



Stanford eCorner

Using Website Innovations to Meet Unrecognized Needs

Chip Conley, *Joie de Vivre Hospitality*

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In order to match the specific personalities of customers with the specific personalities of their hotels, Joie de Vivre implemented a creative website innovation. Using an avatar and an online survey, the website is able to provide a hotel that is tailor made to fit the individual customer. In order to meet another unrecognized need of the customer, the site provides psychographically customized travel advice that is off the beaten track. As a result of this innovation, Joie de Vivre now receives 70% of its bookings through its own website and has won E-marketer of the year awards several years running.



Transcript

What we realize is we had these different hotels each with its own personality and so what we added to our website was a one-minute personality test that people to our website don't have to take. But if they want to take, they can go on to our any website and click on this person Yvette the hotel matchmaker you'll see on the homepage, Yvette the hotel matchmaker and she actually takes you through a one-minute personality test where we ask you five questions and we can get five to ten adjectives that best describe you. And what we deliver back to you is the five hotels within our collection of 35 or 40 hotels that best suite your personality. And then two things that you didn't ask for, travel advice that's psychographically customized for you. Now what I mean by that is we'll give you first of all six things to do in your travel destination that fit your personality, your identity. Because we understand from the personality test you've taken. This one-minute personality test who you are and what you like doing and how other people see you and then we've come up, we have 250 hidden treasures of things to do around the state of California. When I say hidden treasure I mean, not like going to Chinatown in San Francisco or Golden Gate Bridge but it's something that's a little offbeat and sort of fun that only locals will tend to know about. And we give you the state that fit your personality. And then we give you one other thing, we have 50 local folks on our site from the different parts of the state and there's a section on our site that says locals talk.

And on that part of the site, you click on the local that looks interesting to you and learn about them. What we do with Yvette is we actually give you the two of these 50 locals that are most similar to you. And not for a date, not to try some date or like that but these two locals are the ones who most are similar to you so that, if you've never been to California before, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Silicon Valley or wherever, we're going to actually to connect you to two people who are very similar to you, not with our email address but with about four paragraphs from that personal back- their perfect day. So if you're coming to San Francisco and there's somebody who's just like you in San Francisco, we're saying, they're local and here's their perfect day and the things they would want to do. So in essence we started delivering on the unrecognized need of a customer. And what happened over the course of five years in year 2002, 80% of our online reservations came from Expedia, Travelocity, all those very expensive 25% commission companies. By 2007, instead of 80% of those coming from them, 30% came from Expedia and Travelocity and all we got are the big guys. And 70% of our reservations came from our own website. And by

making that change, and we won the you know, the award for E-marketer of the year worldwide of hotel chain including Marriott helping star with big ones and we won it actually three years running now. What it speaks to and what this pyramid speaks to is the idea that what differentiates you from your customer, if you want to build a relationship with a customer, it's all about creating relationships.

And it's all about creating loyalty. And if you want to create loyalty with your customers and do something memorable and that leads to word of mouth, we spend, we're going to, our annual sales is around \$250 million as a company and we spend less than \$50,000.00 a year in print advertising. \$250 million a year in revenues and less than \$50,000.00 total for 40 hotels, 22 restaurants, 4 spas because it's all about the relationship we create. So we create a great relationship at the peak of the pyramid for the customers they go out and tell people and they end up coming back for more. And frankly if we treat our employees well, that's another piece of the puzzle that the employees build a relationship with the customers.