

From Dismal to Thriving: How Edmonton's Best Hotels Used BHN Incentives to Reignite its Hotel Booking Program

Edmonton's Best Hotels works to attract more overnight visitors to the city.

Edmonton's Best Hotels (EBH), is owned and operated by Edmonton Destination Marketing Hotels Ltd., in the city of Edmonton, Alberta, in Canada. With a total of 51 hotels representing about 75% of all hotel rooms available in the city, EBH plays a large role in promoting tourism and stimulating the local economy.

SITUATION: How to motivate visitors to come more often and stay longer

As the pandemic waned and travelers cautiously began to hit the road again, hope for the tourism industry—and for travelers—began to shine a little brighter. However, for smaller destination cities like Edmonton, getting back to pre-pandemic levels was a slow process. Like many cities, numerous brick-and-mortar shops closed down during the pandemic, meaning local businesses relied exclusively on online sales or gift card purchases.

Joan Currie, who is the Marketing and Communications Manager at EBH, explained that Edmonton is primarily a "one night destination", best known for their famous West Edmonton Mall, world-class concerts, and of course, the Edmonton Oilers hockey team. That's why they needed an innovative rewards program to motivate customers to travel more frequently and stay longer in their member hotels. Prior to working with BHN, EBH did offer a customer rewards program, but with less than stellar results. EBH's original program gave discounts to various events or physical merchant gift cards to customers for any length of stay.

SOLUTION: Multi-tiered incentives

As part of its reward program redesign, EBH knew that it had to select a vendor that offered flexibility, convenience for both the consumers and marketers and, most importantly, enticing rewards. BHN delivered on all fronts. In January 2022, EBH launched the 1-2-3 Rewards program for 10 months of the year. From BHN's extensive catalog of options, EBH selected a variety of popular digital reward cards for their customers to choose from. For customers that stay one night at EBH member hotels, they receive a \$50 incentive, for two nights they receive a \$150 incentive and for three nights they receive a \$225 incentive.

From the get-go, customers favored the flexibility and ease of redemption. Upon booking, customers get to choose between the Prepaid Mastercard®, the Ultimate Dining Card®—featuring a variety of popular restaurant brands—or an Esso™ gas gift card. Once they check in, they are sent their reward via email within 48 hours.

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Prepaid Mastercard and Ultimate Dining offer customers the flexibility to redeem their reward funds with multiple brands, while the gas gift cards help offset the rising price of fuel. Since all the cards are virtual, they can redeem them almost instantly—avoiding lengthy delivery delays for customers and streamlining logistics for EBH. Customers also enjoy mixing-and-matching various card amounts. For example, a customer can opt to slice a \$150 reward into a \$75 gas gift card and a \$75 Prepaid Mastercard.

OUTCOME: EBH consumer booking program grows by leaps and bounds

The results speak for themselves. In 2021, prior to BHN becoming their incentives partner, EBH sold only 168 deals, for a total of 344 nights. **With the newly revamped 1-2-3 Rewards program, they boosted that total to a staggering 1535 deals in 10 months—amounting to 3225 hotel nights—or an 813% increase in sales.** The numbers are also a testament to the tier system's success. Of the 1535 bookings, 39% were for three nights, 37% were for two nights and 24% were for one night. EBH also reported that about 25% of customers are repeat buyers, giving them a solid base of happy, loyal guests—and a steady revenue stream.

According to EBH, the entire economy of Edmonton—not just the hotels—benefits from this system. “The longer someone stays the more they spend so they’re going to the restaurants, and they’re going shopping and they’re going to the attractions because they’re here longer.”

EBH is excited about the remarkable success of their program and partnership with BHN. EBH member hotels love it as well, and the program is on track to record additional year-over-year increases in 2023. In fact, EBH is currently running their program year-round, with no blackout period during the traditionally busy summer months, since they experienced a significant slow-down during the blackout period of July and August 2022.



“In this market, incentivizing works.”

– Joan Currie

Consumer Marketing Manager,
Edmonton's Best Hotels (EBH)

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