

## **10 Tips to get more online reservations**

There's a plenty of competition on the Internet and it is important to stand out from the crowd. This article provides 10 tips for small and mid-sized businesses (SMB) providing rental products and services.

### **1. Get on the Internet**

The most important rule of the business world today is to get on the Internet. More and more customers turn to the Internet as the primary source for any type of service, be it hotel reservations, spa reservations, tee times, dentist appointments or any other type of reservations or appointments. Customers will be using sites like WebReserv.com, Google.com, Yahoo.com, MSN.com and similar search sites to search for products and services. If your business is not on the Internet it will not be found.

### **2. Provide real-time information**

A large number of websites are static, meaning that it is not possible to make a reservation directly from the website. Instead, the customer is provided with an email address or phone number to the office. While a static website is better than no website, many customers favor websites that provide reservation capabilities directly on the website. When your customers can reserve directly from your site, you close the sale immediately. The reservation system is open 24 hours every day, and you have no more lost sales due to customers trying to make a reservation outside of regular office hours.

### **3. Have multiple reservation outlets**

The more outlets you have for your reservations, the more sales opportunities you have. As a minimum, your customers should be able to make reservations from your own website and at least one other reservation websites. WebReserv.com is one of the online reservation systems that enable customers to make reservations directly from your own website, while also listing your services on WebReserv.com and other online reservation sites.

### **4. Have a waitlist**

Even if you are sold out, you want to hold on to potential customers in case another reservation gets cancelled. Most airlines and many hotels utilize overbooking, a technique where the reservation system allows for more reservations than the airliner or hotel has capacity for. The assumption is that a certain percent of the customers won't show up (no-show). A slightly different approach is pending or unconfirmed reservations. With this approach the customer is put on a pending list, allowing for the business to confirm or reject the reservation depending on availability. The waitlist approach is also useful when the business needs to synchronize a local reservation system with the Internet reservation system prior to accepting a reservation.

## 5. Optimize keywords

All search engines utilize special tags (called metatags) to categorize websites. If your website doesn't provide the expected tags and search keywords, the search engines will not be able to pick up and categorize your website correctly, resulting in few, if any, customers from the Internet. Many hosting companies provide tools to help you optimize your keywords. Some websites automatically make your search keywords visible to the major search engines on the Internet, making it easier for your customers to find you. Remember to include your products or services as well as your business location in the search keywords.

A couple of examples:

- **For Bed & Breakfast:** Hotel, Travel, B&B, Bed Breakfast, Bed And Breakfast, Denver, Colorado, CO, Reserve, Book
- **For Vacation Home:** Vacation home, Vacation, Vacation Rental, Vacation Rental Reservation, Beach, Destin, FL, Florida
- **For Wedding Photographer:** Wedding, Wedding photographer, Weddings, Atlanta, GA, Georgia
- **For Tee Times:** Golf, Tee Time, Golf Reservation, San Diego, California, CA
- **For Horse Riding Lessons:** Horse Riding, Horse Riding Lessons, Horseback Riding, Dallas, TX, Texas.

## 6. Describe your products well

The more information you provide for your products or services the more customers you will get. Compare your website to your competitors and provide your customers with more information about your business and your products. You can also include links to nearby attractions or business partners, it will encourage others to link to your site and improve the overall quality and experience of your site for your customers.

## 7. Include plenty of pictures

A picture is worth a thousand words, so don't forget the pictures. With a digital camera it is easy to take pictures of your business and the surrounding area and good online reservation systems will allow you to include multiple pictures of each product.

## 8. Send newsletters

Sales are slow? Set up a mailing list where your customers can sign up for news, offers, tips and so forth. It is an excellent way to advertise promotions before or during slow periods and your customers will appreciate the heads up with you have a new promotion or a new service. You can also partner with other businesses in your areas to provide package deals.

## 9. Link with complimentary businesses partners

The more links you have to your website, the higher ranking you will get on the major search engines. Identify other sites that you can trade links with - you link to them and in return they will link to you. The best partners are businesses that offer complimentary services.

## 10. Utilize free Internet listings

All of the major search engines are free and you can get listed on all of them with just a few hours worth of work. Use the following links to get registered on the major search engines and reservation systems:

Google: <http://www.google.com/addurl?continue=/addurl>

Yahoo: <http://submit.search.yahoo.com/free/request>

MSN: <http://beta.search.msn.com/docs/submit.aspx>

WebReserv: <http://www.webreserv.com/signup.do>

Other resources:

[Tips from Microsoft on getting more links to your site](#)

[The Site Wizards Guide to Website optimization](#)