

## **Sheraton Hotels and Resorts**

A Case Study Examining How the Hotel Company Sheraton Used a Social Media Platform and other Forms of Social Media to Allow Users to Share their Travel Experience via the Internet

Kati Kampi  
COMM: 307 Social Media  
Section 03, 5:00 p.m.

Monday March 19, 2012

## **Introduction**

The Sheraton was started in 1937 when the company's founders, Ernest Henderson and Robert Moore, acquired their first hotel in Springfield, Massachusetts. Ten years later the Sheraton Corporation of America becomes the first hotel chain to be listed on the New York Stock Exchange. From there the founders expanded their property, and in 1949 end up becoming international, and in no time the company was opening and expanding around the world. "In 1998 Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc. purchased Sheraton and is now their operator and franchisor, and Sheraton is their biggest brand" (Starwood Hotels & Resorts, 2011). Their company is very well known, and they have to keep up with the whole world. They were one of the first companies to have a social networking website, and it is still going strong today.

Sheraton has many online communities such as, Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, and blogging. The social media platform the Sheraton used in December 2009 called "Sheraton Shared Moments" is the social media campaign the focus will be on during analysis. Sheraton Hotels Company does a good job of creating successful social media campaigns in order to invite customers to share their travel stories.

## **Analysis**

In December of 2009, Sheraton Hotels launched a new social media platform "Sheraton Shared Moments". A news release sent out by Jill Lloyd (2009) said: "Sheraton Shared Moments' enables users to share their travel experiences with friends and family and the public via the Internet. Those who sign up to the portal and share their moments also have the chance to win one of five dream holidays to a luxury Sheraton Hotel or Resort. If you sign up and share your moment by uploading a photo, saying where it was taken, how it felt and what made this

moment special, and then by answering a few questions on your travel likes and dislikes, users will be entered into the competition to win one of five week-long stays in a Sheraton hotel best suited to their travel preferences – be that Milan, Lisbon, Stockholm, Tenerife, or even the Red Sea in Egypt!” Susanne Barfoed, Vice President Brand Management, Sheraton Hotels & Resorts comments throughout and mentions how the Sheraton has a variety of programs they call Link@Sheraton to keep people connected to who’s important to them. They use laptops with fully wired work stations, Microsoft web camera provides video chat, and there is free WI-FI (“Hotels 2011 social,” 2011). Barfoed also mentions that “Shared Moments works in collaboration with multiple online communities including Twitter, Facebook and Flickr as well as blogging platforms and email to offer simple ways for customers to share their moments.”

The Sheraton’s idea of making a “connection” is perfect for their guests who want to keep in touch and up with their family, friends, and colleagues. Facebook is not needed to access and connect through the Sheraton website, but people who have Facebook can log in from Facebook Connect. This lets them "connect" their Facebook identity, friends and privacy to the site, and let them share stories and pictures about their trip. Your story can become approved and posted on their website. The site also has a search tool that allows visitors to search stories by activity and interest. Facebook is a great way for the Sheraton to advertise and keep loyal and new guests updated.

Sheraton also used Twitter (@Sheratonhotels) to directly connect to their customers. If a customer has a problem or concern they can tweet to the company to let them know. This allows Sheraton to immediately respond back and ask the customer send a direct message to get the full details of what went wrong, so they can assist them. Twitter also is a great way for positive

feedback from customers to let Sheraton know they are doing a good job and what they can improve.

Blogs allow people to input their ideas and allow people to contact each other. Customers' comments can provide feedback for the company. By posting on Flickr it can get the brand name across from sharing the pictures with the whole world.

### **Conclusion**

All companies want to make sure they reach out and supply their customers with updates and information as fast as possible. Sheraton has worked hard and succeeded at building an online community. A quote from an Academic Journal said, "Two-thirds of Fortune 100 companies use Twitter; 54 percent have a Facebook page and half manage a corporate YouTube channel, according to a 2010 Burson Marsteller study. Social media likely is here to stay, and other surveys find that more businesses and marketers plan on adopting and adapting to the phenomenon, which is reshaping the way organizations communicate" (Social Media, 2012). This shows how popular social media is and how fast it is spreading throughout the world, and how it is becoming necessary in order to stay in contact with the rest of the world.

Some benefits social media has on hotels is "it provides a cost-effective way to boost site traffic, has a viral effect – passionate reviewers will spread the word through their social media accounts, engages travelers in a new way, protects the brand's reputation through consistent monitoring and replies, creates loyal customers and generates brand buzz Boosts brand awareness" ("Hotels 2011 social," 2011). Sheraton Shared Moments is a wonderful example of a successful social media campaign. By simply sharing a memory from a previous getaway you get entered to win a trip, which proves to be fair. Companies need to stay visible by creating new campaigns to attract customers and stay dependable to their loyal customers. Every individual

has their own personal experience while traveling, and Sheraton Shared Moments provides various ways for them to share their memories with the public. Sheraton brings customers and the people who are important to them closer together. Sheraton is an example of how social media can be used for effective communication and linking the world together.

## References

*Hotels 2011 social media guide*. (2011). Retrieved March 12, 2012, from  
<http://socialmediasolutionsllc.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Hotel-Guide.pdf>

Lloyd, J. (2009, December 17). Sheraton hotels & resorts launches new 'shared moments' social media platform for sharing experiences and inspiring new ones. [Web log message]. Retrieved from <http://blogit.realwire.com>

Social media will rock on. (2012). *Industrial Engineer: IE*, 44(2), 15.

Starwood Hotels & Resorts. (2011). *Sheraton hotels and resorts: Sheraton history*. Retrieved May 9, 2012, from  
<http://www.starwoodhotels.com/sheraton/about/history.html>