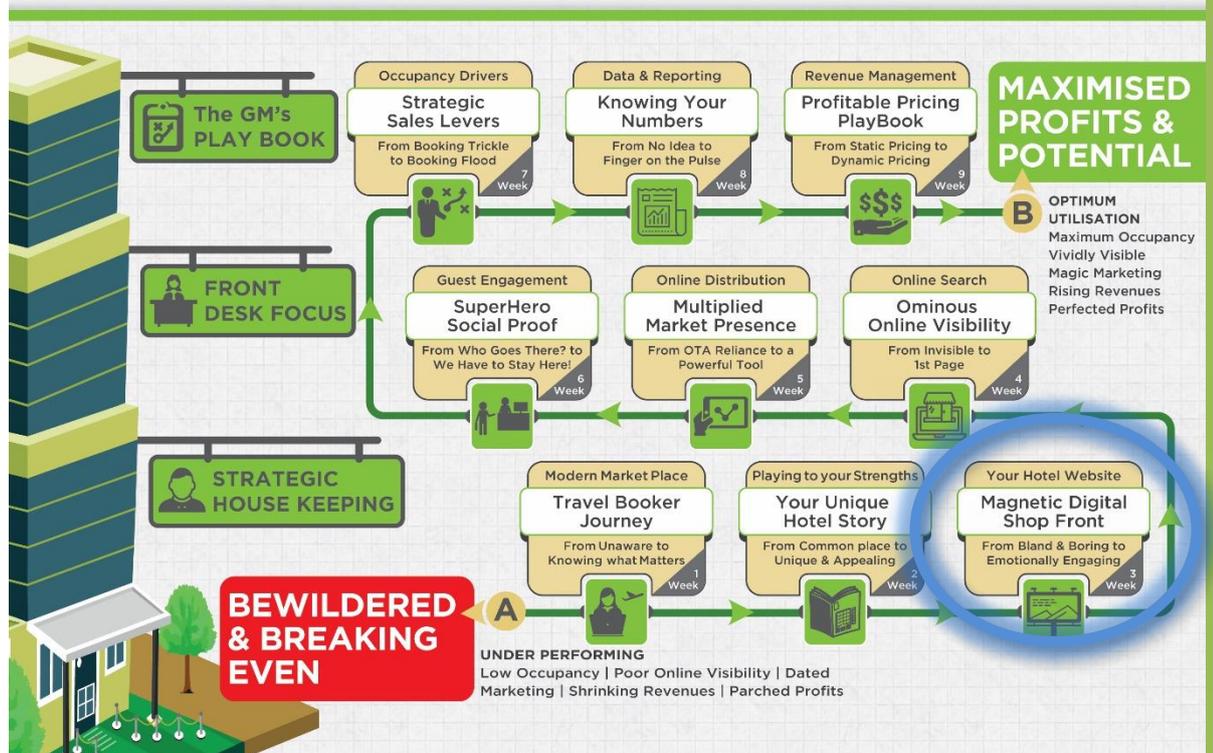# 63 Day
# 80%+ Occupancy
# ROADMAP



The 63 Day 80%+ Occupancy ROADMAP

A proven step by step system for Independent Hoteliers to increase their profit by up to 50% in 63 days without increasing stress or work load

**MAXIMISED PROFITS & POTENTIAL**

**OPTIMUM UTILISATION**
Maximum Occupancy
Vividly Visible
Magic Marketing
Rising Revenues
Perfected Profits

**The GM's PLAY BOOK**

| Occupancy Drivers | Data & Reporting | Revenue Management |
|---|---|---|
| Strategic Sales Levers | Knowing Your Numbers | Profitable Pricing PlayBook |
| From Booking Trickle to Booking Flood | From No Idea to Finger on the Pulse | From Static Pricing to Dynamic Pricing |
| Week 7 | Week 8 | Week 9 |

**FRONT DESK FOCUS**

| Guest Engagement | Online Distribution | Online Search |
|---|---|---|
| SuperHero Social Proof | Multiplied Market Presence | Ominous Online Visibility |
| From Who Goes There? to We Have to Stay Here! | From OTA Reliance to a Powerful Tool | From Invisible to 1st Page |
| Week 6 | Week 5 | Week 4 |

**STRATEGIC HOUSE KEEPING**

| Modern Market Place | Playing to your Strengths | Your Hotel Website |
|---|---|---|
| Travel Booker Journey | Your Unique Hotel Story | Magnetic Digital Shop Front |
| From Unaware to Knowing what Matters | From Common place to Unique & Appealing | From Bland & Boring to Emotionally Engaging |
| Week 1 | Week 2 | Week 3 |

**BEWILDERED & BREAKING EVEN**

**UNDER PERFORMING**
Low Occupancy | Poor Online Visibility | Dated Marketing | Shrinking Revenues | Parched Profits

# Module 3

## Magnetic Digital Shopfront

Michael Harper & Andreas Palmqvist

Hotel Rescue 2017

Module 3 – Your Hotel Website

# Magnetic Digital Shopfront
*From Online Brochure to Booking Machine*

## Section 1.

## Your Website, your Virtual Shopfront

Your Hotel website is such a critical piece in your overall marketing strategy. When comparing traditional marketing practices to the modern techniques that exist now, the following analogy helps to describe how important your Hotel Website is to your property's financial success.

So firstly, you have to think like the owner of a retail business or retail shopfront. The old school way. You know, where you open the store up every day, attract people into your store, present you whares in the best way possible, provide outstanding customer service, and hopefully somewhere along the way, MAKE SOME SALES!! The same rules apply not only in 'modern retail' but can equally be applied to a 'modern accommodation business'. Let me break it down for you. Below listed are the key fundamentals of traditional bricks and mortar retailing and then how each principle can be applied to your Hotel website.

### Opening Hours
In traditional retail, if you doors aren't open, it's impossible to sell your goods. A good store keeper ensures their doors are always open ready for the next buyer. Some shops are 9am-5pm x 5 days a week while others trade more to the extreme at 24 hours x 7 days a week.
Your Hotel website allows you to trade 24/7. Once upon a time you could only be selling (taking bookings) while ever your reception was open and able to take phone calls or walk-ins. Now, your doors are open around the clock.

### Appealing Shop Front/Window
Having an eye grabbing and enticing shop front and exterior presence, has always been key in attracting retail shoppers through the front doors of any retail business. First impressions count and unless we can get people through the front doors, there's no chance of a sale.
It's no different on your website either, the first impression is super critical. This means that from the very first image they see, to the colour scheme used, to the language and emotive connections you make along with even the web page loading speed, all must be just right, to grab the attention of your target audience and engage them so they remain on your website to view the rest of your 'shop'.

### Attracting Attention / Floor Traffic
So the doors are open and the shop front looks great. The next thing you have to get right is floor traffic. More people through the doors, should mean more money in the cash register. So retailers typically begin advertising, running specials, conducting instore promotions, competitions, giveaways, loyalty campaigns and the list goes on. Anything to bring people back through the doors, in other words 'Advertising & Marketing'.
In the modern hotel marketplace, how market your property to get traffic to your store (your Hotel website)? Again, the principle remains the same, you do whatever you have to, to drive more and more traffic to your website, then let the conversions take care of themselves. The good news, is that it is very manageable and measureable now. You can actually see what marketing activities are driving traffic results, and even follow them through to conversion.

The even better news is that you're not only looking to grab the attention of pedestrians in your local area (so to speak), you have the ability to grab the attention of anyone, anywhere looking to book accommodation in your area right now. And you can reach them, while you sleep even!

**Fully Stocked Shelves with Great Products**

Having fully stocked shelves with a great range of products, in a retail environment, demonstrates choice for consumers and helps appeal to the buyers 'immediacy' impulse, so they know that if they make a decision, they can walk away with their purchase today! Again attractive displays play a role, along with everything being well layed out, organised into sections and accurately priced, helps consumers simplify their buying process.

So when it comes to your hotel website it is critical you have beautiful imagery of your property accurately representing the property and helping the visitor to quickly and easily understand what your property stands for and provides. Often you only have seconds to do this so the more you can use imagery and icons the better. Better still if you can seamlessly link pricing and availability so visitors can see it alongside your product (room) range, it all makes it easier for the visitor to surmise if you are the right hotel for them. A key part of this is having "Live-Availability" via a booking engine on your site.

**Customer Service**

In days gone by, customer service was often the hall mark of many a great retail outlet. And while we now live in a more price sensitive, product educated society, it remains relevant for Hotel websites.

When we talk about Hotel websites and customer service, what we mean is the usability and user experience your website provides as visitors are going the booking process. Now we talk more on this later, but in simple terms, is your website easy to use and how does it make people feel when they use it.

**Making the Sale / The Checkout**

At the end of the day, the goal is to get people in the store to pick something up, take it to a sales counter and buy it. While Great pricing, special deals, customer service and pushy sales people can help this along to 'get the sale', it is a just a little different in the digital world for Hotels.

First of all (and assuming you have taken care of all of the above), you must make it plainly obvious for visitors how they can make a purchase. Having "Book Now" or "Check Availability" buttons littered everywhere on your site is absolute mandatory, so that it is always visible and ready for the micro moment when a travel booker is ready to buy. Better still, why not embed your booking engine on you website so people don't need to leave to make a booking. We must make the checkout process obvious and seem-less, because unfortunately while we are available 24/7, we don't typically have 24/7 customer service staff monitoring visitor behaviour and helping get the sale across the line.

| Traditional Retail Shop Front | Hotel Website – Virtual Shop Front |
|---|---|
| Open the doors & manage the shop | **Open 24/7 - Hands Off** |
| Appealing Shop Front/Window | **First Impressions/Imagery/Load Speed** |
| Market/Promote and Hope | **Targeted Marketing with Measurability** |
| Stock the Shelves | **Live-Availability** |
| Customer Service | **Usability and User Experience** |
| Making the Sale | **The Checkout Experience** |

### Section 2.

## Changes in User Behaivour

Once upon a time, before the online world existed, the way people found and booked Hotels was completely different. The bigger, better brighter the sign out the front of your property was, the more chance you had of attracting those last minute travellers and capturing their "walk-in' style of business. But what about those that needed to book in advance? Well you either booked somewhere that you already new about, or that a friend had told you about, asked the local VIC(visitor information centre), or what was once common place was using the good old Yellow Pages or one of a number of Accommodation Directory publications that were updated annually. Then you would make a phone call, check availability, check price and perhaps make a booking. All very manual and slow.

Well clearly the game has changed with the entrance, and rapid development, of the world wide web and the ready access it has given to the travel booker to a plethora of accommodation options. All at your fingertips, on any device anywhere, anytime with up to date information, pictures, rates and availability. A booking can be made within a few simple clicks.

**Be Online or Die**

- 85% of all Travel planning is done online and your Hotel website should be the cornerstone of your online presence. That only leaves 15% of searches doing it the old way.
- 77% of all online search is conducted on Google. If people can't easily find your website on Google, you're really not in the game.
- Once a travel booker gets that far (Google search), it's open to the masses, where not only all accommodation providers (your direct competitors) are fighting for the travel bookers' attention. But so are the really big players such as Booking.com, Expedia as well as all the meta search travel websites. You have to be in the mix here somewhere to at least be found some of the time, by some of the lookers.
- 53% of people who visit an OTA or TPI (eg; Booking.com), will actually visit your direct hotel website, to check for best rate, see the whole property and find out more. This presents the biggest opportunity to capture a new guest while they are in the planning/booking phase.

**Be on Mobile or be Imobilised**

- The rise of smartphone and mobile devices is prolific to say the least, and it heavily weighs into the travel industry with consumer behaviour changing dramatically. These days, 77% of people don't leave home without their mobile device, so having a mobile responsive website is critical to your success in converting online bookings.
- 47% of all last minute hotel bookings made online, are made from a mobile device. Last minute means typically any bookings made in the 24-48 hours prior to arrival, which for many destinations can be a large proportion of their booking demand. So if you aren't easily found and booked on mobile devices, you risk losing out on all this 'last minute' business.
- Smartphones are used massively throughout the travel process (inspiration, research, booking, experience, post stay) by 67% of leisure travellers and 78% of business travellers.

- Only 23% of those who encountered a website on a mobile device that <u>wasn't mobile optimized</u>, actually pushed through and continued using the site.
- 33% of mobile travel searchers, actually want to complete their transaction the same day.
- Google found that a poor mobile website experience was the #1 reason for not making a reservation.



U.S. Local Mobile Search vs. Desktop Search
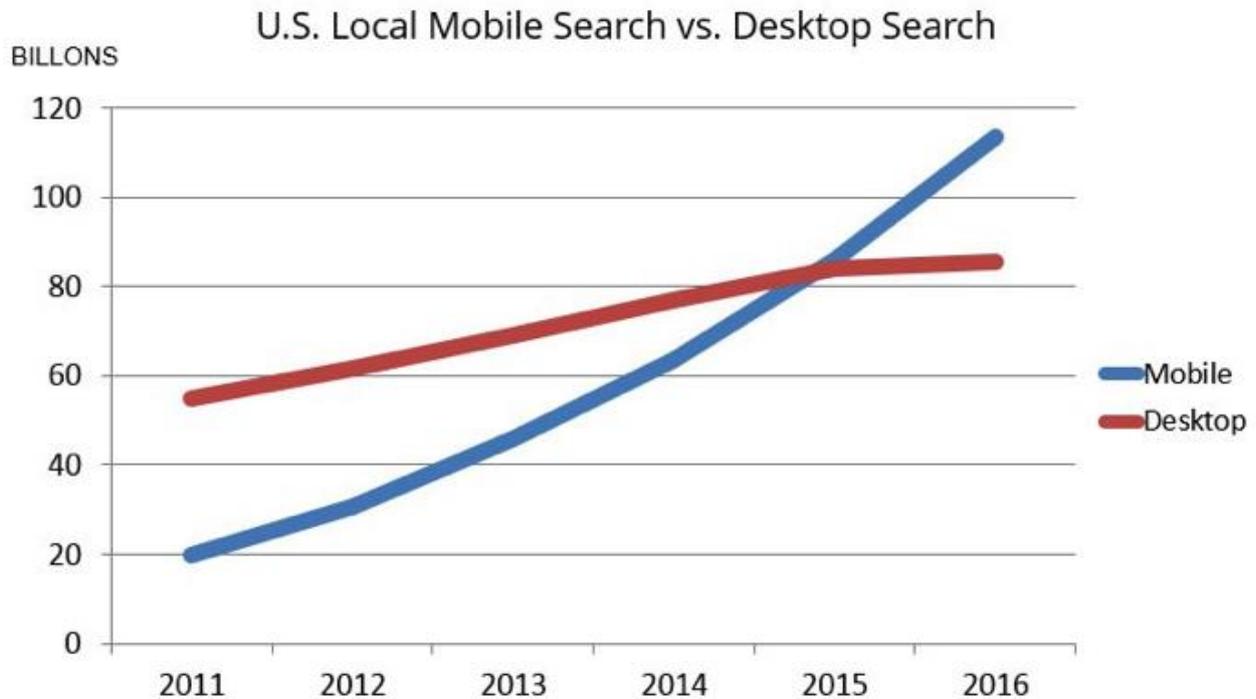
### Section 3.

### Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Search engine optimisation (SEO) has become an industry on its own these days and entails the art, or skill, or the ability for a particular website to be able to rank high in the organic search results of search engines (such as Google.com or Yahoo.com). The search engines work on the basis of having an algorithm (or formula) which calculates what is the best webpage to suggest for an entered search query.

In its most simplest form, if an entered search term was "Toys for Kids", it would find all the web pages that contain the words "Toys for Kids" in them. So to appear for that search term should be easy (or at least once upon a time it may have been). But not only will a search engine present all pages with "Toys for Kids" in it, there are many layers to how the search engines look for this information and then they want to present, to the searcher, the <u>most relevant website</u> for them.

Currently, keeping up with SEO algorithm changes, has become almost impossible for the budding independent hotelier hoping to manage their own website. Managing your own website is a great idea so you can keep your content fresh and up to date. But as far as keeping up with algorithm changes we have 4 suggestions that will help you gain some traction in what has become a difficult and competitive environment:

**Hire a Pro**

There is just too much involved, and too much at risk to get the SEO fundamentals wrong for your site. Unless you have an IT background, are a complete tech geek and really know what you are doing, or you're about to sit a course in SEO and web design, we suggest leaving to the professionals. We know you have plenty of things to take care of in the day to day running of your property, without adding this to your work load. The aim here is to get it set up with the 'correct technical SEO structure' based upon some thoughtful keyword research that highlights key search terms that are relevant to your property and location and have strong monthly search history volumes.

**Local Search Success**

Ensure you have optimized your website for local search functionality. That is, when someone searches for let's say "Accommodation Sydney", that you have optimized for this search query. This will involve ensuring your business is listed On Google Maps and that your Google My Business profile is updated. Also ensuring that your address is listed on every page of your website as well as being optimized for the search term relevant to you, such as "Sydney".  Again we suggest highlighting the importance of local search to your web professional.

**Make your Website Awesome!**

Of course you want an awesome website, however what we mean here is simply to have a really engaging website that people enjoy using and the content is massively valuable towards their travel journey. If all it promotes are the facts about your Hotel (which is lovely I'm sure), it really isn't adding value and creating interest. Most search engines rank your site not only for all the technical stuff, but user click-through plays a massive role in how you rank. If you think about it this way; Google's (as an example), goal is to place the most relevant web page (in the world, no less) in front of the person placing a search query. Really this is just a popularity issue. If for a certain search term, the bulk of people continually end up on the same web page, and they spend a reasonable amount of time on the web page consuming the information available, this then proves to Google that it is relevant. And so it then continues to push that web page higher and higher in the organic search results.

By providing content and information about things to do in your local area, this would be just one example of how to provide awesome content that will be consumed.

**Digital Repository**

A Digital Repository (DR) is a technology solution that does a whole lot more than SEO. It provides a single repository for all your online content (text, images, videos) to be pushed out to all your online channels including your own website. The key here though is that the up keep of your alignment to algorithm changes on search engines, is the responsibility of the repository provider, and as they have many customers to please, it is highly important that they are doing this regularly. Having a repository is simply one means of doing this, but in principal it is important to highlight the need for regular review of your SEO alignment to latest algorithm changes which typically are changed between 300-500 times per year.

In summary, SEO is extremely important and should involve the below three strategies; Technical Correctness, Engaging & Fresh Content, a means for SEO realignment over time.

**Section 4.**

## User Experience

A note on User Experience Vs Usability. Often these two terms are used inter changeably, however it is important to clarify the difference. User Experience, or UX as it can be called, refers to the <u>way a user feels</u> when they use your website or other digital assets. So it is all about the emotions that are evoked, as opposed to 'Usability' which is an indication of how easy it is for users to engage and interact with your site. So when it comes to User Experience, ask yourself, how does my website make people FEEL.

**Imagery/Look & Feel**

Only 5% of people remember the facts but 63% of people remember the story. Pictures are more powerful and engaging than words. You should be using full width format and your Images should have people in them. Use of galleries helps consumers to browse and get a feel for your property. No one wants to read loads of information anymore. Employ the use of icons to help describe features and inclusions. So when it comes to presenting your property online the key points to remember are:

     i.   Beautiful Images in Full Width Format
    ii.   Use People in your Images so people can imagine themselves at your property.
   iii.   Use of Visual Icons instead of bullet pointing all your features.
   iv.   Keep your website clean and as simplified as you can.

Top 10 images that are viewed on a hotel website:

1. Guest Rooms
2. Restaurant
3. Recreation
4. Lobby/Foyer
5. Map
6. Business Centre
7. Pool
8. Amenities
9. Exterior
10. Bar/Lounge

**Succinct and Uniform Messaging**

On a typical webpage of 100 words, people typically only read 49% of the content. On a page with 600 words only 28% is consumed. So when it comes to telling your story we must Prioritize Your Value Proposition & Get to the Point, quickly. There is no time to create a list of features and inclusions that run off the page. You need to focus on what sets you apart, and what is the intrinsic potential benefit to them should they follow through and book your property. Focus on your key points of difference and what sets you apart from your closest competitors.

An extension of this is using a digital repository as it was described above. But not for SEO purposes this time. The concept of having a DR is great for your overall online presence as well, where-by you

have one, single, master resource that holds the standard of digital representation to be used not only on your website, but across every platform you appear on.

The same room names, the same property and room descriptions, same inclusions, images and videos, replicated across the channels to provide a uniformed approach no matter where someone finds you on line.

**Use the Power of Video**

By the end of the year 2017, according to Cisco, 69% of all consumer web traffic will be video based (this is set to increase to 80% by 2018). So if your website is not adopting the use of video then you will be excluding yourself from a large piece of the 'prospective guest pie'. Here are a couple of suggestions of ways you can implement the use of video on your website.

- Using the full width format, instead of have static images, you can try replacing them with short videos that auto play and again make use of actual people using the hotel facilities.
- Have a virtual tour video recorded and place it on your home page and on youtube/vimeo for people to discover the property in 3D. Include either music to create atmosphere or go for more of a 'guided tour' feel by providing commentary throughout.
- Guest testimonials recorded on your iPhone/smartphone and posted on a review/testimonials page.
- Create a time lapse video that shows a complete tour of inside and outside and all key facilities and provides an 'orientation' style function so people can quickly asses what the property offers.

By employing the use of video you not only succeed more at telling your story you also are boosted by higher rankings and relevance in the eyes of google's algorithm.

There are numerous resources and articles around that go into greater detail about User Experience & Usability, and so we don't plan to re-write the play-book on web design, but simply highlight the key points that are worth focussing on for the accommodation industry.

Below are some resources that may be of interest:

http://blog.leonardo.com/why-usability-and-ux-matter-for-your-hotel-website-an-inside-look-from-our-ux-manager/

https://www.slideshare.net/domain7/ux-vs-usability

https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/usability-a-part-of-the-user-experience

## Section 5.

## Usability

Travel shoppers check as many as 22-38 different website before feeling prepared to make a booking. If your website is <u>difficult to navigate</u>, bookers will leave your site in a flash. In other words, is it functional, logical, simple and streamlined, as opposed too busy, confusing, many clicks to achieve a task, difficult to navigate. So when it comes to Usability, ask yourself, is my website EASY to use?

### Usability/Ease of Use

Going for a simplistic/minimalist design should be the goal. However is not always that easy to achieve. We often get wrapped up in wanting to provide as much information as possible so people have no excuse for not booking your property. Sometimes, it can be the fact that there is too much information that causes people to abandon your site with information overload. Finding the balance between too much and too little can prove difficult.

Keep the navigation of your site streamlined. Remember you don't need to show a direct link to every page on your website, clever use of appropriate links in the right locations helps users to easily navigate their way around your site.

### Clear Call to Action

The key purpose of any website at the end of day is to have the user take action. So, while it may seem logical to you what action you'd like them to take, you should make it abundantly clear exactly what you'd like them to do. You should have clear Call to Action (CTA) such as a 'Book Now' or 'Check Availability' button at least once on every page and sometimes more often depending on your design. Basically whenever you think someone may be moved (either emotionally of logically), to want to take the next step, place a CTA right there on the page.

A 'Check Availability' button performs better than a 'Book Now' button (less committal), however an 'Availability Calendar' performs best, because bookers can begin typing and checking dates without having to go off the page they are already on.

### Live Rates & Availability

The days of using contact forms or sending emails with reservation enquiries are almost gone. Very few people actually use this function anymore and even fewer have the patience to await your response. No matter how fast you are at responding! The immediacy of consumer demand now requires you to be able to show your rates and availability in real-time. Most travel bookers will not wait for email responses or even call (unless availability is extremely tight) They want to be able to asses and make decisions on the go all while they bounce between multiple sites and devices. Having live availability, especially on your own website, is a must have it todays modern accommodation business.

### Conversions Rates

Once you get travel bookers to your website, now it's time to convert them to a booking. The longer you can keep them engaged and interested on your site the better. Everything we have noted above

will help you achieve that, but the key is to actually get the booking. So, a couple of key things to include that will assist with increasing conversion rates;

- Include Guest reviews right there on your website using the many widgets that third party sites offer. This stops them from leaving your site to check (as we know they will otherwise do)
- Tell them you offer the best rates right there on your site by stating the obvious with terms like "Book Direct & Save" or "Best Rate Guaranteed". We must provide incentive for guests to book direct on your website and not provide any reason or resistance that might make them leave your site and ultimately book through an OTA (where you'll clearly pay commissions). Did you know? It is vital that you are not undercutting rates on your own websites, with deals on OTA's. It is easy to be convinced by the OTA provider to participate in one of their promotions. This is well and good, just ensure the offer is matched, or bettered on your own site.
- Minimise Clicks through the checkout. The fewer clicks we can build into the research and booking process, the better the conversion. Understanding at what point, that people abandon your booking process, is key to improving conversions
- You don't need to be Einstein to know that better conversion rates are important. The trick is where to start with firstly measuring them and secondly implementing strategies that help to improve them.

**Simple ways to Measure Traffic & Conversions**

- **Phone & Email**

Are you tracking volumes of Email and Phone Enquiries so we can later compare levels as well as conversion rates? Simply keeping track of these can be very helpful in understanding what's happening in your market and finding ways to improve. (more on this in Module #8 – Know Your Numbers)

- **Website (Google Analytics)**

Once you set up your mobile responsive website, have Google analytics set up so you can begin to monitor traffic volumes and understand the demographics of your website visitors, which will help with future marketing.

- **Google Goals**

Within Google Analytics we can set up Google Goals which helps us to target specific outcomes we are seeking. Things like clicks on the Book Now button, helps to understand conversions rates of viewers to enquirers, enquirers to bookings.

- **Tracking Actual bookings**

Track as much detail as possible on bookings made via your website. How frequently is each room type and offer booked? What is their purpose for staying? What was the lead time and Length of stay? All this data will help with your future decisions on offers and promotions and should be easily captured within your PMS (Property Management Software)

**Section 6.**

**FRAMEWORKS**

Explore the frameworks for Module # 3

Logon to the Hotel Growth Gurus Portal and download the available FRAMEWORK files.

Use the STRATEGY SELECTION TOOL to decide which frameworks to add to your MASTER HOTEL STRATEGY & Action Plan

## Moudule #3 FRAMEWORKS

| # | Name | Type |
|---|------|------|
| 1 | VIRTUAL SHOPFRONT | Concept |
| 2 | DIGITAL REPOSITORY | Concept |
| 3 | DIGITAL REPOSITORY | Action - Template |
| 4 | PHOTO HACKING for HOTELS | Action -Check List |
| 5 | HOTEL WEBSITE CHEAT SHEAT | Action - MILESTONE |
| 6 | WEBSITE CONVERSION CALCULATOR | Action - MILESTONE |

*Click on the*