



VACATION RENTAL MARKETING GUIDE: CREATIVE MARKETING

Creative Marketing Tips to Increase Traffic
to your Website and Convert Lookers into
Bookers

Kigo Vacation Rental Software

<http://kigo.net>

Why Do I Need Creative Marketing?

The Vacation Rental Industry is booming with growing demand for vacation rental properties, but at the same time competition is increasing at an exponential rate. Simply advertising your properties through vacation rental portals or creating a stand-alone website is no longer enough to stay ahead of your competition.

Creative marketing tactics can help you increase your bookings by giving you an edge over your competition, whether is it marketing efforts to obtain new guests or managing guests for referral marketing.

This short-paper outlines out-of-the-box marketing ideas that can help you differentiate your service over your competition to increase bookings by covering:

- Creative E-mail Marketing
- Personalized Google Maps
- Local Marketing
- Social Media
- Infographics
- Videos

For more information about Vacation Rental marketing and to receive regular marketing tips, be sure to subscribe to Kigo Vacation Rental's Blog:

<http://kigo.net/blog>



Top 5 Email Marketing Tips

Email is a great free marketing tool that can increase your engagement with past and potential guests, enabling increased referral for your vacation rental agency. In our earlier blog post we covered [the importance of email automation](#) when managing a guest's stay at a property, this week we will cover emailing past guests for referral marketing purposes.

We need to be careful not to overstep boundaries when reaching out to customers through e-mail. Emails are a personal-use tool, and if a guest feels your emails are irrelevant or are sent at wrong frequencies, you can be sure to expect them to unsubscribe from future emails, hindering your relationship.

To help ensure your emails do not get placed on a guest's black-list, we have rounded up the top 5 email marketing tips to increase your success with guests:

1. Encourage Communication

Being personal with your email recipient will help you build a relationship and decrease the chances of guests seeing your communication as marketing.

Make sure the "from" part of your email has a name in it, and if you want to include your company name you can place it at the end of the name such as Francesca Nurlu (Kigo).

Always address recipients with their names in the intro of the email, try and avoid intros such as "Hi All".

2. Avoiding the Dreaded Spam Folder

Email programs use two basic rules when it comes to placing an email in the Spam folder: High number of spammy words in your email, and credibility/familiarity of the sender. Having communicated with guests for their stay will help ensure you have credibility with the recipient.

In order to avoid placing too many spammy words in your e-mail we would suggest that you avoid Spam Trigger words such as, *Risk Free*, *100% Satisfied*, *Pre-approved* etc. It is especially important to ensure that your e-mail subject line avoids these words. [Here is a full list of spam trigger words.](#)

Again, making sure the content is relevant to the recipient will ensure you avoid them clicking on the Spam button through their email program.



3. Utilize Email Management Programs.

Just like you can automate your emails between the housekeeping staff, guests and property owners with [vacation rental software](#), you can manage a large email list with email management programs such as [MailChimp](#). The advantages of using these programs are that you can see what percentage of your emails were opened, whether any links inside the email were clicked, as well as who unsubscribed from your emails. Best of all, you can design your emails to look professional with pre-designed templates or easy-to-use template creators.

4. Newsletters and RSS Feeds

Finding content for email marketing campaigns can sometimes be challenging. If you have a blog, allowing guests to sign up for a newsletter will ensure you receive continuous brand recognition without having to create new content.

To ensure we are keeping in-line with tip #1, we can keep our newsletters and rss feeds personal by ensuring the content is of interest for specific guests, making sure that e-mails are addressed to the recipient by name (a great feature of email management programs) and also placing personal comments or questions at the end of your feed, such as *“As always [Name], let me know if you have any questions about the saving money when travelling abroad”*.

5. Make It Sharable

If you are sharing content that the user finds relevant, chances are they will want to share it on their social networks, such as Facebook, Google+ and Twitter. A simple “share this” link or widget will make it easy for guests to spread your content with their friends and family. Again, relevant content that is informational and sometimes funny is very important.

Next Topic: [Personalized Google Maps](#)



How to Create Personalized Google Maps

The vacation rental industry is fast growing and in order to stay ahead of the competition, owners and agencies need to utilize creative and out-of-the box marketing efforts to acquire guests and keep them happy for referrals.

Referral marketing aims at ensuring that past guests become your ambassador, and ensure you get a steady stream of bookings by referring your property and agency to their friends and family. The key to succeeding at referral marketing is to ensure you give guests an “above-and-beyond” customer service experience. Small and personal touches can make the difference between a repeat and referral guest and a one-time uninterested guest.

Here at [Kigo's vacation rental management and marketing blog](#) we provide regular creative marketing tips to enable our readers to see the wide variety of available marketing tactics. This week we will look at creating personal Google Maps.

What are Personal Google Maps?

Personal Google maps allow you to send your vacation rental guests a personalized map that can feature a wide variety of places:

- Local tourist attractions,
- Local restaurants,
- Emergency services,
- Kid-friendly local attractions,
- and many many more ideas!

The key is to create a bunch of Google Maps and send the appropriate ones to your guests in your check-in or welcome email. An older couple will appreciate a Restaurants map while a family with small children will appreciate a Kid-friendly map. Realizing which guests would like which maps will ensure that guests feel you created the map to meet their exact tourist needs, increasing your chance of referrals.

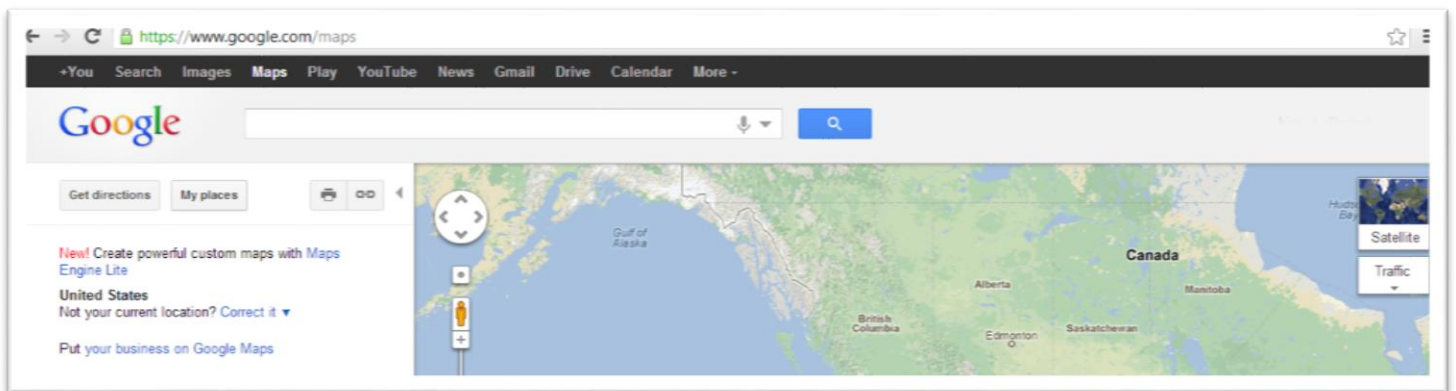
How do I create a Personal Google Map for my guests?

Creating a personal Google map is both easy, and will take less and less time each time you create a new one.

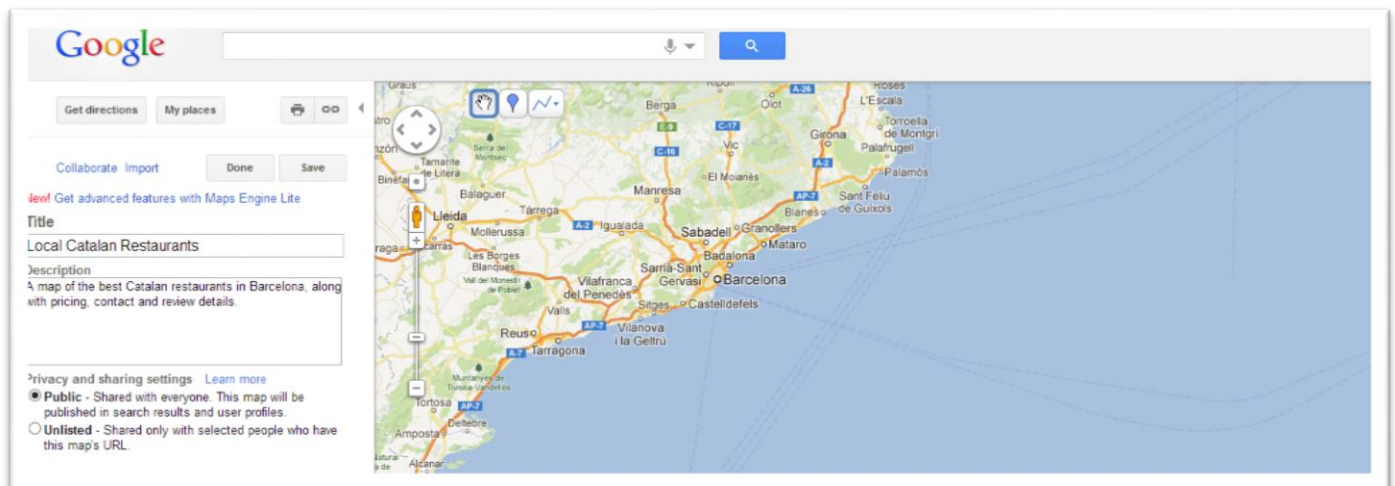
Step 1: Go to [Google Maps](#) and make sure you have signed into your Google Account.



Step 2: Click on “My places” on the left side-bar of the Google Maps page:

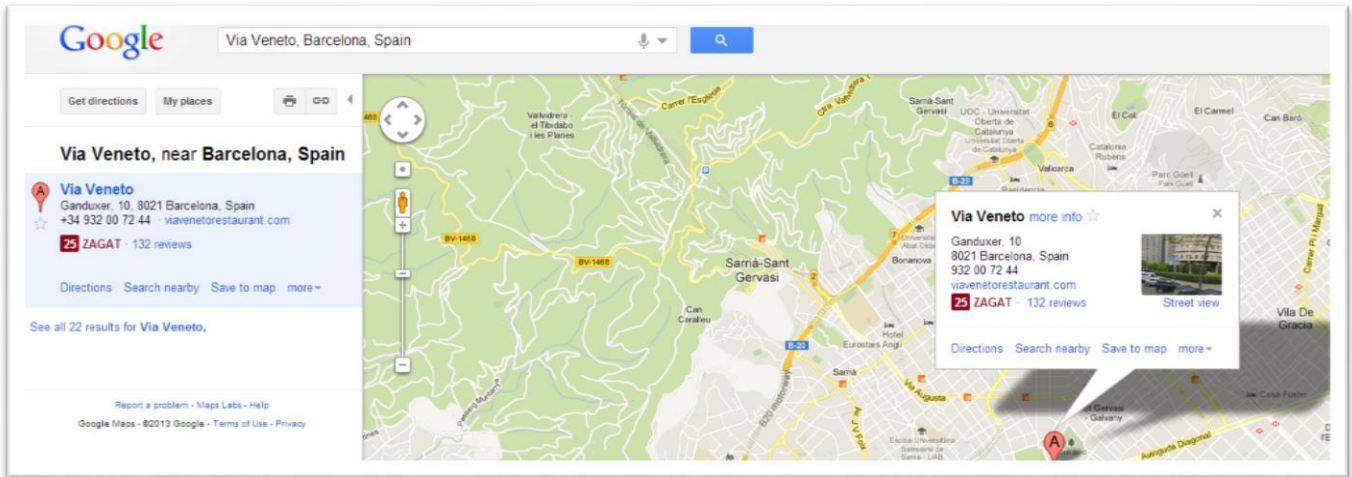


Step 3: Click on the red “Create Map” button, write a title and description for your Map. Please note that guests and the general public will be able to see the title and descriptions. If you want to keep the map private, you can select the unlisted option, this will ensure that only guests you send the map URL to can see the map, not the general public. When you have finished your title and description press the “Done” button.

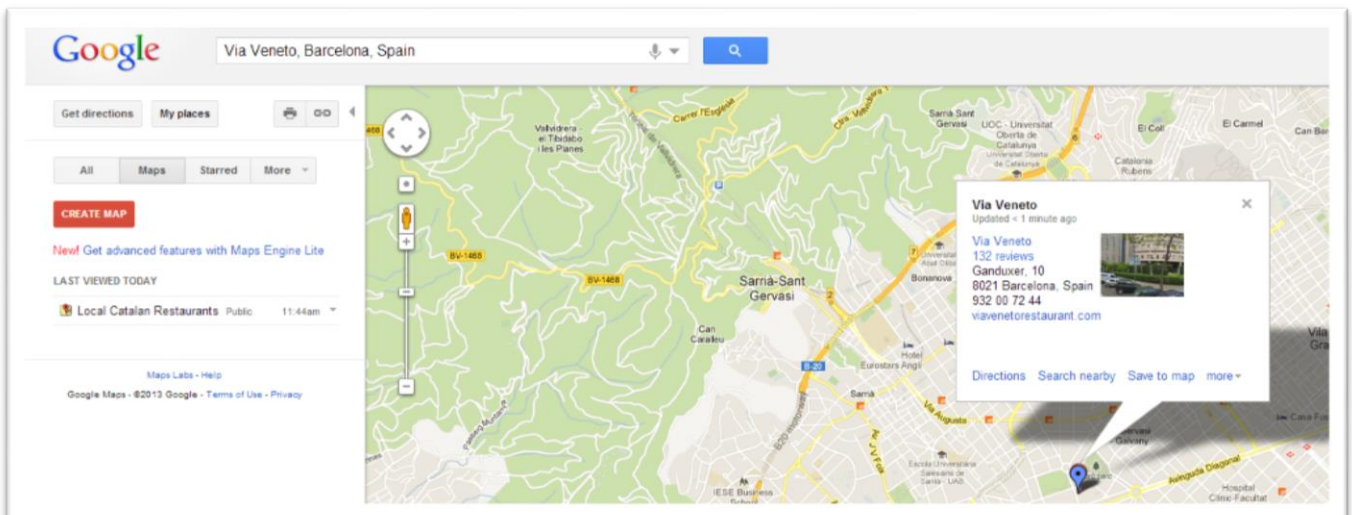


Step 4: Now that you have a map category you should start adding locations to your map. To do so simply search for the address/name of the restaurant or attraction in Google Maps. Once the location appears with the red-bubble labelled A. Click on the red-bubble until a box opens up. Here you select “Save to Map” and select the map category you just created.

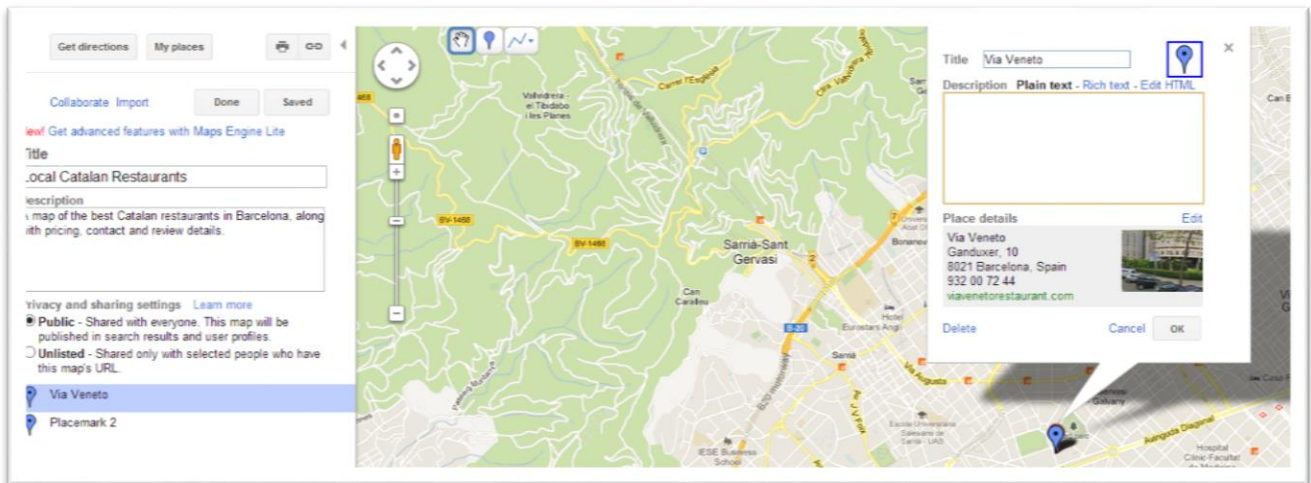
Now a blue bubble with a black circle in the middle will appear on the map. Click on the blue bubble to see what information is readily available for guests viewing your map.



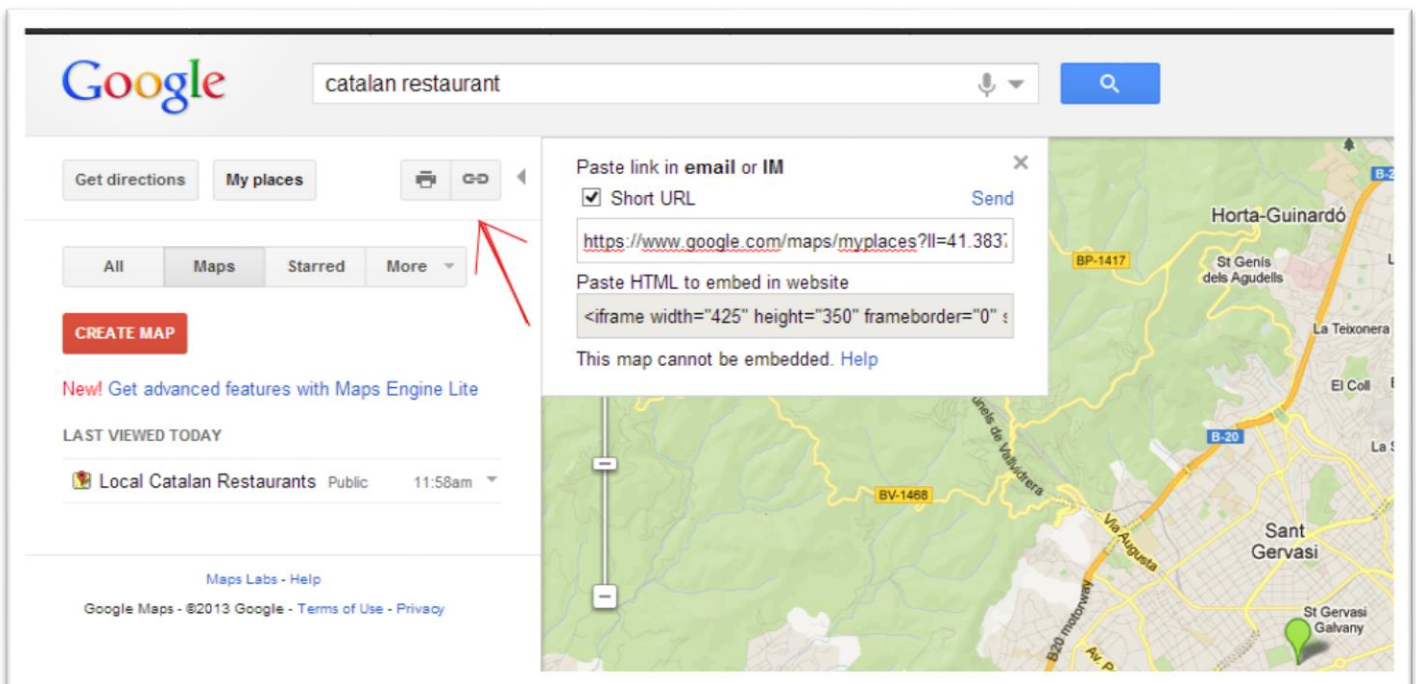
Step 5: If you would like to add more personal details to the location, you can edit the location details by clicking on “My places” on the top left side-bar. You will need to select the Maps tab here.



Click on the map you created, and then click on the red Edit button above the name of the map. Now you can click on the blue bubble of the location you would like to edit and place important information such as open times, contact details, transport options, website of restaurant. You can also edit the icon, so you can change the blue bubble into a restaurant icon.



Step 6: To Add more locations you can repeat steps 3-5. Once you have completed your map, you will need the URL of the map to share it with your guests. To get the URL of your personal map, click on the Chain button on the top left sidebar. This will open a box that gives you both the URL and the HTML code to embed the map in your website.



Next Topic: Localized Marketing

Local Marketing: 3 Free & Easy Ways to Promote Your Vacation Rental

Local Marketing with Google Sample:



[All-Paris-Apartments](#)

www.all-paris-apartments.com/

[Google+ page](#)

A 24/26 Rue de la Pépinière
Paris
+33 1 76 54 25 73

[Paris Appartements Services](#)

www.paris-acts.com/ - [Translate this page](#)

B 20 Rue Bachaumont
Paris

Within the vacation rental industry we are encouraged to promote to an international level because our clients reside out-of-town. We create websites, digital ads, work with channel managers and [optimize websites for search engines](#), however these efforts often make us overlook a good marketing opportunity : *local promotions*.

As counter-intuitive as it may seem, marketing on a local level can set you apart from your competition and allows you to market your properties and agency without breaking your budget. Below we have outlines 3 ways in which you can market your rentals on a local level for free:

Google Places for Businesses:

When you Google a key phrase such as “Vacation Rentals in London” you will notice that the coveted top spots in Google (beneath the ads) are reserved for a few select rental agencies which include their URL, address and location on a Google map. If you are ever wondering how these agencies got their website listed in the map, the answer is simple: Google Places for Business.

[Google Places for Business](#) (sometimes known as Google Local) is like the yellow pages of the digital world. For free you can register the address of your business and when a user does a local search such as Vacation Rentals in Paris, your business will appear on the map, and if there is low competition, at the top spot of Google.

Once you register with Google you will be able to add photos and videos of your business, along with showcasing reviews. Best of all if you are a Google+ user, you will be able to link your account to your local listing.

Promote to relatives and friends:

Local publicity can be just as important as international publicity if you take the standpoint of marketing to the relatives and friends of locals. If London local Mike is going to have relatives come visit in the near future, his ears and eyes will be perked up when he sees accommodation options for his family. Networking events, whether it is hobby-based like wine tasting or business-based like a seminar, are a great way of getting in front of local people.

The key is to explicitly tell people **“If you ever have friends or family coming into town, be sure to contact me so I can set them up with the perfect apartment”**. You can even write a personal note on your business cards when you give them to locals you network with. This personal interaction will create a personal bond so that the first agency they look at when they are looking for an apartment is you.

You can also contact your local newspapers to give them a news tip about the state of the vacation rental industry and provide interview options. Remember to feature that you are a vacation rental agency or owner, and that locals should contact you when they have out-of-town guests.

Local Classified Websites:

Every country has a free classified website that is their go-to for accommodation or owner-purchases. For Americans it is Craigslist, for Eastern Canadians it is Kijiji, for UK residents it is Gumtree, and for the French it is LeBonCoin. These classified websites often feature a Travel or Accommodation section where you can feature your agency or properties for free.

Again **the key here is to make sure you are featured on classifieds that are popular in other countries as well as yours**. To reach American visitors you should feature yourself in Craigslist, even though it may not be popular in your local country.

Next Topic: [Social Media](#)



Social Media: To Be There or Not To Be There

There are a lot of mixed views on using social media for vacation rental marketing: some people swear by it while others see it as a complete waste of time.

With the launch of platforms like Twitter and Pinterest, social media hit a big craze with small businesses. It was a free tool that allowed small businesses to have their voices heard without competing monetarily with large corporations. Nowadays the usefulness of social media for your vacation rental management is dependent on your marketing needs.

Social media is great for creating a community:

With a plethora of small businesses having entered social media websites, it is hard to gain a competitive edge over others when it comes to pure lead generation. However, social media is great for indirect marketing efforts such as creating a community. For example, if you own a vacation rental agency in Paris, you can create a Facebook community for travellers who love to visit Paris. In this community you can share photos, “little known facts”, top attractions and latest news related to Paris. Users who have enjoyed their time there can reminisce about their vacation time, and constantly have your brand’s logo and name in front of them in a non-intrusive way.

If there are a large number of communities that already exist, try and go into a niche community such as culinary fans of Paris or walking enthusiasts of Paris.

Vacation Rental marketing with Pinterest:

Many vacation rental agencies have found great use from using Pinterest to market their properties. If you are a luxury vacation rental agency you can post pictures of each of your properties on a board and label it so that people can share it as their “dream vacation home” or as “an architectural wonder”. Otherwise you can post interesting pictures of your local city, its food and funny meme’s on boards. To ensure your properties are re-pinned, place a “share this” button underneath each of your properties’ pictures on your website.

How regularly should you post on social media?

Consistency is the golden rule when it comes to using social media. Users don’t like those who post too often and those who don’t post enough. The frequency in which you post on social media is dependent on how much time you can allocate to it. If you are tight on time, once a week will suffice *on the condition that you are consistent on posting every week.*

Social Media Management platforms:

The best part of social media marketing is being able to write and plan your posts in advance. Free social media management platforms such as [HootSuite](#), allow you to pre-plan the time and date of a post. That way you can write a number of Tweets or Facebook posts in advance and have them scheduled to post once a week for the near future.

Promote your social media channels:

Gaining meaningful followers is the hard part of social media marketing. If you have a budget set aside for social media, you can participate in social media pay-per-click ads that target users based on income, location, job etc. If you want to organically grow your user-base be sure to include links and a call to actions, such as “Check out our Travelling to Paris community”, to your emails footers, websites, and at the bottom of your answers to travel/vacation rental forums.

Golden Rule: Social media marketing is all about sharing useful information, not about direct marketing. You can promote your own agencies one in a while, but users will resist participating in a community that is focused too much on marketing.

Next Topic: [Videos](#)

How to Promote Listings with Videos

In the US alone *39 billion* online videos were watched this past September. This staggering number shows the gradual shift from reading to watching when it comes to gaining information. [A recent study revealed](#) that viewers engage more after watching a video, with *click for more information increasing by 30-40%* and *phone inquiries increasing by 16-20%*.

Adding videos to your website and social media sites can be intimidating at first: content, equipment, scripts, actors all start buzzing through your mind and before you know it, it is in the back of the “to-do” list again. Luckily for us marketers, technology has advanced so much that creating and editing high quality videos are as simple as writing a blog post.

Equipment:

With a small amount of investment, you can start creating high-quality videos with the tools outlined below:

Cameras: Nearly all DSLR cameras now come with HD video recording options. If you do not have a DSLR camera on hand, you can either use your computer’s built-in camera or you can purchase a webcam for very cheap.

Voice Recording: Your computer’s built-in microphone will likely pick up a lot of outside noise. To enhance the voice quality of your videos, you can purchase a headset with a microphone or purchase a standalone microphone.

Video Editing: The final touch to creating great videos is to bring everything together. There are hundreds of video editing tools available for free or for a low price: Mac users can use iMovie and PC users may prefer to use programs such as Camtasia for non-technical video editing (Don’t worry both of these programs are made for users who are not as technical as professional video editors).

Content:

There are hundreds of different video content ideas you can use to promote your vacation rental agency. The key is to be creative and try to create videos that your competitors have not. Below are a few samples of content ideas for your video:

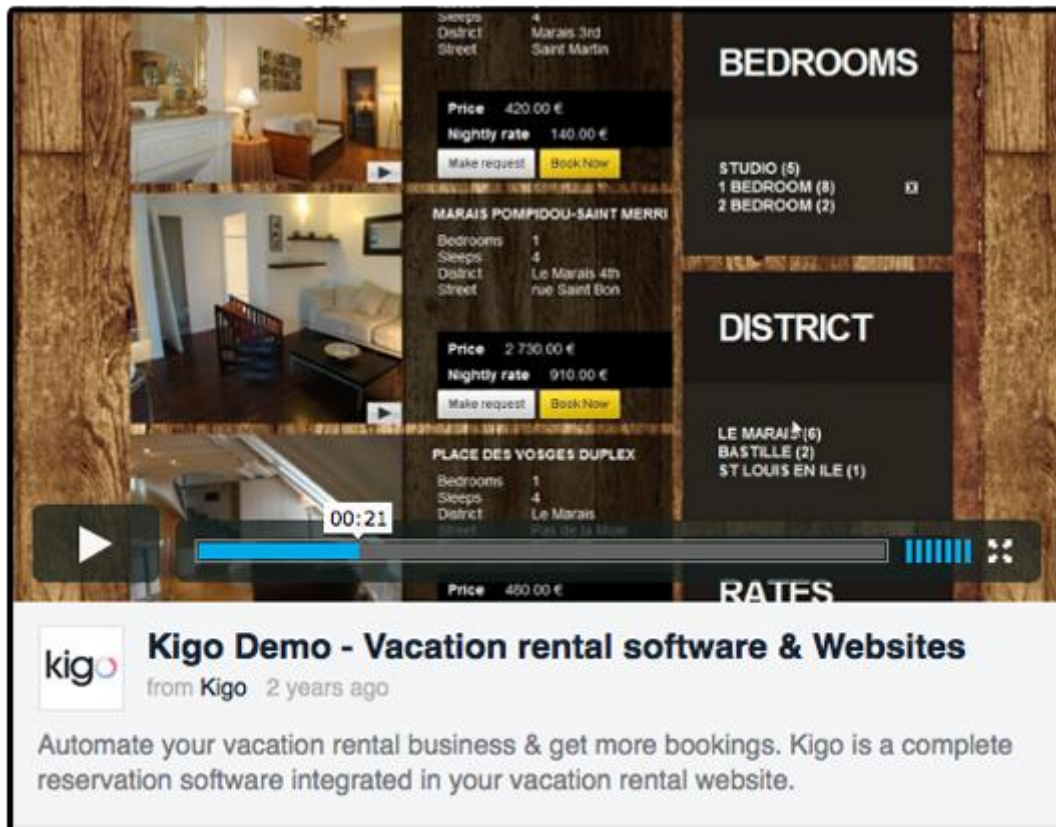
Agency Q&A Videos: Let visitors meet the team behind your vacation rental agency. This will not only put a human face to your website, but will also increase the trust between you and a website visitor.

Property Tour Videos: Many renters are aware that photos can sometimes be deceiving when it comes to showcasing a property. A video tour of each property will allow users to see exactly what they are getting.



Expert Interviews: Increase your credibility by interviewing local experts about your city. These experts can range from tour guides, to chefs, to bloggers. Experts will be happy to increase their exposure, and you can get valuable video content out of the deal.

City/Country Tour Videos: Do you have a hidden creative side you want to let loose? Showcase the hidden gems of your local area with virtual video tours. A time-lapse video of city lights turning on or a walking tour of your favorite hang out spots, can be creative enough to go viral among your audience.



Promotion:

There is no point in creating great videos if no one is going to watch them. Place your videos in high traffic video viewing websites such as YouTube and Vimeo. Make sure you utilize keywords and tags when labeling your videos. A catchy title that is keyword rich is also important when you want to entice your visitors to click on the video. Research the right keywords to ensure your video pops up when a user searches for information about your city. Lastly, you should also choose which screen you should freeze (the stable image you see when the video has not yet been played). The screen you freeze should entice the user to click on the play button.

Place your videos on your website, your blog, your social media websites, tourist forums as well as include them in your communications with clients.

Next Topic: Infographics



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Power of Infographics

Infographics are simply great for marketing purposes! We live in an age where we have access to abundant information, meaning the time and attention we give to informational webpages are significantly decreasing. Infographics allow us to present large amounts of information in such a way that a user feels compelled to read on rather than get overwhelmed with paragraph after paragraph of text-only pages.

What is an Infographic?

An Infographic is a visual presentation of content, analysis and design placed on a single image format (see sample below). Taking a sharp rise in popularity over the past couple of years, infographic topics can range from anti-bullying to vacation rental industry.

How can I use Infographics for Vacation Rental Marketing?

The world is your oyster when it comes to marketing your vacation rental agency with infographics! Choose your topic, and start sharing your infographic on social media, your blog as well as key industry forums. Below are a few creative ideas for possible infographics:

Present information about **your city**

Present information about **your agency**

Present information about **tourist activities in your city**

Present information about **safety precautions tourists**

Present information about **reasons for renting a vacation home**

Any many many more creative ideas...

How do I create my own Infographic?

There are abundant resources for creating free infographics. [Visual.ly](http://visual.ly) is a popular free-infographic creation tool. It is easier to create stunning infographics using a designer, but you can also purchase stock-photos that are similar to each other and create the infographic yourself. Just remember to keep it simple and enticing.

One of the biggest advantages of creating an infographic is its viral nature: they are created so that they can be shared. If you do not have the time and resources to create your own infographic you can research relevant vacation rental themed infographics and share the on your blog – just be sure give credit to the creator by linking back to them.

Sample Vacation Rental Infographic:



To view full infographic please visit: [Vacation Rentals Rock infographic](#)

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Website Platform:

Beautiful, lightning-fast and SEO-optimized custom or template websites to attract and convert more visitors into guests. [Learn More.](#)

If you are in the market for a new [vacation rental website](#) or better [vacation rental software](#) to manage your inquiries, bookings and marketing, consider using Kigo. You can contact one of our vacation rental software experts:

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(France) +33 1 84 17 04 18
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