

MEETING WITH BLAISE ANGEHRN

Gianni Navatta, editor in chief of www.suite401.com, an online luxury hotel magazine, met up with Mr Blaise Angehrn, head of the Best Mont Blanc group.



WWW.BESTMONTBLANC.COM TENFOLD INCREASE IN RESERVATIONS thanks to “FASTBOOKING”



Acknowledging the growing use of the Internet among leisure customers, the Best Mont Blanc group of Chamonix decided to start afresh a few months ago. Its site was completely redesigned and a new reservations system introduced.

The group opted for the FastBooking system. In just over half a year, the results have been exceptional and the group is already looking to gather more than 15% of reservations online in the next few months, largely through FastBooking's development and marketing of a reservations portal devoted entirely to Chamonix.



Blaise Angehrn
Head of the Best Mont Blanc group

COULD YOU PRESENT YOUR GROUP?

Best Mont Blanc is the largest hotel group in Chamonix with a total of 301 rooms split between four hotels.

I have been managing director since 2001, when the group was taken over by investors.

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Since the start of our collaboration with FastBooking, the percentage of reservations being made online has leapt from 1% to 10% and is rising all the time.

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HOW IS BUSINESS?

■ We are fortunate to be settled in one of the Alps' mythical stations and the occupancy rate is high in summer and winter. Located at the foot of Mont Blanc, Chamonix has always been able to attract visitors from around the world.

HAVE CUSTOMER NUMBERS RISEN THANKS TO THE INTERNET?

■ The Internet has been a major boost on a large number of international markets, especially as Geneva is well connected by low-cost airlines. A whole new type of customer has emerged – one that reserves airline tickets and hotel accommodation without the middle man.

HAS YOUR GROUP SUCCEEDED IN CAPTURING THESE NEW CUSTOMERS?

■ To be quite honest, we didn't really to begin with. Although we have had a website for a few years, run internally and by the company than previously provided the reservations engine, nobody cared because after the tool was installed, nothing was done to develop business. The result? The number of online reservations was insignificant and stagnant.

HAS THE SITUATION CHANGED WITH THE ARRIVAL OF FASTBOOKING?

■ There has been a dramatic change. Since the beginning of our partnership with FastBooking in December 2004, the percentage of reservations being made online has leapt from 1% to 10% and is rising all the time.

THAT IS SUBSTANTIAL. HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN IT?

■ From the start, FastBooking warned us that nothing concrete could happen without work from both parties. After taking stock of the situation, a whole new strategy was introduced. Referencing, layout, management of reservation links... in each area we benefited from their expertise so that the site became a genuine sales aid. Together, we invested time and energy, but on seeing the result we realised it was worth it. This is the advantage of a percentage-based collaboration. It is in the interests of the partner to develop sales and therefore provide customers with all the available techniques to optimise the marketing of hotels on the Internet.

Hôtel Prieuré
Chamonix





Chamonix hotel reservations website, marketed by FastBooking.

The other explanation is FastBooking's creation of a reservations portal devoted entirely to hotels in Chamonix: www.hotels-direct-chamonix.com

THERE ARE ALREADY A NUMBER OF RESERVATIONS SITES. WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO START A NEW ONE?

■ Most portals are multi-destination. And with competition from all stations, it is very difficult to be visible on a general portal that shows a hundred or so hotels. During the high season, the hotels have a very high daily occupancy rate, on top of which we have to consider the usual mountain accommodation terms (arrival, number of days, week/ weekend prices). For customers traveling on specific dates, it is hard to find a room without a long and arduous search. By creating a portal devoted to Chamonix, taking us out of direct competition with the other stations, we had an opportunity to provide a single source of information to answer the two key questions:

- 1) is there a room available?
- 2) what is the price?

HOW DID THIS SITE COME ABOUT?

■ We quickly agreed on one point: each to his own business. We are neither computer experts nor Internet specialists. Only another company specialising in these areas could develop a site meeting all our needs. FastBooking created a portal that took into account the booking conditions of each hotel attached to the project. The promotion, referencing, management and development of the Hotels-Direct-Chamonix website is the responsibility of FastBooking, freeing the hotels from any burden of work or financial investment.

Web users can now compare and book hotel rooms without any additional effort and without creating further competition between us as each establishment has its own distinct offers. For the hoteliers taking part in the project, this is the ideal solution: our hotels enjoy wider visibility; we immediately provide extensive, useful information to customers, and obviously generate sales without any intermediary.

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Hôtel Mont-Blanc
Chamonix



DOES YOUR GROUP NOW HAVE ALL IT NEEDS TO CONTINUE BENEFITING FROM THE INTERNET BOOM?

■ We have easily exceeded our initial targets for the first half of the year. And we should soon see more than 15% of reservations being made online. One staff member is now responsible for tracking our Internet marketing in collaboration with FastBooking, who are always working to make the portal a reference point for the station. So from a group perspective, the outlook for the Internet seems very bright.



Hôtel Croix-Blanche
Chamonix

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We have already gone well beyond our targets for the first half of the year. Soon, more than 15% of reservations should be online.

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On the Internet, attracting new customers and increasing their loyalty requires specific, proven expertise. Only an Internet professional can master all the skills required. FastBooking provides these for all its hotel clients.

With payments based on reservations, depending on the income Best Mont Blanc group receives, the partner will do everything to increase visibility and therefore raise online sales.

This is a win/win situation, one of the finest examples of which is the creation of the dedicated www.hotels-direct-chamonix.com portal.

Through a common drive from Chamonix hoteliers associated with the project and FastBooking's know-how, this site has quickly become a key reference for customers seeking hotels in the station. In a single step, it is now possible to discover the availability and price of establishments shown on the site. On a dedicated page, each partner hotel is presented with a few photos, its main features and, above all, a link to its own website. Result: the objective is achieved: web users go directly to a site that corresponds exactly to their search, and the hotels enjoy maximum visibility to show customers what they can offer.



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