



Using traveler reviews to reinforce your hotel program

While social media is often blamed for luring travelers away from the managed travel program, if done correctly it can actually be used to reinforce it. CWT is helping its clients use social media to their benefit via CWT Hotel Intel, a private, company-specific platform where travelers provide reviews and feedback on the organization's preferred hotels.



When a traveler is researching potential hotels before deciding where to stay, an online directory like *CWT Hotel Intel* provides credible information from trusted colleagues who have used the property for the same purpose – namely, business travel, which differs from the leisure-focused information often available on external hotel review sites – and highly relevant content can be accessed, such as proximity to the organization's offices or client locations. Because only company-preferred properties are able to be reviewed and listed in the hotel directory within the platform, the managed hotel program is reinforced. And, the organization gains constructive feedback on its suppliers, which can be used in future negotiations.

Whichever platform is used, CWT recommends the following critical elements be integrated into any effort to incorporate traveler reviews into managed travel programs:

- **Link reviews to actual bookings.** Logically, travelers should only be able to review a property after they have actually stayed there, and for business travel specifically, as their needs during a leisure trip are different. This can be accomplished by linking the review platform to the organization's travel reservations system.
- **Ensure accountability.** Many travel buyers' initial concern with traveler reviews is the potential for negative or inappropriate content about preferred hotels, which can deteriorate the program rather than reinforce it. In CWT's experience, the fact

that reviews are tied to a traveler's actual name has alleviated this concern. The majority of feedback submitted through *CWT Hotel Intel* is positive, and less satisfied travelers have provided constructive comments that buyers appreciate. While various review systems may provide flexibility on identification of reviewers, CWT recommends requiring real names to ensure accountability.

- **Respond to the feedback.** Hotel reviews create a channel for direct traveler feedback that has not previously existed in most travel programs. For example, the reviews might indicate that, while travelers enjoy the fact that a given property is brand new and offers a highly competitive rate, the location is simply too far from a client site to be a feasible option. Buyers should use this information to adjust their program where it makes sense. Then, let travelers know they've been heard by communicating about changes that have originated from the reviews.
- **Leverage with suppliers.** Traveler reviews should be used in supplier conversations about what is working and areas for improvement. Beyond helping to evaluate supplier performance, the feedback can also be used to tweak the agreement to better meet travelers' needs. For example, the reviews may indicate that travelers are underwhelmed by the breakfast the company has negotiated at a property, and feel the wireless Internet access fee is higher than most competitors. Buyers may use this input to shift the focus of negotiations away from complimentary breakfast to free or reduced internet charges. ▼

Click the images below to learn how L'Oréal uses *CWT Hotel Intel* to improve traveler satisfaction and increase its negotiating power with hotels.

