Looking to take a large group to Austin? It’s likely you’ll wind up at the JW Marriott. Granted, it’s among the largest properties in the area—and one that caters to large groups and conference-goers. But it’s also because the hotel is located right at the heart of this dynamic city—at the center of all things Austin, whether that’s live music, street eats or SXSW. The JW Marriott is the place that’s always just next door in a city that has made neighborly experiences commonplace. We spoke with Matthew Inabinett, director of sales and marketing, to pick up a few of the best practices driving their success as a Cvent Top Meeting Hotel. The verdict? The science behind JW Marriott’s success is built on patterns, consistency and technology that helps drive meeting business forward.

WHAT’S YOUR ‘TOP MEETING HOTEL’ APPROACH?

For starters, it’s about having a true sense of the clients needs and understanding how to utilize pattern management to meet the goals of both the group and the hotel. Working closely with our planners to understand their date and pattern flexibility is integral to the success of the hotel and allows our sales team some flexibility in meeting the client’s needs if alternate dates or pattern are considered. We also don’t focus too much on the competition. We look at our own performance—and improve. Things like lead management, group rate, food and beverage, they get day-by-day analysis. Simply put: Know what you’re up against and know what your planners are shopping for. Most of all, make sure you’re set up to meet those needs.

WHAT ABOUT THE PLANNER EXPERIENCE?

If it’s all about the experience—and you’re sitting in the middle of Austin—how can we improve on that? We don’t. So, what we do is first make sure our planners are happy (and our guests) by executing on the basics. If you can’t get those done, the whole experience part falls apart and you lose the planner relationship. Then we map the diversity of Austin experiences to great ideas that make planners want to come back. Here’s an example: We had a large group that had been with us for three years. In that third year we wanted more. So we worked with their team of planners and came up with a street festival idea. We literally closed the street in front of the hotel and had a party.

HOW DOES TECHNOLOGY HELP YOU “GROW AND OWN” YOUR GROUP BUSINESS?

Technology is hugely important. Lead management, room block management, and business intelligence, all help us optimize and create efficiencies. It’s used in all aspects of our group operations and is increasingly a vital part of revenue growth and enhancing the group attendee experience. A perfect example is Cvent Passkey: we’ve done a terrific job of figuring out how to enhance the group reservation experience by ensuring optional experiences are “on the shelf” at the time of booking. For example, if and when we have hotel room availability for nights before or after a groups contracted arrival date, we ensure primary inventory is loaded via passkey which allows the guest to add pre or post nights at the time of their booking without the hassle of contacting reservations via telephone. Additionally, group guests can pre-purchase Spa by JW gift cards, guaranteed early arrival, or even a late departure. Promotional Cubes are used to inform future guests of upcoming city wide or hotel specific events happening during their group dates. When it comes to technology, our advice is to push Cvent Passkey to all planners.

Click here to learn more about Cvent’s 2019 Top Meeting Hotels, and see the complete list.