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Do's & Don'ts for Turning Guest Data Into Direct Bookings

Digital Strategy

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REVINATE

You have probably heard it before: your guest data is one of your hotel's most valuable assets. But here's the uncomfortable truth. Most of it is just sitting there, untouched. Unused. Unloved. And that's a problem. Because data doesn't drive value unless it's activated. When you connect the dots between systems, teams, and guest touchpoints, magic happens. Suddenly, you are not just sending emails, you are sending the right message to the right guest at the right time. You are not just answering phone calls, you are anticipating needs. And you are not just looking at dashboards, you are making decisions that move the needle on loyalty, bookings, and revenue. Ready to turn that data dust into gold? Let's get into it.

I bet you have a great view, sitting atop mountains of guest data. But is a good view all you really have?

Most hotels really are sitting on mountains of guest data, but only a handful are using what they have to drive meaningful results. I have spoken with too many hoteliers who say the same thing: *"We have the data, but we don't really do anything with it."*

That needs to change, and here's why: Activating guest data across channels – email, voice, and even the on-property experience – unlocks better personalization. That personalization isn't the end goal, but instead the fuel you need to boost direct bookings and reduce your reliance on OTAs.

In this article, I'll walk you through the key do's and don'ts for turning that untapped guest data into a powerful, scalable, and repeatable process that fosters the guest loyalty and direct revenue you have been dreaming of.

DO'S

1 DO CENTRALIZE YOUR GUEST DATA INTO A UNIFIED PLATFORM

If I were starting fresh at a hotel tomorrow, this is where I would begin. Without a unified view of your guest data, you are flying blind. A connected system (like a proper CDP) lets your marketing, reservations, and front desk teams all work from the same playbook – and that's when the real magic happens.

2 DO USE SEGMENTATION TO PERSONALIZE YOUR OFFERS

Want to stand out in a guest's inbox? Then don't blast, but instead segment. Review that guest's booking behavior, frequency, spend, and even preferences to make every message feel handpicked. That's how you start turning emails into direct bookings, not just opens.

3 DO ENRICH YOUR VOICE RESERVATIONS WITH PRE-CALL GUEST INSIGHTS

If your hotel voice channel isn't data-powered, you are leaving money on the table. Equip your reservation agents with insights before they even pick up the phone by providing them with details like a guest's last stay, preferences, loyalty status, and more. The conversation becomes less of a transaction and more about the personalization you can infuse into the upcoming stay. And that's where conversion happens.

4 DO AUTOMATE YOUR EMAIL MARKETING BASED ON GUEST LIFECYCLE

I have seen too many hotels send emails just because *"it's time."* That's backwards. Instead, build campaigns around the guest's journey: pre-arrival nudges, post-stay re-engagement, and seasonal offers based on past behaviors. Let your hotel email marketing meet guests where *they* are, not where your calendar says they should be.

5 DO PROACTIVELY TARGET PAST GUESTS WITH HIGH INTENT

Every hotel has *"hidden gold"* – past guests who are primed to rebook. Maybe they clicked a recent campaign. Maybe they stayed the same time last year. If I were building a direct booking strategy, this segment would be one of my first targets. The intent is already there; you just need to close the loop.

6 DO USE YOUR CALL DATA TO INFORM FUTURE CAMPAIGNS

Your voice channel isn't just a conversion machine – it's also a valuable listening tool and the ultimate data collector. No piece of data is wasted. Booking objections, frequently asked questions, and upsell interest can all feed into future email campaigns. So, the next time guests get an email after hanging up, they'll feel like you are reading their minds. But, in reality, you are just listening better.

7 DO PRIORITIZE HIGH-VALUE GUESTS AND LOYALTY SEGMENTS

It may sound harsh, but some guests are just worth more – in revenue, in frequency, and in influence. If I were you, I would identify them early and make sure every touchpoint is dialed up for better offers, smoother booking, and recognition at check-in. Your guest data can tell you who those high-value guests are, and then it's on you to treat them like it.

8 DO UNIFY YOUR DATA ACROSS CHANNELS (EMAIL, VOICE, SURVEY)

Here's a big one I see hotels miss: cross-channel consistency. Imagine there is an invisible thread that connects pieces of information you have gathered from email, the voice channel, post-stay surveys, and even on-site service notes. All of it's connected, and that connection is how you build a living, breathing hotel guest profile. When all your channels talk to each other, the experience just *feels* better for the guest.

9 DO ALIGN YOUR MARKETING AND RESERVATION SALES TEAMS

If your data is siloed, that's no good. The same idea goes for your teams. If your marketing department is completely cut off from your reservation sales team, then that creates inefficiency. Because you can bet they aren't sharing guest data to use for guest communication. When both teams have shared access to guest data, they can collaborate on campaigns that convert. Alignment isn't optional anymore – it's essential.

10 DO CONTINUOUSLY TEST AND REFINE YOUR CAMPAIGNS BASED ON PERFORMANCE

Testing and refining never stop. Constantly test subject lines, send times, offer types, and even call scripts. The more you experiment, the more your guest data sharpens into strategy. Direct bookings don't improve by accident – they improve through iteration. And your guest's preferences and reason to book are always changing, so your campaigns should change with them.

DON'TS

1 DON'T LET YOUR DATA SIT SILOED IN DIFFERENT SYSTEMS OR SPREADSHEETS

If your guest data is locked away in disconnected systems, you won't be able to use it when it matters. I have seen hotels waste hours trying to track down a guest's last stay. That's not scalable. Centralize it, or you are stuck reacting instead of leading. More importantly, if you want to get any benefit out of anything 'new' in the burgeoning world of AI, your data has to be in one place. AI doesn't work with siloed data.

2 DON'T IGNORE YOUR VOICE CHANNEL'S CONVERSION POTENTIAL

The hotel voice channel still outperforms most digital channels when used well, and we have the data to prove it. If you are ignoring it, you are missing out on high-intent, high-converting moments. Equip your team with the right training to maximize the value of every call and treat it like the revenue and data generator it is.

3 DON'T SEND GENERIC EMAILS WITHOUT SEGMENTATION

Stop treating every guest like they are the same, because they are not. I can almost guarantee your direct bookings will lift when you start sending segmented, relevant campaigns that feel crafted, not canned. Guests want to believe and feel like you know them, so the more accurate you can be in sending the right email to the right guest, the better your results will be.

4 DON'T LET YOUR RESERVATION TEAM OPERATE WITHOUT ACCESS TO GUEST HISTORY

If I were a reservation agent, I would want access to a guest's history before every call. Without it, they are simply left guessing. Give your team the data, and you'll see stronger conversations and stronger conversions. How else are you going to identify your most loyal guests, enrich their profiles, and tap into the reasons why they choose your hotel over another?

5 DON'T NEGLECT POST-STAY SURVEY INSIGHTS

Guests are already giving you feedback. Are you listening? If you are not using post-stay survey insights to adjust your outreach or improve your service, you are missing one of your richest guest data sources. Send these surveys soon after the stay ends, so that guests can provide fresh feedback. Waiting too long can lead to stale feedback that you really can't accurately use to improve the guest experience.

6 DON'T TREAT OTA GUESTS THE SAME AS YOUR LOYAL GUESTS

This one's simple: Not all guests are equal. Direct bookers are more likely to stay loyal to your hotel and provide you with rich guest data. So reward your loyal book-direct customers, and create frictionless paths to convert OTA guests into future direct ones. Ever heard of OTA winback campaigns? They are a great way to flip OTA bookers and turn them into direct bookers with the assurance that you can give guests what OTA's can't – a personalized experience.

7 DON'T OVERLOOK DROP-OFF POINTS IN THE BOOKING JOURNEY

Have you mapped your booking journey lately? If not, you might be missing clear drop-off points – where your guests are leaving the booking engine without booking (also known as the dreaded abandoned guests). I would be looking at form friction, pricing confusion, or gaps in the booking experience. The quicker you can identify these drop-off points, the sooner you can get back to collecting guest data. When a guest abandons the booking journey, their data does too.

8 DON'T SKIP PERFORMANCE TRACKING

No data, no progress. I would never run a campaign or call script without tracking its performance. Whether it's email metrics or call conversion rates, you need data to optimize. Find out what's working and what's not so that you can make data collection and activation as seamless as possible.

9 DON'T IGNORE THE VALUE OF HUMAN TOUCH

Automation is great – until it's not. Guests still want to feel known, so use automation to enable better personalization, not eliminate it. For example, automating email sends frees up your staff by reducing manual work and adding more time to spend with guests. Real change happens when technology enhances hospitality and the human connection instead of replacing it.

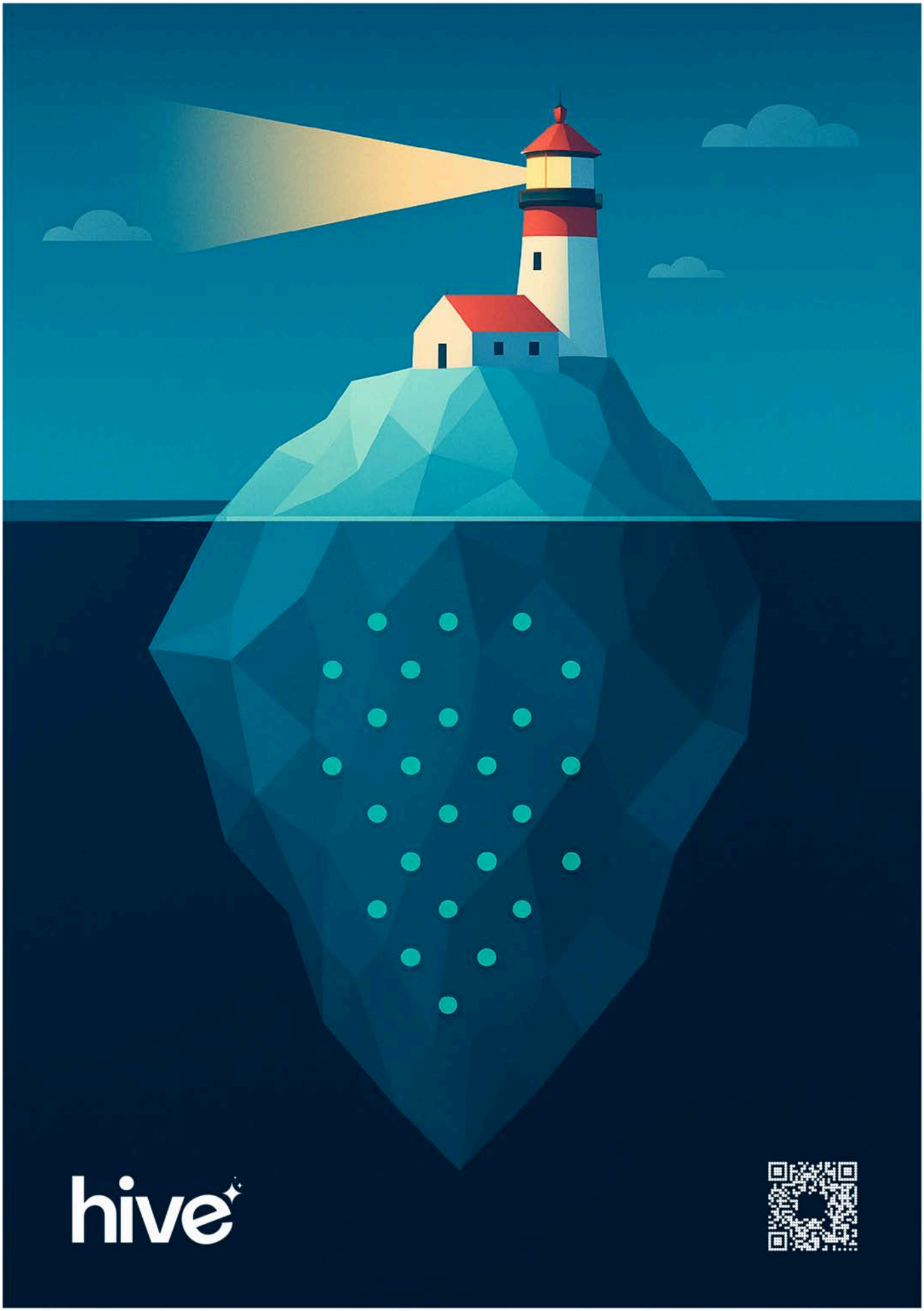
10 DON'T IGNORE DATA PRIVACY AND CONSENT REQUIREMENTS

We all want to use data better, but we can't cut corners. Make sure every data point is collected ethically, transparently, and in line with privacy laws. Trust is the new currency, and your guests won't give you a second chance. The best setup is to adopt and operate with technology that puts privacy standards first and reduces the chances that your guests' information could fall into the wrong hands.

DIRECT BOOKINGS ARE A DATA POINT AWAY

As you move forward in 2025, remember that the hotels that are winning right now aren't just collecting data, they are activating it – thoughtfully, strategically, and across every channel. If I were running a hotel in 2025, I would think less about *"how much"* data I have and more about the smarter use of what I already have. Your guest data is already in your systems. The question is: Are you using it to create value for your guests to book direct and add to your bottom line?

So I'll leave you with this: How is your hotel using guest data today – and how could you use it better tomorrow?



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