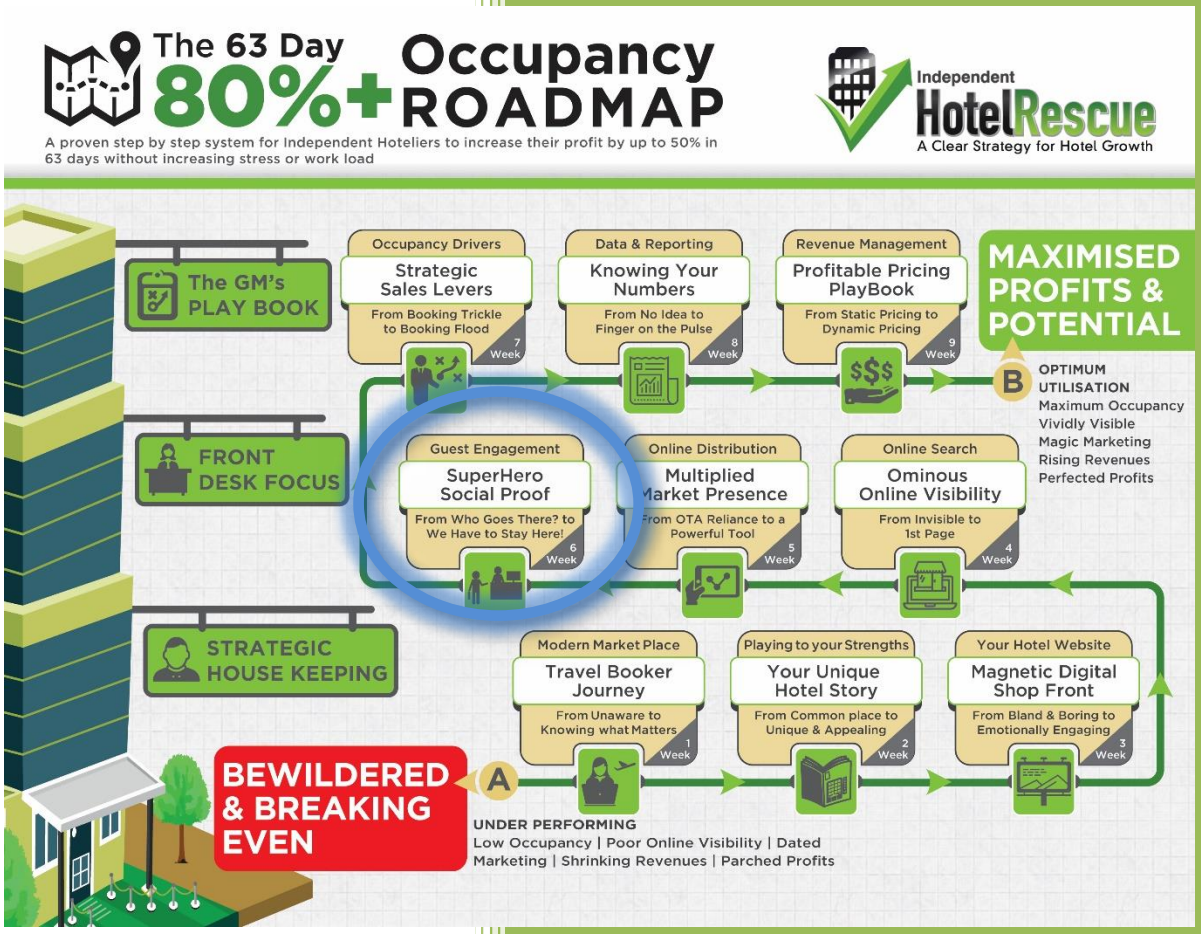
Independent HotelRescue
A Clear Strategy for Hotel Growth

63 Day 80%+ Occupancy ROADMAP



Module 6

SuperHero Social Proof

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Hotel Rescue 2017

Module 6 – Guest Engagement

SuperHero Social Proof

From crickets, to get in line!

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Section 1.

Guest Engagement – The Real Deal

Through this module we will be looking at the overarching and critically important area of Social Proof. By Social proof we mean the support you will get from your guests over time via all of the online feedback and social media websites available across multiple platforms. But what influences 'social proof' the most is what we like to call Guest Engagement. The connection, experience and relationship you deliver and build with the guest right throughout their journey with you through the 5 (or 6) stages of travel.

It is becoming critical that your product is well managed across these areas in a day and age where the general public no longer takes what you have to say about yourself at face value. They will dig around in the online world to gain some form of buyer endorsement prior to approaching you for a booking/stay.

Without, giving this area of marketing, real time, you will find it increasingly difficult to compete in a crowded space.

While Social Proof is a chicken or the egg question, something vendors struggle with on a regular basis is an area very simple to get started in. By simply engaging with your guest and encouraging/directing them to go to the right places to provide feedback you will start a valuable and profitable journey if done in the right way. To maintain focus in this space always start with the end in mind, a great review by a happy guest. In order to get this review, start at the beginning of the experience, the reservation.

Section 2.

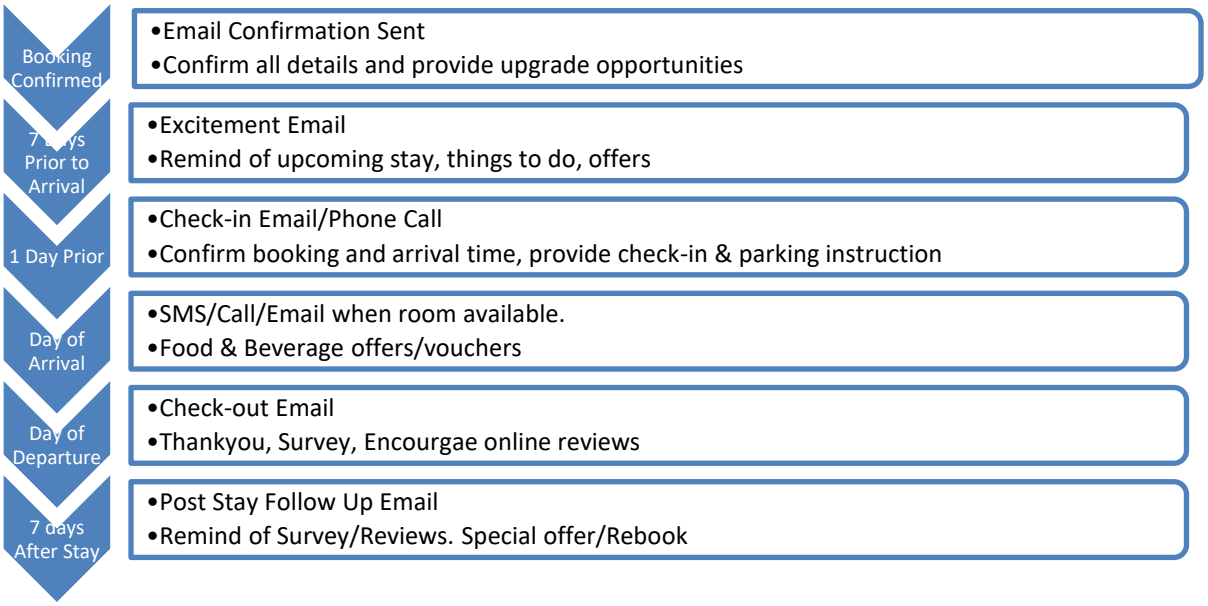
Guest Sequencing - Communications

We encourage hoteliers to establish a communication sequence that require multiple touch points throughout. In following a sequence similar to the one below, you should be able to bring about the desired pleasant experience and with it, a positive review.

In reviewing the example below you may notice that there are a number of touch points, some are direct and personal while some can be completed through personalised but automated systems. However, all along the way the goal is about ensuring the guest is continually engaged with your property in a meaningful and helpful way. It is worth noting at this stage that not all guest will want to engage at all stages if at all, however the more opportunity you give to them to engage the more likely it is that you will achieve your desired outcomes, a guest who has had a great experience with your property and they are willing to talk about it in multiple forums.

SuperHero Social Proof

From crickets, to get in line!



Section 3

In House Requests / Real Time Complaints

This is an area you may be managing already; however, with the end in mind it's important to keep track of your guest interactions via some form of internal log or journal. It is a tool you can reference at a later date when you need to write responses to your guests on line. It can be a great memory trigger for when you need to respond to a review about an issue or service difficulty. When you are talking to a guest on line you are also talking to all of your potential guests. An honest response with an accurate positive account of an occurrence will help build your reputation considerably.

Now you have the record keeping taken care of you need to take care of the guest, remember when dealing with the issue at hand it is critical to get the response just right, if you do the guest will leave happy and hopefully commit to a review without being requested to or if a gentle request is made they should move to it in a quick and positive manner if the issue has been dealt with in the right way.

Section 4

Getting Guests Gasbagging (Leveraging Social)

Guest Engagement is focussed on what is the actual Guest Experience & Relationship with property. What will keep them coming back? How do we ensure guests are engaged physically with the Hotel as well as online in a digital sense? How do we garner and respond to positive reviews and equally how do we handle negative reviews? Two of the most powerful platforms to garner review on are;

TripAdvisor Presence & Ranking

Tripadvisor in particular has become a real go-to resource for travellers as many bookings aren't made without consulting peer reviews first. It is important for you to not only have good reviews that tell a good story, but you need to have a high volume of reviews also because it helps

contribute to your overall ranking. If you are ranked higher you are seen first. It's as simple as that.

You can become more visible by encouraging guests to review the hotel upon departure. This can be done via Trip advisor cards (You can order these direct from TA) further to this you can request it at the end touch points where appropriate. Word of warning, DO NOT entice or incentivise the guest as it can be viewed on negatively, however, there is nothing wrong with simply asking them in a friendly professional manner.

Google Reviews

Because Google Maps, Google Search, Google Reviews, GooglePlus are all so intertwined and form the largest search engine on the planet, it is absolutely critical that your Google presence, activity and visibility is addressed. This method of review is often well below the volumes seen on the OTA platforms or TripAdvisor, however they are super powerful from an online visibility perspective. Make sure you are sending guest to your Google My Business listing to drop a review.

Section 5.

Responsive Review Rhythm

Tripadvisor

Tripadvisor has become the #1 source of reliable information for what to expect from a property because it is based on actual, no-holes barred, guest experience. In fact it is fair to say that the official 'Star-Rating' system that has been in place world-wide is now running a distant 2nd when it comes to what people rely upon for making a booking judgement.

If you're not visible on Trip Advisor and you don't rank highly, then it's plain and simple you are missing bookings as a result.

So the first thing is all properties just have to be on Tripadvisor without question. The second is how to improve your ranking? There is an algorithm that Tripadvisor uses to calculate the ranking which involves 85% dictated by the average review score and 6% by the total number of reviews. So in simple terms you must get plenty of reviews and maintain a good average score. (Not rocket science really)

Google/Social/OTA

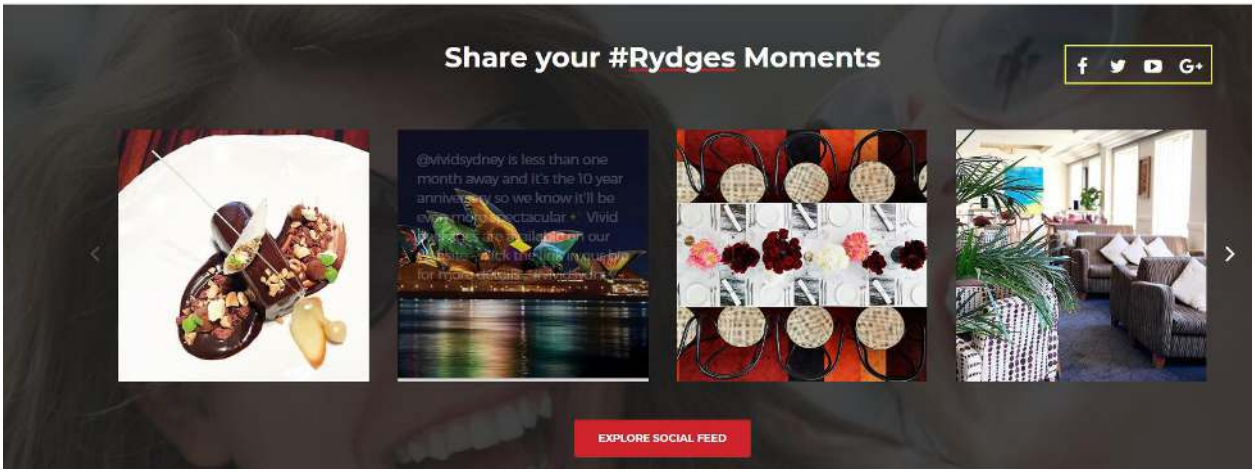
Similar to above but of slightly less importance than Tripadvisor, there are many other opportunities for guests to review your property. Google is an important one simply because they are so dominant in the online space. They are prominent now and will only likely increase their dominance over time. On top of this they are connected through so many applications like Google Maps/Earth, Google Hotel Finder, Google Ads, Organic search etc. Make sure you are on Google and are getting some reviews on there.

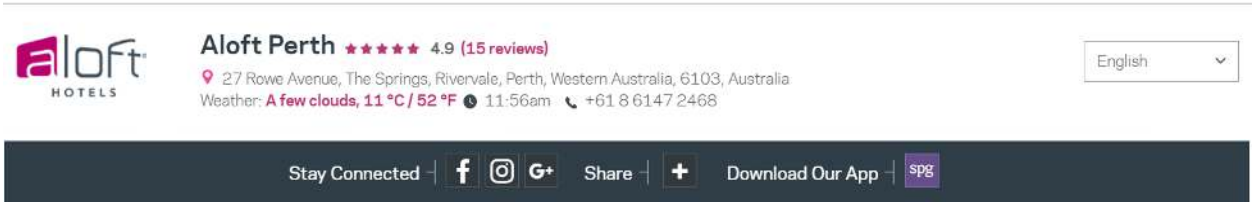
Most the OTA's (Online Travel Agents) have a reviewing system as does the many social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram (in one form or another). In short, when it comes to the guest experience in your Hotel, very few will know about it if they aren't talking about it online & there's nowhere to hide if you're getting in wrong!

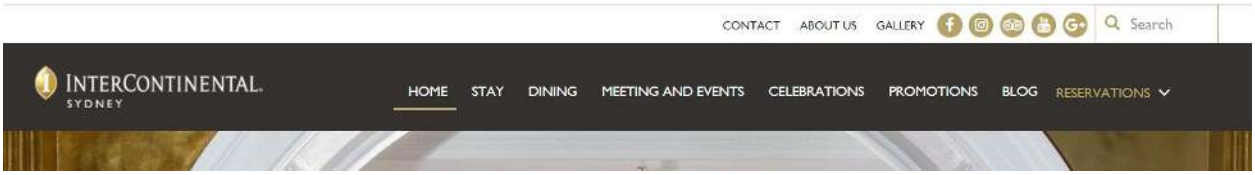
Encourage & Respond

The real question is not what platforms should I use, it is what are you doing to encourage reviews full stop (no matter the platform)? Are you just hoping they happen or are you taking some action towards it? Perhaps upon check-out you are suggesting to guests to complete a review, perhaps in a post stay email. Some properties are installing tablets or computers to allow guests to complete reviews while still in the hotel. Once you start getting reviews, you absolutely have to start responding, thanking and answering the reviews. This shows good 'guest engagement' and helps increase your ranking and visibility on all these sites. This is not limited to the reviews you have encouraged, but all reviews. Good, bad or indifferent. Look at this as a marketing opportunity.

Whilst you do not want to bombard your guests, ensure you remind them to "talk about you". From a social media perspective ensure you inform your guests you can be found on Facebook. Use your Facebook page in collateral and list the link online, to keep this top of mind (even if it is subconscious). Below are some examples on how this is done in a subtle but obvious way:







Set a Rhythm

From a review perspective, we have established that we want to encourage these (warts and all). Even bad reviews can be turned around and converted into a marketing opportunity. The key is to INTERACT and ACT. Similarly to social media, include reviews on your own website. Not only is it an opportunity to have your property "endorsed", but you also show the potential booker that you have nothing to hide. There are "widgets" available that can take care of this for you.

- Interact. Ensure you respond to the reviews. Good or bad, acknowledge what has been said and offer solutions. Do NOT engage in an argument with the guest (remember, the guest is always right).
- Act. Ensure the reviewer feels like you listened to their comments and has confidence you will taking action where appropriate.

Your Rhythm could look something like this:

1. Daily – monitor and respond to new comments. This means ALL comments (good or bad), within 1 business day of receiving them, wherever possible.
2. Weekly – ensure you keep a track of what department/category the comments you receive belong to. This will help you prioritise any projects or work in order of importance.
3. Monthly – Plan and execute any action required based on your guest feedback.

Explore Technology Offerings

With the ever increasing amount of sites and platforms offering reviews, it is starting to be tricky to keep a track of all the reviews. Similarly to how a Channel Manager combines multiple OTA's and channels to sell inventory, there are now platforms available that combines reviews in one simple platform. These Review or Reputation Management platforms also offer an easy way to track and combine reviews from platforms you may or may not even know you are on. And they will keep a track of your rankings on sites where this is relevant.

Below is a list of a few of these platforms. Please note that these platforms come at a subscription cost. If you are serious about getting on top of your reviews, we strongly recommend using one of these:

- Trust You

Leverages guest feedback to improve the guest experience and increases your property's online visibility

- Rategain - Online Reputaion Management (ORM)

Simplifies online reputation management for hotels and easily tracks what guests are saying

- Reputami

Reputation management built for hotels and restaurants. Monitors all reviews, competitors, identifies influential guests

- Win Hotel Solution

Monitors and improves your rating on different online channels

If your budget does not allow for a paid platform, the following blog article gives you some further hints and ideas on how to track your reviews and social media comments:

7 tools to track and manage your hotel's online reputation

Section 6.

Guest Recognition

Database Management

Do we maintain accurate client records including mobile number and email? Sure, the OTA's withhold this information but even then, there is an opportunity upon check-in to capture those details. We should be always adding to our database on a daily basis.

Communication Schedule

Then with that database it is important that we are communicating with them to remain top of mind or introduce special offers and entice return visits. Perhaps simply communicating 'what's on' in [your City] is sufficient. Or setting up a periodic email newsletter to keep yourself top of mind.

Guest Recognition

With the database it is also valuable to be recognising guest loyalty. Be sure you are recognising guests that are returning even for just their second stay with you, but also look for ways to impress guest when their 5th, 10th, 20th stays occur as well. Make them feel special to cement that loyalty.

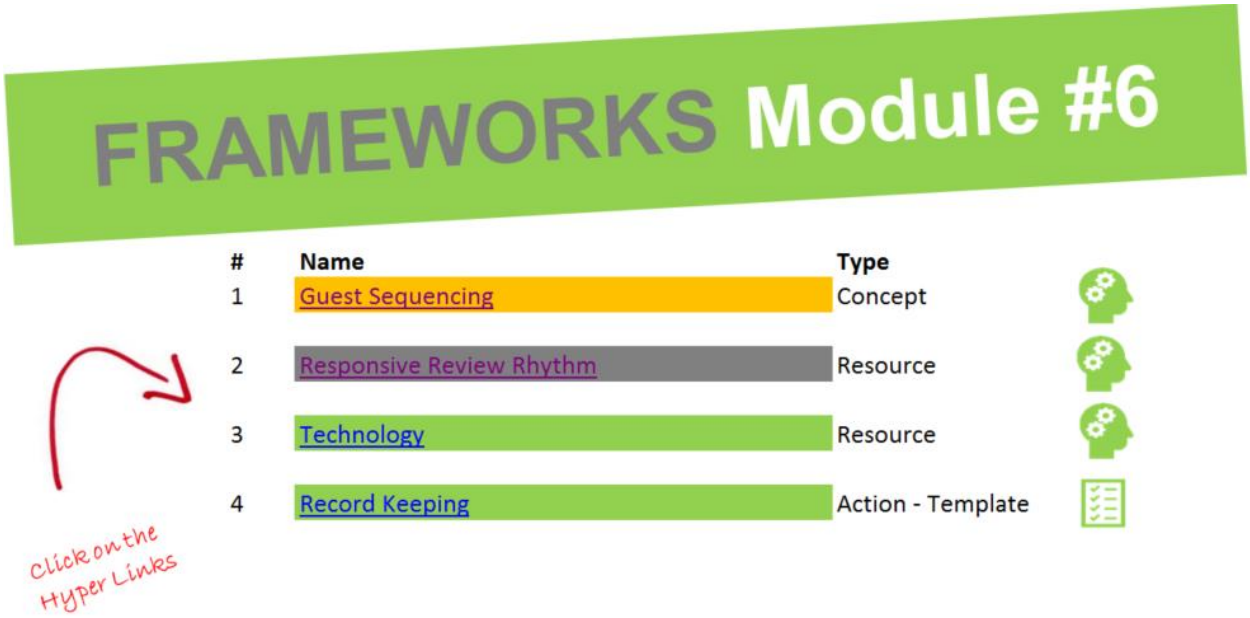
Referral Programs

Nothing better than a personal recommendation to encourage a new customer, so why not find ways to encourage and reward your guest for recommending you to a friend.

Section 7.

FRAMEWORKS

Explore the frameworks for Module # 6

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