

# VIP CLIENTS: A BEST PRACTICE GUIDE FOR HOTELS AND TRAVEL MANAGERS

So you've achieved the hotelier's dream: a VIP is staying at your property. Be it Drake, Julia Roberts or Le Bron (okay, namedropping is vulgar, so let's all agree not to do it, especially when they stay with you!) you want one thing: to ensure they stay with you again. And again.

Achieving this is actually far less complicated than it seems. Just ask our L.E/Miami Committee, who between them, look after a considerable percentage of the world's biggest recording artists, media talent, fashion powerhouses and high-net-worth individuals when they travel. In their own words, here's how to over-deliver for VIPs, every single time, from initial enquiry to post-check out follow-up.

## Stage 1 | The Enquiry

Getting the 411.

Hotels should...

- Respond to every VIP enquiry within 24 hours, max.
- Create an easy-to-follow proposal highlighting rates, concessions, commission, and cancellation details.
- Ask all the questions. If anything, over-communicate.
- Address all relevant questions before you or the buyer signs anything, including confirmation that your property can actually honour all VIP requests.

- Work with buyers on budget, encouraging the travel booker to be as open and transparent as possible.
- Consider the bigger picture as to the value of the booking: current, long-term and future. Could the VIP bring serious \$ long-term, or could they actually damage your rep?
- Triple-check your ability to set up third-party billing in last-minute scenarios (we're talking less than 24-hours out) because, VIPs.

### VIP TIP

Customisation is critical for VIP bookings, so be thoughtful, creative and considered. How can you ensure your property stands out from the competition and guarantees those sweet rebookings? Flag any and all VIP requests and make all staff (and we mean all – front desk, housekeeping, bar staff, you get the gist) aware of their preferences – the more information they have, the better.

## Stage 2 | The Contract

Making it official.

Hotels managers should...

- Create a simple (maximum two pages) and flexible contract (like the one you'll find on the L.E/Miami website) which includes:
  - Name
  - Address
  - Contact
  - Arrival & departure dates
  - Concessions
  - Commission
  - Billing
  - Cancellation & attrition policies (flexibility is recommended)
  - Financial liability (client not agency defined)
  - Waiving portorage, with an option for yes or no for super VIPs
- Schedule a pre-arrival call with the buyer, where last-minute VIP information can be provided and any pre-arrival questions clarified. Leave no stone unturned at this stage – you have been warned.

### **VIP TIP**

Knowing what duty of care means for VIP clients (on both sides – for them and the hotel) is essential, so consider drawing up a separate contract for this – you can use the the security policy on the L.E/Miami website as a starting point.

## Stage 3 | The Pre-Arrival

S\*\*t's getting real.

Hotel sales managers should...

- Provide a detailed debrief to all departments 24 hrs before the VIP's arrival, including:
  - Group name
  - On-site contact and details
  - Reason for travel
  - VIP details: name, title, photographs, upgrades, preferences and hierarchy of guests in the booking
  - Arrival time
  - Specific billing details
  - Room assignments
  - Security and alias (if requested or required)
- Share the debrief with VIP buyer, too, to make sure all information is joined-up
- Send a calendar invite at least two days in advance to the client, including key contacts and contact details, so they have everything on-hand and won't waste time searching

### **VIP TIP**

Bands often need space for bus parking, so make sure you can accommodate this *before* you sign a contract.

## Stage 4 | The Stay

It's showtime.

Hotel managers should...

- Pre-key/ pre-reg VIP guests and groups, with key packets ready for them upon arrival
- Appoint a dedicated and educated rep with a detailed understanding of the entertainment and creative sector as the official point of contact. Whether it's a salesperson, personal concierge or someone else, they should lead and educate the hotel team on how to handle 'talent'
- Protect and respect the do-not-disturb policy like it's your firstborn. Agree in advance who can walk the VIP rooms, and when exactly they should do so
- Call your VIPs within 15 minutes of check-in to ensure they're happy and catered for
- Create a detailed handover and send to all departments during shift changes so everyone is up to speed. All of the VIP group's needs should be clearly communicated with one key person, per shift, who can act as the point of contact
- If it doesn't already exist, set up an email address with 24-hour monitoring by the front desk and Manager on Duty (it's good to keep the sales or on-site hotel contact on copy too!) to ensure no communication is missed due to shift changes – and share this with the client, too

## VIP TIP

The importance of privacy cannot be overstated. Social media slip-ups can result in a literal stampede outside the hotel, putting both the safety of your VIP and your reputation in jeopardy. Keep all guest details strictly private, and never, ever share them on social media.

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## Stage 5 | The Post-Check Out

Don't slow down *just* yet.

Hotel managers should...

- Follow up, within the agreed timeline, including clear and correct folios for the contact to review.
- The dedicated point of contact should review the bill in full, making sure all charges are accurate, before sending. Detail is literally everything
- Pay 10% minimum commission within a maximum of 30 days

## VIP TIPS

Attend entertainment-friendly educational Forums, trade shows and events (ahem, L.E/Miami)

Get educated and stay up-to-date by reading entertainment trade publications – Billboard, Pollstar, Deadline Hollywood, Variety, The Hollywood Reporter

Keep VIP guest profiles as detailed as possible and update them frequently: their preferred room type, any special needs or amenities, how they like their coffee/ room temperature/Pringles Flavour – nothing is too detailed