



Hospitality Advisory  
— ASSOCIATES —

## Finding Your Place in a Post Covid Hotel Market

*HAA's Maura Bruen and Stephen Nass outline the necessary steps as we move towards the future in the hotel industry*

November 10, 2020 | By: Maura Bruen & Stephen Nass

mbruen@haassoc.com | snass@haassoc.com

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**It has now been eight months since Coronavirus reached our shores, and its impact continues to affect our economy, our health, and our industry.**

As the virus' impact begins to abate, and better therapeutics and vaccines are developed, it is time for those in the hotel industry, to begin the process of reassessing their respective assets' position in the new landscape. The focus must be to clearly understand all of the implications and changes, in our respective markets, and to develop a strategic vision to ensure that we are properly positioned to recapture a fair share of our new marketplaces



**The first step to achieving this end, begins by creating a recovery strategy that aligns the sales, marketing, and revenue management disciplines.**

**Revenue management and sales professionals** are trained to use the relevant data available to make decisions about future market demand and pricing, to properly position their hotels in their respective markets.

The pandemic has, interrupted the traditional cadence and flow of hotel supply and demand and most importantly, clouded our ability to use that information to accurately forecast.

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**While the current data may not be as relevant,** the tools that we have always relied on to determine our positioning in the market may be more important than ever.

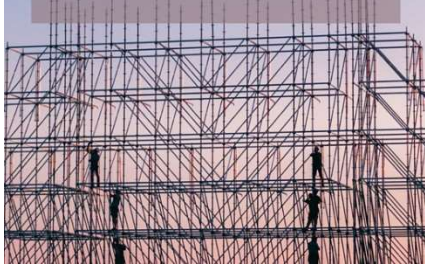
**For example, have you dusted off your SWOT analysis?**

It is not only possible, but it is likely that is the new environment you and the competitive set have different strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats than you did in a pre-pandemic competitive landscape.

**Take the time to step back,** be objective and see your property and the competition through the customer's eyes. Your competitors, if open, may not be offering the same services that they once did. How do your modified services stack up against theirs? Consider which of these things are temporary and which are indefinite before determining your final position.

In the wake of the  
Covid pandemic,  
how do we  
move forward to  
insure the proper  
positioning of  
our hotels?

Step 2:  
Understand  
WHO your  
customer is



Following this exercise, you need to understand who your customer is.

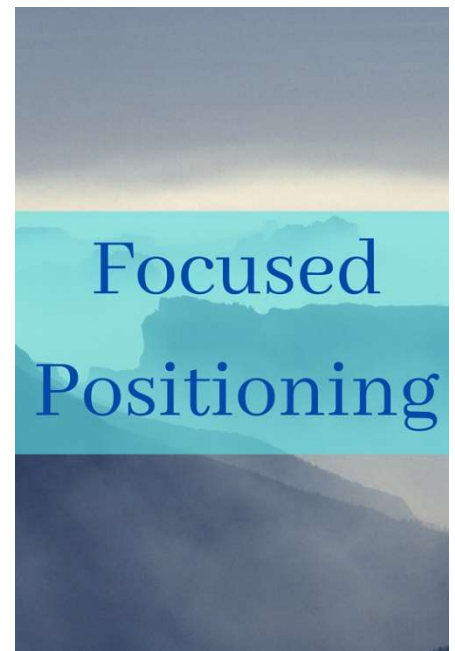
Not who you *think* they are, but who they *are*.

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With this customer in mind, consider these approaches to further honing your position:

Find out what the fundamentals of your market are, both past and present and focus on them. This approach assumes that customers want something more than the basic, but they do not want **EVERYTHING**.

Using this approach, you can breathe new life into a your product while reinventing a category of need. Of course, one new fundamental will certainly be sanitation and safety for your guests and employees. Putting yourself into position to be able to deliver.



# Creative Positioning



**This chooses to position the hotel as something other than what it is in the product category.**

It associates it with a different category. If you redefine the category, then you can redefine the competition.

Have you considered office space for the use of guest rooms?

With flexible terms and added amenities than a standard office building you will find a whole market available to you and your property and perhaps will become the market leader in this new category.

**One of the biggest mistakes that you can make is trying to appeal to everybody. You will waste money if you try to cater to the masses.**

**As you step back** and go through this process of reevaluating yourself objectively, there is no better source for an objective opinion than that of your guests.

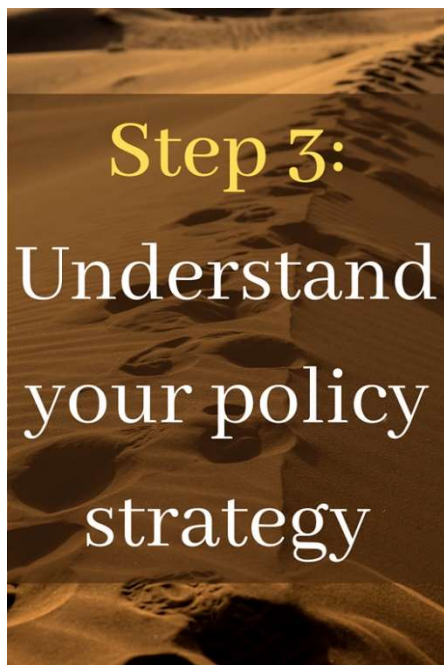
**Customer reviews today are more critical than ever in the guest's journey.**

Responding to them, both positive and negative should well be part of your customer acquisition and retention plan. If responding to customer reviews was not happening with regularity in the past, or if you have only been responding to the negative reviews, now is time to revise your reputation management strategy.

**As much as you need a revenue management, distribution, pricing, and sales strategy, you need to have a reputation management strategy.**

If you are using a revenue management system to set pricing for your hotel, have you adjusted or considered adjusting the inputs and assumptions that it is working from? Now is also a good time to review all data inputs.

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**Lastly, what is your policy strategy and how are you communicating it to customers?**

- Have you done a competitive analysis on cancellation and guarantee policies for the short term and for dates out in the future?**
- Have you reviewed these by channel and by rate plan?**

**Communicate these using all available mediums. Use social media to get the message out.**



**Step 3.5:**  
Determine  
HOW you are  
communicating  
that plan

Put yourself in the guests' shoes and make booking – and yes, cancelling, as easy as possible for them.

**Once you determine your position in the market, then all the branding, marketing, sales, etc. will stem from it. There is a real competitive edge that you can gain from knowing your position in the market. In a crowded marketplace, having proper positioning can help you build rapport with customers. Positioning begins and ends with the customer.**



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## About the Author(s):



### **Maura Bruen**

25+ year hospitality veteran with an extensive background in revenue management on both a local and regional level. Maura has worked for the major brands (Hyatt, Hilton, Starwood) in Chicago and more recently over 40 independent properties in the US and Canada as a revenue account director for Preferred Hotels and Resorts.

Maura is a highly motivated and results driven professional focused on actions that increase revenue, create value or drive customer engagement.



### **Stephen Nass**

30+ year hospitality veteran leading award-winning sales and marketing teams both domestically and internationally. Stephen demonstrates excellence in devising, defining and executing short and long term strategies to amplify revenue, sales and build and retain customer loyalty.

He has credible history in planning and implementing business development initiatives as well as boosting sales and accelerating profits. Stephen has worked with major brands, independent management companies as well as REITs in Boston, Washington, DC and San Juan, Puerto Rico. He is an accomplished and growth-focused leader with extensive experience in sales, marketing, business development, profit optimization, and customer & vendor relationship management.