Bookassist Research Summary

Company Overview

Bookassist is an Irish company and was founded in 1999. It is a private company that specialises in providing booking engine technology to hotels and other types of accommodation.

Entirely self-financed and consistently profitable, management comprises an expert and award-winning team with decades of experience in scientific and technology research, in the hospitality industry, in internet consultancy and in enterprise-level software development.

Bookassist has offices in Dublin, Paris, Madrid, Rome, Vienna and Prague with resellers worldwide. Bookassist is a trading name and registered trade mark of Automatic Netware Ltd.

Research Highlights

During the in-depth interviews we spoke to Des O'Mahony of Bookassist, and he made several recommendations to hotels in relation to growing their overseas business. Firstly, he suggested that hotels spend more time analysing historical direct website traffic data, in order to identify the international markets that should be a focus for them over the coming months and years. He then suggests analysing the source market of other bookings from OTA's, GDS and Tour Operators. Once the key markets have been identified, then they need to select the markets that show the most potential for growth and then understand the booking nuances for each market (e.g.: Germans are likely to book via Tour Operators, French often travel as a family etc.). Next assess whether there is a need for website translation.

Once the growth markets and targets for these markets have been selected, next it is crucial to understand the nuances from a marketing point of view. For example if you are going after the French market be aware of bank holidays, school holidays and religious occasions which might encourage or discourage travel. Also keep up to speed on the routes that this market travel to Ireland through. Finally understand what these customers want from their accommodation – not sure what the hotels or guesthouse wants to sell – and from their stay, so match events to their interests

Cost of Sale

Bookassist were very clear that they don't think the industry should be using language like "cost" when talking about direct website bookings; rather we should use the term "investment". They offer their customers the following options as part of their campaigns:

- Commission rate is from 2.5% upwards

- They have a product called Traffic Builder which costs €399 per month

- Their quarterly SEO services is €250 per quarter

- €60 per month, per channel for Metasearch (plus the direct PPC costs associated with these campaigns)

- Other variable costs includes Email, Social Media, reputation management and translations

Overall Des says that total costs above (including a PPC budget) should work out at 9% or less, of the price of each direct booking. When you add in staff salaries and overheads this total cost rises to 20%.

Booking Volumes

All of the booking volume and value statistics that Bookassist shared with us are shown cumulatively (with the other booking engine providers), in appendix 2 of the main report.