Implementing Cvent’s Diamond Plus marketing feature highlighted the particularly unique aspects of this property, resulting in exceptional ROI in 2017.

The Westin Copley Place is a hotel primed for group business success: It’s situated in the heart of downtown Boston, with great meeting amenities and a skybridge to the Hynes Convention Center. But the recent merger of Starwood and Marriott created budget changes that sent the hotel looking for new, creative marketing solutions.

The property, which is in the city’s trendy Back Bay area, has 803 rooms and about 54,000 square feet of meeting space. It recently completed a $45 million, top-to-bottom renovation of its guest rooms and suites, which followed closely on the heels of a complete meeting space overhaul.

The Problem

When Marriott took control of The Westin Copley Place as part of its Starwood acquisition in 2016, it created a new set of challenges. The Westin previously subscribed to a 3 Diamond ad placement on Cvent’s Supplier Network, paid for jointly by the hotel and Starwood. However, after the acquisition, Marriott didn’t contribute financially to the subscription, as Starwood had, and the hotel had not budgeted to cover the 3 Diamond status on its own. The drop from a 3 Diamond ad to a 2 Diamond ad made a bigger difference in the hotel’s RFP volume than anticipated, says Samantha Mahoney, director of sales and marketing at The Westin Copley Place.

“When you’re a large hotel that’s part of a large company with a pretty good footprint in the market, you can sometimes underestimate the value of the positioning on a site like Cvent,” she says. “To me, when we take a snapshot in time, that is when, all of a sudden, our RFP volume started to decrease.”

Overall, the Boston market was seeing growth in RFP volume, while The Westin was not.
“We could clearly see from the stats that we reviewed with (our Cvent representative) that we weren't getting what we got in the year prior. We also weren't getting our fair share compared to the market,” Mahoney says. “We were lagging behind and needed to do something in order to make sure we were keeping up — and hopefully turning that stat around and exceeding the RFP capture rate that the Boston market was achieving.”

The Solution

After getting guidance from their Cvent account manager on the options for increasing visibility, the team at The Westin Copley Place decided on the **Diamond Plus** ad. The Diamond Plus provides suppliers with flexible monthly terms targeted at specific need periods to help generate more group business leads. The ad appears on each page of natural search results on the Cvent Supplier Network, as well as SpeedRFP.com.

“Ampering up what we would do from a Diamond Plus standpoint made the most sense to us, because we were able to gain the visibility that we realized we were lacking after dropping from a 3 Diamond to a 2 Diamond,” Mahoney says. “We were also able to use the Diamond Plus marketing feature to really highlight particularly unique aspects of the property. As we've gone through different renovations and initiatives in the hotel, we've used the Diamond Plus ad feature to remain flexible as we needed to either attract business over a certain time period or attract a certain type of business.”

The Outcome

The strategy worked: In six months of running a Diamond Plus ad, the hotel received more than 100 RFPs, with a combined value of over $15 million. The Westin was awarded five of the 100 RFPs, with a total value of $866,000. The hotel also decreased its market gap by 2% for the remainder of 2017 while the Diamond Plus ad was running.

In addition to the increased group business, Mahoney values the ability to monitor the ad's performance. “Just to be able to track the results, regardless of whether they're positive or not, from a marketing ROI (perspective) — that's huge,” she says. “When we look at that compared to the results we were getting without Diamond Plus, to me it was almost a no-brainer that it was the Diamond Plus positioning that was making the impact.”
“The results have definitely made the deciding factor that [the Diamond Plus] is not a nice-to-have moving forward; for us, it’s a need-to-have.”

Being able to dive into the numbers also made the hotel more of an active participant in the marketing campaign, “keeping us on point” to monitor its progress and evaluate its performance, Mahoney says.

Another advantage of the Diamond Plus ad is that it allows the client to customize the messaging and images based on need periods, special promotions, booking windows, and more. Mahoney appreciates the adaptability, as well as the option to deploy the ad for a specific time frame. “The results have definitely made the deciding factor that (the Diamond Plus) is not a nice-to-have moving forward; for us, it's a need-to-have.”

She credits the partnership that The Westin Copley Place has with Cvent for much of its success.

“I think that the team at Cvent is just impressive — helpful, collaborative, a true partnership. Most of us on my side of the hotel business didn't start doing this because we were really into data mining and how to launch things like this, so to have partners that can really explain it and put it in real terms ... that's so beneficial,” she says. “You can have the software and the analytics, but if you don't have the right people who are bridging the gap, then you're not going to have the same impact.”

What’s Next

Mahoney is thankful for her partnership with Cvent as she looks ahead to future campaigns as well. “The great thing about the experience I've had working with Cvent is that there's so much knowledge there,” she says. “I want to make sure that I tap into those resources to help us use all of the tools to the best of our ability.”

In fact, “it's never that we have a great idea and Cvent can't help us with it,” Mahoney adds. Often, her Cvent partners are the ones educating her team on best practices and presenting new solutions that they hadn't considered. “I definitely see that continuing and hopefully expanding the opportunities we have in the future.”