



HSMAI SPECIAL REPORT

Hospitality Successes During the Pandemic Year

**Best Practices in Hotel CSR, Communications, Recovery, and
Talent From HSMAI's 2020 Adrian Awards Gold Winners**

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By Robert A. Gilbert, CHME, CHBA, President and CEO, Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMAI)

When the pandemic forced hotel companies to change everything about how they do business, HSMAI knew we needed to do the same thing. We started with our Adrian Awards program, which every year honors creativity and innovation in hospitality advertising, digital marketing, and public relations.

For the 2020 Adrian Awards — presented with Signature Partner MMGY Global and Supporting Partners Panzano + Partners and WorkerBee.TV — we created four new focus categories to recognize the resilience that the industry demonstrated in response to COVID: corporate social responsibility, crisis communications and management, recovery strategies, and talent and leadership development, with that last category being an HSMAI Foundation Honor. Made possible with the support of our Organizational Member companies, this HSMAI Special Report profiles the Best Practice Gold honorees in these four focus categories.

All of the honorees show just how resilient our industry and the people who serve it have been throughout the crisis. And they leave me convinced that the silver lining of the last year is that it has only strengthened the hospitality community. We're still here, and we're more responsive, strategic, and compassionate than ever.

Learn more about all of the 2020 Adrian Awards honorees at adrianawards.hsmai.org.



ABOUT HSMAI

Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMAI) is the hospitality industry's leading advocate for intelligent, sustainable hotel revenue growth. HSMAI provides hotel professionals and their partners with tools, insights, and expertise to fuel sales, inspire marketing, and optimize revenue through programs such as HSMAI's Revenue Optimization Conference, Digital Marketing Strategy Conference, Sales Leader Forum, and Adrian Awards. HSMAI offers organizational and individual membership, with more than 7,000 members in four global regions — the Americas, Asia Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East. — hsmai.org

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Holidays for Your Heroes

BACKGROUND

Karisma Hotels & Resorts set out to instill a sense of hope for workers on the front lines of COVID-19 by offering a chance to win one of 150 vacations of a lifetime through Holidays for Your Heroes, a new initiative featuring all-inclusive trips to some of the most sought-after brands in Karisma's portfolio. The primary goals for this campaign were to support frontline workers with a flexible, high-value giveaway, to involve the company's partners and related businesses to give back, and to link the giveaway to Karisma's values of inclusivity and a variety of incredible vacation experiences.

RESULTS

Holidays for Your Heroes received 13,236 entries over 57,319 web sessions — more than 6.5 times the goal — with Karisma doubling the giveaways to 300 total vacations after *The View* encouraged providing trips specifically for mothers at a hard-hit New York City hospital ahead of Mother's Day. In addition to *The View*, the campaign was featured in high-profile stories on *Today*, ABC News, and Yahoo! News and in *Travel + Leisure*, helping Karisma exceed its annual press goal of 2 billion impressions in just four months. In all, there were 187 media stories about Holidays for Your Heroes (37 times Karisma's goal), including a BuzzFeed article that went viral on Facebook, drawing 2,217 web sessions from BuzzFeed and 6,290 sessions from Facebook.



Rooms for Responders

BACKGROUND

Marriott established the Rooms for Responders program to aid in the fight against the pandemic — partnering with American Express and JPMorgan Chase to provide \$10 million worth of hotel stays for healthcare professionals in the United States. The hotel company further partnered with the American College of Emergency Physicians, the Emergency Nurses Association, and the American Hospital Association to match frontline doctors and nurses with free accommodations in highly impacted cities such as New York City, Newark, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., Detroit, Chicago, New Orleans, Las Vegas, and Los Angeles. Marriott also partnered with MasterCard and Banorte to support first responders in the hardest-hit areas of Mexico.

RESULTS

Marriott donated 44,318 room nights to 1,500 healthcare workers who provided critical care at 25 high-need medical facilities in the United States. On average, these healthcare workers were guests for 29 nights per stay. Latin America teams donated more than 13,000 room nights in Mexico City to first responders.



Rooms for Responders and Community Caregiver Programs

In the Community

Throughout the world, our properties and associates have been stepping up to the challenge of hosting caregivers or providing safe environments for our guests. In other instances, our properties have been donating cooked and pre-packaged meals and critically important supplies, including cleaning products, masks, gloves, anti-microbial wipes, sanitizers and shower caps for medical and other frontline workers.

As we all watch the news unfold about this unprecedented event, it's clear that there is a need to assist and bolster healthcare workers and community caregivers who are on the frontlines working to contain this disease. To that end, we have established the following programs to aid in the urgent fight against the pandemic:

Rooms for Responders

With support from our credit card partners, American Express and JPMorgan Chase, we are committed to providing \$10 million worth of hotel stays for healthcare professionals leading the fight against COVID-19 in the United States. We are partnering with the [American College of Emergency Physicians](#), the [Emergency Nurses Association](#), and the [American Hospital Association](#) to match front line doctors and nurses with free accommodations in some of the areas most impacted: New York City, Newark, NJ, Baltimore, Washington DC, Detroit, Chicago, New Orleans, Las Vegas, and Los Angeles. To book accommodation through the Rooms for Responders Program, please visit your association websites. FAQs are available [here](#).

Coronavirus Initiatives

BACKGROUND

MGM Resorts International executed an array of initiatives intended to support those impacted economically by the coronavirus pandemic, including a \$1-million crisis and disaster-relief pledge into an employee emergency grant fund. MGM also donated more than 480,000 pounds of food — or 400,000 meals — to communities where it operates.

RESULTS

Across Las Vegas, MGM provided extensive on-the-ground support and in-kind donations to several local community organizations and agencies, including 301,000 pounds of food to Three Square Food Bank and 250,000 rapid COVID-19 test kits and essential PPE items to healthcare workers throughout Nevada. Individual MGM properties also got involved, including:

- MGM National Harbor (Oxon Hill, Maryland) worked with food-donor partner Nourish Now to contribute 55,000 pounds of food to community nonprofits serving Maryland residents.
- MGM Springfield (Springfield, Massachusetts) donated 12,000 pounds of food to the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, Open Pantry Community Services, and Friends of the Homeless.
- Beau Rivage (Biloxi, Mississippi) donated 25,000 pounds of food to organizations including Extra Table, Loaves & Fishes, Lord Is My Help, and the Hancock County Food Pantry.
- Gold Strike (Tunica, Mississippi) donated 10,000 pounds of food to Sacred Hearth Southern Mission.



MGM RESORTS
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- MGM Northfield Park (Northfield, Ohio) worked with JACK Casino and JACK Thistledown to donate more than 3,000 pounds of food to the Greater Cleveland Food Bank.
- MGM Grand Detroit donated approximately 15,000 pounds of produce and dairy products to Forgotten Harvest, a food distribution channel, and 3,000 gloves to medical professionals.
- Borgata (Atlantic City, New Jersey) donated more than 35,000 pounds of food to the Boys and Girls Club of Atlantic County and to the Community Food Bank of NJ.

Employee Relief Auction

BACKGROUND

The largest golf resort in North America, Pinehurst was forced to close its three historic hotels for two months during the COVID-19 crisis. Pinehurst essentially missed its entire spring season in 2020, which led to the temporary layoff of more than 80 percent of employees — nearly 1,000 people.

Pinehurst acted quickly to help by launching the Pinehurst Employee Relief Auction, which offered more than 20 once-in-a-lifetime experiences in an online auction format to raise money for laid-off employees. Experiences included playing famed Pinehurst No. 2 with the architect who restored the course, Bill Coore; playing The Cradle short course with its designer, Gil Hanse; visiting legendary golf architect Donald Ross's home; playing all nine of Pinehurst's championship golf courses; getaways to The Spa at Pinehurst; brewing and naming a craft beer at Pinehurst Brewing Co.; and playing Pinehurst No. 2 with the caddie for 1999 U.S. Open champion Payne Stewart.

RESULTS

The Pinehurst Employee Relief Auction raised \$294,984. The success of the auction allowed Pinehurst to continue covering employees' insurance premiums through the end of May and to supplement weekly care packages with additional food and essentials; more than 200 care packages were given out each week. Additionally, Pinehurst was able to donate to local organizations, including Boys & Girls Club of Sandhills, Moore Free & Charitable Clinic, and Eastern NC Food Bank. And since reopening its hotels on May 22, 2020, Pinehurst has been able to welcome back more than 800 laid-off employees.



Feeding Furloughed Hospitality Workers

BACKGROUND

Even in the midst of the spring coronavirus shutdown, the kitchens of the Irving Convention Center at Las Colinas (ICC) were a hub of activity, with the culinary team turning out meals for area hospitality workers furloughed due to the pandemic. The project was a partnership between the ICC and StaffMeal, a local nonprofit organization formed to help feed these hard-hit workers and their families.

The ICC culinary staff prepped and cooked 2,400 free meal kits per week for seven consecutive weeks, with each kit containing breakfast and dinner to feed a family of four. The kits were distributed in a safe, socially distanced manner from the ICC's loading dock each Saturday to out-of-work hotel and restaurant employees who had preregistered online. While ICC donated its space and labor to the project, local suppliers donated ingredients, with cash and in-kind donations of goods and services totaling more than \$125,000.

RESULTS

Over the duration of the program, which concluded when Texas restaurants were allowed to return to 75-percent occupancy, the ICC prepared and distributed some 16,000 meals. ICC culinary volunteers put in 72 to 120 hours a week. Besides providing much-needed sustenance to the community, the program also united ICC's culinary staff around a new common purpose and allowed them to put their training and talent to the service of their fellow hospitality professionals.



Nourish Lexington

BACKGROUND

At the start of the pandemic, VisitLEX partnered with FoodChain, Keeneland Racecourse, and the E.E. Murry Family Foundation to create Nourish Lexington, which addressed two problems: community-wide food insecurity and hospitality industry job losses. Nourish Lexington's dual goals were to provide meals to people in Central Kentucky needing immediate access to food — and to provide jobs for displaced restaurant workers, who were hired to prepare and deliver the meals.

VisitLEX donated \$10,000 to kickstart the Nourish Lexington fund and leveraged partnerships with local restaurants to promote the program among displaced hospitality workers and create distribution points. Keeneland donated more than 1,500 pounds of food, which encouraged many Lexington restaurants to donate excess product, and also contributed 100 percent of proceeds from online sales in April 2020 to Nourish Lexington, for a total of \$22,000.

RESULTS

Nourish Lexington produced and distributed 200,000 meals to area hospitality workers, families in need, and seniors, and 68,103 meals for schoolchildren. More than \$525,000 went back into the local food economy, which helped keep restaurant workers employed. Thanks to FoodChain, \$86,259 went directly to food service workers displaced from their jobs.



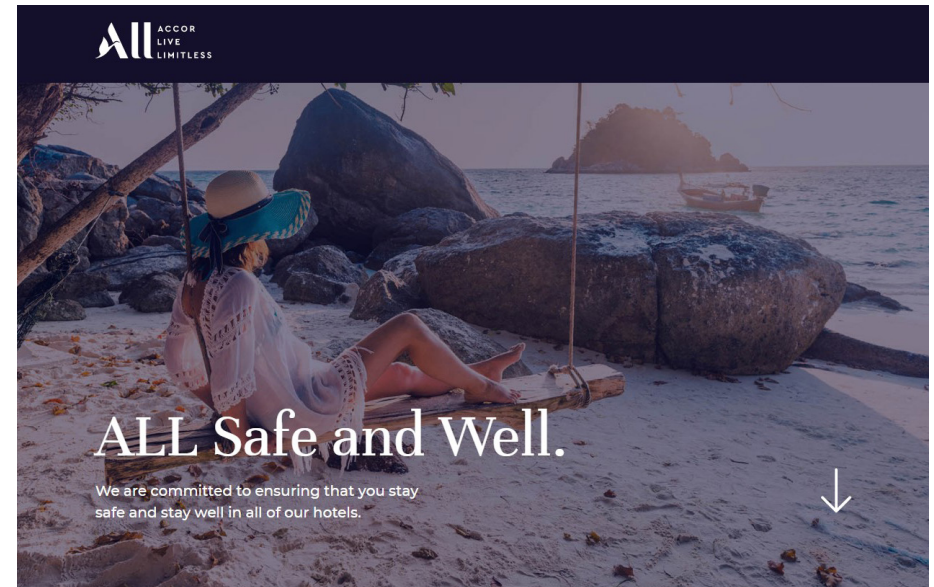
ALL Safe and Well

BACKGROUND

When hotels began reopening after the initial shutdown, Accor wanted to inspire confidence with guests and colleagues throughout North and Central America. This led to the development of ALL Safe and Well, a real-time information hub for hotels, clients, employees, and stakeholders to find accurate information on COVID-19. Partner resource ALL Meet Well provided a similar level of information for meeting and event planners. Accor also launched the global ALLSAFE label, representing stringent cleaning standards and operational procedures developed with Bureau Veritas, a world leader in testing, inspections, and certification.

RESULTS

Accor's goals included having more than 65 percent of regional properties ALLSAFE-certified by the end of 2020, driving a combined 120,000 website views to ALLSafeAndWell.com and the global ALLSAFE page, and generating 175,000 room nights with the Stay Close regional offer. Accor successfully exceeded all goals, with more than 75 percent of hotels having received ALLSAFE certification by November 2020, ALLSafeAndWell.com and the global ALLSAFE page hitting 200,000 site visits, and Stay Close driving more than 275,900 room nights.



Virtual Vacay

BACKGROUND

At the onset of the global pandemic, Puerto Rico reacted quickly, imposing a curfew and strict measures to ensure health safety. This posed a unique challenge: how to keep Puerto Rico top of mind while reminding travelers to stay home. By becoming the first U.S. destination to offer virtual tourism — providing global visibility to the island's local tourism community, highlighting its unique culture and natural attractions, and ensuring that travelers would commit to visit when the time was right. While many destinations pulled back on marketing, Puerto Rico pushed forward in a spirit of positivity and resilience that showcased its local talent and small businesses.

RESULTS

Millions of people around the world became virtual visitors of Puerto Rico through digital-savvy techniques that kept the island front of mind for future travel. Earned-media efforts resulted in more than 480 placements in publications including *The New York Times*, *National Geographic*, *Forbes*, *BuzzFeed*, *Travel + Leisure*, and *Men's Journal*. In two months, the activations garnered 1.1 billion total impressions and substantial increases in audience size, views, and reactions. Instagram profile views and followers grew by 72 percent and 69 percent, respectively, while Facebook page views and interactions increased by 30 percent and 8 percent, respectively.



Don't Cancel It, Push It!

BACKGROUND

Grupo Tauá de Hotéis is responsible for five companies in the hospitality sector and is present in three Brazilian states. When the pandemic forced the closing of hotels, Grupo Tauá understood that many customers would cancel reservations on impulse, motivated by fear and panic. The company responded by adding a popup to its hotels websites activated by clicking the "cancel reservations" button that encouraged customers to reschedule their reservation. The main message was "Don't cancel it, push it!" and the popup allowed customers to choose a rescheduled date, which was sent to the hotel's reservations center.

RESULTS

By including the popup feature in its ecommerce platform, Grupo Tauá prevented 61 percent of reservations from being canceled from April to June 2020; the company discontinued the popup when hotels reopened. Due to the sensitivity of the moment, proactively offering guests flexibility and dialogue was fundamental to the success of the program and delivered on Grupo Tauá's core promise: welcoming service and customer satisfaction.



A Model for Tourism Leadership

BACKGROUND

During the first months of the pandemic, Jamaica suffered a 40-percent loss in GDP, marking the country's worst economic decline in four decades. In response, the Jamaica Tourist Board developed a recovery strategy focused on maintaining the destination's connection with international travelers, showcasing Jamaica's leadership in resilience, and communicating the island's readiness to safely welcome visitors. Components included:

- Gen-C, a concept that acknowledges a generation of travelers born from the shared experience of pandemic shutdowns and driving new demands for COVID-era travel.
- "Escape to Jamaica," a digital series highlighting cuisine, wellness, and music through cooking demos, fitness classes, and DJ sessions. Through a partnership with DestinationWeddings.com, couples were married via Zoom by an officiant on the beach in Jamaica during a virtual "destination" wedding with more than 7,000 viewers.
- A global media relations blitz when Jamaica reopened in June 2020, including an innovative virtual tourism update via Zoom breakout rooms that paired trade media with tourism partners for one-on-one discussions.
- Resilience Corridors, part of Jamaica's health and safety protocols that gave travelers a chance to explore while mitigating virus spread and allowing for rapid medical response.

RESULTS

The World Health Organization hailed Jamaica as a model in handling the pandemic, and Jamaica was one of the first countries to receive the Safe Travels Stamp from the World Travel & Tourism Council. More than 2 billion impressions were generated from media placements around the world, with the GEN-C Thought Leadership platform

CEOWORLD Magazine

Resilience will Define Jamaica's Tourism Recovery



generating more than 55 interviews and 476 million impressions and the "Escape to Jamaica" digital campaign exceeding 345 million impressions. And by the end of October 2020, Jamaica had welcomed more than 150,000 visitors since reopening.

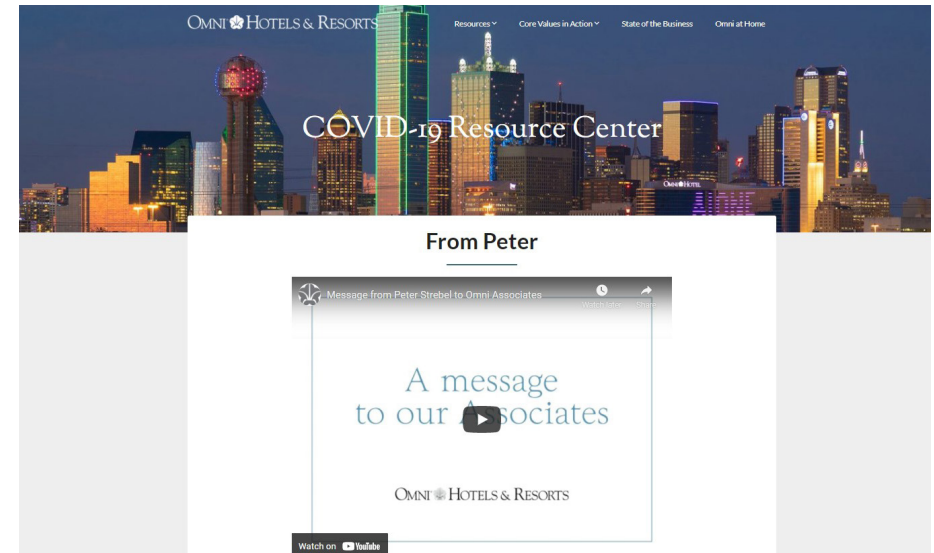
COVID-19 Resource Landing Page

BACKGROUND

Omni worked to reduce the heavy burdens COVID-19 placed on its family of associates by extending healthcare benefits, providing financial assistance through its Omni Circle foundation, and creating a COVID-19 resource center to share timely information. Communications, human resources, IT, digital commerce, and Omni executives worked quickly to launch the robust landing page and populate it with content that furloughed associates would find relevant, comforting, and inspiring during this challenging time — including videos from executives, state-of-the-business updates, Omni Circle grant application requests and donations, blog posts, community resources, and temporary job opportunities.

RESULTS

Omni's top three goals for the COVID-19 resources landing page were to develop 50 pieces of original content, reach an average of 750 daily page views, and achieve a 50-percent open rate on content update emails to associates. Omni exceeded the first two goals, delivering 96 pieces of content and hitting 1,000 page views, and came close on the third, achieving an open rate of 39 percent. Other highlights included more than 1,000 visits from social channels, more than 5,000 video views, and 93 donations to Omni Circle via the landing page.



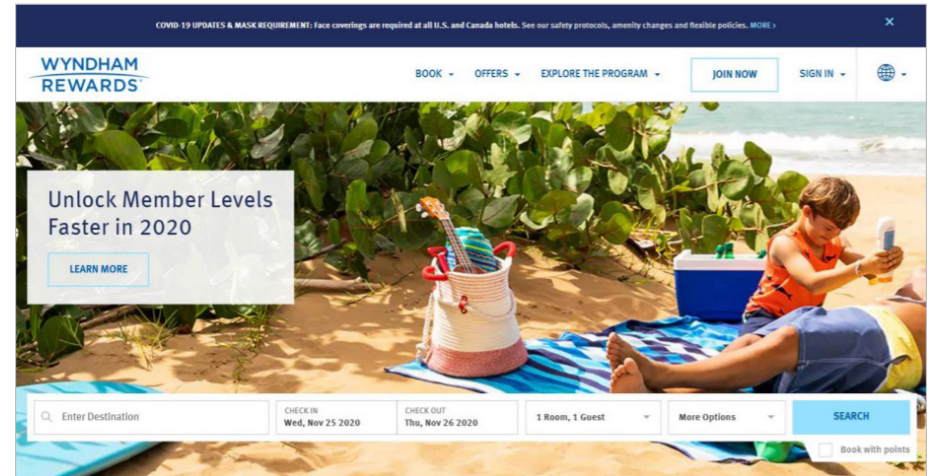
Crisis Response Marketing

BACKGROUND

In 2020, it was critical to ensure that Wyndham Rewards members felt peace of mind when it came to their points and status. To that end, Wyndham launched “Unlock Member Levels Faster,” a campaign that paused the expiration of Wyndham Rewards points for all members globally through the end of 2020, extended current member levels earned in 2019 through the end of 2021, relaxed earning requirements to allow members to gain status with fewer nights stayed, and relaxed cancellation policies. Wyndham also offered essential workers and first responders an instant complimentary gold membership in Wyndham Rewards and a 15-percent discount at participating hotels through the #EverydayHeroes initiative.

RESULTS

Through “Unlock Member Levels Faster,” Wyndham increased the number of members in all status levels; month over month, there was a 20-percent increase in members achieving the next level. Through #EverydayHeroes, 40 percent of those who signed up were new members, making this campaign successful in both enrolling new members and activating existing members.



Everyday Heroes

BACKGROUND

While it's easy to think of healthcare workers as essential workers, less thought of were those in other fields: truck drivers, delivery drivers, grocery associates, sanitation workers, construction workers, and so on. Wanting to give back to these individuals, many of whom are regular travelers who stay at Wyndham hotels, in mid-April 2020 the brand launched #EverydayHeroes — a campaign celebrating those on the frontlines of the pandemic with an instant, complimentary upgrade to Wyndham Rewards Gold Membership good through the end of 2021.

RESULTS

The campaign overperformed, successfully meeting all objectives. Originally slated to end on Sept. 30, 2020, the initiative was so well received that it was extended through the end of the year. On Oct. 28, 2020 — National First Responders Day — Wyndham surprised anyone who signed up for the program with 7,500 points, enough for a free night's stay. Slightly fewer than 50,000 individuals took advantage of the program; 40 percent of them were new members. The program also garnered extensive positive publicity across national trade and consumer media, resulting in more than 75 placements and 850 million impressions.



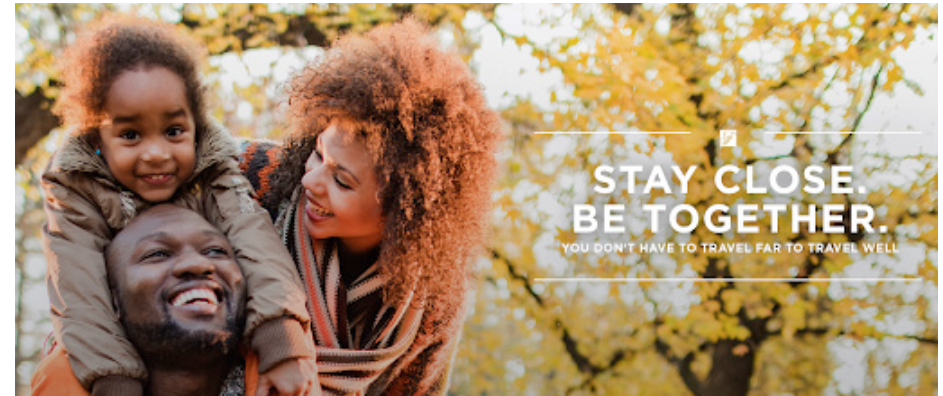
Stay Close

BACKGROUND

After extended closures, Accor knew the company needed to come back with a robust campaign that drove bookings while reassuring consumers that they were safe. With “Stay Close,” a first-in-market initiative that launched in May 2020, guests received one complimentary night for every night booked during the same stay and had the option to use their complimentary night as a second room; the campaign included a flexible cancellation policy, which was more important to guests than ever. Designed around the concept of safely traveling close to home with the ones you love, “Stay Close” included an array of strategic digital marketing tactics, including email, banner ads, paid search, and social media advertising. Hotels received customized ads specific to their property, with properties added on a staggered schedule as they reopened and had all necessary COVID protocols and procedures in place.

RESULTS

“Stay Close” resulted in more than 275,900 room nights sold, exceeding Accor’s goal by 58 percent, and 101,700 bookings, exceeding the goal by 56 percent. Additionally, the campaign had more than 24 million display-ad impressions, more than 8 million social media impressions, and 6 million emails delivered, with an open rate of 21.6 percent. The campaign performance was so strong that “Stay Close” relaunched in mid-October for an additional month.



At Home With Baha Mar

BACKGROUND

As COVID-19 brought the travel industry to a halt, Baha Mar shifted course. While closed to guests, the resort complex in the Bahamas created and shared At Home With Baha Mar, a series of brand-amplifying virtual experiences bringing its chefs, mixologists, spa therapies, children's activities, and more into guests' homes, from recipes for hands-on gourmet meals, to game ideas, to wellness ideas. Based on the success of the first At Home series, the resort created At Home With Baha Mar: Mother's Day Edition in May 2020, which featured an exclusive recipe from celebrity chef Marcus Samuelsson, meditation and yoga tips for the entire family, card games, and ideas for personalized Mother's Day cards featuring Bahamian animals.

RESULTS

Baha Mar shared At Home With Baha Mar kits via direct emails to its database of past and potential guests, via social media channels, and through travel, lifestyle, and trade media — with open and click-through rates that were significantly higher than industry averages. Additionally, guests forwarded the kits to more than 1,000 new contacts, attracting new audiences for Baha Mar. Via social media, the Mother's Day program reached more than 8,000 users, and thanks to strong press coverage, At Home With Baha Mar generated more than 1.4 million media impressions.



Virtual Painkiller Happy Hour

BACKGROUND

Due to funding restrictions brought on by the pandemic, the British Virgin Islands Tourist Board (BVITB) needed to reduce or pause most North American sales, marketing, and public relations activity. Through a joint public relations and marketing effort, the BVTIB sought to highlight the Painkiller, the world-famous BVI cocktail, and let fans in on the secret of how to make this iconic drink. The BVITB hosted a virtual happy hour in April 2020, and invited 17 select top-tier media to attend, sending the journalists ingredients to make a Painkiller as well as press materials about BVI.

RESULTS

The invitation was extended broadly to BVI fans and the Caribbean Tourism Organization list, which resulted in live attendance of more than 1,700 people. Attendees shared their at-home bartending successes via Instagram Stories, catching the attention of publications such as *Forbes*, *AFAR*, *Saveur*, and *The Boston Globe*, with a total incremental audience of 606,709 followers. Following the event, BVITB added the Facebook Live session to its website, where it received more than 14,000 views, and also pitched the Painkiller story to U.S. media, generating nine stories that reached a combined audience of more than 99 million.



2020 Recovery Campaign

BACKGROUND

Choice Hotels refers to its core target customer as the “resourceful American.” This traveler often works in a gray-collar role, skews toward leisure travel, and tends to drive to a destination rather than fly. When COVID shifted traveler attitudes and behaviors in this direction across the board, Choice seized the opportunity to speak to a broader audience looking to release the pent-up demand industry polls forecasted. Although travel had dropped drastically in March and April 2020, traveler optimism in late April and early May was growing, with 40 percent of travelers saying they were likely to take a vacation in the coming six months, compared to 31 percent in early April. As pent-up consumer travel demand began to release, Choice wanted to capture their bookings.

RESULTS

After the launch of regional assets targeted geographically, Choice saw significant revenue growth originating from bookings by consumers who lived within close driving distance of its hotels (25 miles or less), reflecting the success of the regional and road-trip-based strategy. In Q3 2020, Choice reported \$14.5 million in net profit despite experiencing the worst year on record for the travel industry, while the company’s domestic systemwide RevPAR outperformed the general hotel industry by 20 percentage points in the market segments where Choice operates. As of November 2020, Choice Hotels’ stock price had risen 46 percent over a six-month period, significantly outperforming many hospitality peers.



The Costa Rica Essentials Toolkit

BACKGROUND

After Costa Rica closed its borders to all foreign travelers in March 2020, the Costa Rica Tourism Board wanted to connect and empathize with its passionate community of travelers during this challenging time. While many destinations were pausing advertising entirely, Costa Rica leaned into the positioning of “Life’s Essentials Found Here,” the campaign it had just launched in 2019, to suggest that travelers pause and think about what really mattered, noting that when the time was right, Costa Rica would be ready to welcome them. Costa Rica communicated this idea through inspirational messaging and experiences from the destination, including producing a video called “We’ll Be Here”; developing a series of cooking videos, coloring worksheets, craft projects, digital wellness retreats, and wanderlust video backgrounds, all available via the newly launched Toolkit Hub: Find Some Balance; sponsoring Pandora’s Relaxation Radio station via in-stream audio, display, and video; and partnering with family experience store CAMP to host an Instagram takeover and virtual vacation.

RESULTS

Costa Rica’s organic, grassroots campaign delivered results across platforms. Find Some Balance nearly doubled the tourism board’s average page view time, and toolkit activities were shared broadly, generating more than 222 million media impressions, while “We’ll Be Here” garnered more than 37.5 million impressions and the Pandora sponsorship reached more than 300,000 listeners. In addition, the Instagram takeover and virtual vacation resulted in 1.8 million media and consumer impressions and nearly 25,000 social media impressions.



Explore Your Georgia

BACKGROUND

To inspire people to travel again, Explore Georgia had to create a plan that was cost-effective, used assets it already had, and could be optimized and scaled quickly. Focusing on road trips, the organization began by reaching out to Georgia residents, encouraging them to satisfy their desire to travel safely by checking out previously unexplored corners of their home state. Subsequent phases expanded to include Florida residents and then people in neighboring states to the north. At every phase, Explore Georgia sought to generate awareness of the breathtaking and widely varied opportunities that Georgia offers for travel of all kinds.

RESULTS

The campaign generated a 53-percent arrival lift, with more than 11,000 visitors tracked 10 weeks in, and also increased the length of stay by 24 percent. Georgia's travel spending was 72 percent higher than the national state average and currently stands more than 350 percent higher than at its lowest point during the pandemic. Explore Georgia also provided inspirational social media content and promoted safe activities, helping keep COVID sentiment 55-percent positive.



The Path Forward Readiness Plan

BACKGROUND

As a destination, it was critical that Hilton Head worked with partner businesses, residents, and visitors throughout the island to maintain the frequency of health-and-safety-focused messaging while still attracting visitors. With that in mind, Hilton Head created a readiness plan called The Path Forward that had three objectives: to increase online awareness of Hilton Head Island as a vacation destination taking health and safety seriously; educate visitors and residents on the safety measures in place throughout the destination and within each partner business while encouraging all to follow safety protocols; and drive increased referrals and phone inquiries from HiltonHeadIsland.org to partners, leading to increased visitation. Hilton Head integrated messaging throughout its website, social media, video, email, public relations, and traditional marketing channels, and further raised awareness for safety protocols with in-market window signage and branded face masks at high-traffic retail outlets.

RESULTS

Marketing activation resulted in increased awareness of Hilton Head and its health and safety protocols as well as realized business for the destination. Website visitation increased by 32.8 percent year-over-year, while free member listing referrals increased by 57 percent, co-op marketing partner referrals increased by 104 percent, and golf marketing referrals increased by 39 percent. Social media efforts saw a 28-percent increase in cross-channel engagement and a 54-percent increase in referrals from social traffic to member websites. In addition, recovery-oriented video content received more than 3.2 million views through YouTube and social media.



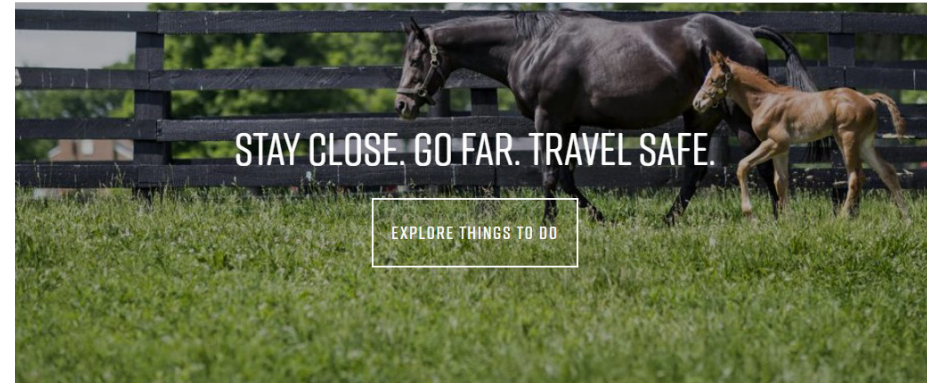
Stay Close, Go Far

BACKGROUND

As COVID-19 travel restrictions started to ease, Kentucky's research made an overwhelming case that in-state travel would be the first to resume, with residents looking for road trips, safe outdoor activities, and uncrowded areas. Kentucky responded with "Stay Close, Go Far," a campaign targeting in-state residents ages 25 to 64 who were more prone to family travel — and aimed at instilling in them a sense of pride to get out and explore the place they call home, support businesses in need, and develop deeper loyalty that will pay off in years to come.

RESULTS

"Stay Close, Go Far" exceeded KPI benchmarks across the board, with paid media resulting in 35 million total impressions and more than 62,000 landing-page views. The campaign also garnered nearly 250,000 site visits and an 87-percent video completion rate, while video polls and awareness ads on social generated more than 40,000 sessions and social conversion ads drove 3,663 new email subscribers and 1,530 guide requests. A Nielsen study found that 5 percent more of respondents who were exposed to this campaign said they "definitely will" or "probably will" vacation in Kentucky in the next six months versus respondents not exposed to the campaign. Data from Arrivalist showed that the campaign has influenced nearly 9,000 actual visits so far.



Chief Virtual Learning Officer

BACKGROUND

While remote learning presented many challenges for already-overburdened parents, it also presented a silver lining: Because school wasn't defined by a physical classroom, parents had more flexibility to travel. Kimpton set out to help them manage virtual learning on the road to encourage family travel with the chief virtual learning officer (CVLO), an on-property, individual hotel position whose job is to support families for virtual learning success — whether that's setting up Zoom or providing school supplies and snacks. Other perks are designed to ease the virtual learning burden facing families on the road, including a late checkout to accommodate the school day, a discounted day rate for a second room, and a complimentary bottle of wine for parents.

RESULTS

Launched in early-September 2020, the CVLO program generated nearly 2 billion impressions and 42 stories in one month, including coverage in *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *CNBC*, *Travel + Leisure*, and *Yahoo! Finance*. CVLO-participating hotels saw an average increase of 48.5 percent in market share in September, while October was one of the strongest months yet for Kimpton, with a tremendous number of leisure travelers. Additionally, Kimpton is seeing high purchase intent for “school-cation” ads and a rise in direct bookings at CVLO-participating hotels.



Caribbean and Latin America Recovery Strategy

BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 crisis had an unprecedented impact on Marriott's hotel portfolio in the Caribbean and Latin America (CALA). In response, Marriott CALA launched a recovery strategy aimed at capturing domestic travelers in markets where governments had lifted restrictions and allowed local tourists and international travelers from the United States looking to book. Marriott CALA did a country-level traffic boost in select markets, pushing users with clear travel intent to visit Marriott.com and targeting users with known in-market intent promoting specific destinations. Destination Prospecting on Facebook showcased destinations in Latin America to prospecting domestic travelers, while Dynamic Ads for Travel on Facebook showcased last-seen properties on Marriott.com. Regional Getaways, an alpha product test in Facebook, featured properties to users up to 350 miles away from origin cities, excluding the first 80 miles.

RESULTS

More than 4,790 incremental bookings were generated in the Caribbean and Latin America. Top-performing markets included Mexico, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and Colombia. In total, the recovery strategy delivered \$904 million in revenue, more than 2.2 million impressions, and more than 1.96 million clicks.



Buy One, Give One Vacay Layaway

BACKGROUND

When the pandemic hit, MMGY and HSMAI wanted to unite the hospitality industry and offer a collective charitable response, providing immediate funds to hotels as well as a much-deserved respite in the future for healthcare workers. To jump-start leisure travel, MMGY launched the “Buy One, Give One Vacay Layaway” program. Consumers were incentivized to buy future travel with special offers ranging from discounted stays, to gift cards, to loyalty points. In return, participating hospitality brands and hotels would donate room nights, gift cards, or loyalty points to medical organizations — including the American Nurses Association and New York-Presbyterian — to distribute to medical professionals. The industry-wide program was conceived, created, and launched in less than a month — including securing more than 40 hotel partners and developing a website and toolkit with resources, templates, and rules of engagement.

RESULTS

“Buy One, Give One” provided immediate revenue to participating hotels and hospitality brands, with the purchase of more than 65,000 room nights. These partners distributed 385 room nights to frontline healthcare workers as a well-deserved thank you. The program generated nearly 60 press clips in prominent consumer and trade media, leading to more than 121 million media impressions. Social media resulted in another 2.5 million impressions, including nearly 32,000 engagements, 17,000 clicks, and 85,000 video views across 64 published posts.



Omni Safe & Clean

BACKGROUND

As COVID-19 impacted the industry, Omni Hotels & Resorts closed 44 hotels within its portfolio of 51, laying off or furloughing nearly 92 percent of its workforce. At the industry level, cleaning and safety measures were being discussed every day, and Omni worked to develop and publicize its own stringent standards. To do that, Omni shared information with partners like Ecolab and industry organizations like the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) and the U.S. Travel Association and engaged with partners and the internal creative team to develop visually appealing and informative assets. Omni also was able to bring back two associates from furlough to develop the Omni Safe & Clean initiative; teams scripted a video outlining the new efforts that was shared on OmniHotels.com and distributed via email and social media.

RESULTS

Omni Safe & Clean achieved 143 media placements resulting in 84 million earned impressions, including coverage in top-tier national media outlets with a large travel audience like *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, Skift, and The Points Guy. The email distributed to Omni's database achieved a 21-percent open rate and a 4-percent click-to-open rate, influencing 476 bookings, 1,315 room nights, and more than \$300,000 in revenue. The video resulted in 7,753 impressions, 228 engagements (benchmark of 190), and a 9.25-percent engagement rate (benchmark of 4.5 percent). The Omni Safe & Clean landing page saw 163,337 pageviews with a 2.02-minute average view time.



Redefining Roles for Success

BACKGROUND

The pandemic's impact on travel meant that Atrium Hospitality had to work with smaller teams without compromising standards. Atrium responded by focusing on two goals: creating a cross-functional hotel position and streamlining the number of job descriptions within the company's national hotel portfolio. To accomplish the first goal, Atrium created the all-purpose manager (APM) position to handle multiple operational responsibilities, with an emphasis on clean, safe guest stays. APM responsibilities cross all operational departments, including culinary, transportation, banquet, housekeeping, front office, and engineering, and the position also provides accounting and sales support. For the second goal, the creation of the APM position sparked an initiative to refine Atrium's job description library. Atrium transformed job descriptions from being title-oriented to purpose-centered, better articulating the needs of each role and how they correlate to broader responsibilities. This strategic effort also led to the development of more utility players across all hotels and helped enhance associates' skillsets.

RESULTS

Atrium has one to three APMs on property compared to pre-pandemic levels of up to 20 managers. By combining critical success factors into the APM role, 98 percent of hotels were able to stay open throughout the pandemic. And by redesigning its job description library, Atrium eliminated or combined 60 percent of job descriptions, with the remaining 125 job descriptions redefined to focus on the purpose of each role and the nature of the work. This approach is more conducive to developing cross-functional teams and yielding individuals with the skills to assume leadership roles.



Omni Circle Foundation

BACKGROUND

Created in 2005 in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and funded by a generous donation from The Rowling Foundation along with associate donations, Omni Circle provides grants to Omni associates facing extenuating circumstances. Prior to COVID, Omni Circle distributed more than \$1.3 million to associates in need. Due to the pandemic, Omni closed 44 out of 51 hotels, laying off or furloughing nearly 92 percent of its workforce. Another donation from The Rowling Foundation — bolstered by a donation-matching program from Omni's owners — allowed Omni Circle to begin dispersing funds immediately. To help as many associations as quickly as possible, Omni relaxed qualification criteria, streamlined the application process, and increased grant amounts.

RESULTS

The Omni Circle Foundation distributed more than \$3 million to furloughed Omni associates; the average grant amount was \$1,314.86. Over four months, 70 percent of applications were approved, nearly tripling Omni Circle's impact from inception. Former Omni associates donated a total of \$2,570, while individual properties rallied in creative ways. Inspired by the generosity of their general manager and his wife, who drove to all furloughed associates' homes sharing homemade food, for example, associates at Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate started a GoFundMe page for fellow associates, raising \$3,228.62, while the team at Omni Scottsdale Resort & Spa at Montelucia started a weekly outdoor block party that raised \$9,000.



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Emerald Members



Sapphire Members



Ruby Members

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Concord Hospitality
Diamond Resorts
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GitGo
Google
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Marcus Hotels & Resorts
OTA Insight
Oracle Hospitality
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