

# Strength in Numbers: The Importance of Being a Great Brand Partner

A Brand Is a Promise We Make to Our Guests



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Even though the United States boasts numerous exceptional independent hotels, approximately two-thirds of the country's 60,000 hotels are still associated with a brand. Additionally, the number of rooms being constructed for unaffiliated hotels was only around 30,000 at the end of last year, which is significantly lower than the 131,000 rooms being built for branded and franchised properties.

There are many compelling reasons for the predominance of branded properties, both in the United States and globally, some of which will be considered in this column.

Owners, investors and property managers can realize the most significant value from this contractual relationship by being high-quality brand partners. Achieving this within the hotel industry means understanding the needs and desires of your customers and working closely with your brand to deliver a memorable and satisfying experience. It means offering high-quality accommodations and amenities, providing exceptional service and consistently delivering on your promises to your guests. A great brand partner is also committed to sustainability and social responsibility and works to create a positive impact on the environment and local communities. By focusing on these

critical areas, a great brand partner can build strong relationships with guests and create a loyal customer base to drive long-term success and growth.

### From Promise to Reality

A brand is essentially a promise that we make to our guests, as well as our business partners and employees. This promise has various aspects that enable us to achieve our objectives, such as maintaining high service standards, ensuring guest satisfaction, promoting career development for our staff, and fulfilling our social and community responsibilities.

The first is the technical or operational underpinnings of the brand affiliation. This includes many areas vital to daily and ongoing operations, such as brand standards, staff training programs, reservation systems and sustainability programs. Marketing support, including the now prominent loyalty programs, is also essential. An excellent example of how the brands can successfully fuse operating standards and guidance with marketing support was evident during the pandemic with the rapid establishment, deployment and information campaigns of rigorous, guest-reassuring distancing and cleaning protocols. It was a win all around for our industry.

To be a reliable brand partner, it is essential to actively contribute towards industry-wide brand initiatives that focus on talent attraction, environmental stewardship and social responsibility. Additionally, participation in brand-sponsored advisory councils is crucial. These councils provide a platform for owners, investors and property managers to discuss common issues, ultimately helping to achieve the brand's inherent qualities and market objectives.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the connection between the values represented by a brand and the ownership or management of a property. The principles and values of the brand should guide and inform the actions of the property's management, as they are responsible for representing the brand to guests and the community. Our reputation as a brand and a business is at stake, so we must work together to strengthen our partnerships, uphold industry standards and remain dedicated to the principles that define us.

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