The Hilton Boston Logan Airport hotel partnered with Cvent to build its group sales effort, launch its #connectingyoutoitall ad campaign, and map out a successful corporate meetings and events strategy.

11%  Total RFP Volume Increase
31%  RFP Award Rate Increase
INTRODUCTION

The Possibilities of Change

Most of the time, change comes down to potential and possibilities. The opportunity to shift and thrive, whether as a business or a person, depends mostly on how you perceive your story and the way you approach the new opportunity to turn possibilities into something more.

For the Hilton Boston Logan Airport hotel, that shift came quickly. By all accounts a hugely successful transient operation, it is the only four-diamond property connected to Logan International Airport — and has a well-earned reputation as a convenient, prestigious, and high-quality hotel. As a result, the team has, over the years, relied almost exclusively on transient business, along with citywide events, mostly handled by the Hilton’s Boston regional sales center.

Until it didn’t.

By the middle of 2018, the regional sales center closed and Autumn Mullen, director of sales and marketing, was tasked with building the hotel’s group business portfolio.

The shift fundamentally changed the way they approached business. Mullen could have been content to ride the transient wave, but she and her team saw an opportunity to build a sales and marketing department that would create a sustainable base of revenue, showcase the hotel’s character, and shine a light on the unique history of East Boston.

“We looked at what we had and who we were and thought, let’s start to experiment a little. Let’s change the mix of the hotel,” said Mullen.

30,000 sq. ft. of event space

Skybridge to Logan International Airport

Walking distance to Boston Harbor and Piers Park
Shifting Planner Perceptions

Changing the business seemed easy enough. After all, the hotel had 30,000 square feet of meeting space, a great location, and all those four-diamond amenities. Yet somehow, that didn't help. The challenge was in planner perception: It was an “airport” hotel. Mullen and her team consistently saw opportunities where they were sent the RFP but lost the business. When they looked at their Competitive Set Dashboard from Cvent — and additional data sets — they were able to see that they were constantly losing business to the downtown market.

"Here we are in this unique situation, where we've actually got a group-ready hotel. We have a lot of four-diamond rooms. We're 10 minutes away from the downtown area. But we lose business to those hotels because of the lore and locale of being downtown," said Mullen.

Boston and the Downtown Dilemma

That makes sense if you know Boston. When you land, you can get your bags and be downtown just 15 minutes after leaving the airport. As a result, the hotel's proximity to downtown worked against it when it came to sourcing; every year saw more and more declines and a slower pace. “The past few years, we were booking smaller and smaller groups,” said Mullen. “We used business intelligence to tell us that the lead size in general was shrinking and that the booking window was changing. We were still being sourced for Boston events, but they were declining. They were just going to other hotels,” said Mullen.

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— Autumn Mullen —
Director of Sales and Marketing,
Hilton Boston Logan Airport
Intelligent Marketing

Mullen, her team, and their Cvent representative went to work changing planner perceptions by using Business Intelligence to help map an advertising strategy on the Cvent Supplier Network. They purchased ad products and created messaging designed to show planners that the hotel offered an amazing experience, with unrivaled convenience — plus all the local color and history of downtown. They leveraged the Comp Set Dashboard and took advantage of the exposure gained from Suggested Ads and other tools on the Cvent Supplier Network to get the message in front of the right planners — a message that included their true group value proposition.

Creating a Value Proposition

At the same time, they needed to be ready to convert more of the lead volume they knew was coming — all while transforming into a more robust group business footprint. “The Cvent Competitive Set Dashboard really, really helped in tremendous ways, because when you look at the STR report or you look at TravelClick, you’re not looking forward,” said Mullen. “The one thing we knew is that we had a great value proposition. But if we were at the same exact rate as our downtown competitors, knowing that the proximity wasn’t going to be a big deal for planners, we were able to compete on value and the experience.”
Building Group Opportunity

Mullen and team set about perfecting their message and building themselves up in the group world. She knew that planners had a perception of airport hotels as a busy hodgepodge of all types of people and that they would not think an airport hotel is designed to cater to groups and meetings.

They had to show the other side — and bring it all together in a compelling package that showcased the convenience of the airport, the logistical might of the hotel, its proximity to downtown, and its own unique events experience. “We have this phenomenal 4,000-square-foot private event lawn. We do outdoor events. It's totally unique because it's natural green space; we're literally surrounded by a parklike setting.” said Mullen.

“We came up with #connectingyoutoitall and had some fun.”

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— Autumn Mullen —
Change Can Be Transformative

Paired with data analysis and the right mix of ad products on CSN, the #connectingyoutoitall ad and social media campaign created valuable awareness and engagement about the hotel's unique meetings and events footprint. The results have transformed the hotel's business. “People are pleasantly surprised and don’t expect that level of variation in the things that we can do,” said Mullen. “The campaign has been a great success at changing planner perception about the hotel, and what we offer groups.”

From there, Mullen has employed the Cvent Comp Set Dashboard to optimize sales and energize the team. It’s been part of a plan that has changed planner perception about the hotel, and has transformed its group program:

- Awarded RFP value increased 163%
- Average response lapse time improved from three days/eight hours to just 51 minutes
- Total RFPs improved 11%
- RFP award rate increased 31%

Hilton Boston Logan Airport saw:

- **163%** Increase in awarded value (between 2018 and 2019)
- **11%** Increase in total RFPs
- **31%** Improvement in RFP award rate
Energizing the Culture

Leveraging data changed the perception of the sales team. And energized the culture.

“At first I didn’t make a connection between how you can use a tool like Cvent to help change a culture or enhance your culture in the office,” said Mullen. “You know, it’s just a tool, right? You think about how you can use it for its efficiencies and getting more leads. But culture? The funny thing is that it really is at the core of culture change. Response time, for example, helps to create an energized environment. Knowing response time and educating them on how important that is ... then seeing the positive ROI come from it. That has really helped us change things.”

Now, the team acts with a sense of urgency because they see the dramatic impact that has on success. It’s part of a collective drive to be a best-in-class sales team, promote the hotel, and build awareness about the Hilton Boston Logan Airport’s group business offerings. According to Mullen, the Competitive Set Dashboard helps raise the bar in multiple ways: the response rate and the resulting team energy that comes from generating successful RFP responses, as well as the collaboration with partners to get strategic, gain insights, and fine-tune programs.

As a communication tool, it gives Mullen “intel” to share with ownership and higher levels of leadership. “It helps us be strategic, target improvements, and communicate an accurate story about our success and competitive trends,” said Mullen. “It helps, because we are an airport hotel — we have to get scrappy. We must fight a little harder than other guys sometimes. So I want to make sure that we’re taking full advantage, always improving our KPIs, and always looking for new opportunities.”
Learn more about how Cvent can help your sales team.

**Cvent Competitive Set Dashboards**

Cvent’s Group Competitive Set Dashboards help hoteliers understand how group demand, response patterns, and awards compare with up to 10 competitors in real time.

**Cvent Search Ads**

Cvent offers a full suite of Search Ad solutions that keep you top of mind for the tens of thousands of planners using our digital channels.