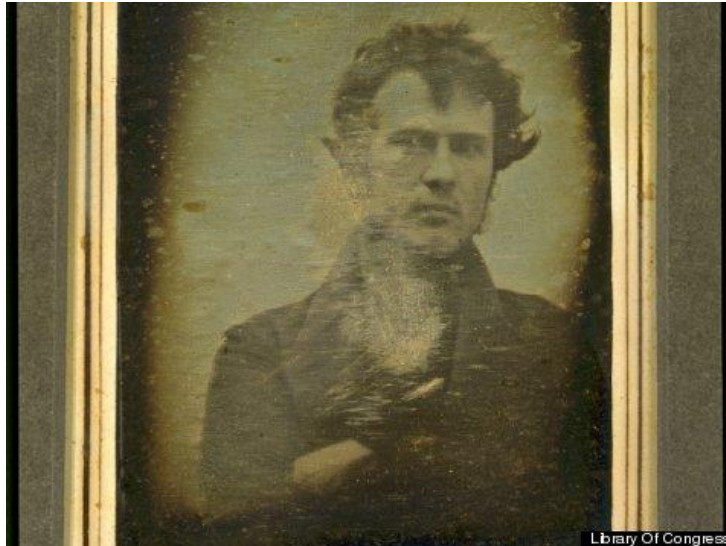


Learning from a Non-Traditional Approach: Selfies!

Do you realize that for as long as there have been cameras, there have been selfies? The Millennials think that they invented the “selfie”; however, selfies have been around longer than the Millennials’ great, great, great, great-grandparents! Here is what is thought to be the first recorded selfie. Meet Robert Cornelius in October 1839. Per the Library of Congress, they believe that Robert stood there between 3-15 minutes in order to “snap” this photograph.



Considering that the oldest hotel in the world is **Nishiyama Onsen Keiunka** (a hot spring hotel in [Hayakawa](#), [Yamanashi Prefecture](#), [Japan](#), founded in 705), we can assume that the job position in hotel sales has been around for a VERY long time. The selfie isn’t as old as the hotel sales position, whereas they have both been around for a very long time. This brings me to the apex of my point. What can hotel sales people learn from selfies? Considering our industry has been around for over 1,500 years, it is time to look to non-traditional sources to better ourselves as hotel sales professionals!

1) GROUP Business!



Did you know that Ellen’s famous Oscar Selfie broke Twitter’s record? It basically broke Twitter for a short period of time. This is very important because you shouldn’t ever leave out group business! Even though you may have bad rooms/space ratio, or you don’t have a large amount of dedicated group space or you just have a lower group ceiling, don’t ever take for granted the value of group business! According to a collaborative organization called the Convention Industry Council (CIC), meetings are a \$122 billion industry in the United States alone.

2) Announcement of Renovation Completed!



I would be lying if I said I am not a tad jealous of Kim’s body in this picture. (Note – this is the edited version of her “smoking hot” selfie that she took after she had her baby). However, I would also be lying if I said I wasn’t jealous of her pregnant body (I had my own 75 pound weight gain with my first pregnancy!). All of us did a collaborative jaw drop when she posted this picture after the birth of her baby. My point is this: If you have a new

transformation, show it off! New guest room renovation; new lobby; new meeting space etc. If you don't show off your new assets, how are people going to know?

3) International Travel is Big Business!



This selfie is 2013 Miss International, Bea Rose Santiago, as she took a selfie with President Benigno Aquino III during her courtesy call at the Malacañan Palace.

Did you know that in 2013, there were 69.9 million visitors to the United States? According to the latest forecast, the number of international visitors will rise to 84.6 million in 2018 (source: statista.com). How are you doing to ensure that you are seen by international travelers and international meeting planners?

4) Use #Hashtags in your Marketing!



Justin Bieber sent his “Beliebers” into a spin when he posted this picture with his (now) ex and used the hashtag “#heartbreaker”. At the time, they were a couple and he used this to announce that they were no longer together. It is amazing how one word with the “#” can completely change everything! Hashtags are no longer just for Twitter! When marketing, note that hashtags are for Pinterest, Facebook, Google Plus, Instagram and pretty much whatever social network you can image. Two pretty cool websites to help track the value and distance of your hashtags are: www.hashtags.org & www.tagdef.com. #hashtagsarereallycool #justdontgooverboard #useme



5) Get Creative!

I'm not going to waste your time on telling you the magnitude of selfies. There are millions upon millions taken every single day. The lesson I learned from this selfie is that you have to be creative and change your sales strategies. For selfies, you are supposed to have the camera at a higher angle (Google the "right way" to take a selfie – there is tons of advice). This lady has it right. I am sure that you are facing the same situation in that your competitors have room inventory, space to sell etc. Well, figure out a way to **MAKE YOUR'S BETTER** – adjust your strategies! Try using new sales tools, tactics and trends to make you different.

6) Don't forget about the SMERF Market!



It wasn't that long ago (2009 and 2010 say "hi") that corporate and association meetings were in a valley. What was peaking was SMERF business! SMERF planners traditionally book with those sales managers with whom they have a long-standing relationship. Just because corporate and association meetings are coming back, don't forget to form and foster the SMERF planners! There is always a time when you need to fill in holes and SMERF is the perfect way to do it. Organizations like RCMA and SGMP are great ways to get your foot in the door!



7) Content Sales & Marketing

This is one of my favorite all-time selfies! I can just picture the Kennedys hanging out on vacation in Hyannis Port. Did you know that one of Jackie Kennedy's favorite vacation spots was Palm Beach, FL? If you are like me, you always just assume that any picture of a Kennedy in what appears to be their vacation was probably taken in Hyannis Port. I am sure you are asking yourself: "What does this have to do with content marketing"? In all of my research of this selfie, I couldn't find where this selfie was taken. But what if, and I know that it is a Big "IF", this selfie was taken on FL? That would be a really fantastic sales and marketing pitch for our hospitality sales friends in FL! It would be a great Content Marketing piece to tell your potential travelers that The Kennedys once vacationed here and this was the spot that an infamous selfie was taken! Content Marketing is educating your audience (in our case it is meeting planners and leisure travelers) by creating and curating relevant and valuable information to attract potential customers to you. In other words, what information can I give to planners (or travelers) that they don't know and that will make their job and decision easier? Our customers are looking for emails and social media that include Content Marketing. Here are some great ways to incorporate content marketing in your emails: customer testimonials, case studies, videos, whitepapers and infographs.

Did you know that in 2014, it is projected that mobile hotel bookings will be up to 25.8 Billion USD? WOW! (source: PhoCusWright). When you take that statistic coupled with 86.2% of meeting planners who indicated that they prefer to receive meeting supplier information via email (source E-proDirect), we are seriously living in a technology-infused world. It is not new info, but make sure that you are capitalizing on all that the mobile, technology and digital marketing the world has to offer! Don't be afraid to try new things, because sometimes something that you think is "new" might actually be old and it just takes the crowd doing it to make it "cool". Be the trend-setter in new and better sales and marketing trends! Just for fun, I thought my daughter Kenzie and I would join in on the selfie trend!



Chaunsea Keller is Vice President for E-proDirect. She has over 16 years of experience in the hospitality sales and marketing field. In her role with E-proDirect, it allows her to see daily interaction between suppliers and planners; therefore, it is a good gauge on the meetings industry as a whole. She resides in College Station, TX with her husband and two children.

E-proDirect helps hotels and other meeting suppliers grow their group markets with an integrated digital marketing program. We can create progressive marketing strategies to nurture your database OR help find new group business opportunities by using proven marketing methods targeting OUR database of over 80,000 U.S.-based meeting planners. From an e-blast promoting a special offer to a fully integrated digital marketing campaign, our services include database development and management, email marketing, social media, creative design and development, triggered and drip campaigns, and social sharing campaigns.