



Get creative when trying to reach luxury hotels

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Marketers of fine goods and services salivate at the thought of doing business with the world's top luxury hotels. However, getting in with these lucrative customers often takes some creative and circuitous approaches. *BtoB* caught up with Douglas Gollan, president and editor in chief of New York-based *Elite Traveler*, a magazine read by VIP business and leisure travelers who carry an enormous influence with the general managers at luxury hotels. In addition, *Elite Traveler* works with marketers to directly reach hotel general managers through its e-mail and direct mail databases.

BtoB: *What are the particular challenges reaching and engaging luxury hotel general managers?*

Gollan: For vendors seeking business from luxury hotels, the challenge is that the general manager is in essence the president and CEO of that hotel. As such, [they have] a broad range of departments they oversee-including operations, finance, food and beverage, sales and marketing, and legal-while also serving as an ambassador to top VIP guests. Therefore, if you work for a company that sells bed linens, toiletries, spirits, tableware, chaise lounges for the pool or whatever, you likely have to make your pitch to a department or purchasing manager first. However, as the GM is ultimately responsible for guest experience, they usually get involved in approving new vendors or concepts. That means your salesperson doesn't usually have direct access to the ultimate decision-maker at a luxury hotel. *Elite Traveler*, for one, provides access to hotel GMs through our readers-their VIP guests who demand top luxuries. Additionally, these GMs are our advertising clients, and we can help luxury goods and services suppliers reach them via e-mail and co-branded direct mail to our database.

BtoB: *What are the specific opportunities of getting your foot in the door with luxury hotels?*

Gollan: We have more than 1,000 luxury hotels and resorts worldwide in our database, and most of these hotels go through soft refurbishments-curtains, bedspreads, etc.-every three to five years. They are always looking for new and innovative products for their top customers in top suites. These VIPs pay anywhere from \$5,000 to \$10,000 per night and typically have a mini-entourage. Add that up and these top customers spend \$50,000 to \$250,000 per stay, so general managers are always interested in products and services to provide them. For example, one of advertisers is Amouage, which markets to these GMs an ultra-high-end perfume from Oman that sells for as much as \$30,000 per bottle.

—R.S.