

Recruiting and Deploying Niche Market Sellers

HSMAI's [Sales Advisory Board](#) is developing resources to help hospitality organizations that are gearing up to bring back staff and hire for new positions, including niche market sellers.

No matter the market, the hotel sales process is pretty basic:

1. Researching key and target accounts.
2. Prospecting strategically versus “dialing for dollars.”
3. Probing to find the “hot buttons.”
4. Presenting the experience versus the features.
5. Overcoming objections.
6. Closing more effectively every time.

There is no one secret for how to succeed in hotel sales. No matter your market, you need a combination of specific skills and knowledge to ultimately win the business. Each market segment is unique and nuanced — and the strengths, skills, knowledge, and experience required to be a successful seller in each segment are unique.

The following outline will help sales leaders effectively recruit and deploy niche market sellers:

MARKET SEGMENT	STRENGTHS, SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, and EXPERIENCE	CUSTOMIZE THIS FOR YOUR HOTEL
Business Travel	<p>Strengths and Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prospecting and solicitation • Strategic thinking and planning • Strong business acumen • Data mining • SMART plan execution • Engaging presentation skills • Effective time management • Negotiating • Value writing • Loading rates, coding, and tracking • Adept at navigating BI tools (e.g., Agency 360, Lanyon, etc.) • Self-motivated <p>Knowledge and Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience developing tactical sales plans and implementing key initiatives to benefit the hotel's top-line, market share gains, and market reputation • Experience with the corporate market, BTA, RFPs, GDS 	<p>Use this column for your unique needs or add more columns if needed. Example columns include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate rating — if you are using this to evaluate potential new hires • Your incentive/compensation plan — connecting it to the development of knowledge and skills, and results • Performance reviews — and determining if your sellers are optimally deployed • Persuasion/education — if you need to educate stakeholders about the nuanced needs of each

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the local area, including industrial parks, business centers, executive centers • Connections to community business groups and chambers of commerce • Industry affiliations (for example, with MPI, SITE, IMEX, GBTA, BTN, etc.) • Contract savviness — understands the nuances of contracts and contract language • Understanding of travel agents and GDS • Experience with reservation portals such as Concur 	<p><i>niche market to get or retain support for each position</i></p>
<p>SMERF (Social, Military, Education, Religious, Fraternal)</p>	<p>Strengths and Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prospecting and solicitation • Strategic planning • Empathy and ability to connect with this niche's clientele, which are often different from straightforward corporate personalities • Interpersonal relationship building and management • Self-motivated • Curiosity • Effective time management <p>Knowledge and Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience partnering with other venues who cater to one-time social events such as weddings, reunions, bar/bat mitzvahs, military reunions, etc. • Understanding of the landscape of fraternities, sororities, religious conventions/retreats, and sports (youth) stay-to-play tournaments • Understanding of various religious ceremonies • Wedding market knowledge, including neighboring venues, digital resources (e.g., The Knot, Wedding Wire, etc.) • Industry affiliations (e.g., Connect Meetings, RCMA, Sports ETA, etc.) 	

<p>Motorcoach and Destination Marketing</p>	<p>Strengths and Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prospecting and solicitation • Strategic planning • Itinerary building • Creation of packages • Logistics management • Effective time management <p>Knowledge and Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience building relationships with tour operators • Knowledge of how to work with local destination marketing organizations and their motorcoach representatives • Understanding of the state tourism office and how it promotes the destination to groups • Experience serving as a professional coach escort • Industry affiliations (e.g., American Bus Association, United Bus Association) 	
<p>Government</p>	<p>Strengths and Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prospecting and solicitation • Strategic planning • Tenacity and persistence • Effective time management <p>Knowledge and Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience registering with SAM.gov, FEMA, local government offices, and other state and federal registries • Knowing how to work with and brand for CWTSatoTravel, ADTRAV, FedRooms, Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTACs), etc. • Experience with the government procurement process, including knowledge of the operational requirements of government programs (e.g., FedRooms' rate visibility and commission requirements) • Industry affiliations (e.g., SGMP) 	
<p>Association and Meeting Markets</p>	<p>Strengths and Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prospecting and solicitation • Strategic planning • Superior relationship and networking skills 	

- Engaging presentation skills
- Self-motivated
- Value writing
- Effective time management
- Strong business acumen
- Data mining
- SMART plan execution
- Consultative selling
- Social selling
- Negotiating

Knowledge and Experience

- Strong third-party relationships
- Extremely comfortable attending events alone and starting conversations with strangers
- Understanding of the buying process and timelines for associations and other meeting and event sponsors
- Contract savviness — understands the nuances of contracts and contract language
- Industry affiliations (e.g., PCMA, ASAE, IMEX)