

## THINKING OUTSIDE THE SQUARE

by Glenn Millar  
Sales Consultant

I first made contact with Resort Brokers in 1993, when I purchased a motel leasehold in Mackay, Queensland, through our managing director, Ian Crooks. I've been part of Ian's specialist broking team for several years now, but I know what it is to walk in the shoes of an accommodation business owner.

The motel I bought had been in receivership and was run down. With no worthwhile trading figures to benchmark, I moved my family, including pregnant wife and five year old, to the sub-tropics. It was a challenge to say the least.

The first thing I noticed when driving into a town was that nearly every one of the 40 or so motels operating there at the time displayed a sandwich board out front touting the rate of the day. It seemed to me they were intent on going broke by trying to beat the motel next door on price. I was amazed they seemed to care more about the rates charged by their competition than about the presentation of their own property, the service they offered and what was needed to run a profitable business.

The first thing to go at our motel was the sandwich board, followed closely by the stand-by rates sign. The tariff was increased from \$37 per night (yes \$37!) to \$49. At my first local motel association meeting, fellow operators gleefully told me I wouldn't last long in the business. With a huge bank loan, a tired property showing 35% occupancy and a family to support, my journey began.

During the handover period, I quizzed the outgoing managers as to why they didn't have a strong travelling sales rep market. This elicited a response along these lines: "They want to drink in the bar and keep us up as late as 9 pm, so we chased them away."

So we put back that sandwich board, but this time it announced "free beer for reps". That drew an instant response. Every new rep staying with us was given a free six-pack on their first visit and, on each and every subsequent stay, their first beer in the bar was complimentary. Word spread quickly.

We ripped out the overgrown gardens, installed new signage and made sure our roadside appeal was first class. We even painted the footpath out front (at midnight) with paving paint for the length of our property to attract more attention.

Next we set about door-knocking all the regional Government offices, the Entertainment Centre, hospital and local companies. Before long we had rooms filled not only with sales reps, but with Masai Warriors from the *Out of Africa* tour, performers including James Blundell, Queensland Government officers, and visiting hospital specialists requiring cold storage for plasma vials. We were starting to win.

Within 14 months, and having funded a refurbishment from the cash flow generated, we lifted occupancy to 90% occupancy and sold the business at double the price we paid.

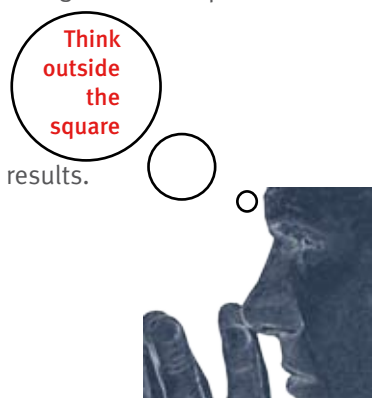
So - don't assume you can't achieve similar results. Don't wait for the phone to ring. Get out and knock on doors, ask for business. Don't think, because you are a holiday complex, you can't chase the corporate market.

You can do anything. Offer the local RSL a complimentary weekend accommodation package as a raffle prize.

Be proactive.

Be involved in your local business community.

You will be surprised at the results.



## WHO NEEDS INSURANCE?

by Alex Griffith  
Hillhouse Burrough McKeown

1/3 Column Editorial Column dimensions: 89.5w x 170d  
280 words approx required

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Written by Meta Medium 10pt blue  
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