

5 WAYS TO FAIL AT ONLINE PARTY BOOKING

Are you getting the most from your online booking? A great online booking experience means lower labor costs and increased add-on revenue. Our clients have booked more than \$425 million in event revenue using our online software. This is a list of the 5 most critical online booking mistakes that entertainment facilities make.

Mistake 1

You don't let your customers know you have it

What's the point in having online booking if your customers can't find the link? This tip seems obvious, but so often facilities will have links that are difficult to find, or even non-existent. In addition, how do customers know to go to your website to book an event in the first place? Make sure your facility voicemail provides information about the ability to book online. Also make sure that your promotional materials and flyers all have information about this feature. Once customers understand that this option is available, the bookings will start rolling in.

Mistake 2

You don't up-sell during the online booking process

Up-selling is one of the most powerful features of online booking. Many operators know that by the time you finish doing a booking over the phone (which takes 20-30 minutes if done correctly), the parent just wants to get off the line. This leaves little room to add up-sell items. But when you provide the ability to up-sell during an online booking, the parent can go at their own pace to see each item. And you can also pinpoint specific up-sell items targeted for particular types of parties. For example, if the parent is booking a glow-in-the-dark party, you can make sure that glow necklaces are at the top of the up-sell list. This helps increase the amount of up-sells for online booking.

Mistake 3

You don't show pictures or provide details

There's an old saying, "Pictures are worth 1,000 words." It's vital to include high-quality pictures as part of the online booking process. Make sure that every type of event and every up-sell item has a good picture. In addition, make sure you provide descriptive details. Sure, saying "large pepperoni pizza" is accurate, but it's not very exciting. Change that to something like "Freshly-baked pepperoni pizza with melted cheese and a crispy crust." These details, along with high-quality pictures, will make your products easier to understand and increase up-sell revenue. Our clients tend to see 18-20% more in up-sell revenue for parties booked online compared to over the phone. When you provide pictures and details, it creates results.

Mistake 4

You throw everything you can at them

While providing up-sell options is important, don't overwhelm the customers with too many options. If they get to the up-sell page, and they have to scroll through 70 or 80 different items, it will become overwhelming, and they may not complete the order. In addition, make sure similar items are grouped together for a sense of order. If you have several different types of pizza, don't scatter them throughout the page. This makes the process more confusing than necessary. The easier the online booking process is, the more likely customers are to complete the process.

Mistake 5

You don't up-sell after the fact

Some operators are skeptical about doing online booking because they think they won't be able to talk to the guest. If event booking is done correctly, then this isn't the case. When someone books an event online, the process is done in the customer's mind. They chose a date and package, added up-sells, and paid a deposit. But surely you will be doing follow up calls for each booking. You have the opportunity to up-sell again over the phone while explaining the options or answering additional questions. Plus, you have the opportunity to up-sell during the event itself. Everything booked online is money already spent in the eyes of the parent, so it's easier to add more during the event. If you try to initially sell a parent on 6 pizzas, they may think it's a lot. However, if they order 4 online and then you try to sell them 2 more during the event, it becomes a lot easier due to the psychology of spending money.

BONUS Mistake

You don't take a deposit online

It's extremely important that you take a deposit online to finish the booking process. It seals the deal and prevents that customer from potentially looking at any of your competitors. If your system is only set up to take a deposit over the phone during the follow up call, you create the ability for the customer to back out and do a party somewhere else. Plus, the deposit creates a sense of certainty. If a deposit isn't taken during the online booking process, the parent may be skeptical and uncertain the booking was actually completed.

In Review - 5 Ways to Succeed

1. Let your customers know you have it
2. Up-sell during the booking process
3. Show pictures and provide details
4. Simplify the process and avoid confusion
5. Up-sell after the fact
6. Bonus: Take a deposit to seal the deal