

CASE STUDY

HEI Hotels & Resorts Looks to Knowland for Help Rebuilding Sales During Recovery



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– KARL MURPHY, CHIEF COMMERCIAL OFFICER, HEI HOTELS & RESORTS

The Challenge

Group business is key to the hotel industry's return to sustainability and profitability. As the world began to re-open and meetings began to re-emerge, the **HEI Hotels & Resorts** management team knew it would be essential to provide its teams with innovative software solutions to help them rebuild and elevate its group sales teams' performance levels. They also knew that one of the greatest challenges was to provide its limited sales teams with a way to conduct proactive outreach efficiently and effectively.

By partnering with Knowland and leveraging its experienced support team, they could provide a tool to their employees that not only helped them identify leads, but also provided them with the necessary historical data to conduct meaningful outreach when it was needed most.

PROPERTY PROFILE

HEI Hotels & Resorts, headquartered in Norwalk, Conn., is a leading hospitality investment and management company that owns and/or operates over 80+ luxury, upper-upscale and independent and branded hotels and resorts throughout the United States. HEI's branding partners include Marriott, Hilton, Hyatt, IHG and Accor. HEI prides itself on some of the highest employee satisfaction scores in the hospitality industry.

The Strategy

HEI strategized with long-time partner Knowland, whose team worked to develop a four-week program for two hotels in Boston and Atlanta. The program was designed to help re-invigorate the sales teams and prepare them for the oncoming travel rush. To deliver top-notch sales training customized for new normal, Knowland called in **Master Connection Associates (MCA)** who designed and implemented a sales refresher program and best-practices training.

Knowland's Customer Success team oversaw project management including counseling, training support and a feedback loop. Additionally, a prospecting roadmap was implemented that entailed coaching each property's sales team. These teams were then provided with access to the Knowland platform database to help them drill into their approximately 50 target accounts based on market activity. Teams received engagement tools such as email templates, sample LinkedIn messages, and email subject lines to improve efficiency and success of their outreach. Knowland and MCA managed weekly program reviews which were reported back to Karl Murphy.

It was clear HEI also needed to redefine success metrics with a focus on personal engagement and relationship building to ensure successful outcomes leading to future sales.



The Results

By incorporating Knowland's database and contact information into their outreach efforts, two HEI hotels collectively identified \$165k in opportunities in just two weeks during COVID.

The Westin Waltham, Boston was able to identify the potential for upwards of \$90k in new business by proactively conducting outreach to local biopharmaceutical companies. With a new Director of Sales and Marketing and a returning Director of Catering, the small team of two (reduced from a previous staff of 12) were able to identify 46 contacts at a variety of companies to begin rebuilding the hotel's group pipeline.

The Whitely, in Atlanta's Buckhead region, saw even greater results due to the market re-opening quicker than Boston. They identified a gala in 2022 that included catering for 375-400 people for a large top-tier university. Another opportunity came from a large regional hospital looking to book a planning conference in 2022 for upwards of 150 people. "Knowland is a necessary tool to help our hotels identify new business and streamline efforts to rebuild meeting and events revenue," added Murphy about the ability of Knowland to accelerate recovery.