

Duff on Hospitality Law

OTA & Travel Distribution Update - Feb. 10th, 2017

By Greg Duff on 2.24.17 | Posted in OTA Update

This week's client OTA & Distribution Update for the week ending February 10, 2017 is below. A few more stories in this week's update in comparison to the last few weeks of update. Plus, given the increasing importance of loyalty programs and the critical role they now play in many hoteliers' distribution strategies (e.g. direct book), we plan to start tracking and featuring important loyalty program stories – this week's update features the first loyalty program story of many to come.

- **Hilton HHonors, I mean Honors, Makes Some Big Changes [LOYALTY PROGRAM].** In an effort to further leverage its well-documented (and hugely expensive) direct booking campaign, Hilton last week announced major changes to its loyalty program, Hilton Honors (f/k/a Hilton HHonors). Most notably, loyalty program members are now able to use varying combinations of points and money (using Hilton's Points & Money Slider) for stays at Hilton hotels and points may now be used to purchase routine merchandise on Amazon. Last week's announced changes by Hilton are the latest in a series of loyalty program overhauls by the largest lodging brands (e.g. Marriott / Starwood, Hyatt and Wyndham) and further underscore the new found importance of these frequent traveler programs. We look forward to taking a closer look at these programs, their costs, their benefits and the role they play in differentiating the many booking and hotel brands in the weeks ahead.
- **Google's Significance Grows [OTA].** I know, I know. You've heard this all before...Google is (or is becoming) a formidable competitor to the very OTAs that provide Google with hundreds of millions of dollars in annual advertising revenue. While this may be an often repeated refrain in industry publications, we've rarely seen mainstream business publications weigh in on the distribution juggernaut that Google is becoming. A sign of increasing stress between the search engine and some of its largest advertisers?

Hilton Unveils Loyalty Program Updates That Borrow From the Airlines

We're surprised no other hotel loyalty programs have yet attempted to do what Hilton is doing here. These updates, for the most part, reflect an acknowledgement on Hilton's part that no two hotel guests are the same, and that loyalty programs designed solely for road warriors aren't enough to compete ...

Skift Travel News on Jan 31, 2017

Expedia Has a Google Problem

Like other Internet companies, Expedia appears to have a Google problem, and the search engine's expanding reach could weigh on results in coming quarters. Google, owned by the Alphabet corporation, has been launching its own travel tools in recent years. In 2015, it began allowing users to ...

Barron's on Feb 10, 2017