

IHG's Winning Metrics Help Crown Plaza Operators Deliver Exceptional Performance

How does a company help ensure great guest service when it doesn't actually own most the hotels in its portfolio?

IHG, a global hotel company, provides the owners and operators of around 150 Crowne Plaza® Hotels and Resorts located in the United States and Canada with "Winning Metrics," an email newsletter on their past month's performance. These monthly updates give hotel executives the insights they need to continually enhance service and ensure guest satisfaction. Crown Plaza brand hotels provides restful guest rooms, comprehensive meeting facilities, 24-hour business services, and fitness centers to meet the needs of its target clientele, modern business travelers.



Ben Rosenbaum
Associate Marketing and
Communications Manager,
Crowne Plaza Brand Team



Communicating with Diverse Audiences

"Our business is more complex than it might seem from the outside," says **Ben Rosenbaum, Associate Marketing and Communications Manager, Crowne Plaza Brand Team**. "We have two sets of customers: our guests, of course, and our owners. Whenever we want to roll out new initiatives or emphasize certain performance metrics, we rely on our owners to buy into the initiatives and make the investments required and implement our programs," Ben states. To improve communication, the Brand Team

leaders developed a biweekly brand newsletter. It was designed to help Crowne Plaza hotel operators stay informed and up-to-date on key initiatives. While this tactic was a vast improvement, it still left something to be desired. To increase the relevancy of the stakeholder newsletter and increase open rates, the Brand Team decided to segment the content.

Winning Metrics Provide Actionable Insights

The new tool would provide Winning Metrics on several key indices: occupancy satisfaction; hotel response to guest reviews; recognition of loyalty members; and RGI, a "hyper-local" market share, or how each hotel fares against its nearby competitors.

And that's where things got complicated, said Rosenbaum. It was easy to pull numbers by inn-codes from an Excel spreadsheet, giving general managers information that was relevant to their hotel. However, owners often ran multiple properties. Was there a way to pull and integrate information seamlessly, without a lot of manual labor, which added time and error to key processes?

Rosenbaum reached out to EmailOpen to see if the company could help. EmailOpen is the preferred stakeholder communications tool at IHG, used for myriad purposes such as the **CEO blog, employee communications in Europe and the Americas**, and more.

"Working with EmailOpen has been phenomenal. EmailOpen helped IHG generate personalized executive communication emails to all of our Crowne Plaza® hotel and resort owners and operators in the U.S. and Canada. These busy executives get fast access to aggregated data on their properties, so that they can assess performance on an ongoing basis."

- Ben Rosenbaum, Associate Marketing and Communications Manager, Crowne Plaza® Brand Team

Personalizing Communications for Better Results

"And that's where the real creativity came in," says Rosenbaum. EmailOpen created HTML code that linked owners, properties, and the EmailOpen tool. After the Brand Team updates its metrics each month, it uploads the updated Excel spreadsheet into EmailOpen. The internal communications solution takes the HTML code and prepopulates all of the mails with the executives' names and their performance data. The EmailOpen tool generates "clear, crisp-looking tables in the finished emails, which are totally personalized. This is really exceptional," says Rosenbaum.

Rosenbaum and his team chose to keep the internal communications simple, an email sent from a senior leader. Rosenbaum believes that providing one-to-one executive communication and aggregating information for simple review helps increase the effectiveness of the Winning Metrics program. He says that the emails are used by the majority of Crowne Plaza's leadership, who set the standard for the rest of the operators.

"We want to make sure that our owners and operators are aware of how they're performing," states Rosenbaum. "Believe it or not, this is not the easiest information to get. By getting a snapshot of what's happening at each hotel, these executives can say, 'Wow, occupancy satisfaction is higher than I thought' – or else, 'Why is it so low? What do I need to do now?' Our owners self-regulate and deliver amazing service, but there is an always an opportunity to improve in the competitive hospitality industry."

A New Use for a Best-In-Class Email Marketing Solution

When asked how difficult it was to create Winning Metrics, Rosenbaum says, "Honestly, it couldn't have been any easier. I sent an email to EmailOpen, and Geraldine Chollet [Director of Client Services] called me to gain more insight into what I was asking for.



EmailOpen developed the spreadsheet, Geraldine talked me through how to use it, and I've been using the same spreadsheet ever since."

Rosenbaum says it takes him about an hour to update all the metrics and just a few seconds to upload the spreadsheet into EmailOpen and generate the personalized emails. "I'm sure we're only scratching the surface of what EmailOpen can do, but they have evolved to meet our needs, which is incredibly helpful," he says. Rosenbaum is moving into a new role as strategic partnerships manager. "If I need a tool for internal communications and direct marketing, EmailOpen will be the first solution I turn to."

EmailOpen has helped teams across IHG segment audiences, test messages, and increase the relevance of its stakeholder communications – an imperative in today's age when most individuals receive hundreds of emails each day.