

Improving The Appearance Of Your Minibar

In our travels across Australia promoting Minibarmaster, we encounter wide variations in Minibar stocking and appearance. We see some properties with a large range of items, yet the minibar doesn't seem to have a presence or appeal for guests to purchase. This results in lower revenue, yet there is a high cost to stock and maintain the bar, resulting in minibar operations running at a loss.

While most experienced operators don't expect minibar operations to operate with a significant profit, it should not operate at a loss. There are some improvements operators can implement to improve minibar revenue.

Firstly, ensure no item is ever out of stock. This is common sense and results in direct revenue loss, exacerbated further if the items are high volume items such as water or soft drinks. There is also a knock on effect because the minibar looks bare and uninviting, thus not encouraging guests to purchase.

Consider the placement of products. For non-refrigerated products use a stand to hold the items in place with the brand and product logo displayed prominently. Staff should be trained to position products accordingly. The stand should spread the items across from left to right to maximise their visibility and their appeal, and encourage the guest to purchase. In addition, ensure the products are well lit so the guest will notice them.

Stock popular product lines. Most hotels stock brand standard products so there is not a great deal of flexibility, however if there is freedom to choose items, avoid cheaper less popular items. Don't use cheap substitutes for popular items.

Ensure the choice of items is varied. There must be at least three sweets, at least two different types of chips, nuts, cashews, water, three types of soft drinks, two types of juices, two or three beers and RTDs. The guest needs sufficient choice so as to think "wow, there's a lot of choice here". Off course too much choice requires additional wages for staff to restock the bar, so a balance has to be met.

Consider stocking more than one entity of each item. If a guest is going to consume one example of an item, they are likely to want a second one later in the evening. Common items such as chocolates and soft drinks should have at least two entities.

Split the dry minibar products across two locations in the room. This maximises the guest's exposure to the minibar, leading to temptation and purchase.

Alternatively, place the non-refrigerated products in a high traffic location such as on the end of the table near the broadband connection. If the hotel has a reasonable level of business clientele, guests will normally use the table to work in the evening, thus being exposed to the minibar

products and increasing the possibility of purchasing. This is a better location compared to existing options such as above the fridge near the doorway where it is not as noticeable.

Place the most profitable refrigerated items in the main part of the fridge where the guest has maximum visibility. This is usually the bottom of the fridge or the first shelf up from the bottom. The least popular items should be placed in the door.

Don't place chocolates in the fridge. Rock hard refrigerated chocolates are not very appealing and guests are not likely to purchase them.

The best way to manage change in your minibar ranging and display, is to sample the changes on a few rooms of the hotel and measure the outcome. Typically an entire floor offers an adequate sample size to ascertain if the proposed changes improve your minibar revenue, and are easy to manage.

What Is Minibarmaster?

Minibarmaster it is a specialised minibar solution using handheld PDAs for hotel staff to record minibar sales as they check rooms. The charges are recorded on the PDA and posted wirelessly to the guest accounts in the PMS from the floors. The charges take less than 60 seconds from the time they are entered in the PDA to the time they reach the guest accounts. In addition, because the system uses the mobile phone network as the wireless mechanism, the hotel does not need to invest in any wireless infrastructure. The system will also calculate denials, and includes reports for finding expired products in rooms, calculating staff productivity, DNDs, sales and other reports. It eliminates the need for pen and paper based recording and dramatically improves speed of checking and the speed of posting thus resulting in savings in wages and reduced denials. In addition Minibarmaster was fully developed locally for the Australian and New Zealand market places.



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