

CUSTOMER STORY

Dolce International Rides Trend of Increased Group Business Leads From Internet Channels

INCREASED LEAD TRAFFIC

Global Leader in Conference Destinations Shares Leads via Network Technology, Web Connectivity; Group Leads Increase 10%, Definite Bookings Up 5% Over Last Year

When Dolce International, the global leader in the conference center niche, reshapes its 26-property operation to collect more leads from the growing Internet group-booking channel, it is proof of 'evolving technology' at work in the conference destination marketplace. Fielding a new automated electronic Request For Proposal (e-RFP) response capability, Dolce International is on track this year to achieve a 10% increase in e-RFP leads gathered from third-party meeting planning sites like PlanSoft and StarCite, while first quarter sales point to a solid year-over-year increase in definite bookings.

“INCREASINGLY **PLANNERS ARE MOVING** THEIR GROUP BOOKING PROCESS **TO THE INTERNET** AND AWAY FROM TIME-CONSUMING AND EXPENSIVE TRADITIONAL APPROACHES INVOLVING PHONE CALLS, FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS, TRAVEL, AND ONSITE PROPERTY INSPECTIONS. WE ARE PROVIDING A **TRUE B2B SOLUTION** THAT MEETS THEIR REQUIREMENTS FOR A FAST, COST-EFFECTIVE ONLINE BOOKING RESPONSE INSTRUMENT. IN SHORT, WITH OUR E-RFP RESPONSE CAPABILITY, **WE ARE SELLING** THE WAY OUR CUSTOMERS WANT TO BUY.”

Jeff Weggman,
Vice President of Sales,
North America – Dolce International

“The environment has changed. Altogether we expect 15 percent of our group meeting business in 2004 will be booked through our e-RFP process, reflecting our leadership in an emerging trend in our industry,” says Jeff Weggman, Dolce International’s Vice President of Sales, North America. “Increasingly planners are moving their group booking process to the Internet and away from time-consuming and expensive traditional approaches involving phone calls, face-to-face meetings, travel, and onsite property inspections. We are providing a true B2B solution that meets their requirements for a fast, cost-effective online booking response instrument. In short, with our e-RFP response capability, we are selling the way our customers want to buy.”

Recent industry research supports Weggman’s view: With 20 percent of meeting planners reporting they will increase their use of the Internet in 2004 (*MPI FutureWatch 2004* survey), the trend to Web-based conference-booking services is forecasted to expand.

A year ago, before the Internet sales lead boom, Dolce International’s e-RFP process was already integrated directly with Newmarket International’s enterprise-wide sales and marketing management system, Delphi™, which automatically generates the information required for an effective response to an incoming e-RFP. The vendor’s web-based application, NetXchange™ MeetingBroker, then seamlessly connects planners with Dolce’s e-RFP site or with third-party e-market hubs. Buyers can also request e-RFP proposals by going directly to Dolce International’s Web site (www.dolce.com). What has changed in the past year is the volume and speed of lead traffic over the Internet, an increased pace that Dolce’s existing infrastructure is easily able to accommodate. Before, Dolce received sales leads through a straw; now – using the same sales and catering technology – Dolce is able to respond to sales leads received through a fire hose.

An important feature of Dolce International’s e-RFP process is its ability to generate and deliver proposals that do full justice to the Complete Meeting Packages available at the company’s different properties. “Being able to properly communicate what our CMPs include helps to differentiate us from the competition, so our meeting-planner customers don’t make buy decisions just on price,” says Robin Steiner, Dolce International’s Vice President Marketing, The Americas. “Each of our properties is unique in terms of location, type and physical structure. The constant is that they all offer Dolce’s branded standards of service with meeting environments and service designed to provide the best meeting experience in the world. Part of creating great meeting experiences for our customers includes the ease of use and attention to detail of our e-RFP process. Our e-RFP responses convey the details of our state-of-the-art conference facilities as well as all of the leisure amenities – golf, spas, hiking, fine dining, and the like – that enhance a meeting experience for conference attendees at a Dolce property. As a result, event planners can clearly see how we deliver the greatest value within their budget.”



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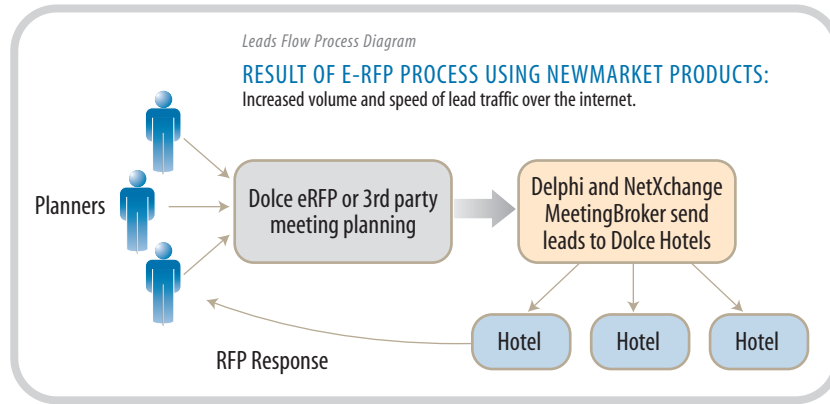
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Dolce’s automated e-RFP response process generates proposals that include all relevant specifications – including images, feature descriptions, and layouts – for each property. Complete Meeting Package proposals incorporate detailed information on group rooms, function space, learning components, property amenities, and even ancillary costs such as airfare and ground transportation. Clients are able to submit e-RFPs to multiple Dolce properties simultaneously, and they are promised real-time responses to their proposal requests within 30 minutes.



ENHANCED LEAD SHARING AMONG PROPERTIES SPURS BOOKINGS AND REVENUES

In addition to streamlining its response to e-RFPs, Dolce International’s corporate Internet strategy enables it to quickly and flexibly share leads among properties. “The salespeople at our Global Sales Offices and individual properties are focused on increasing business across the organization *for the brand*, not just for their location, so it is vital for them to be able to communicate a piece of business from one property to another,” observes Sales VP Weggeman.

This important capability uses several integrated technologies from its sales and catering vendor. Currently, salespeople can access the Delphi Global Sales Edition – a sales force automation tool providing a centralized customer database – gather leads and submit them to Dolce’s e-RFP site, which pushes them to the properties via the NetXchange MeetingBroker link. Soon Dolce International will enhance this process by using the NetXchange I-Server framework for system integration to link the database directly to the properties without the need to access the e-RFP site.

“Our salespeople will very easily be able to send a piece of business from any Delphi screen they’re working in – whether an Accounts, Booking, or Meeting Profile screen – to Dolce properties worldwide,” says Dolce’s Director of Global Technology, Nelson F. Garrido. “With one button click, they can automatically enter all of the lead information into a form that is securely pushed to the properties through I-Server. Since we pay a commission for every shared lead, and a bonus for every lead that results in a booking, our sales force is clearly motivated to drive property-to-property lead sharing, making it a surefire strategy for booking more business and boosting revenue across the brand.”

ABOUT NEWMARKET INTERNATIONAL

Newmarket International’s hospitality solutions are in use at more than 3,500 properties in over 60 countries to generate new business and run their daily operations. The company’s applications manage over 140 million square feet of convention, meeting and banquet space and provide clients with tools to maximize operating efficiencies and increase profitability. Newmarket International is the leading supplier of group, sales, catering, and banquet system solutions for global travel and entertainment organizations. Hotels, international property chains, casinos, visitor bureaus, convention centers and arenas all use Newmarket’s business solutions. The company provides competitive advantages to its customers by enabling cross selling, automated lead generation, efficient enterprise management, and supplying the tools to electronically share and transfer account information across cities and around the world. By combining award-winning technology and support, the industry’s best return on investment, secure domain expertise, and a commitment to the travel industry, Portsmouth, N.H.-based Newmarket International enables its clients to increase efficiencies and maximize profits. For more information call 888.829.8871 or visit www.newmarketinc.com.

ABOUT THE PARAMOUNT GROUP OF HOTELS

Dolce International is the global leader in learning through meetings and leisure, and primarily serves meeting groups of from 30 to 50 people from multinational organizations. Founded in 1981 by Chairman and CEO, Andy Dolce, the Montvale, N.J.-based company currently has 26 properties in the United States, Canada and Europe. Dolce International is among the few conference center operators in the world whose entire portfolio is IACC (International Association of Conference Centers) approved, and the only conference center company that is global. The Dolce collection includes a wide range of geographical venues from the New York metropolitan area to the Texas Hill Country to the Paris countryside, all with branded Dolce standards of service.