

Table 7.7 Sources of Room Reservations

Proprietary website or mobile app for hotel property or chain
Intermediary websites or mobile app, such as Travelocity and Expedia
Auction-style websites or mobile app, such as Priceline.com
Direct telephone number to the individual property
Central reservation telephone number for the chain or other referral system
Local visitors bureau reservation service telephone number or website
Property or corporate sales staff
Travel agents
Hotel room consolidators such as Hotel Reservations Network
Conventions/other meetings
Presold room blocks through tour operators or preferred partners

to meet guest needs. This task often begins long before reservations are made or guests arrive. Depending on the size of a property, guests may encounter a whole host of service employees.

Too often, employees fail to recognize that they are an important part of these marketing efforts. Just as employees must be trained to deliver high-quality service, they must also be trained to anticipate guest needs and serve as marketing ambassadors. For example, when checking in, guests' comments that they are tired and hungry provide opportunities to recommend room service. Or when checking out, guests who mention that they will be returning in a month provide an opportunity to ask whether they would like to make a reservation now for their next visit.

Organizing for Success

Basic operating functions that must be performed in all properties include administration (general management), guest contact services (such as front office reception, cashiering, and housekeeping), and guest support services (such as groundskeeping, engineering, and maintenance). In a small motel, inn, or B&B, there may be only one

TOURISM IN ACTION

IT TAKES A TEAM TO CLOSE A SALE

While pleasing owners is the mainstay of the timeshare industry, marketing and sales is the lifeblood of the industry. Reaching the goal of closing the sale on a vacation ownership interest requires a team of people. In order to sell to existing owners and attract new prospects, timeshare companies invest heavily in marketing to attract potential leads. These leads are solicited via company web pages, by mail, on the phone, and in-person at premier vacation locations by an on-the-ground sales force offering incentives or gifts (free night stays, show tickets, attraction tickets, deep discounts at premium restaurants, loyalty points for current owners, etc.) to entice prospects into attending a sales presentation.

Prospects who meet income and employment minimum requirements must attend a "presentation" before these gifts can be obtained. These sales presentations, which many consider to be high pressure, are scheduled in waves (typically 8:30, 11:30, and 1:30), and are made by sales people who operate on a commission basis. Since sales people only earn money when they make a sale and are evaluated on their ability to convert prospects into owners, there is no question that it is a high-pressure job. The sales force is supported by administrative employees at the tour reception desk, gifting desk, contracts and finance department, human resources, and others who are paid on a salaried or hourly basis. Finally, just like any other business, there is a manager or executive who is responsible for the entire operation.