



The Hospitality Guide to Nurturing



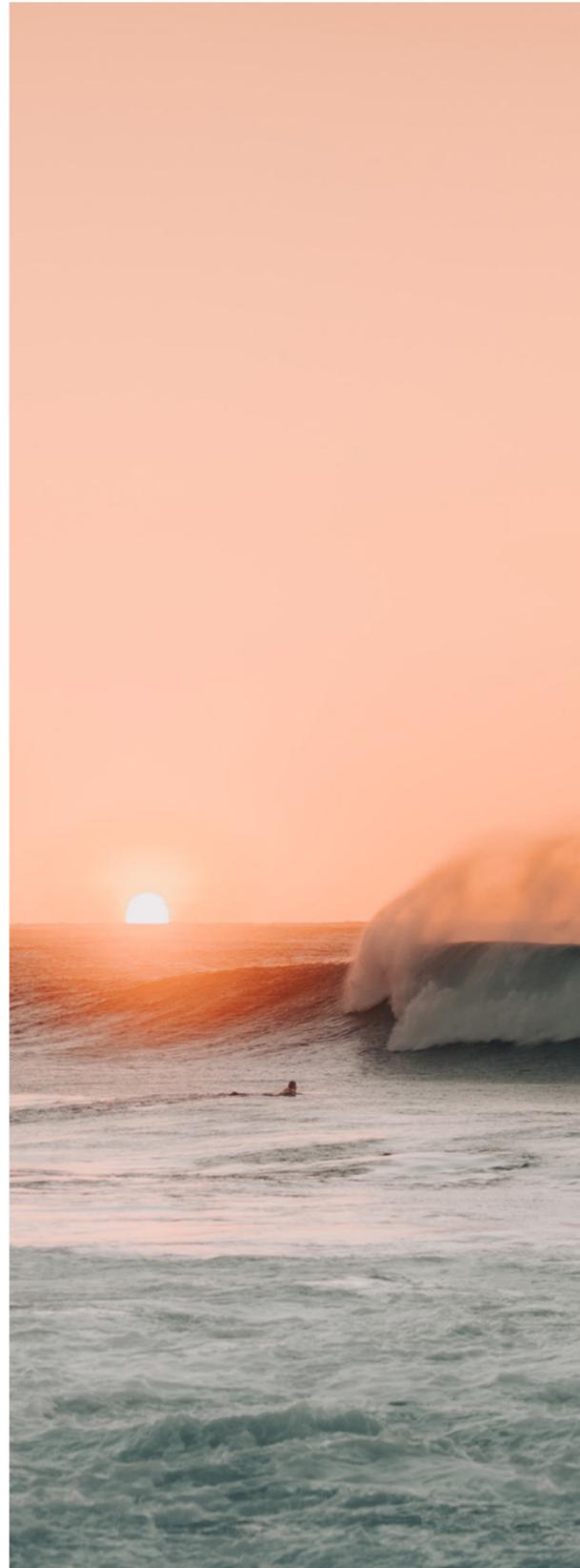
BY JANINE YU

You see it all the time: feel-good stories and marketing stunts and companies going above and beyond to show they care for their customers. These are usually one-off examples that epitomize a brand's values – something that plays well in the press but isn't scalable.

For hotels, delivering an exceptional customer experience should be the key focus. Properties know the high acquisition cost of capturing and converting a new guest, so the priority should be to nurture that relationship well beyond when the guest checks out. And it should be done in a way that reaches all guests without overextending your team. Customer loyalty is the ultimate objective, whether it's in the form of a repeat visitor or a guest advocating for your brand to their personal network.

On and off the property, when you deliver a great guest experience, guest satisfaction levels rise. If you maintain world-class levels of guest satisfaction, nurturing customer relationships becomes much easier. And naturally, guest retention and loyalty will follow.

But how do you reach world-class guest satisfaction levels? Nurturing guest relationships requires the right tools and strategies. Read on to learn what they are.



How to Nurture Your Guests

NUMBER 1

Develop a Customer Obsession.

You know that old nugget, “The customer is always right?” Well, maybe not quite, but the customer always deserves attention, and not just when there's a problem to be fixed. The best hospitality brands are always thinking of their customers – not just what they think, but how they think. Customer obsession is a state of hyper-focus on creating a better customer experience from the customer's perspective.

Jeff Bezos credits much of Amazon's success to its first core value: customer obsession. He believes that every department needs to make customers' needs and expectations a priority across the business. This approach isn't based on one-time or seasonal campaigns; it's an everyday mindset, and every department from sales to marketing to customer support, is built around these needs.

The biggest and most successful brands in the world share this approach. Walt Disney created the magic of his parks, cruises, and hotels with obsessive attention to customers' needs. In fact, Disney studied customer experience down to smallest detail, including how far visitors had to walk in one of his parks to get to a trash can. Decisions big, small, and seemingly trivial add to the overall impression of your brand, as well as your ability to deliver an excellent customer experience.

NUMBER 2

Implement Customer Relationship Management Software.

How do you measure how well you're improving your customer experience? Customer obsession requires an obsession with data, which requires a customer relationship management (CRM) software that can meet your needs. After all, there's that other business nugget to consider: "You can't manage what you can't measure."

You should understand who your guests are even if they don't become repeat visitors. Why? Because their profiles likely represent the interest and preferences of similar people who could or would be guests. A CRM can help you learn more about your guests' interests and behaviors and help you spot patterns that can inform your business strategies.

The battle for consumer data is fierce, especially now that the major tech companies including Google and Apple

are limiting the access of advertisers and other third parties to customer data collected via their products. According to a Skift report, knowing less about travelers could make it harder for travel brands to be surgical in their messaging by geography and demography, given that some regions and age groups will be traveling sooner than others¹. Without app data sharing, travel brands may have less insight into which campaigns drive bookings at a time when they're desperate to regain profitability. In a world where we can no longer use third-party data, hospitality professionals will increasingly have to rely on their own data to figure out the customer journey and customer profile.

For more on the end of 3rd party cookies, check out our recent blog on the [cookie-less future](#).

¹ <https://skift.com/2021/04/19/apples-privacy-update-may-cripple-some-travel-ad-campaigns/>

NUMBER 3

Make Sure it Works.

It's not enough to have a lead nurture program in place – you should continually check that it works, by measuring its impact. For example, lead nurturing is the process of developing and reinforcing relationships with buyers at every stage of the sales funnel. A successful lead nurturing program focuses marketing and communication efforts on listening to the needs of prospects and providing the information and answers they need to build trust, increase brand awareness, and maintain a connection until prospects are ready to make a purchase.

Lead nurturing is an involved process that requires you to have goals in place. Ask yourself how many leads you need to generate, what your offering is, and what type of guests/prospects you want to attract and use that information as a jumping-off point to gather relevant data. From there, you can measure its impact.

Top Three Key Metrics for Lead Nurturing:

- ▶ **Qualification Metrics** – identify the leads who demonstrate a strong potential toward becoming buyers
- ▶ **Conversion Metrics** – measure click-through on emails and response rates to CTAs in your newsletter
- ▶ **Cost & Profitability Metrics** – analyze how well the lead nurturing process contributes to your topline and bottom line¹

Source: [Regalix](#)



NUMBER 4

Start from the Beginning.

Once someone has signed up for your newsletter, you may think it's a job well done. You've captured the email address for future communication, so that should be it, right? Not quite. Surprisingly, many brands don't always send a welcome email. A recent survey from enterprise email service company Bluehornet showed that 74.4% of people expect to receive a welcome email following a new sign-up. If you aren't sending a welcome email, you are missing an opportunity to nurture a new relationship.

The goal of this communication is simply: to welcome the prospect and thank them for signing up. Welcome emails have a much higher open rate compared to the average open rates for email newsletters, so it's a great time to set expectations for your email program (your long-term marketing nurture strategy). Encourage them to personalize their preferences, and if applicable, offer a first-time booking incentive.

You can also do a welcome series and with three separate LifeCycle emails. The first is sent immediately – the time a subscriber opts in is when they are most excited, so this is your best chance to introduce your brand and make a strong impression. A second follow up can be sent 10 days later. This email should be personalized to their interests using email segmentation. For example, segmenting spa aficionados, this email could focus on spa offerings for your hotel spa. The final email could be sent at 20-days, post-sign up, to re-engage and drive traffic – perhaps offer a discount code to book your property. A welcome series can deliver 13% more revenue than a single welcome note.



NUMBER 5

Take a Holistic Approach.

Beyond that first email, think through subsequent communications. Effective lead nurturing must encompass your entire marketing calendar to incorporate the total amount of communications your leads are receiving, including newsletters, updates, database emails, and other cross-channel communications.

Focus on making these interactions work harmoniously in a way that is relevant and gives guests and prospects the best possible experience, and you'll earn the loyalty of your leads.





NUMBER 6

Understand Engagement.

List churn is a fact of marketing communications. Companies should expect to lose up to 30%² of email subscribers. For a lead nurturing program to be effective (and to avoid losing subscribers), it must engage your audience.

Email capture is only the first step in the longer and more important process of email engagement. When you nurture your communications with leads, you demonstrate value in the content and knowledge you share, creating trust and impact. You can start building trust by providing a clear and easy opt-in process and empowering the subscriber to manage their email preferences so they can choose the content, frequency, and format of emails they receive.

You can even take personalization a step further -- send them what you know they like and what they are interested in. Seventy-five percent of consumers³ say they are more likely to buy from a brand that personalizes messages. This is where segmentation comes in – by segmenting according to demographic, behavior, and intent, you can send more targeted communications that foster a higher level of engagement. When your audience knows you only send the most relevant content, they look forward to hearing from you.

With [NAVIS Marketing Suite](#), you can segment your email list to target guests according to their interests. Let them know about specials and offers relevant to them and keep them engaged with smart and strategic lifecycle email marketing.

² <https://cxl.com/blog/email-engagement/>

³ <https://newsroom.accenture.com/news/consumers-welcome-personalized-offerings-but-businesses-are-struggling-to-deliver-finds-accenture-interactive-personalization-research.htm>

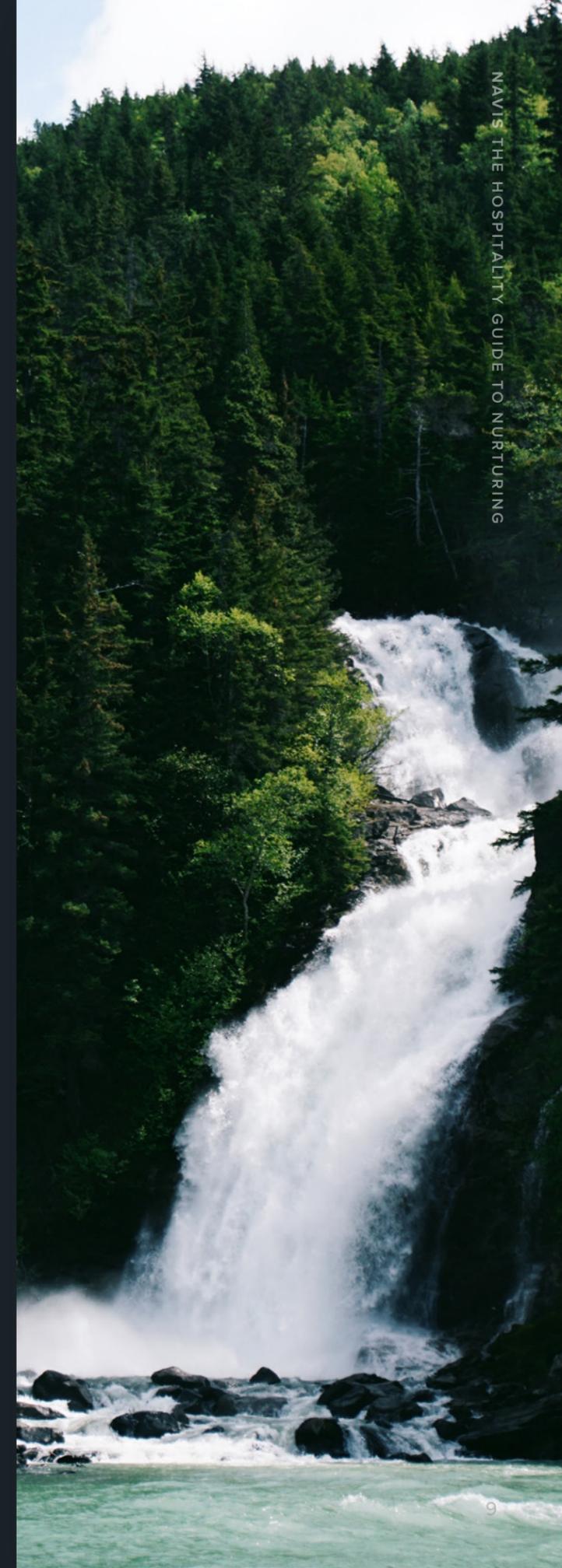
NUMBER 7

Focus on Loyalty.

Far too many in the hospitality industry focus heavily on new customer acquisition rather than guest retention and loyalty. Attracting and capturing new guests is attractive, and no doubt important for business growth. However, you need to find a balance between making that a priority and retaining existing customers. This is key to any guest nurturing strategy.

When nurturing loyal guests, it's important to determine how you define "loyalty." Simply put, loyal guests are ones who return to a property, but not all loyal guests are of equal value, based on their frequency of stay, channels booked, and overall spend. Ed. St. Onge of [Flip.to](#) says that loyalty shouldn't be based on what channel guests booked through, as it doesn't reflect the guest's preferences and needs, such as wanting to be serviced by a travel agent to make a hotel booking. Also, St. Onge points out that loyalty programs can be a crutch, especially if they are all about points, which are more "schemes" that aren't driving true guest loyalty.

Learn more about building guest loyalty through this recent [NAVIS's webinar](#).



NUMBER 8

Check-in with the Guest at Various Points.

Guests need a lot of information pre-arrival, but it's also vital to check in with them during their stay too. StayCycle emails typically include the pre-arrival message and post-departure message but consider adding mid-stay communication to ensure your guests are having a good time and if there is anything that could make their stay more enjoyable. It can be an open-ended message, inviting guests to respond with comments or requests. It can also be an effective way of getting ahead of any potential issues that may lead to a negative review.

Checking in during a guest's stay is also a great way to upsell, let them know about spa offers, or entice them to stay longer or upgrade to a suite. You can also surprise and delight with in-room gifts during the stay to nurture.

NUMBER 9

Work Smarter Not Harder with Email Automation.

You want guests to feel like they are a priority and that they're getting personalized service, but there's a way of doing that without straining your resources. Sending manual emails is time-consuming and not cost-effective. Leveraging email automation allows you to send emails automatically based on pre-defined triggers (such as a welcome email sent when someone signs up for your newsletter). Automating your email marketing efforts removes the time that comes with manual email delivery allowing you to engage your customer base, increase operational efficiency, and aid in revenue growth.

While email automation creates efficiencies for your team, it is important to keep in mind segmenting in mind. As we mentioned earlier, subscribers should only receive communication relevant to them to optimize email engagement. Leveraging segmentation, you can sync your automated emails with your Lifecycle programs so that automatic communications are sent out at different stages of the consumer journey.

Check out [NAVIS's Email Marketing Guide for Hoteliers & Vacation Rentals](#).





NUMBER 10

Join The Conversation.

Remember that relationships are a two-way street, and sometimes it's the guest that reaches out and engages your property. When someone posts to your social media sites or mentions your brand in a post, a door opens for you to engage that customer. People expect rapid responses on social media and responding quickly should be a priority.

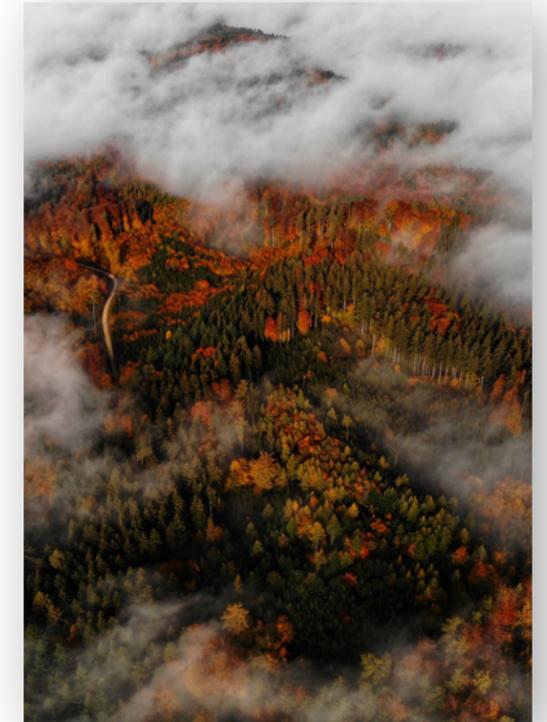
If someone asks a question, mentions your brand, makes a complaint about your company, etc., you need to jump on it. When you show customers that you are listening and attentive to their needs on social media, they will respect and trust you even more.

Nurture, Nurture, Nurture

As with anything worthwhile, building customer loyalty takes time, patience, effort, and care. Nurture every prospect and look forward to reaping the rewards. According to a report by Bain & Company and Harvard Business School, increasing customer retention rates by 5% increases profits by 25% to 95%⁴. It's a relationship that gives back exponentially, so take care in nurturing it.



⁴ <https://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/the-economics-of-e-loyalty>



Nurturing Techniques for Voice Channel

Voice channel drives 75-80% of a property's revenue for independent, as well as four- and five-star properties. Call center agents have a direct line of communication with guests, so it's an optimal time to nurture the guest's relationship with the hotel brand. NAVIS representatives employ the 7 Non-Negotiables, an industry standard that leads to successful and personalized sales calls, with techniques such as using the caller's name in polite conversation and asking open-ended qualifying questions to make custom recommendations. Learn more about the [10 Dos and Don'ts for Call Centers](#).



Chart Your Course.

For hospitality professionals, getting and keeping profitable guests is tougher than ever. NAVIS has created the only complete Direct Booking Platform with a proven plan to help Reservations, Revenue Management, and Marketing truly operate as one team, and make more profit.

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