



case study: hotels.com

Offering bookings at more than one hundred twenty thousand hotels in over sixty countries, Hotels.com services business and personal travelers the world over. With its popular loyalty program, twenty-four hour call-center assistance, and extensive library of over one million hotel reviews, Hotels.com offers great prices on every type of hotel property—from roadside motels to all-inclusive resorts.

To remain competitive in today's aggressive travel marketplace, Hotels.com is dedicated to understanding and engaging with its customers. In the online world, tying customer voice to customer experience is the best formula for excelling in that effort—marrying insight into what customers do with information on why they do it.

challenge

Online travel is considered by many to be the most competitive market on the web: today's savvy consumers are shrewdly price conscious, and, since many sites provide similar inventories, companies are often forced into aggressive cost competition.

In this market, differentiation is a persistent and ever-changing challenge. The companies who listen to and understand their customers are those who stand out from the competition.

Understanding Shopping Behavior

Many websites generate more questions than answers regarding customer experience. Without a brick-and-mortar space where analysts and service specialists can witness shopping behavior and interact with consumers, online improvement efforts can often fall victim to web teams' guesswork or whims.

To address this, today's range of advanced web-analytics tools provides helpful insight into what website visitors do. But in order to fully understand the reasons governing that behavior, companies require the ability to both

- Watch individual customers interact with online properties
- Listen as they share input on their online experiences

Make Feedback Actionable

Collecting feedback is only the first step in an enterprise Voice of Customer (VoC) listening program: customer-centric organizations succeed by taking action on the input they receive.

To ensure that web teams understand the complete picture and can make well-informed decisions based on user data, e-businesses must collect both feedback and contextual information.

For example, if a customer comments on a problem in the booking process but fails to provide specific details, that issue is still difficult to identify and fix.

Likewise, if customers repeatedly abandon the checkout process at a specific step, it is typically quite difficult—if not impossible—to accurately pinpoint the reasons for the issue based on analytics or session-replay data alone.

Without a combination of Voice of Customer input and contextual insight, a cycle of inactionable data can take hold, perpetuating poor customer experiences, site abandonment, and unrealized revenue opportunities.

strategy

To gain actionable insight into customer behavior, Hotels.com integrated OpinionLab listening technologies with Tealeaf's leading online customer experience management solution.

Listen and Witness

The combination of OpinionLab and Tealeaf allows Hotels.com to understand and manage customer data in a variety of powerful ways:

- Collect page-specific VoC data in real time
- Gather contextual information around each customer comment
- Automatically notify key stakeholders of important issues revealed through customer input
- Gain visibility into customer behavior through a page-by-page, browser-level recording of actual customer experiences

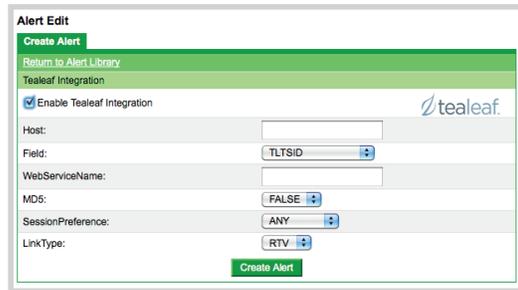
With OpinionLab providing the initial indication of customer struggle and Tealeaf affording the ability to fully understand the detailed context of that issue and measure its impact to the business, Hotels.com can now quickly resolve a myriad of user-experience issues.



"The ability to tie together customer feedback with actual site experiences has really taken our optimization efforts to the next level." -Scott Booker, Senior Vice President of E-Commerce

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By combining OpinionLab and Tealeaf, Hotels.com has inextricably woven customer insight into its business practices for improved customer conversion, satisfaction, and retention.



impact

Improved Visibility, Improved Business Value

When OpinionLab feedback indicated that visitors to Hotels.com were struggling to complete the registration process and book reservations, toolkit administrators simply clicked a button beneath each comment view Tealeaf sessions and confirm users' feedback.

This integration allowed the client to map feedback to actual user sessions, which revealed that some customers were trying to re-register for an existing account. In these cases, the system responded by recognizing a duplicate e-mail address and returning an error message that trapped visitors in an endless loop.

Based on this qualitative information, Hotels.com redesigned the page and created a new site option: Book Without Registering.

Minor Upgrades, Major Issues

Hotels.com frequently updates site functionally through minor weekly upgrades. Although meant to further customer engagement, these small updates can lead to unexpected issues that frustrate customers and impede conversion.

After one such upgrade, negative comments suddenly skyrocketed.

Automated OpinionLab alerts began firing to pre-selected stakeholders in real time, so Hotels.com was instantly aware that a problem existed. And, since opt-in feedback flows in on a page-specific basis, the exact location of the issue was easy to identify.

To augment the quantitative ratings, qualitative comments, and contextual data provided through the OpinionLab VoC system, Tealeaf session-playback links beneath each comment helped web teams quickly determine precisely why customers had struggled on the site.

By drilling down into visitor sessions, website administrators discovered that customers who moved between SSL and standard pages experienced a catastrophic error and could not proceed with booking.

To make matters worse, the issue occurred during the final stage of checkout, so frustrated customers were forced to restart the reservation process from scratch—if they still had enough patience to remain on the site at all.

Hotels.com would have had no way to identify and resolve this issue without the powerful combination of OpinionLab and Tealeaf.



results

Better Bookings

OpinionLab and Tealeaf enabled Hotels.com to improve visibility into customer experience for faster identification and resolution of a significant impediment to conversion.

The new Book Without Registering feature implemented as a result of the VoC - CEM integration was a huge success: today, nearly fifty percent of all customers use this booking option.

Improved Conversion and Retention

By quickly identifying and resolving catastrophic issues created by minor site updates, Hotels.com is able to consistently improve conversion and customer-satisfaction rates while diminishing negative feedback related to such issues.

The powerful combination of OpinionLab and Tealeaf has helped Hotels.com gain precise, actionable insight into online customer experiences for a comprehensive optimization solution.



"The combination of Tealeaf and OpinionLab is great in theory and even better in practice." -Scott Booker, Senior Vice President of E-Commerce