

## 12 BEST PRACTICES

## FOR FULL-CYCLE

## GUEST MARKETING



### INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, retaining guests is a more complicated and resource-intensive endeavor than ever. Today's guest is less likely to be loyal to any one brand, thanks to the popularity of OTA websites and other travel-planning apps. Some hoteliers might wonder how they can effectively compete in this kind of environment. Thankfully, there are tools available that simplify the process.

One of these tools is messaging throughout the guest journey, from pre-arrival to post-stay. Enabling guests to communicate with the hotel using the mobile device of their choice encourages them to build a stronger connection with the brand, which leads to more return visits and an increase in revenue.

This kind of messaging can be as simple as sending an email to the guest in advance of their stay, welcoming them to the property and giving them information about the hotel and its surroundings. The dialogue can then be continued during the guest's stay using an on-

83 percent of consumers would prefer to receive a maximum of two marketing messages per month from a brand.<sup>1</sup>

Behaviorally targeted ads can increase click-through rates by as much as 670 percent.<sup>2</sup>

More than 75 percent of Generation Z want brands to reach out to them with promotions and offers.<sup>3</sup>

Personalized email messages improve click-through rates and conversions by more than 10 percent.<sup>4</sup>

44% of email recipients made at least one purchase last year via promotional emails.<sup>5</sup>

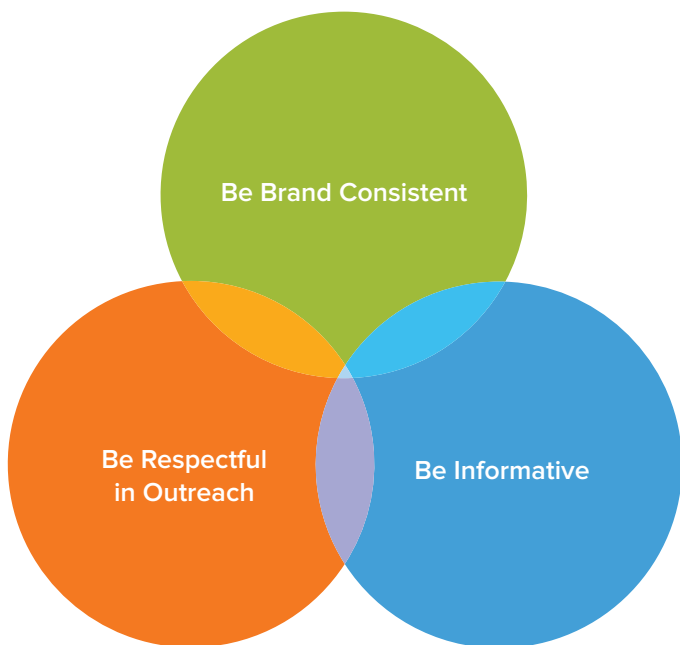
site guest messaging and ordering solution—and once the guest leaves, the hotel can follow up with another email, inviting them to complete a feedback survey or offering them a deal on their next visit.

Hotels that do not participate in this kind of outreach take a great risk. Technology is advancing at a rapid pace, and guests expect to have the same conveniences at a hotel that they do at home. The world's leading hotel brands are already embracing technologies such as robot butlers, guest room automation, and instant messaging. Hotels that do not commit to technological advancement, at least to some degree, will be left behind—their guests will choose hotels that have better amenities, and the hotels that don't will lose out on revenue.

Hoteliers who have never participated in full-cycle guest marketing may feel daunted by the task and unsure where to begin. This white paper offers 12 best practices for implementing and using full-cycle guest marketing efficiently, from pre-arrival to post-stay.

## PRE-STAY MESSAGING

To some hoteliers, it may seem strange to reach out to guests before they arrive, but this strategy could in fact make your property stand out among all the rest. Pre-arrival messaging positions the hotel in the guest's mind as a brand that cares about its patrons, and also gives the hotel the opportunity to inform the guest about services and offers they can use once they arrive on the property. Here are a few things to remember when using pre-arrival messaging.



## PRE-STAY MESSAGING TIPS

### 1. Be Brand Consistent

Use strong, brand-consistent messaging and include high quality images of the property and environs. Branding is what makes the hotel recognizable to the guest, and it helps them build a connection with the brand. Clean, crisp, and beautiful images serve two purposes: one, it demonstrates a degree of professionalism, and two, it gets the guest excited about their stay.<sup>6</sup>

### 2. Be Respectful in Outreach

Don't inundate your guests with emails. Hoteliers do not need to get guest permission before sending a pre-stay message, as they fall under transactional CAN-SPAM law<sup>7</sup>. Since such emails are sent only for reservations and before the guest's arrival on property, it is not required that they follow the same opt-in marketing laws as standard e-mail marketing communications. However, that only covers a single email. If hoteliers find they need to send another email, they should ensure there's a good reason for it. The goal of pre-stay messaging is to be useful and appreciated.

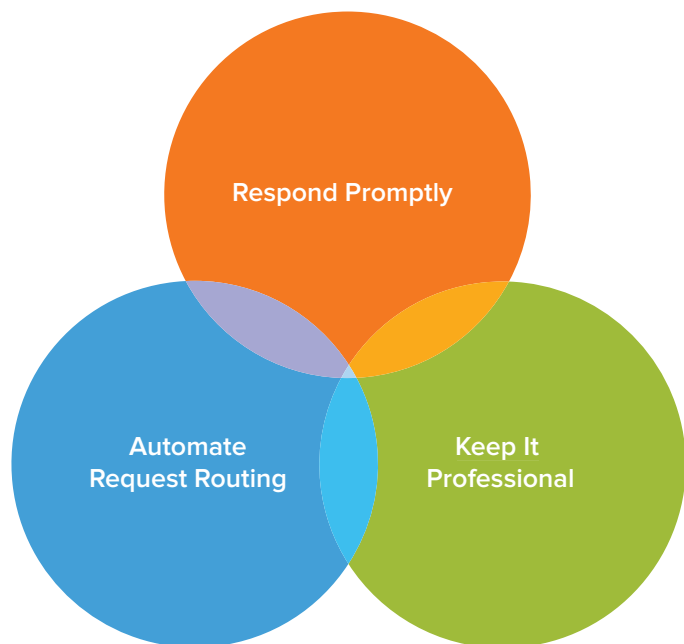
### 3. Be Informative

Inform the guest in advance that there's an on-site messaging solution they can use to communicate with the hotel during their stay, if applicable. Mobile technology can help hoteliers create a seamless digital communication channel between themselves and their guests. Informing the guest in advance of their stay makes them aware such a technology exists and therefore more likely to use it. If there is no on-site messaging solution in place, inform the guest about other services that will be available to them once they arrive. By being a source of information, they will see you as a trusted source and guide.

## COMMUNICATING DURING THE STAY

Hotel staff interact with guests during the stay, but hotels are actually hearing from fewer of their guests than they might like. Studies have shown that the majority of consumers who have an issue with a brand won't necessarily bring it up directly with that brand<sup>8</sup>, but instead take their complaints to social media or an online review website. This is why it is important to offer several channels of communication, including digital, during the guest's stay.

Regardless of the scenario and the technology, here are some best practices hoteliers need to implement in order to meet the service quality expectations of today's mobile guest:



### 4. Respond Promptly

Consumers don't like to be kept waiting, and particularly at hotels, there is the danger that guests will feel that their needs and concerns are being ignored if staff don't respond in good time. Hotel staff must acknowledge them as soon as reasonably possible once guests reach out, whether it's in person, by phone, or via digital channels.

### 5. Automate Request Routing

This can be accomplished by programming keywords and tags to send messages to the appropriate staff member—for example, a request for fresh linens can be automatically directed to housekeeping, while a request that the car be brought up can be routed to the valet. This frees up hotel staff to attend to revenue-producing tasks rather than figuring out which messages apply to whom and directing them accordingly.

### 6. Keep It Professional

It can lead employees to feel as if their work is making an impact in the moment. Scoreboards give employees an instant, visual representation of their performance. When they see that they're performing well, it gives them an immediate sense of accomplishment and encourages them to keep up the quality work; when their performance is flagging, it gives them the push to improve.

## POST-STAY MESSAGING

The brand's relationship with the guest doesn't end as soon as they're out the door! A quick follow-up email can cement the hotel in the guest's mind as a place to return to next time they travel.



## POST-STAY MESSAGING TIPS

### 7. Listen

Use surveys to better understand guest needs and improve the overall guest experience. This can help improve the stay for future guests. Many guests will not hesitate to write a negative review of a hotel, so this kind of messaging ensures that hotel staff hear about the issues first and can perhaps even resolve them before they make it onto an online review website. On top of this, reaching out post-stay shows the guest that the hotel isn't just going to drop them like a hot potato after taking their money.

### 8. Show Gratitude

Always thank the guest for staying and invite them back for their next vacation so that they feel appreciated and will remember their experience. Even though the hotel-guest relationship is transactional at its core, it's important to show gratitude that guests chose to spend their money at your hotel rather than at the one down the block. Guests who feel appreciated by a hotel are more likely to book at the same location, or at least with the same brand, the next time they travel.

### 9. Personalize

Always make sure to personalize the email so the guest will feel as if they are being specifically catered to. Personalization throughout the guest journey is important, but it is especially important to do it in the post-stay email. The post-stay email gives the guest their last impression of the hotel, so make it a good one.

## HOW TO USE SPECIAL OFFERS

Special offers are a good way to get the guest to purchase more products and services while on property, and also to secure their next visit, but there is a right and a wrong way to go about it. These best practices will help you make the most of your digital marketing efforts.

### 10. Be Relevant

Ensure the offer is relevant to the guest; irrelevant offers may have the opposite effect and turn them off. The more targeted your offers and content, the more likely your offers are to convert.

### 11. Create a Sense of Urgency

The idea is to get the guest to act immediately. This can be accomplished by framing the offer in such a way that they can only get it if they do it now, either because it's a limited time offer or the item, experience, or service will expire soon. This leaves no room for the guest to leave it for later, only to forget about it.

### 12. Be Timely

Timing is everything, so make sure you send your offers at the appropriate time. For example, a more business targeted offer should be received when your audience is more likely to check their business emails—such as between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. in their own time zone. Use a software that can help pinpoint when guests are most likely to look at their emails.

## CONCLUSION

Messaging throughout the guest journey is a powerful device in the savvy hotelier's marketing toolbox. It can make guests feel welcomed by the hotel, ensure their needs are taken care of throughout their stay, and close out the experience by thanking them for their patronage. Most of the time, churn occurs because guests do not feel they are valued by the brand<sup>9</sup>. A reliable channel of communication can help negate this type of incidence and ensure that the guest has a strong relationship with the brand from day one.

Benbria's Loop mobile guest engagement solution and Digital Alchemy's digital marketing platform work in tandem to help hoteliers connect with their guests and build a lasting, profitable relationship.

Digital Alchemy personalizes pre-stay messages according to individual guest preferences and sends emails at times when guests are most likely to open them. Moreover, the platform helps hotels adhere to brand standards across all communications with the guest. On the post-stay side, Digital Alchemy automates thank-you messages to guests and generates surveys that help hotels understand what their guests did and did not like about their stay. The data can then be used to adjust operations and service within the hotel and personalize aspects of the guest's stay in the future.

Hoteliers can take the first step by booking at a demo at [benbria.com](http://benbria.com) or contacting Digital Alchemy at [digital-alchemy.com](http://digital-alchemy.com).

## ABOUT BENBRIA

Loop® by Benbria Corporation is a mobile messaging and engagement solution that helps brands to enhance the customer experience. Leveraging the customer's preferred choice of communications – texting, web chat, native app, email and kiosk – Loop® allows customers to communicate directly with a brand to make requests, resolve issues, and share their experience before, during, and after their visit. Closing the loop through on-the-spot staff action helps brands to improve customer satisfaction, save at-risk customers, increase revenue, and drive repeat business.

For more information, visit [www.benbria.com](http://www.benbria.com).

## ABOUT DIGITAL ALCHEMY

Digital Alchemy, based in North Richland Hills, Texas, is the leader in Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and email marketing solutions that increase revenue. Clients include boutique hotels, Four-and Five-Star properties, branded hotels, and spas. Digital Alchemy guarantees its data-centric marketing campaigns will deliver at least 400% ROI.

Founded in 1999, Digital Alchemy pioneered virtually every email-based concept used in the hospitality industry. Its email templates are mobile optimized and the company offers the industry's first social media-email integration to reach new guests. Digital Alchemy provides dynamic two-way mobile messaging on one integrated platform and creates clients' email designs in-house to free staff for other activities. To verify results for clients the company delivers accurate real-time campaign revenue reporting. Digital Alchemy continuously innovates new solutions that include integrated spa CRM functionality.

For more information visit [www.digital-alchemy.com](http://www.digital-alchemy.com).

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