

# LUXURY HOT SPOTS

• 2nd Quarter  
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# IS YOUR BRAND INVESTMENT SABOTAGING YOUR GUEST EXPERIENCE?



*By Lesley Everett*

There is no denying that exceptional guest experience is a key area of focus in the luxury hotel market. In this day of personalized service, business owners are expected to do everything possible to maximize the experience of those who visit their properties and this can only be done by paying close attention to practices that can be severely diluting it.

Marketing spends are increasing and companies are feeling the pressure to raise brand awareness in a way that allows for them to stand out from their competitors. Much of this is done with clever advertising, digital media marketing, and social media engagement. Today's consumer is looking for more than luxury accommodations: they are focused on having a full-scale high-level experience provided by a brand they respect and can count on to have a consistent level of service and value system as well as a 'personality' that is in line with their own. This all begins with the perception being created through savvy advertising methods.

There are a number of sophisticated marketing methods available to today's businesses and a strong trend of brands focusing on strong values and themes such as integrity, trust, caring, green, social responsibility, innovation and family-orientated, to name but a few. Team this with the increasing brand reach, and it is no wonder that guests (and all of the stakeholders) have forgivably high expectations of the experience they will get from their interactions with every level of your company. They rightfully expect to receive that level of care and interest in them that is so heavily advertised, therefore when it's not there, there is a very high height to fall from. This, in turn, damages your brand.

This is where your marketing spend and brand awareness may actually be sabotaging the desired guest experience to a level that gets talked about and shared more than you would like it to be. A sinkhole could be opening up that is devouring client loyalty and great customer experience, potentially losing your company \$millions in brand investment.

Make no mistake: this sinkhole is going to expand if companies don't wake up to the critical need to provide employees with the brand engagement and behavioral training required to ensure that they interpret and internalize for themselves, authentically, the meaning behind the values you have created. Perhaps there is a need for a deeper appreciation of your corporate messaging (on a

level that employees can relate to). Unless the people who work for you can understand the values, and authentically live and breathe them every day, you are wasting your corporate brand investment. As a result, your increasing marketing budgets will kill your brand due to the apparent lack of authenticity of your brand claims.

Typically Marketing and Brand Directors are not as focused on people behaviors and the impact they have on the brand as they should be. This tends to be the responsibility of the HR and/or Learning & Development departments with little interaction with marketing. However, in order to reach the true marketing and brand objectives, would it not make sense to integrate people behaviors into your brand strategy at an early stage?

Employee engagement is a critical area needing focus right now – employees need to feel valued for what they bring, respected for what they do, feel like they are an active part of the overall corporate objectives and proud to work for the company. This doesn't just happen – a culture needs to be created that encourages and supports this. Increased employee engagement will come from providing the right training and coaching that addresses and nurtures their personal development, in alignment with corporate brand messaging.

We are at a point in our business environment, where we need to re-align the corporate culture with that demanded by our clients and customers if we are to stand out, create loyalty and get widely talked about for the right reasons.

It's time to align people brand and behaviors with your corporate brand in a way that sticks.



**About the author**

Lesley Everett is an international professional speaker and specialist on personal branding and the personality of the corporate brand. She has presented her Walking TALL Methodology in 26 countries across 5 continents to many global organizations. She is the published author of 3 books - latest being Corporate Brand Personality (Kogan Page, 2016) and is a regular media commentator on brand image. Lesley is the founder of Walking TALL International, with offices in US, UK and Hong Kong. [www.lesleyeverett.com](http://www.lesleyeverett.com)

