

## Traffic-flow Management – An essential component of Guest Hospitality Training

By Doug Kennedy

It's an inevitable moment in any customer-contact position; when multiple customers approach a front desk, concierge, or guest services desk simultaneously, leaving one overwhelmed service provider to work-through their needs individually, in order, as they stand impatiently in the queue.

What's worse, rather than flow at a steady pace, customer traffic patterns tend to 'bottle-neck,' and usually do so at the most inopportune times. Put another way, if you want your front desk to suddenly get really busy, just send someone home early and you can be assured that the last five check-ins of the night will all show up simultaneously! It's almost as if guests worldwide were synchronizing their watches to plan their arrival times and co-ordinate their telephone calls!

Regardless of why these bottle-necks occur, it seems inevitable that all frontline service providers will face these circumstances at one time or another. So maybe its time to add the topic of 'Traffic-Flow Management' to the agenda for your hotel's next training meeting.

- **Display A Calm Demeanor.** The first step in successful customer traffic-flow management is to display positive body language that exudes a calm and 'in control' attitude, helping those who are waiting gain confidence that their needs will eventually be met when their turn comes. Alternatively, if the service provider looks panicked and out of control, guests will tend to become more impatient and pessimistic.

- **Acknowledge and Greet Those Who Join The**

**Queue.** Create a positive first impression of those who join the wait by acknowledging their presence. Besides making eye contact, a genuine welcome greeting, such as 'Good morning sir, we'll be with you in just a moment' will go a long way towards securing some goodwill. Hopefully the response is 'Don't worry, I'm in no hurry today,' helping set others waiting at ease.

- **Conduct 'Customer Triage' To Determine What's Required To Service Their Needs.** Just as the medical profession does in an overwhelmed hospital Emergency Room, it is helpful to briefly assess the needs of each guest who is waiting and provide some initial help. For example, you can make sure the guest is waiting in the correct line, get them finding necessary documents (i.e. Drivers License or confirmation), or have them begin completing any registration forms.

- **Reduce The Line By Fulfilling Any Simple Requests.** After conducting 'Customer Triage,' the line of guests waiting can usually be thinned by fulfilling quick and easy requests such as passing out matches, accepting outgoing mail, or re-issuing a room key, all while a front desk agents wait for other guests to complete reg-

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**Monday, November 21**  
11:30am-1:30pm  
3rd party Internet panel  
Wyndham San Jose

**Thursday, December 1**  
6:00pm-9:00pm  
3rd Annual Pineapple Awards  
Westin Santa Clara

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*HSMAI Northern California will provide value to its members by creating business opportunities, offering networking events with peers and customers, sponsoring educational programs, identifying and communicating trends in the hospitality industry and being the leading voice for both the hospitality sales and marketing disciplines.*

*The needs of our members will always be the driving force behind new initiatives and programs at local, national and international levels.*

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## Message from the President

Catherine I. Allen, CHSP, CHME

It is November already and time to think about the holidays. It is also time to think about those people who have made a difference to our industry and I hope that you will support the nominees for the 3rd Annual Pineapple Awards by not only casting your vote but by attending the event at the Westin Hotel in Santa Clara on December 1 at 6:00pm. This year we will also be recognizing our newest CHME and CHSP recipients and if you have thought about getting these designations but didn't think that either your company or indeed yourself could afford it please check out the chapter website [www.hsmainc.com](http://www.hsmainc.com) to find out how we can help you achieve your goal.

As I draw closer to the completion of my second term as President I am reminded that no one person is an island and we all draw strength from one another. We do not always have to agree with one another but as long as we respect one another all is well with the world. Until next month.....

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### Welcome New Members

Sue Barton  
Lake Tahoe Visitors authority

David Nay  
Bagmasters

Sally Kopf  
Costanoa Lodge

Lisa Wilson  
Radisson Sacramento

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### Thanks for Staying

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Toll House Hotel

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Hotwire

Stacey Meyer  
Pegasus

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## The Website Conundrum – Are You Winning the Electronic Marketing Game?

By Neil Salerno

For some time now, I have urged hotels, especially the Independent variety, to play hard at the electronic marketing game. There are big rewards for those who play well.

The Internet revolutionized travel marketing and gave us the ability to market hotels on a global scale...at rates everyone can afford. To win, there are three primary elements which need your attention; The Global Distribution System (GDS), third-party aggregators, and, of course, your own web site.

The GDS is only a minor concern for franchised properties because most franchises require connection through the franchise reservation system. But, if your property does not carry a franchise flag, it would be fool-hardy not to have a GDS connection.

For those not familiar with the GDS, this is what gives travel agents and airlines the ability to book real-time reservations at your hotel. There are companies like GenaRes in Texas, Pegasus, and others which will connect your property to the GDS for a very reasonable fee. There are re-sellers of GDS services, but why pay a third-party fee when you can deal directly with the carrier? Check them out thoroughly.

In spite of all the controversy created by the major hotel franchises, third-party aggregators like Expedia, Travelocity, and Orbitz, the three largest, have the clout to produce a volume contribution to your top-line. You can also get listed with these power-house third-party sites through your GDS listing.

Last, but not least, how healthy is your web site? The most common statement that I hear these days is 'I have a web site that looks great, yet I am still not getting many reservations from it.' The general answer is that it probably was not designed to produce reservations.

There are many hotel sites that look great but lack many of the fundamentals necessary to generate reservations. It's kind of like hiring a good-looking talented sales person who doesn't talk to or meet with clients.

This scenario is very frustrating to many hotel owners who expect great booking results just because they like how their site looks; and why shouldn't they? Unfortunately, they don't realize

that a web site's ultimate performance depends on elements which are not readily visible to the uninitiated.

There are factors like well thought-out Meta Tags which compliment the site's text, proper placement of text elements such as: the hotel's location, facilities, and things-to-do in the area, and an understanding that a hotel web site should be designed to produce reservations, not become an online brochure. These factors affect a site's search ability, and marketing ability to sell rooms.

Site content is king; yet, many site designers spend more time on photography and flash elements than they spend on creating good selling text. Remember, search spiders and site visitors read text. Sometimes one gets the impression that the text was created just to fill space around the photography.

Many of the web site designs that I review remind me of the three blind men trying to describe an elephant. 'It's a long and thin like a snake', says the first man as he feels the elephants tail; 'No, it's fat like a hippo', says the second man as he pats the elephants belly'; 'It's like a thick snake without fangs' says the third man as he feels the elephants trunk. Everyone sees their own web site differently. Few people view their web site as a visitor sees and uses it

If you hire someone to design a web site for your hotel, provide input on how you would like it to look, in general, but, understand that it needs to be designed to 'sell' your location and rooms; not to be a work of art.

Explore the sites of online sales experts like Expedia, Travelocity, and Orbitz. These people have the perfect online formula for selling rooms; nothing fancy, few flash elements, the necessary information to sell rooms, but not too much or unnecessary information. And, they rule the roost when it comes to search ability and hotel bookings.

The fact is that there are many elements which need to be incorporated into a web site for it to perform well; to produce business. The most common problem is that many hotels feel that they must include every element they can think of at the time, which usually results in a web site that is too difficult to navigate, does not follow search engine rules, and

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# Photo Gallery

## *Crowne Plaza Milpitas*



## 3rd ANNUAL PINEAPPLE AWARDS

The 3rd annual Pineapple Awards and Installation dinner will take place on Thursday, December 1 at the Westin Hotel in Santa Clara.

This year we will not only be celebrating those people who have made significant contributions to our industry but those who have chosen to continue their education and show their commitment by taking their CHME (Certified Hospitality Marketing Executive) and CHSP (Certified Hospitality Sales Professional) designation exams. The CHME and CHSP designations are two of the many benefits of membership in our organization that are offered at chapter level and we encourage those of you who have made a commitment to the industry to pursue this further. It will be a night for celebration and the chance for all us to show appreciation to those who continue to make a difference in the chapter. Without committed volunteers our chapter cannot grow and it is important to recognize people for their efforts.

We will also be giving back to the community at this event and awarding our sponsorships. A collection box will be set up in the room for the **US MARINES "TOYS FOR TOTS"** program and we hope that all of the attendees will help fill the box by bringing a toy for this worthy cause. It doesn't have to be an expensive toy just something that will bring joy to a child who would otherwise receive nothing. It is after all the season of giving.



*Crowne Plaza Milpitas*

### Chapter Events

[www.hsmainc.com](http://www.hsmainc.com)

November 21  
3rd party internet panel  
Wyndham San Jose  
11:30am-1:30pm

December 1  
3rd Annual Pineapple Awards  
Westin Santa Clara  
6:00pm-9:00pm

### HSMAI National Events

[www.hsmmai.org](http://www.hsmmai.org)

December 7  
Travel Internet Mktg Conference  
San Francisco

December 15  
Meetings Quest  
Anaheim

### SVBTA

[www.svbta.org](http://www.svbta.org)

October 12  
Allied member Forum  
Fairmont San Jose

### NCCMPI

[www.nccmpi.com](http://www.nccmpi.com)

November 18-20  
CMP Study weekend  
Tenaya Lodge, Yosemite

December 8  
Holiday party  
The GAP San Francisco

## Traffic-flow Management – An essential component of Guest Hospitality Training

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istration forms or review folios at check-out.

• **Focus On One Guest At A Time.** Once you have acknowledged those who have just walked up, ‘triaged’ the needs of those who have joined the wait, and dismissed any guests with easy requests, be sure to return your full attention to the guest who is in front of you at that moment and be present with them. Before you know it, you’ll manage to make it through another busy period and can then catch your breath and re-stock supplies.

• **Thank Guests For Their Extra Patience.** As you compete each guest interaction, be sure to extend a genuine, authentic, and sincere ‘thank you’ to guests for their patience, showing your appreciation not only to them but the rest of those who have just joined the wait.

By using simple tactics such as these during those inevitable periods when the flow of guests bottle-necks momentarily, your hotel team can minimize the stress for everyone, including both the guests and themselves.

Doug Kennedy has been a fixture on the hotel industry conference and lecture circuit since 1989, having presented over 1,000 hotel/travel industry workshops, conference sessions, or keynotes. He is the former President and Co-Founder of HSA International, which he exited after 15 years to found The Douglas Kennedy Company. His consulting and training clients have represented all segments of the lodging industry from select/limited service to upscale/luxury to specialty/niche.

Visit [www.douglaskennedy.com](http://www.douglaskennedy.com)  
for more details or e-mail Doug directly at:  
[Douglas@douglaskennedy.com](mailto:Douglas@douglaskennedy.com).

## The Website Conundrum – Are You Winning the Electronic Marketing Game?

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only serves to confuse the user. Too much information, too many pages, and unnecessary information can kill reservation production.

I have a client and friend who is now on his fourth web site design. One of these designs was created by a very large web design company and it didn’t work at all. It produced only a handful of reservations and, after six months, produced not one search engine referral. His next site worked well, producing more than 30% of his total reservations, but it didn’t look the way he liked, so he scraped that one. His current site, designed by a well known hotel web design company looks great, but was not optimized for search ability and produces very little. Get the point?

Here’s the conundrum again, folks, if your site is producing mediocre results, it needs fixing. But, before you decide to totally scrap your current site, get help to make changes. There are many good hotel marketing consultants, who will give you an honest, unbiased appraisal of your site and provide the suggested changes you need to make to make it function properly. Many of them will work with your web master to make the improvements as well.

Contact:  
Neil Salerno, CHME, CHA  
The Hotel Marketing Coach  
[www.hotelmarketingcoach.com](http://www.hotelmarketingcoach.com)  
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## POSITION VACANT

For information on how you can reach your target audience by placing your message here please contact

**Catherine Allen**  
**Phone: (408) 245-5330**  
**Email: [callen@ramadasv.com](mailto:callen@ramadasv.com)**

# 'Tis the Season...

by Wendy Weiss

The holidays loom. Office parties, family celebrations, religious celebrations, celebrations with friends. Meetings are cancelled. Decisions are postponed. Too much to do, no time to do it. The sales process turns to sludge.

The holidays can be a frustrating time for sales professionals. Telephone prospecting calls end with no appointment the prospect instead saying, "call me in the New Year." Proposals languish. Decisions are on hold.

During that time from Thanksgiving through the end of the year, how do you keep from losing your momentum and how do you keep the sales process moving forward? If you are not able to keep the process moving, January can feel almost like starting over. Instead of leaping into the New Year with prospect meetings and starting new customer projects you are busy following up with all of the prospects who said, "call me in the New Year." Here are two steps that you can use to keep your sales process flowing, not only over the holidays, but also year round.

1. When prospecting by telephone for new appointments do not tamely accept the standard response, "call me in the New Year." Instead, suggest to your prospect that you schedule a meeting in the New Year and promise to call to confirm that meeting. (In the "old days" prospects would frequently say they didn't have their New Year calendar. In these days of palm pilots and contact management software that doesn't fly. After all, January is only next month!) At least 50% of your prospects will go ahead and schedule the meeting leaving you with 50% less follow up calls to make in January.

This is what you say:

"Let's pencil in a date and time for January. It's not

carved in stone, I'll call you to confirm and if it doesn't work out we can always reschedule. Is early January good or is later in the month better?"

This way you'll have a series of prospect meetings already lined up for January!

2. When a prospect asks you to submit a proposal, then and there set up a meeting time with your prospect to go over that proposal. Ask your prospect when they want the proposal. When they give you a date or time frame say:

"Let's set up a time for me to come by and go over the proposal. Is (fill in date) good or is (fill in date) better?"

It does not matter if your prospect wants to meet in December or in January. The point is that you have kept the process moving forward, you have an appointment to discuss the proposal and you do not have to spend time in January making calls to follow up to schedule the meeting or get a response on that proposal.

And remember, on the appointed day, make sure to bring two copies of the proposal, both signed and ready for your prospect's signature.

Happy prospecting, happy closing, happy holidays!

*Wendy Weiss, "The Queen of Cold Calling," is a sales trainer, author and sales coach.*

*Her book, Cold Calling for*

*Women: Opening Doors and Closing Sales, can be ordered by*

*calling: (866) 405-8212. Contact her at*

*wendy@wendyweiss.com. Get her free e-zine at*

*http://www.wendyweiss.com.*

## The MUZIQARIUM

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At The MUZIQARIUM, Our MC/DJ is interactive and outgoing, yet always

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Responsible for all direct sales efforts of the hotel. Candidate should have previous experience, strong self-direction, able to prospect, excellent computer and telephone skills. Superior relationship-building skills and able to network effectively. Represents the property in business setting.

Please forward your resume with salary requirements to:

Fax: 408-243-5749 Email: bozidar@marianis.com

## **POSITION VACANT**

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[www.pyramisadvisors.com](http://www.pyramisadvisors.com)

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