

The Secret to Hotel B2B Sales: The 4 'P's.



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*Over a decade managing and consulting
for international hospitality b2b sales*

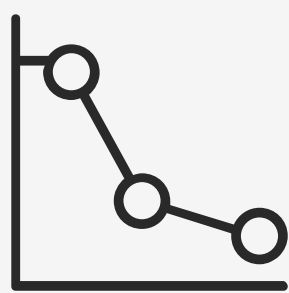
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01. OVERVIEW

In this white paper, we will look at how **digital market trends** have changed the landscape of hotel b2b sales. We will help you to assess your own team's digital prowess through a check-list of good and bad practice. Then, we will deep-dive into 4 key areas that have the biggest impact on revenue and how they can be best used by your sales team. These are also the areas that, if ignored/mis-used, will have the biggest negative impact on both the sales targets and the brand.

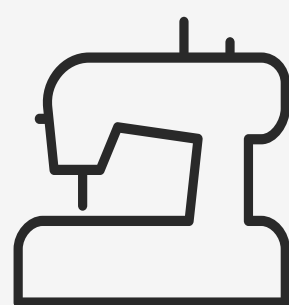
1. Using data to **predict** the best way to hone your sales process
2. Nurturing leads through **personalisation** of the entire customer journey
3. Digital automation to ensure **productivity** of the sales team
4. Ensuring all hotels within a group are aligned on **brand, approach and best practice**

We will share real case studies of how hotels have implemented digital strategies and the learnings we can take away from them. Finally, we will conclude with key takeaways that your sales team can apply today.



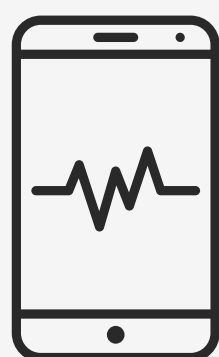
Predictive analysis from customer data

Not just gathering data, but using it intelligently to adapt your message in real time.



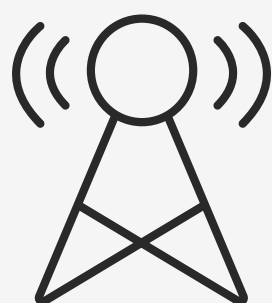
Personalization of every touch point

Describe their business and product offering.



Productivity through automation

Never missing a beat, or an opportunity, through automation and carefully planned nurture campaigns.



Positioning of a consistent brand strategy

Seamlessly deploying sales strategies across a hotel's decentralised organisation



Hotel technology is projected to be the highest growth sector for Enterprise IT spending over the next 5 years



GARTNER GROUP, 2017

SETTING THE SCENE

Survival of the Fittest

During 2017, the Welcome Anywhere property management system processed £74m of hotel reservations. More than 50% of these bookings came from Booking.com, while the **number of direct bookings decreased by almost £2m in value.**

To maintain their revenue stream in the era of OTAs, many hotels are now focusing on the more lucrative and reliable b2b market. Expedia says that the b2b market is typically more brand-loyal, conservative and less dominated by the millennial generation, who are known for their lack of loyalty to specific hotel groups/ brands, and their preference for the convenience of OTAs.

What this means for your sales team is that they need to compete with other hotels for venue opportunities, corporate bookings and stays. You can do it, but not without embracing digital.

Digital is no longer the new shiny object in sales: it's par for the course, with European sales teams now spending an average of **£4,228 per rep** on sales acceleration technology. Now, b2b sales is focused on how digital can be leveraged for greater and greater returns. But digital doesn't just mean doing things online, or having data dashboards. It's a way to describe a new methodology that informs each aspect of the sales cycle.

For example, by using a digital platform to manage leads and nurture possible customers, you can design a lifecycle for your prospects and customers to ensure they are getting regular, relevant touch-points and you are leaving no stone unturned for either new business or repeat/ up-sells. This structure is then augmented with **beautiful, relevant and compelling** content and underpinned with data tracking so you can learn what 'lands' and what falls flat and adapt to that information. This content can help set you apart from the crowd and differentiate your brand and your hotel.

At the end of 2017, Forbes predicted for 2018 that **two of the key trends** for digital would be:

A “true understanding of [the] customer journey”

“Personalization along all stages of the sales funnel”

03.

IS YOUR TEAM WINNING?

“ Nearly 3/4 of
marketing content
is never used by
sales teams. ”

SIRIUSDECISIONS

GOOD PRACTICE

GOOD VISIBILITY

Your team are tracking their leads and able to see what was last done to tailor and maintain momentum.

PERSONALISED EFFICIENTLY

Your team are able to easily personalise their email correspondence to the interests and context of their prospect. This includes images and adaptation of templates.

DATA-DRIVEN DECISIONS

Your team has access to response data so they can make data-driven decisions to adapt messaging in order to increase response rate.

TRANSPARENT MANAGEMENT

Management is able to see the activity of each sales person and use this information to coach and performance manage the team.

A UNIFIED BRAND

Each sales person will take the same approach and present a unified brand regardless of their location (any region, any branch).

AGILE AND RESPONSIVE

The hotel group is able to respond to how their prospects receive their messages quickly and efficiently, experimenting and adapting to get the best result.

BAD PRACTICE

POOR/ NO VISIBILITY

Your team are using email to track their leads. Because email is not built for tracking response rates, stage in a nurture cycle or click-rate, there's low consistency of contact and sometimes things 'fall through the cracks' because it relies on human memory.

NOT EFFICIENT OR NOT PERSONALISED

Your team don't have templates to work from or they are difficult to use, resulting in a lot of time spent personalising correspondence. Alternatively, the team do not personalise content.

GUT-FEEL DECISIONS

Data tracked is usually too high level (i.e. top line revenue) and can't be used to make adaptive decisions to optimise the sales funnel.

NO VISIBILITY OF SALES ACTIVITY

Management is unable to see the activity of each sales person and struggles to adapt approaches across the team and performance managing individuals.

INCONSISTENT BRANDING AND OFFERS

Without a shared set of templates and approach, sales people use different language/ images, potentially damaging the professionalism of the hotel brand.

SLOW AND NOT AGILE

The hotel group lacks the information and/or communication structures to easily adapt their message and approach to get the best results from their sales funnel.

How did your team do?

If your sales team is not taking full advantage of digital, you may be feeling it on your bottom line. The good news is that there are a number of tools, purpose-built for the hotel industry, aimed at helping salespeople to get visibility into what's working. This in turn helps managers build a winning strategy (based on data!) for b2b sales that translates across different locations and presents a strong, unified brand. Upmail (the researchers behind this white paper) are one of those support systems.

Through the remainder of this white paper, there are best practices that you can share with your teams and key changes you can make today to make better use of the tools you're currently employing.



A strong brand can impact the value of a hotel and its chain by up to 3 times.



Cornell University

04.

THE FIRST 'P': PREDICTIVE

Prediction isn't just about where you'll get the most clicks. It's about **leveraging data** about your customers and prospects to make **smarter decisions** across your **entire sales process**. The right reports mean you can take decisions that are data-driven. This is the silver bullet for any sales manager.

These reports may include:

Channel: What channel is most effective for communicating with prospects?

Content: What type and format of content has the biggest impact on your prospects?

Nurture steps: What is the optimal number of steps in the sales cycle?

Frequency: How frequently should the sales team be communicating with prospects?

Activity: How much does response rate and pace of response impact likelihood of closing the deal?

Style: What language and imagery do my customers respond best to?

Top performer characteristics: What do my top sales people do differently? How can I scale that to the rest of the team?

“

Predictive analytics is the use of data, statistical algorithms and machine learning techniques to identify the likelihood of future outcomes based on historical data.

”

SAS

One of the ways in which data can be used to make predictive decisions is AB testing. This means setting up two variations of your message and seeing which performs better by looking at customer and prospect behaviour. By tracking the response and conversion rate to different approaches, phrasing, even colours or picture placement on emails, you can find what has the biggest impact.

*Sometimes, you need to reverse your thinking to get **results!***

One hotel we worked with created meetings and events proposals with the bedroom information at the top, followed by the details of the meetings space and event. They believed this was the right way to approach it because accommodation prices for this luxury hotel were the biggest cost, so wanted to put this up front.

We suggested they reverse the order, starting the proposal with the meeting space, catering option, food and drinks, etc. then ending with the bedroom prices. We believed their customer base would be making the decision on what the meetings space looks like, and 'wow-factors' such as catering spaces. Bedrooms are not a key factor in a corporate decision, and not a differentiator for this hotel.

With UpMail, they quickly tested both options and discovered they had **12% higher conversion rate** that way. This enabled them to be **agile and data-driven** in their new approach, meaning it was easy to roll out across different sites.



BEST PRACTICES FOR USING DATA PREDICTIVELY IN HOTEL B2B SALES

CHANNELS

EyeForTravel says that "email still has an edge" for hotel b2b sales, but, they say, "it needs to be done right".

66% prefer emails ,compared to 26% who prefer direct mail, and 25% who prefer mobile apps, according to Campaign Monitor.

Success with emails requires understanding and adapting to the tone, style, layout and content of emails that your prospects respond to.

NUMBER & SEQUENCE

Upmail's analysis of impact on revenue shows that the ideal number of touch points for prospecting is 5 emails with the following topic sequence:

1. Company/Hotel introduction
2. Value-added #1: this needs to be relevant to the interests of the prospect.
3. Relevant information: Testimonials and client reviews that are relevant to their interest.
4. Value-added #2: this needs to be relevant to the interests of the prospect.
5. Stay in contact - check in and (if no response) finish the conversation without negatively affecting the brand.

CONTENT TYPE

It's not just about how many touch points you have, but when you bring in different types of content into the conversation.

Hotel groups need to have the data to understand what type of content is helping them to convert different types of communication: Prospecting, enquiry response, client nurturing, etc.

CASE STUDY

KEY STATS

Upmail's aggregate data from international hotel chains uses machine learning algorithms to learn the best approach for different types of sales. For Meetings, it's clear that for a 20 person or more event, 16 days before that event is the right time to cross-sell additional bedrooms, while 48h before the event is the best time to up-sell additional welcome drinks, or food and beverage amenities.

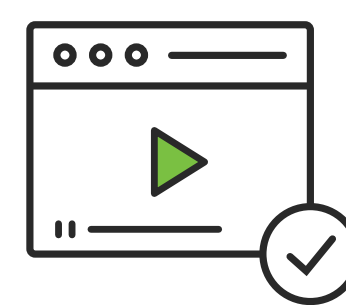
Hotels that use Upmail to analyse their sales data found that:



Prospecting emails increased click rate by 3% when there is at least one link to external content.



Conversion rate increased by 5% on meetings/events proposals when they had a link to an image gallery or video.



Conversion rate increased by 7% when at least one video has been clicked throughout their sales communications.

05.

THE SECOND 'P': PERSONALISED

As we saw in the best practices guide section above, the relevance of content is critical to whether it has impact on your sales funnel.

The mantra your sales team should be following is:

“Is this email I'm sending today **adding value** to the customer? If not, don't send it.”

Personalisation is about understanding your customers and knowing what they need and when they're likely to need it. This does two important things:

1. It makes your message much more likely to be read because it is **useful** to the audience.

2. It positions you as anticipating their needs, which makes you their **'go-to' expert** in what they're doing, whether it's an office event, wedding or something else!

CASE STUDY

A hotel group in Switzerland wanted to increase their conversion rate from proposals (<10%).

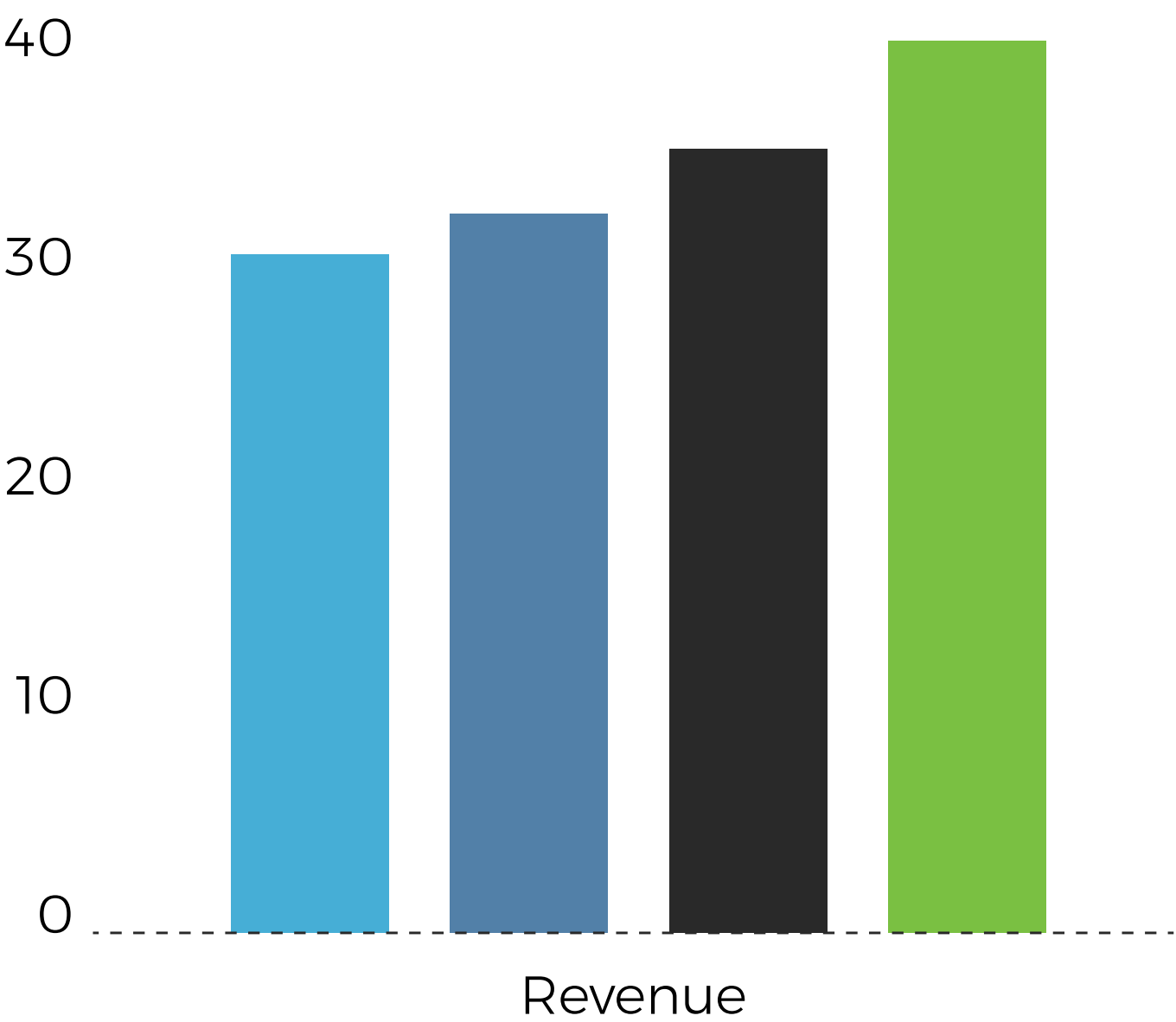
‘Proposals’ were emails followed by a generic brochure, which was diagnosed as the root of the problem.

The hotel group was losing business to its competition by following up with generic, impersonal content.

Revenue impact of Personalised Content

After 1 year:

32%
increase
from
existing
customers



06.

THE THIRD 'P': PRODUCTIVITY

Without a shared set of templates to work with, salespeople spend a lot of their time personalising correspondence, when their attention should be focused on following up. This not only has a direct impact on productivity but also conversion.

The average sales rep spends up to 4 hours per day following up on leads by sending emails and faxes, following up on calls, formatting proposals and doing other admin tasks that can be eliminated using pre-drafted templates and automation. On average it can take about 45 minutes to create an email proposal the standard way, and only **2 minutes if a template was used**.

“The biggest barrier to productivity, after a lack of templates, is a lack of management oversight into the relative activity levels of different sales reps. If you don’t know what’s working, and what options you have, it’s nearly impossible to manage performance.” – insidesales.com



*The average sales rep spends
19% of their time searching
for information*



MCKINSEY GLOBAL INSTITUTE

CASE STUDY

DashboardUsageTop PerformingCommunication Type

TemplateFilter by communication type

EmailsRecipients

	Sent	Opened		Clicked		😊		Score
		N	%	N	%	N	%	
Invitation	727	539	74	111	15	231	32	62
Save the date	202	78	39	6	3	65	32	26
Corporate Rates	164	87	53	5	3	34	21	33
Proposal	80	78	78	10	13	33	41	61
Wedding open day	118	65	55	1	1	32	27	31
Christmas Campaign	546	272	50	16	3	29	5	32
DDR Promotions	250	86	34	5	2	23	9	22
Prospecting	221	75	34	25	11	12	5	36
Q1 Offer	101	28	28	6	6	12	12	25
Promotion	269	38	14	7	3	9	3	14
Incentive	101	23	23	5	5	3	3	21
Total	3147	969	29	94	3	483	25	

Visibility on Productivity

UpMail's dashboard displays team level and individual level statistics for the whole sales team, enabling managers to identify high performers and the root cause of that performance. This makes coaching and performance incentivising easier and more impactful.

UpMail clients share on average **139%** more pieces of marketing content per week than other salespeople.

“ Since using UpMail, the sales team has boosted productivity. They now have more time to focus on following up on every opportunity, and closing more deals. ”

Best Western Hotel Group

07.

THE FOURTH 'P': POSITIONING

STOP HERDING CATS

It can be extremely difficult for hotels to deploy their B2B sales strategies across a decentralised organisation. Everyone does their own thing and as a result, metrics suffer. In order to effectively acquire new B2B clients, improve conversion from proposals and increase existing client revenue, you need to make it frictionless for your sales team to apply best practices to your brand.

CENTRALISE INTELLIGENTLY

This doesn't mean Head Office should have every branch do the exact same thing - sometimes that won't make sense because markets are different. This is where digital data tracking can really help you to compare and contrast different regions and identify the practices that work only for that region, and the ones that should be shared across the whole group as a best practice.

DEPLOY NOW WITHOUT RE-TRAINING

Getting everyone on the same page for a new initiative can be painful. The traditional approach is training, but this can be an inefficient and ineffective method of deploying a unified approach, particularly if you have a lot of people to schedule in! Digital tools can give everyone the same structure, process and language to talk to your customers with a unified message and focus.



Participants in traditional curriculum-based training forget more than 80 percent of the information they were taught within 90 days.



HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Using data to predict the best way to hone your sales process

Assess your team's use of digital and change one of the poor practices to good practice - it will have an immediate and measurable impact on your bottom line, we promise!

2. Nurturing leads through personalisation of the entire customer journey

Tape this message to every salesperson's terminal: Is this email I'm sending today **ADDING VALUE** to the customer? If not, don't send it.

And invest in making it possible for them to personalise their messaging and take advantage of the information you have on every customer.

3. Digital automation to ensure productivity of the sales team

Don't fall into the trap of reinventing the wheel for every customer. Make sure your team are spending less time on re-writing, and more time interacting with prospects - you do this by giving them smart tools that know what they're trying to do.

4. Deploying a unified positioning strategy across de-centralised sites

Ensure you have a clear and easy-to-use way to share your best content and strategies across your sales teams. Review the differences in approach and impact across sites and assess the urgency of deploying a centralized strategy if you haven't already.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Antoine Asselin has over a decade of experience working with and for hotel sales and marketing teams.

Based in London, UK, Antoine launched UpMail, a sales acceleration platform designed to support hospitality groups to deploy their B2B sales strategies, improve the consistency of one-to-one communications and optimise their sales funnel efficiency.

UpMail's clients include Jurys Inn, citizenM, Iberostar, glh, Macdonald Hotels, Frasers Hospitality, Red Carnation Hotels, Malmaison, Virgin Limited Edition, Dusit Hotels and Resorts, Amaris Hospitality, Alrov Luxury Hotels and many more.

The UpMail platform empowers sales teams to increase revenue from direct business and to turn leads, prospects, and sales opportunities into paying customers faster.

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