

A Brand Worth Booking

A Guide for Hospitality
Professionals Who Own or
Operate an Independent Hotel,
Resort, or Lodge.

Build a Profitable Reputation
and Get More Guests Through
Your Doors.

Longitude°



A Dream, but No Plan



If you build it... will they come?

Have you seen the movie “Field of Dreams?”

It's one of the most iconic movies related to America's favorite pastime, baseball. The main character played by Kevin Costner builds a baseball field in the middle of a cornfield in Iowa. It's this film where the famous phrase, “if you build it, they will come” was coined. **It makes for a great story, but it's a terrible strategy for opening a new hotel.**

It's time for a wake-up call, folks. You're starting a business, not building a baseball field in a movie.

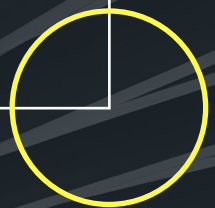
You may have investors, or maybe you have a small independently owned and funded hotel. Either way, you will want to see a return on your investment – and preferably sooner rather than later. This hotel needs to start generating revenue quickly in order to make the business profitable.

Hotel owners, hoteliers, investors, and developers, please remember this – guests aren't going to simply show up because you're building a shiny new hotel. They're not going to book their stay with you because you have a unique lodging concept. These things alone won't get them through your doors. You need the right strategy and plan in place to attract them.

You may be tempted to start thinking about business and marketing tactics that might give you measurable and trackable results related to improving your RevPAR, Average Occupancy Rate, and ALOS. Or, you could be thinking about hiring the best architect and interior designers to ensure that your hotel creates the best guest experience.

No doubt those things are all important, but before you begin spending too much time and money creating reports and spreadsheets, hiring consultants, paying for hotel booking platforms, hiring digital agencies, and installing expensive signage and infill you need a solid plan.

A first
impression will
make a lasting
impression.



Get to Know Your Guests

Do you *really* know your guests?

A basic rule of marketing is that you start any branding, positioning, or marketing project with a single question.

Do I know my guests?

When thinking about how well you know your guests, it is not the idea of having data from their generic demographic snapshot, although that data will help. Think about the guest who loves your brand already.

Why did your boutique hotel strike passion in their choice? How did they make the purchase decision to stay with your hotel? Would they book it again, why? If not, why not? What are their hobbies and interests?

Ask them what the one thing is they enjoyed the most about their stay before they leave. These types of questions will help you better understand who your ideal guest is and what makes them tick.

The most effective and quickest way to sell more is to match your guests' needs and wants with what you offer. When it comes to boutique

hotels, this probably means location, nostalgia, history, site seeing and so many other factors that the large hotel chains can't deliver at scale. That is what makes a hotel "boutique" and unique.

Here's a great example.

Think about a traveler who wants to stay at a quaint, boutique bed and breakfast on the Mississippi River. They are coming in from the west coast seeking to stay close to some historical landmarks from the religious development in the mid-1800s

What will they remember about your boutique hotel experience, so they recommend it to all of their friends and family?

Is it the stairwell built in the early 1830's that present a feeling of sacrifice early settlers made, or will it be the fact the hotel is still hosted by the same family as the original owners?

Your brand can be tied to a number of features; however, to survive those features must be what your guests want and need.



Find Your Perfect Position

Discovering your unique position and compelling story

Positioning is vital to independently owned luxury and boutique hotels due to the competition being so fierce. There are likely many, many options to choose from when a guest is planning their trip. What sets yours apart? What makes yours the clear choice?

Without a clear positioning in the market, you won't have these answers. If you can't find a clear and compelling reason why someone should stay with you, then it's very likely that travelers will validate your findings.

A hotel's position can be seen in two ways, the perspective of the hotel's management and that of the guests. The hotel's management needs to have a firm concept of the position set-forth. Its marketing and advertising efforts must clearly articulate not only what the hotel offers but also how its offerings are unique from the competition.


For example, a hotel may offer a luxurious package of services, perks, and amenities in an effort to attract business travelers. However, if the room rate is higher than travelers are willing to pay, that brand is not positioned for properly for the majority of business travelers. Instead, it

may attract guests who are price insensitive, or it may attract luxury-minded guests traveling for leisure.

In another example, if a hotel has positioned itself as the best conference hotel in the market, guests will expect meetings to be hosted and executed flawlessly. Should that not occur, the hotel's position— from the customer's perspective— will, in reality, be “an average conference hotel” or worse.

To sum it up, if you need to have a truly unique position in your market. But not only that, you need to be able to back it up with the right actions as well.

If you can't find a clear and compelling reason why someone should stay with you, then it's very likely that travelers will validate your findings.

A man in a trench coat and hat is walking from left to right in the lower half of the image. The background is a dark, moody photograph of a building with large windows. In the upper right corner, there is a stylized sunburst or starburst graphic made of many thin yellow lines radiating from a central point.

To keep a
customer
demands as
much skill as
to win one.

Are You Surviving or Thriving?

The common approach or the better approach

Remember, your brand is how you're perceived in the marketplace. And whether you nurture it or not, you will have a brand.

Your brand is made up of the sum of your guest interactions. Contributors to your brand include your booking system, how you treat your guests, the environmental design, your logo and signage, your social media presence, and more.

The average person is exposed to 6,000 advertisements each day. Your brand has to rise above the noise and make an emotional connection with the consumer.

If you have a weak brand, you will experience some or all of these issues:

- **Your guests aren't telling their friends about you.**
- **Your messaging is all over the place and you keep trying things hoping something will stick.**
- **Your advertising efforts fall flat and don't get the results you need.**
- **You are not really known in the community for anything.**
- **You never know if you're going to have a good week or a bad week.**
- **You can't clearly articulate why you're better than the competition.**

And, if the day-to-day struggle doesn't sound bad enough, think about the larger implications of having a weak brand.

Do you want to be able to trust that your employees would run the hotel operations correctly while you're gone? Employees don't take pride and ownership in working for a weak brand.

Do you want to feel good about your brand knowing that you're making your competitors jealous? If you have a weak brand, this isn't happening.

Weak brands are diluted at best, and repulsive at worst. But don't worry, there is a better way.

There are two components that make all of the difference. Establishing a Brand Strategy and Brand Identity.

Build the right strategy at the core of your business, then all of your business efforts are rooted in a cohesive, strategic way.

Becoming a strong brand takes the guess-work out of your marketing efforts and business decisions. You will experience clarity and confidence.

BrandGPS™

by Longitude°

Experts in brand strategy
and identity. Specializing
in hospitality.

As your partner, Longitude° understands that you're pouring your life into your work. You need the right look and a clear message to make a great first impression, attract more customers, and beat your competition.

This is why we created BrandGPS™ – a proven process to help you grow your business and build the reputation you want.

For questions reach out to:
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