CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY:  
The Ritz-Carlton  
San Francisco

San Francisco is an iconic city, and the Ritz Carlton is located in Nob Hill — a neighborhood heavily affiliated with high-end experiences. A luxury hotel of a little over 300 rooms, with about 20% being suites, their team is focused on creating the right mix of customers. They’re also currently finishing up their spa’s renovations, in the latest of a string of design refreshes aimed at creating the elegance that meeting planners, business travelers, and leisure travelers all appreciate. With their central location, the Ritz Carlton can give groups a true feel for the city experience, while also providing a place to host productive meetings.

Product Used:  
Group Marketing Solutions

In Search of the Right Customers

A big focus for the Ritz Carlton is to maximize profitability through booking the right amount of group customers. Cvent is a valuable partner in that regards, with Mgeni Mpolo, Director of Sales, noting, “Cvent is a great partner for us, because that’s one of the platforms we use to source and respond to our leads.”

They reach luxury customers by creating an experience that isn’t “just your typical meeting,” adds Mgeni. Having just celebrated their 25th anniversary, they have a host of seasoned planners and staff to rely on, which lets them focus on creating unique experiences that attract group customers who are interested in an experience beyond a productive meeting, as they know their staff can create that type of experience.

In addition to focusing on group business, another current challenge for them is to get ahead of the curve and find the right partners to bring them those right customers. San Francisco is currently undergoing a huge expansion that’s expected to impact the demand in the local hotel market, which is part of why the Ritz Carlton has already been working on their renovations. That’s also why they’re currently focusing on getting ahead of the curve by working with the right strategic partners.

35% of Cvent leads closed, compared to city-wide average of <20%
The Value of Strategic Partners

As a Diamond Partner with Cvent, the Ritz Carlton has used our tools for several years. When asked how Cvent has helped them combat the challenges they face, Mgeni says, “we can analyze and really understand our group customers — it's the platform where we see the bulk of our leads.” Having the bulk of their leads in one spot lets them analyze their buyer behavior and needs, and figure out how to position their property to meet those needs.

Another standout feature for Mgeni? Having holistic data — that is, data that comes from the planner side as well as the supplier side. It lets the team filter out the noise and make the data that's been collected relevant to them.

They also appreciate the organization-wide focus on getting feedback from Cvent partners, with Mgeni adding, “It’s been refreshing to hear that from senior level management, and makes sure that I’ll continue to provide feedback. And not only myself, but my team as well — reaching out to them to make sure their experiences are helping build the platform of the future.”

Their efforts (and use of Cvent) has paid off, with Mgeni noting that they’re hearing more and more from the platform over time as more planners switch to it. In fact, after evaluating recent data, it turns out that they’re closing approximately 35% of the business that comes through Cvent, compared to a city-wide average of below 20%.

“We can analyze and really understand our group customers – [Cvent is] the platform where we see the bulk of our leads.” — Mgeni Mpolo, Director of Sales

Looking to the Future

When asked if Mgeni thinks group business is still important now and in the years to come, he says it is:

“You want to have a mix where you’re using the full capability of your property from the meeting space aspect, leveraging that with your outlets and meeting budget goals with your ownership group. We view group business as the base to be able to make these other decisions that will help us reach our financial goals.”

In the future, Mgeni expects group business to continue to grow, especially with the expansion of the convention center in San Francisco. “In our luxury segment as well, business will continue to do well in terms of incentive travel.”

Outside of group travel specifics and Cvent tools, Mgeni stresses the importance of keeping up with the latest trends — “we hear our customers where they are, whether that’s on Snapchat or other social media platforms, we want to make sure we’re present in that space.” They’re also experimenting with video messaging and other forms of digital imagery.

With all of the work the Ritz Carlton does to stay ahead of the curve — and Cvent helping them out — they’re looking forward to serving the luxury group market for years to come.

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