

HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO INCREASE BOOKINGS

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW TO
BECOME A SOCIAL MEDIA SUPER STAR



kigo 

What Will You Learn with Kigo's Social Media eBook?

There are many different approaches your vacation rental business could take to acquire new customers; social media, multiple portal listings and content creation, to name a few. This eBook will dive deep into social media options for your Vacation Rental business, covering the following topics:

- A Brief History of Social Media
- Social Media Marketing: To Be There or Not To Be There
- Social Media Marketing: Facebook
- Social Media Marketing: Twitter
- Social Media Marketing: Google+
- Social Media Marketing: LinkedIn
- Social Media Marketing: Pinterest
- Social Media Marketing: Instagram Video
- How to Get Listing Websites to Feature Your Properties on Social Media
- Social Media Marketing: Summary

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

<http://kigo.net/blog>



A Brief History of Social Media

Social media is a relatively new phenomenon which continues to rapidly grow. Although many may consider Myspace or Facebook as the pioneers in social networking, social media does in fact go way back to the arrival of the postal service. Since social media is primarily used as **a way of communicating with one another**, it makes sense that sending post is its earliest form.



With technological developments, most importantly the arrival of the internet, social media has come leaps and bounds since sending a letter. There are currently hundreds of social networking platforms in all shapes and sizes that users can communicate a message across; with Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Google + being some of the key players.

Social media is one of, if not **the most powerful marketing tool** that vacation rental managers can utilize. Take for instance Facebook, it has grown tremendously since its launch in 2004; there are now over 1 billion users sharing content with one another. With that statistic in mind, it's no wonder that **93% of businesses use social media for marketing**.

There are many other advantages to using social media for your business or personal use other than directly communicating with others. Social networking can help to shape a brand identity and create an online presence, which is why businesses are so keen (and so they should be) to sign up. A staggering **90% of people trust online recommendations from people they know**. Taking that into consideration; a social media presence is a really valuable component to any marketing strategy.

To help vacation rental managers understand how to use social media for their business, we are going to delve in deeper on how to optimize the key social networking players.

Social Media and Vacation Rental Marketing: 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.

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.

Key Points:

- Great for creating a community and sharing content around vacation rental
- Be consistent; don't post too little or too much
- Use management tools to plan social media in advance
- Focus on sharing informative content, not selling.

Tools Needed:

- Creativity
- Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Google+, LinkedIn etc.
- Management platforms like HootSuite.

Social Media Marketing: Facebook

From humble beginnings at Harvard University as a side project for computing student Mark Zuckerberg to compare fellow alumni, Facebook has grown into the world's number one platform for social networking, boasting over 1.06 billion users worldwide and even its own feature film.

From pictures of friends and people's latest purchases or meals; to big business harnessing Facebook to convey their brand values and sales expertise; everyone seems to be on there, sharing information.



So with over 42 million pages already set up, you might be wondering if it's worth your while adding to that number. The answer is undoubtedly yes! A number of high profile questions have been asked of Facebook over the last twelve months, with the IPO valuation falling far short of expectations and General Motors notoriously slashing their budget for their paid search activities on the platform, but you shouldn't let this put you off.

Creating a fan page for your agency is fantastic for a number of reasons:

A Social Voice

Communicate more directly with individual customers and allow them to communicate with you, it opens up a direct dialogue with someone who is interested in your brand. This interaction can be priceless not only with the potential customer in question, but also anyone viewing the interaction on your page; it demonstrates that your agency listens and responds to its' customers, which has obvious conformational benefits.

Share Your Brand

It's important not to simply sell constantly on your page, a regular flow of blog content, and images from the areas surrounding your properties and updates about the team should be interspersed with special offers and competitions, in addition to sales-related posts. In doing this, you are more likely to get your posts commented-on and shared, which brings an obvious benefit; expanding your reach.



The more people that share your content and tag themselves (and those holidaying with them) with your brand, the more potential interactions can be created. If a party of 6 are staying at one of your properties and one member of the party tags your agency along with every member of the party, then your brand would be appearing on the wall of (a conservative estimate) of 1200 people.

SEO Optimization

A further benefit is that of the potential SEO value of social presence in general. Google have confirmed that social signals now form part of their algorithm for the order in which results are displayed, and Microsoft are pushing Facebook results within their Bing search returns.

So it will be advantageous for any agency to get a Facebook fan page for a number of reasons.

How to Create a Page:

- Go to this page and register your business: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php>
- Once this page has 25 fans, you will get the URL for your page: facebook.com/yourURL
- As mentioned, it's important to vary your content with images, questions, competitions and team updates as well as sales messages
- Studies have shown that your Affinity score (Affinity is a score of how 'friendly' you are with a brand or person, so how often you interact with them) can be positively influenced through posts beginning with questioning words like 'where', 'when', 'would' and 'why', so it would be a good idea to use these in your posts

- Images are always popular items for sharing, so vibrant location-based shots would be advantageous
- If you wanted to go the extra mile, you could hire a Facebook developer to build you a page for your timeline. It is a more expensive option, but they do look great. Starbucks have a good example of a custom designed Facebook page
- Then you're ready to go, just keep posting, interacting and sharing.

And there you have it; a brief overview of how Facebook can drive real value for your business. It takes time to build the page, to collect a following and to spare a few minutes each day to monitor and interact with it, but the rewards are there for all to see, quite literally. There really is nothing not to "Like"...

Key Points:

- Create a social voice to communicate with customers
- Share with fans a variety of content to encourage sharing
- Facebook is good for SEO purposes
- Creating a page is easy.

Tools Needed:

- Creativity
- Facebook
- Interesting content to share.

Social Media Marketing: Twitter

With over 115 million active users every month and on average 58 million tweets being sent out daily, Twitter is an excellent social media platform for vacation rental businesses to utilize. When used effectively and creatively, holiday home managers can establish a strong online presence and expect to see a rise in bookings.



You may be thinking I have Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest etc., so why do I need to join another platform? Ensuring that your vacation rental business is present on as many social media platforms as possible will strengthen the brand of the properties being advertised and enable you to engage with possible guests and others in the industry. Twitter is an excellent networking tool that requires little effort yet can produce maximum effect.

If you are a holiday home manager yet to jump onto the tweeting bandwagon, here are **5 ways in which you can use Twitter to market your vacation rental**:

Build a Community

Twitter is great for creating a brand around the properties being promoted. By communicating with others in the industry, you can project a desirable image that will work to attract potential bookers and refine your brand. Since Twitter caters for all types of businesses in the travel industry, it is the perfect platform for keeping up with the conversation and creating networking opportunities. The 140 character restriction enables you to engage with existing or future customers quickly without bombarding them with too much information.

Tip: To effectively use Twitter and engage with your followers, 90% of information you post should be informative content and 10% should be direct promotions of the properties, that way you will increase chances of acquiring new followers rather than put people off.

Promote Your Properties

Although Twitter is most effective when posting helpful and informative content, it is also a great way to promote your properties for completely free. From time to time, include links to the property listings with appropriate hash tags.

Tip: Since you are limited to 140 characters, make sure that the tweet you send out with a property listing link is descriptive and appealing to followers e.g. Beautiful Apartment set in the Heart of San Francisco.

Schedule Tweets

Tweeting doesn't have to be time consuming, there are many Twitter marketing tools waiting to be utilized. Scheduling platforms like [HootSuite](#) and [SocialBro](#) allow users to set up tweets in advance and stay on top of current trends and customer engagement. So that way you can set aside an hour or so to organize tweets at different time intervals saving you time throughout the day.

Tip: When including URLs in your tweets, use a URL shortener so that you save on precious character space. Additionally, HootSuite's Ow.ly URL shortener allows you to track how many people click on the link – a great way of finding out what content is most effective.

Help Customers Find You

Hash-tagging has become increasingly popular recently and is a great practise for marketing the vacation rental. When preparing what are you going to post, make sure to include a hash tag at the end of the tweet. Use a keyword that is appropriate to your business, e.g. #vacationrental will order your tweet into the vacation rental hash tag category. That way anyone searching your chosen terms will see your tweet.

Tip: Don't overdo the hash tags, a tweet like this is confusing and will put followers off – 'Check out our #vacation #rental in #Paris for the #perfect #holiday.'

Direct Traffic to Your Website

Connect your social media networks together and ensure that your vacation rental website includes links to your social platforms and vice versa. Every time your content is retweeted or favourited, you can increase chances of website visits and in turn booking leads. Furthermore, it will help to create a professional brand image and credibility.

Tip: Keep all of your networks up to date and ensure that you have a running theme through them all. It will increase chances of gaining more followers and therefore more exposure to the rental properties.

Key Points:

- Communicate with others in the industry and refine brand
- Promote properties completely for free
- Hash-tagging helps to categorize your brand and be found
- Don't overdo #hashtagging
- Retweets increase traffic to your website.

Tools Needed:

- Twitter
- Ability to create interesting tweets up to 140 characters
- HootSuite, SocialBro etc. to schedule tweets.

Social Media Marketing: Google+

You would have to be living in outer space to have not heard of Google; it is the largest online search engine in the world and the ultimate go-to resource for any questions imaginable. And since 2011, Google introduced its own social network to rival the likes of Facebook and Twitter – Google+. You may be wondering why do I need to join yet another social network? Well, with over 343 million active users and Google being its parent, vacation rental managers should tap into this huge networking opportunity immediately!



Joining Google+ is one thing but optimizing the page for your vacation rental business is another. To help you understand how Google+ works and how it can boost bookings, we have put together **4 of the many benefits of using Google+ for your vacation rental business:**

SEO Optimization

SEO or Search Engine Optimization is the process of increasing the rank your vacation rental website appears on search engines. It's simple - the better SEO, the higher the page will appear which means an increase in bookings! Joining Google+ is an excellent addition to an SEO marketing strategy.

Imagine your Google+ account is an extension of your vacation rental website, if both are packaged with the right keywords e.g. beach rental in Koh Samui, it will increase chances of Google pairing the two together and strengthening your SEO efforts.

Categorize Followers

Google+ enables users to group followers into 'Circles'. That way you can pick and choose who goes into what category, e.g. previous guests, potential guests, industry news. From there you can communicate a specific message to each group. Say for instance you have a last minute vacation rental deal, you can package it to appeal to previous guests following the network. 'Circles' is an excellent tool for personalizing and sharing information in bulk, where Facebook and Twitter lack.

Link Other Social Networks

As recommended for all social networks, linking them together will work to strengthen your brand identity and social media presence.

Using Google+ to share other networks for your vacation rental business will let Google know that content is being created across all platforms. This will work to increase SEO and direct traffic to, not only your other social media networks, but to your vacation rental website.

Put Your Vacation Rental on the Map

Formerly Google Places, Google+ Local encourages businesses to put themselves on the map. By putting the vacation rental on the map, guests on Google+ can review the property and you can provide the exact location and contact details.

Additionally, if a Google+ user searches for a nearby vacation rental in Barcelona, the property will appear on the map with any guest reviews. Google+ Local encourages conversation on previous guests' experiences during their stay and increases exposure for potential guests.

Key Points:

- Excellent for SEO purposes
- Categorize and send out messages to specific group with 'Circles'
- Linking together social networks strengthens brand
- Google+ Local increases chances of being found

Tools Needed:

- Google+
- Relevant keywords to the vacation rental.

Photo credit: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/99247795@N00/5940846927/>

Social Media Marketing: LinkedIn

With over 200 million users globally and 2.7 million business pages, LinkedIn is the **ultimate business focused social network**. Bearing these statistics in mind, vacation rental managers should without a doubt get creating a professional profile.



LinkedIn works in a similar way to Facebook and Twitter yet with a professional advantage. By joining LinkedIn, you can connect with other professionals and potentially build upon your vacation rental business.

If you're wondering why you should be using LinkedIn for your vacation rental business, we've put together some **benefits of joining the world's largest professional network** for you to think about:

A Strong Professional Profile Page

Creating a page on LinkedIn will put a face to your vacation rental business, increase credibility and exert professionalism. Filling a profile with as much information about your vacation rental business as possible, including relevant keywords, will increase chances of being found in a search and exposure to the property.

In the same way as Facebook or Twitter, LinkedIn allows you to update statuses, share news and include links to other networks or vacation rental website, which further increasing SEO visibility and in turn, booking leads. LinkedIn also enables recommendations; encouraging guests, employees or business partners to recommend your business page will direct traffic to it from those that don't know you.

Be a Part of a Community

There are loads of vacation rental themed groups on LinkedIn for vacation rental managers to join in on the discussion and stay up-to-date with industry news. Participating in LinkedIn groups allows you to ask any questions or address any common renting issues; it means you can directly receive advice from other professionals in the vacation rental industry, easily and quickly.

Another advantage to LinkedIn groups is having the ability to share your professional knowledge and increase visibility to your brand. Participating in discussions by offering intelligent, experienced answers will further increase business credibility and exposure to the property.

Connect With Other Businesses

[Partnering with local businesses](#) is a really effective referral marketing tool which can boost bookings. LinkedIn is the perfect platform for potential business partnerships and connecting with other vacation rental professionals.

It provides an excellent database for researching potential business opportunities to help your vacation rental business grow. Also, if you have mutual connections with a local business, LinkedIn will let you know, providing a great conversation starter.

Key Points:

- LinkedIn puts a face to your vacation rental business
- Update statuses and share content in a similar way to other networks
- Recommendations drive traffic to your business page
- LinkedIn groups keeps you update on industry news and helps resolve issues
- Perfect platform for partnering with other local businesses

Tools Needed:

- LinkedIn
- Completed profile
- Professional voice.

Source: <http://visual.ly/10-amazing-linkedin-statistics-2013>

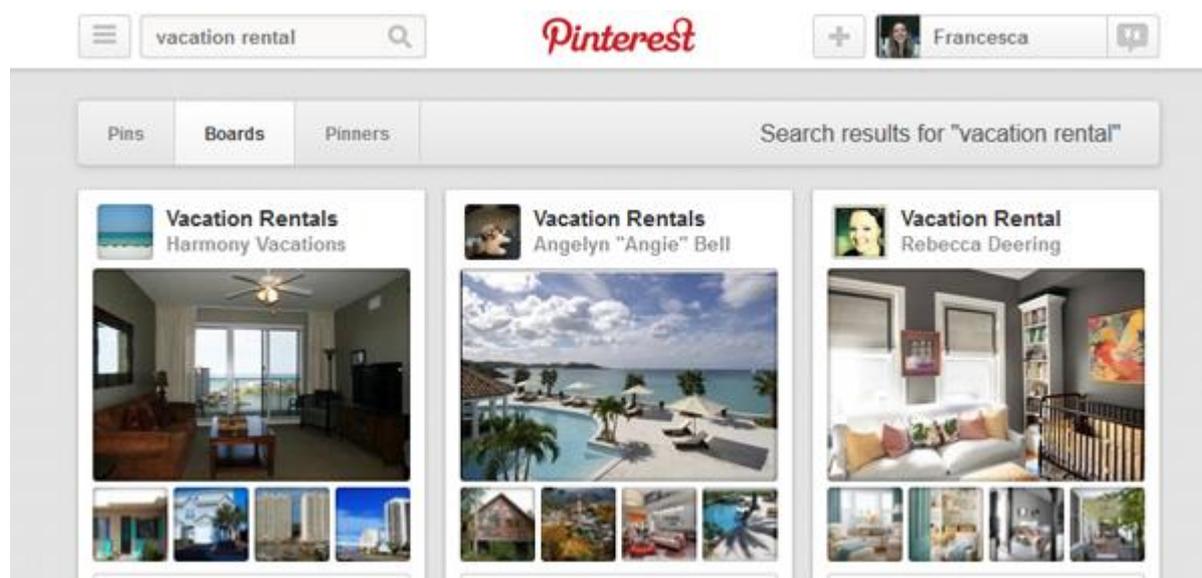


Vacation Rental Software: <http://kigo.net>

Social Media Marketing: Pinterest

Pinterest, the virtual pin-board social network, has recently and rapidly become extremely popular. As of April 2013, there are 48.7million Pinterest users including vacation rental marketplace HomeAway.

The general idea is for users aka 'pinners' to create multiple boards to 'pin' images and videos of any inspirations and interests on to, from travel destinations to event organisation. Each board represents a fun visual journey to feed users' imagination and encourage sharing amongst other pinners.



Since Pinterest is predominantly powered by beautifully presented images, it is a social media marketing tool that vacation rental owners should without-a-doubt embrace. Working in a similar way to other social networks, Pinterest can be used to build a following and images can reach users through hash tags. Creating informative boards around your vacation rental and its location is visually appealing and easy to digest for your guests. Visual marketing generates more engagement; use Pinterest to promote sharing of your vacation rental images and drive traffic to your website.

Need some board inspiration? Here are **5 board ideas for Vacation Rental Owners** that will get you started on Pinterest:

Board Idea 1: Destination

Creating a board around the location of your vacation rental property will give the guest a visual preview of their holiday. Focus on tourism in your property area; from recommended restaurants to nearby beaches. Pinning visually pleasing images will increase share-ability and link back to your vacation rental site.

Board Idea 2: Family-friendly activities

Narrow down your destination board by creating an additional one for different types of guests. Families booking a vacation rental are more than likely going to search for family-friendly activities in the property area. Hash tagging family-friendly activities in your area will reach any users specifically searching and direct them to your vacation rental Pinterest board.

Board Idea 3: Photo tips & tricks

Create a board dedicated to photo tips and tricks. Users on Pinterest are looking for inspiration so inspire! Use your own examples of great travel photos. You could also use Pinterest to engage with past guests by featuring and crediting some of their photos from their stay at your vacation rental.

Board Idea 4: Travel tips

Pinterest is a go-to website for various ideas with travel being one of the most popular search topics. Don't let it go unmissed, tap into it! Pin informative tips that are likely to be re-pinned e.g. images of any must-pack items or travel money saving ideas.

Board Idea 5: Architecture pics of your properties

Use Pinterest to highlight your images; devote a board to the architecture and interior design of your properties. Upload your own quality images to create a visual story of what kind of experience your guest will have at your vacation rental. Images are powerful and can determine leads to your website so make sure your vacation rental images portray your brand.

Key Points:

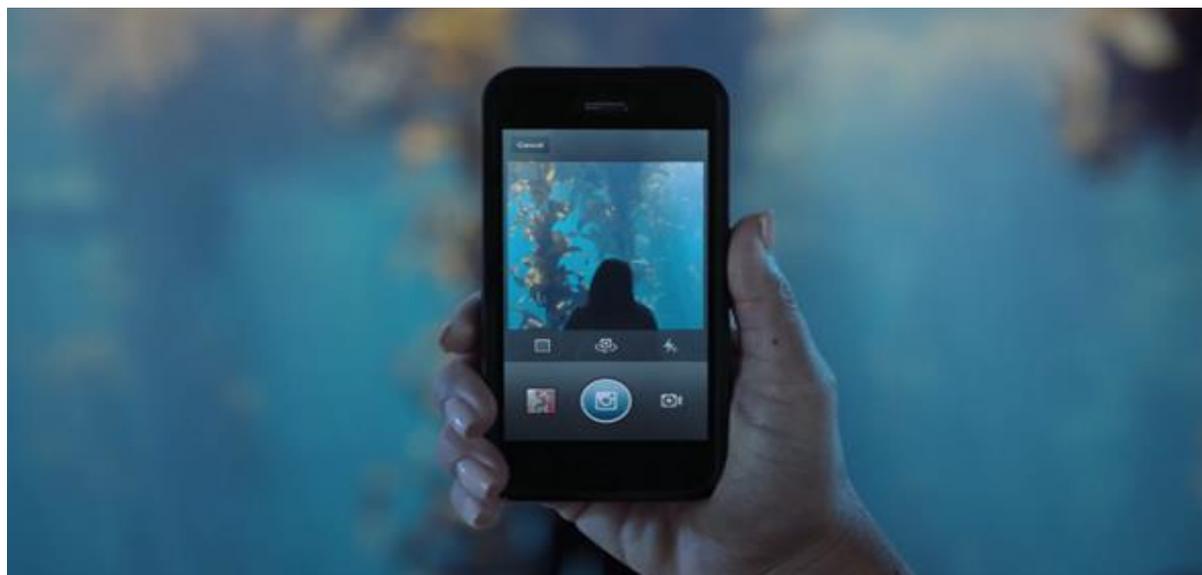
- Visual marketing generates more engagement
- Pinterest users are looking for inspiration so inspire!
- Hash-tagging will categorize your boards
- Make sure the images you use represent the brand.

Tools Needed:

- Pinterest
- Lots of beautiful images.

Social Media Marketing: Instagram Video

Owned by social media's largest platform Facebook, with 130 million users and 1 billion likes happening daily, Instagram is an excellent social media marketing tool that vacation rental owners should snap into. The increasingly popular photo-capturing app has been under the spotlight recently since introducing their additional video creation tool.



Video marketing is a great way for vacation rental managers to communicate property information quickly and effectively. Everywhere you look, people are using mobile devices and it is important for holiday home managers to adapt with the ever evolving mobile social media landscape. As of June 2013, Instagram became a video marketers dream; it offers a completely free service allowing users to create short and sweet 15 second videos from an Android or iOS device to project a brand image across to potential guests.

Are you thinking of using Instagram video but want to know more? Here are **5 benefits of using Instagram Video to market your vacation rental property:**

Create a Brand Personality

Instagram Video provides holiday home managers with a platform for sharing with guests a brand personality in an informal setting. Say for instance the aura of your brand is 'luxury', you can ensure that your vacation rental projects this notion through video and images, e.g. use video to shoot a panoramic view of your peaceful property gardens and swimming pool. With 13 video filters to choose from, the handy filter tool also makes it easy to generate a mood around the property.

A Video Preview of Your Properties

If you are unsure on what kind of content to include on your Instagram, create short informative videos of each of your property listings. A 15 second tour of each property will make it so much easier for potential guests to digest. The stop-motion tool makes it easy to capture your whole property in 15 seconds as you can pause recording before moving to another room, plus it keeps your video content short and sweet.

Get Creative with Your Vacation Rental Location

As well as promoting your vacation rental, use video to share with your Instagram followers the beautiful surroundings of your property. If your holiday home is located near an idyllic beach or historical landmarks, capture it! You are more likely to entice guests if you generate an idea of the kind of holiday to expect during their stay. Hash-tagging points of interest is an excellent way for your videos to reach a larger audience and encourage engagement.

Increase Guest Engagement

As mentioned in the last point, hash-tagging is a great way to increase exposure to your property. Use hashtags to categorize your videos or images so that those searching will come directly to your Instagram and increase chances of bookings.

Another way you could increase guest engagement through Instagram is by starting a campaign with followers or previous guests. Get them to direct creative videos to your account that they have made of your property or location and feature your favourite for the week. That way you can stay in the conversation and drive traffic to your Instagram.

Direct Traffic to Your Website

As Instagram is owned by Facebook, everything is closely linked. Ensure that your website features on your video posts or account bio so that every time your content is liked or shared, you can increase chances of website visits and in turn booking leads.

Key Points:

- Instagram is a video marketer's dream
- Great for creating a brand personality in an informal setting
- Provides a free and digestible way to promote properties to followers
- Hashtags and campaigns increase guest engagement.

Tools Needed:

- Mobile device that supports Instagram
- Eye for capturing good images/videos.

How to Get Listing Websites to Feature Your Properties on Social Media

At Kigo, we are always encouraging property managers to list properties on a multitude of portals. It increases exposure to the vacation rental and in turn booking leads. Listing sites like HomeAway, FlipKey and HolidayLettings provide you with a huge marketing platform. Since they operate globally, these kind of sites are a great starting point for expanding your client reach, improving customer service and client retention.

Although it is important for professionalism and branding to operate your own vacation rental website and social networks, it is also important to utilize those of the portals. Their Twitter, Facebook, Google + accounts will generally attract a higher amount of attention which property managers should take into consideration.



Are you interested in utilizing portal networks but don't know where to start? We have put together some **ideas you could adapt to your vacation rental marketing strategy**:

Approach Portal Social Media Networks:

Twitter

Say the property you are managing is listed on [HolidayLettings](#), why not tweet directly to their Twitter account. Mentioning the portal listing site along with any last minute deals or special offers will give them the option to retweet to a larger audience. It will increase chances of filling any gaps in the property's availability calendar and drive traffic to your Twitter account.

Tip: Make sure the tweet you devise is appealing and around 140 characters, that way it will encourage retweets.

Facebook

In the same way as Twitter, approach larger social vacation rental networks that could potentially feature the property you are marketing. If the holiday home is particularly unique, make sure the

photos and property description project its uniqueness – the [HomeAway Facebook page](#) features a beautiful property daily and it will increase your chances of being featured.

Tip: Join in on any discussions and be sure to include a link of the property listing or your website.

Instagram

If you are not using Instagram to promote the vacation rental, you should be! It's constant, up-to-date and will keep you in the conversation. Make sure you are following the portal listing sites the property is on and approach their Instagram accounts when you have an image or video that might attract them.

Tip: Say you've taken a beautiful photo of where the vacation rental is located, tag the portal it is listed on including the property id. Many portal Instagram accounts will 're-gram' property listings to their large follower base.

Last Minute Deals Page

Featuring last minute deals is a great way to give a final push towards filling the property's availability calendar. Ensure that you promote this through the portal listings to attract attention. Many portal listing sites include a 'deals' page which are then projected through their social media networks.

[VacationRentals.com](#) use their blog, Twitter and Facebook to push last minute deals of the weekend; appearing on there would be an excellent opportunity for gaining coverage and increasing bookings.

Key Points:

- Portal listing sites generally have more followers/fans on their social networks
- Approaching their accounts with last minute deals will increase property exposure
- Appealing updates increase chances of being featured
- Last minute pages provide excellent coverage and increase bookings.

Tools Needed:

- Established social networks.



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