

▼ Hospitality with a system



protel Web Booking Engine

protel **WBE 4.0**

Checklist for successful online sales



protel **WBE 4.0**: the next generation of online sales

Foreword

Dear protel Client!

You have decided to promote your online sales and have already taken the first important step. By choosing protel WBE 4.0, you have decided on an integrated solution consisting of hotel software and online booking software "from one source". Our new cloud-based booking machine provides you with all the options to not only present your offers and products on your hotel website more attractively than ever before but, more importantly, to sell them.

Which strategies and measures are required for a successful direct sales campaign beyond implementing a sophisticated technical booking solution? We already asked ourselves this question during the conceptual design phase of WBE 4.0 and worked out several valuable ideas together with industry experts during several workshops. Gabriele Schulze, hotel marketing specialist and consultant, acted as our competent advisor during this process.

We are delighted to be able to give you guidelines with this document, which list and explain a range of central requirements for efficient online direct sales. Use it to stimulate thinking or as a checklist for planning further action. We would like to thank Gabriele Schulze for her professional suggestions and wish you, dear Client, ...

... good luck with online sales of the next generation!



protel WBE 4.0: Success in direct sales

Thinking and acting to multiply sales via your own hotel website

There are now countless hotels that achieve more than half their total accommodation sales via their own website. In fact, in a fully automated way. This means, that prices, packages and availabilities are transferred from the hotel software to the website, without any extra work for staff. And that incoming bookings are also automatically entered in the hotel software by assigning the right price, the appropriate guest profile, the booked room and any extra services booked. This information only needs to undergo a quality check.

Entering one reservation manually takes three to four minutes. Manually entering 5,000 bookings (roughly half of all bookings in a hotel with fifty rooms with an occupancy rate of 60 to 70 percent) takes two to three people literally months to complete. That's without even mentioning the time to manually update availabilities.

Beside massive time savings, which should benefit your business' customer service and sales and distribution strategies, the greatest impact of your decision lies in better distribution, i.e. the optimum distribution of your rooms on the market.

The aim should be: Rooms should always be sold when rooms are vacant. Today, in four weeks and in twelve months. And when a group booking is cancelled for an arrival date in six months, nobody should have to remember to activate sales again. Your hotel software does this automatically.

You have taken an important step and decided on an integrated solution from one source. Your protel Hotel Management System and protel Web Booking Engine work seamlessly together: you turn over your products to the most important PoS for you in future; your website, and transfer the received bookings into the protel database. This is an important requirement for increasing direct sales since it generates a lower sales cost and higher guest loyalty.

However, you will only manage to multiply sales through your website using a bundle of measures, which we describe on the following pages in the form of a checklist.

This checklist will help you to assess the current situation and action plan.

It can show you what steps you need to take and can serve as a clear to-do list for external support and advice. Have fun completing it and good luck on your path to **"50 percent booked directly and processed automatically!"** Once you have finished, you can start the "80 percent booked directly and processed automatically" project.

Good luck from protel hotelsoftware and Gabriele Schulze!



What do guests think of your online offer?

▼ Search engine optimization	Going well for us	Don't know, needs to be checked	Still to do
Google is my best friend. My website has high or very high visibility in search engines.			
Our website's ranking or visibility is measured regularly and we are always working on further improvements. We are aware that 80 percent of all hotel searches start online and approx. 40 percent is also booked there.			
We use software to measure success on our website and know which search terms are used to find our website.			
We also measure the websites of our important competitors and know which relevant search terms achieve a better ranking for our competitors' websites. We deliberately use these terms on our website.			
We use a modern Content Management System and carry out regular updates (ideally daily, but at least weekly) which help search engines to bring the right visitors to our website (e.g. descriptions of current events in the region to offer guests a hotel room).			
We (or our agency) update every page and every content field with unique content, which include important keywords. We know and actively use meta descriptions, HTML titles and so-called "friendly URL's", i.e. browser addresses, which correspond to our guests' searches as much as possible.			

▼ Note	<p><i>Larger websites are rated better by Google than small and static websites.</i></p> <p><i>If you enter your URL in the Google search window according to the following pattern, you will then see how many of your website's pages Google recognizes:</i></p> <p>site:www.yourdomainname.com.</p> <p><i>If it is only 30 to 50 pages, there is definitely content missing that is relevant to your guests.</i></p>
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▼ Search engine optimization	Going well for us	Don't know, needs to be checked	Still to do
<p>We can only control what we measure. Therefore, we regularly measure all our website's results.</p> <p>We observe the following key figures and their changes using automatically generated reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Number of visitors b) Length of stay c) Percentage of visitors who make a booking (conversion) d) Sales per booking guest e) Sales per visitor f) Sales broken down according to price code, room category, advance booking times, additional services g) Sources of visitors h) Results (costs to additional sales) of paid for campaigns in AdWords or other advertising options i) Search terms that find us j) Search terms that find our competition 			



How well do guests navigate your website?

▼ Usability	Going well for us	Don't know, needs to be checked	Still to do
<p>Visitors like our website. They find all the information they need with just a few mouse clicks and can contact us, check the availability of offers and purchase very easily at any point.</p>			
<p>Our new rule is: our own website is always the first to present everything we offer, what we are doing and changing. Guests are only informed via the newsletter or Facebook page once the information has been created on the website.</p> <p>Our whole team is aware of this: the website is updated to present any changes to the service portfolio, every new idea and every new expert in the team. Our website displays every (new) reason to travel in the surrounding area including information about sightseeing locations, landmarks, companies, public transportation, amusement parks, family activities, cultural events, etc. , basically everything from A-Z.</p> <p>Typical search enquiries, which are entered when searching for a hotel with Google, for example refer to lactose-free options at the breakfast buffet or the free bridal suite for the newly married couple, the shuttle service to the airport, child reductions for the brunch buffet or a conference room for 80 people, the purchasing of fruit and vegetables from organic farmers or free WiFi.</p> <p>If our website does not have this information, it cannot help Google to bring the right guests to our site and guests only find out about these great services by chance or not at all.</p>			
<p>We make purchasing as easy as possible. We guarantee a simple booking process offering availability, alternative dates, immediate booking option and contact information for every offer and every product such as conference rates or Christmas packages.</p>			
<p>We only request data from guests that is absolutely essential to process the booking. This is normally the first and last name, email address and in some cases, credit card information.</p>			



▼ Usability	Going well for us	Don't know, needs to be checked	Still to do
We provide methods of payment that our guests like to use.			
We permanently increase the conversion rate, i.e. visitors end up making an enquiry, people enquiring end up booking.			
For this, we ensure that there is also availability information or a contact person with every service description.			

▼ Note	<p>Visit the online retailer Amazon. Wherever a product is described, the "Buy", "Add to Basket" or "Add to Wish List" buttons are not far away. Guests should not have to look for these buttons.</p> <p>The following example transfers this strategy to a hotel booking site: once the guest has found the hotel website page with the offer they are interested in, they should find the following landing page:</p> <p>"Seven Nights Summer"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ Service description ▼ Price for requested travel period ▼ Information about room categories offered ▼ Button to book and login, fields to enter guest name.. <p>Suitable advertising campaigns, Facebook wall or YouTube page etc. refer to this specific landing page.</p> <p>▼ Let's simply concentrate again on the "4 Ps of good old marketing": product, price, promotion and place (i.e. purchasing opportunity) - placed simultaneously.</p>		
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<p>We are always researching which topics are particularly important for guests in our city; the next Open Air Festival, the city marathon or the art exhibition. We develop a landing page for these kinds of topics, where we inform potential guests about the incentive to travel and provide them with assistance: a suitable package (with availability display of course), distance from hotel to the event, the best transfer options and so on ...</p> <p>In this way, we are always giving Google new "content" on topics that generate a decent search criteria.</p>			
<p>Do not advertise without a landing page. Whenever we communicate anything via newsletter, banner advertising or good old mailings, we refer to the appropriate topic page (landing page) on our website.</p> <p>Naturally these landing pages also lead to the availability enquiry, booking process or at least the quickest way to a professional contact person.</p>			



How unrivalled is the outlet on your website?

▼ Price strategy	Going well for us	Don't know, needs to be checked	Still to do
<p>Our price strategy takes the high transparency and dynamics of online sales into account. We know that price/performance comparison is a piece of cake for guests and that sales partners with a possibly more favorable offer are "only a mouse click" away.</p> <p>For us this means: nobody, not even the best sales partner can sell anything better than our own website. You could also call this the outlet.</p>			
<p>We work fairly and on equal price terms. No sales partner, however, can offer a better price or free additional service, which is not also offered by our website. We take this simple rule into account to keep and reward guests that book directly.</p>			
<p>Our price and product strategy always offers guests a smart alternative, if possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ Our room categories are put together from the guest's perspective and the website offers the whole selection. ▼ Our price strategy is fair, in line with the market and extremely transparent and logical for guests. ▼ Our discounted prices are credible because they are always combined with at least one restriction (e.g. summer price with minimum stay of seven nights). ▼ We have done away with last minute strategies with no restrictions. 			
<p>All prices, packages and additional services are kept and can be booked for at least 365 days in protel. Off-peak times can be booked well in advance at attractive conditions to "pick up" the long-term demand.</p> <p>Early booking rates are also ideal, as they do not allow for last minute bargains without any restrictions.</p>			



▼ Price strategy	Going well for us	Don't know, needs to be checked	Still to do
<p>We guarantee that the room types, which are most in demand, can always be continuously booked. It is essential that group or conference bookings are not simply placed in the most important category (standard room) thus bringing sales in the main category to a standstill.</p> <p>We differentiate between "out of order" and "out of service".</p> <p>Note: "Out of order" takes a room out of sales! That does not make sense when it is only being cleaned.</p>			
<p>We make all products, room categories and optional additional services available to book and purchase online.</p> <p>This also applies to suites, weekend prices and additional services, such as early check-in, late check-out, car park or airport shuttle.</p>			



How confident are you of your guests' loyalty?

▼ Customer loyalty	Going well for us	Don't know, needs to be checked	Still to do
Customer and guest loyalty is the key. We develop measures to "Say thank you" and give our regular guests that special treatment online as well.			
We say "thanks" whenever the guest books through our website by using our fully automated online booking tool. We develop creative options to reward guests. A surprising welcome drink on arrival (and the important information that this is a thank you for booking directly) or another small added value to reward guests who save us 15-20 percent in sales costs.			
Our website recognizes our regular guests. Regular guests have quick access to their data and we trust them. We compile regular guest programs to those who book directly on our website.			
We offer special products or packages to those who book directly on our website.			
We store all the agreed contractual prices and personally invite companies, conference booking guests and other target groups to get to know our online booking.			
We analyze at what point potential guests leave our offer or purchasing process. We don't simply let guests leave who have not found the right offer, but we provide an alternative, waiting list or personal conversation.			
We permanently measure the success of these measures.			



Gabriele Schulze

is an expert in measurable marketing success and the implementation of modern technology for services that impress and a sales-boosting image that pays off.

She has acquired her profound practical knowledge during more than twenty years of top management experience in the (international) hotel industry and sales environment. She was Managing Director at one of the most successful hotel cooperations, Best Western Hotels Germany, Luxemburg and Poland for over eight years. Before this, she was responsible for the largest German hotel group's sales and marketing activities for ten years.

She implemented one of the first ever intranets in the German hotel industry and was a pioneer for the first automatically processed voucher and loyalty marketing systems in the international hotel industry. As the boss of a cooperation, she knew early on about the powerful possibilities of emotional messages and carved a new career out of her passion for perfect events in 2008. When she moved to the Management Board of MICE AG in Berlin, she assumed responsibility for the company's brand development, sales, technological reorganization and repositioning.

She has been a freelance coach and consultant for holistic, forward-looking marketing, sales and technology trends since the summer of 2010. Her vision of the future shows new approaches and motivates people to act. Her specialities are: online strategies, community (social media) marketing, innovative customer loyalty, brand profiling, event and MICE marketing as well as price and distribution strategies. She gets to the crux of cross-sector, complex content in an understandable and entertaining manner in her lectures and seminars. In consultancy projects she analyzes the need for action, conveys it comprehensively and assists with implementation through to a measurable result, if required.

Contact

Please contact us if you have any questions or would like more information! We will be happy to advise you!



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