

# Writing RFPs That Get Hotels

## Excited: 10 Tips to Getting Better Lead Response

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Once upon a time, sending leads was a time-consuming science. Remember thumbing through the 4-inch-thick hotel directory to select hotels of interest and calling or faxing them your meeting specifications? Now, in a few email clicks, your lead (no matter how big or small) can hit 100 hotels. Due in part to this simplicity (as well as a growing meetings industry), hotels are more inundated with leads than ever.

What? Too many leads? That's a good thing, right?

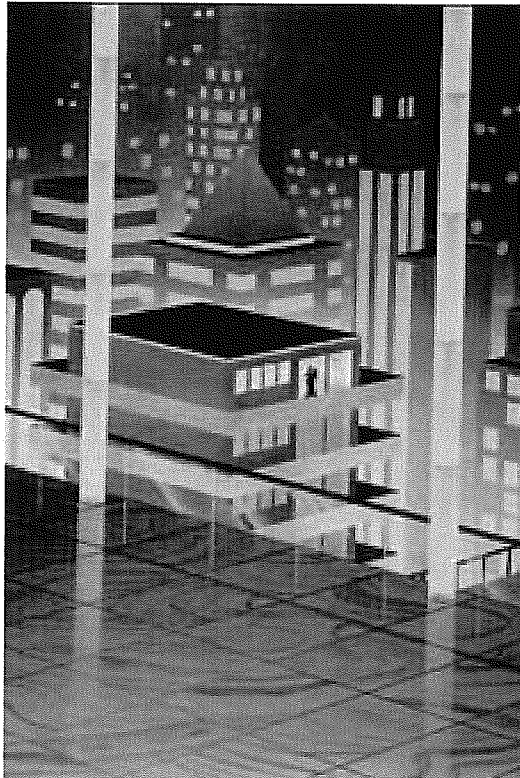
Wonderful leads are sent out every day. Yet many others are blasted out to every hotel in a region. A small size branded hotel can easily receive 30 group leads in a typical day. And on many of these leads, hotels are competing with every other full-service hotel in the region. Often this means that sales managers spend less time on your serious quality leads because they are wading through dozens of unfiltered leads.

Don't let your lead get lost in the pile. Use these simple points to ensure your lead will be responded to promptly by the hotels you want:

- Send the lead to the preferred hotels (or preferred locations) first before sending out to a large number of properties.
- Prioritize the most important features, such as room rate,

location, meal pricing, amenities or parking/Metro access. It is frustrating for a hotel to respond to a lead to find out that the client was really interested in another area of town.

- List the meeting history. It helps to know what type of property a client is accustomed to.
- Specify food and beverage functions as accurately as possible. F&B history, or a preferred F&B minimum, will help a hotel understand the true value of your business and result in better lead response.
- Provide a budgeted rate range. This can even save you money, as hotels will often strive to be within the acceptable range.



- List alternate dates whenever possible.
- Prioritize competitive properties or cities. If the lead has been sent to "all area hotels," then it is much less valuable to a hotel than a lead which specifies: 1st choice, downtown, 2nd choice, northern suburbs, 3rd choice, airport.
- Ask for the concessions that are most important to you, not a generic laundry list. A recent lead requested two complimentary suites, two additional upgrades to suites, three amenities upon arrival, discounted staff rooms, 10 percent discount on food, one per 40 complimentary rooms - all for a one-day Tuesday meeting with 35 guestrooms!
- Specify a deadline for the response and a decision timeline. It helps a hotel to know how long they have to prepare a bid and when to follow up with the planner.
- After a decision has been made, inform the hotels that bid on your program. This is as easy as sending out an email saying that another hotel was selected. For added brownie points, let the hotels know which property earned your business.

Often it is not the highest dollar business that receives the quickest response. When planners take a few minutes to detail their needs, the hotel can see what is important and help them put together a proposal to meet the needs of the meeting.

Hotels want your leads. Hotels want more business. By adding just a little more information to a lead, it can speed up the replies and provide you with better information on the responses you receive. Then it will be that much easier to match up your meeting with the perfect hotel.