

August 20, 2018

Dear PAYG (Pay as you go) Innkeepers,

We have now passed the mid-year mark for 2018, and as expected our industry continues to change at a rapid pace. We are finding that many of our PAYG Innkeepers are falling behind as they are not involved in one of our Advantage Plan Programs. If you don't know what you need to be doing, you are not going to be able to keep up with an ongoing marketing strategy. And without a strategy, your business is not going to grow.

Below please find our **“Are You Keeping Up” 2018 Innkeepers Survey**.

If you are able to answer these questions with confidence and you know you are on the right track managing your business without assistance, then there is nothing more for you to do.

If you answered **No** or **I don't know** to more than 5 of these items, do not understand what the questions mean, or why we have them on the survey, we would strongly encourage you to upgrade to one of our Advantage Plan Levels.

You must have an ongoing strategy to succeed in today's online marketing environment. Our Advantage Plan program provides you the tools to create and manage that strategy so that you may grow and sustain your business.

**Learn more about our Advantage Plan Program here:**

<https://acorn-is.com/advantage-plan-services.htm>

**Review our Advantage Plan Info-Graphic:**

<http://acorn-is.com/wp-content/uploads/Advantage-Plan-Info-Graphic.png>

**Request to upgrade to our Advantage Plan here:**

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSezuuHNvex5K6I5-ViiImtf48gwX0nc6bhENL6TXgr7TDfwDw/viewform>

**A heads up for our Innkeepers currently in New-Site Development:** You may want to consider choosing an Advantage Plan Level now instead of waiting until your website is live. There is so very much you can be working on, outside of your website presence, to grow your business in the meantime.

***Join our Advantage Plan Level 3 Program and this could be you!***

*“Since I have been working with Acorn's Level 3 Advantage Plan, I have been able to turn around our direct booking's. June's direct bookings were at an all-time high! I do have to give some credit to my new Innkeeper, who is fantastic on the phone with guests. But I also think TripConnect and Social Media postings (blogs, post and ads) have helped tremendously.”*

# The “Are you keeping up” 2018 Innkeepers Survey

## Section 1: Web Design

As per Google’s Mobile-First Algorithm, a separate mobile website is no longer acceptable. Your website must have a Responsive Design so that it automatically responds or adjusts to the screen on which its viewed (phone, tablet or desktop). As part of a Responsive Design, your web design should also include but is not limited to the following. (Typically, an Acorn IS-built website includes these items, as applicable.) Although these items are coded as part of your design, the additional work required to implement and maintain each of them is divided into other sections of this survey. See below:

- **Is your Website Responsive?** (Yes / No / I Don’t Know)
- **Do you have Local, Recipe and Event Schema?** (Yes / No / I Don’t Know)  
*If Yes – Is it updated to Google’s July 2018 Schema changes?* (Yes / No / I Don’t Know)
- **Is your Local Schema installed and running error-free?** (Yes / No / I Don’t Know)
- **Do you receive and monitor notifications from your Search Console?** (Yes / No / I Don’t Know)
- **Is your Site Map updated to satisfy Google’s latest requirements?** (Yes / No / I Don’t Know)
- **How often do you monitor / update broken links on your site?** (Monthly / 1/4ly / Annually/ Never)
- **Do you use Google Alerts to track important topics that Google indexes?** (Yes / No / I Don’t Know)
- **How often do you monitor and approve your Blog Comments?** (Immediately, Weekly, Monthly, Never)
- **Do you know your booking engine’s abandonment rates?** (Yes / No)
- **When is the last time your On-Page SEO was updated?** (6, 12, 24 months or more?)
- **Do you have Social Engagement buttons installed on your Website?** (Share, Use, Both, Neither)
- **Have you tested your Website speed lately?** (Yes / No)

## Section 2: Using Google to Grow Direct Traffic

For any Responsive Design to be successful, you must consider the following Google requirements:

- **How often do you analyze your Google Analytics E-Commerce data and adjust your marketing plan accordingly?** (Monthly / Quarterly / Annually / Never / I don’t have E-Commerce Installed)
- **When was the last time you reviewed everyone who has access to your Google Analytics account?** (3 months / 6 months / More than a year ago / Never)
- **Do you manage and update your GMB (Google My Business) account on a monthly basis?** (Yes / No)
- **How often do you manage and review your major Local Business Listings (LBL) such as InfoUSA, Axiom, LocalEze, and Factual?** (Quarterly / Annually / Never)
- **Do you know the percentage of your Google traffic that comes from your GMB Listing vs. your Organic listing?** (Yes / No / I don’t know)
- **How often do you manage your GMB Q&A’s?** (Daily / Weekly / Monthly / Never / I don’t know)
- **When was the last time you reviewed your Website and Blog Photos and Content for accuracy?** (3 months / 6 months / Over a year / Not since my site went live)
- **Using a clean browser while logged out of your Google account, how often do you review your Organic Placement in Google for your top 3 search phrases?** (Once a week / Once a month / Once a quarter / Once every 6 months / Not in the last year)

### Section 3: Secure Server

Having your website stored on a secure server (HTTPS://) is vital. If your site is not on a secure server (HTTP://), then Google's Chrome browser will alert visitors to your site to beware that the site is unsecure. Once your website has been moved to HTTPS://, you will need to make sure all inbound links to the site have been updated to HTTPS://, such as Trip Advisor, Directories, etc.

- **Have you requested your website to be moved to an HTTPS:// server?** (Yes / No / I don't know)

*If yes, have you updated all of the inbound links on your website to HTTPS://? (Yes / No / I don't know)*

### Section 4: Traditional Online Marketing Tasks

Just having a website is no longer enough to sustain or grow your business. Unless you are the only property in town, you MUST be doing additional marketing tasks, such as those listed below:

#### **BLOGGING - Do you have a blog?** (Yes / No)

*If yes, how often do you or your marketing firm write blog posts? (Weekly / Bi-Monthly / Monthly / Quarterly / Occasionally / Never)*

*If yes, do you have a blog CAPTCHA so that spammers cannot use your Blog as a place to share their message? (Yes / No / I don't know)*

*If yes, how often do you review the ROI of your posts (E-Commerce tracking) in relation to engagement and direct bookings? (Monthly / Quarterly / Annually / Never)*

*If yes, do you use JetPack to auto feed your blog posts to your Social Media accounts? (Yes / No / I don't know)*

#### **SOCIAL MEDIA - How often do you or your marketing firm post on Social Media?**

(Daily / Weekly / Bi-Monthly / Monthly / Quarterly / Occasionally / Never)

*If using Social Media, how often do you review the ROI of this marketing avenue (Google Analytics E-Commerce tracking) in relation to engagement and direct bookings? (Monthly / Quarterly / Annually / Never)*

#### **NEWSLETTERS - How often do you or your marketing firm publish a newsletter?**

(Daily / Weekly / Bi-Monthly / Monthly / Quarterly / Occasionally / Never)

*If using newsletters to market directly, which types of newsletters do you send? (General Topics / Targeted Topics)*

*If using newsletter marketing, how often do you review your ROI from newsletters in relation to engagement and direct bookings using Google Analytics E-Commerce tracking? (Monthly / Quarterly / Annually / Never)*

- **Do you use Constant Contact as your Newsletter provider?** (Yes / No)

*If you use Constant Contact to send newsletters, do you include the proper tracking in your Newsletters so you can determine the ROI in your Google Analytics E-Commerce tracking? (Yes / No / I don't know)*

The execution of any Traditional Online Marketing Task falls outside of the Advantage Plan Program.

If you participate in the Level 3 Advantage Plan, ROI (Return on Investment) Revenue Tracking of these tasks is documented and reviewed. Ongoing strategy regarding your Traditional Marketing Tasks is also discussed as part of the monthly Market Watch call with your assigned PM (Project Manager).

Acorn IS provides Traditional Marketing Packages and A La Carte Marketing options.

<http://acorn-is.com/monthly-marketing-packages.htm>

## **Section 5: Paid Listings**

Unless you are the only property in town, you can no longer ignore options to sell your rooms on outside directories such as:

### **TRIPADVISOR - Do you participate in one of TripAdvisor's Business Listing programs?**

(Standard / Preferred / No Business Listing)

*If you have a paid TripAdvisor business listing, have you updated your Business Listing URL to HTTPS://? (Yes / No / I don't know)*

*If you have a paid TripAdvisor business listing, how often do you review your ROI from this paid advertising? (Monthly / Quarterly / Annually / Never)*

*If you have a paid TripAdvisor business listing, have you requested Acorn to do a TA ROI Business Listing Review before your annual TA renewal date meeting? (Yes / No)*

*This service is billable for non-advantage plan clients.*

- **Do you participate in TripAdvisor's Click-to-Call program? (Yes / No / I don't know)**
- **Do you participate in TripAdvisor's TripConnect PPC (Pay Per Click) Program? (Yes / No)**

*If you use TripConnect, are you using the proper strategy to have your Official Site Button appear as often as possible and for the least expensive room available? (Yes / No / I don't know)*

*If you use TripConnect, how often do you review your ROI from this paid advertising? (Monthly / Quarterly / Annually / Never)*

- **Do you participate TripAdvisor's Sponsored Ads program? (Yes / No)**
- **Do you participate TripAdvisor's Instant Booking program? (Yes / No)**
- **Have you provided Acorn IS direct access to your TripAdvisor account so we can assist you when you have TA-related questions? (Yes / No)**

*This service is billable for non-advantage plan clients.*

**BEDANDBREAKFAST.COM - Do you currently participate in any BedandBreakfast.com programs? (Yes / No)**

*If yes, do you know the BedandBreakfast.com options that currently apply to your property? (Yes / No)*

*If yes, how often do you review your ROI from BedandBreakfast.com? (Monthly / Quarterly / Annually / Never)*

*If yes, did you remove your property from the Featured Property program gracefully (closed as of July 1, 2018)? (Yes / No / I didn't know it was gone / I never used the Featured Property Program)*

**SELECT REGISTRY - Do you or have you ever participated in the Select Registry (SR) Program?**

(Yes I am Participating, No I cancelled my subscription, No I have never participated in Select Registry)

*If you advertise with SR, how often do you review your Google E-Commerce ROI from this paid advertising? (Monthly / Quarterly / Annually / Never)*

*If you are a Select Registry member, have you ever requested an SR ROI Review from Acorn? (Yes / No)*

**AIRBNB - Are you currently participating in AIRBNB? (Yes / No)**

*If not, is this a marketing avenue you plan to try? (Yes / No / I don't know)*

**PPC - Do you pay for any PPC (Pay Per Click) Programs? (Yes / No)**

*If you participate in PPC, which companies do you use? (Google, Yahoo, Bing, Other)*

*If you participate in PPC, which ad types do you use? (Desktop, Mobile, Map / Local / YouTube / Re-Targeting / I don't know)*

*If you participate in PPC, why do you participate? (Branding to compete with OTA's buying my name, Room Sales, Others)*

*If you participate in any PPC marketing, how often do you review your E-Commerce ROI for your PPC advertising? (Monthly / Quarterly / Annually)*

## **Section 6: Enhanced Marketing Techniques and Support**

All of the marketing techniques previously discussed in this survey are tried and true options. There are additional marketing options that some innkeepers are using and testing for validity. Such "enhanced" techniques may include, but are not limited to:

- Cart Stack
- Triptease
- The Hotels Network
- Yelp Ads
- Facebook Ads
- Loyalty Programs

- Only In Your State
- Event Brite

**Which of these do you participate in?**

## **Section 7: Review Management**

Forbes has indicated that 90% of consumers read online reviews before visiting a business. It is critical that Innkeepers constantly monitor and manage what is being said about them online.

- **How often do you read and respond to your Reviews?** (Daily / Weekly / Monthly / Never)
- **On which sites do you monitor and manage your Reviews?** (Yelp, TripAdvisor, Google, Facebook, Other)
- **Do you have at least 1 Google Review or more?** (Yes / No / I don't know)
- **Do you use any Review Management software to assist you in managing your reviews?** (Yes / No)

## **Section 8: Press and Print**

It's so easy to get caught up in all the "Online" marketing available for your business, that it's easy to forget about the power of the Press and your Print materials. One well-published Press article can increase traffic to your site (and bookings) tremendously. Innkeepers should be aware of and capitalize on these opportunities as frequently as possible.

- **Do you actively seek Press for your property?** (Yes / No)
- **Do you use any Print tracking methods, such as a different URL or Sub-Page to record ROI in Google Analytics E-Commerce Tracking?** (Yes / No)

## **SECTION 9: OTA and Revenue Management**

In today's competitive arena, it's important to manage your room pricing. If you do not use an OTA, your pricing will NOT be available in GMB Local Listings (Google My Business) or TripAdvisor results. Although there are other ways to combat the lack of visibility, the first step is to realize that OTAs control much of the market today. Other players, such as the search engines, TripAdvisor, etc., all play off of OTA availability. If you don't participate, then you're not visible in these places.

If you're in a competitive area, you must understand how this will impact your business, for better or for worse. Revenue Management is just another term for managing your Direct and/or OTA pricing so you're not too high or too low, providing you with the best opportunity to sell your rooms.

- **Do you offer specials and packages?** (Yes / No)

*If Yes - On which Directories or OTA's do you populate your Specials and Packages? (Inn Website / Regional and State Directories / National B&B Directories / Select Registry / Booking.com and their partners / Expedia and their partners / Other)*

- **How often do you employ Revenue Management (Yield Management), including tools such as Pace Reports, in order to improve your Direct Bookings?** (Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly, Annually, Never)

*If Yes - Do you use automated tools to assist you with Revenue / Yield Management tasks? (Yes / No)*

- **Do you provide inventory to any OTA? (Yes / No)**

*If Yes, do you provide inventory to Expedia and their partners? (Yes / No)*

*If Yes, do you provide inventory to Booking.com and their partners? (Yes / No)*

*If you use Booking.com, do you always update your No Shows, so you're not charged commission fees? (Yes / No)*

- **How often do you actively manage your OTA program(s) in order to improve your direct bookings? (Daily / Weekly / Monthly / Quarterly / Annually)**
- **Do you know the percentage of your Direct vs. OTA annual revenue? (Yes / No)**
- **Should you be part of Expedia's Class-Action Lawsuit (whether or not you currently participate in their program)? (Yes / No / I don't know)**

## **Section 10: Legal**

This year alone, new legal requirements have moved from "potential" to "real" with topics such as GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) and ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act). Innkeepers across the U.S. are experiencing lawsuits and other legal actions because they have not taken the precautionary steps to make sure their websites and Third Party systems comply with these rules and regulations:

### **GDPR**

- **Have you written your GDPR Privacy Policy and requested the Policy to be posted on your website and blog? (Yes / No / In progress)**
- **Have you reviewed all of your Third Party services and solutions to verify they are GDPR-compliant (including your reservation system, newsletter tools, form-gathering tools, retargeting systems, etc.)? (Yes / No / In progress)**
- **Have you noted this information in your Privacy Policy on both your Website / Blog and Reservation system? (Yes / No / In progress)**
- **Did you update (or ask Acorn to update) your Google Analytics Data Retention settings before May 22, 2018 to prevent losing any stored data? (Yes / No / I don't know)**

### **ADA**

- **Have you requested a bid to have your Website reviewed and updated for current ADA requirements? (Yes / No)**
- **Have you reviewed all your Third Party services and solutions to verify they are ADA-compliant (including your reservation system, newsletter tools, Form-gathering tools, retargeting systems, etc.) (Yes / No / In progress)**
- **Do all your blog post images contain appropriate ALT Tags? (Yes / No / I don't know)**

## Section 11: Is your property for Sale?

Selling your property is no simple task. There are many factors to consider and decisions to make. For starters, how will you list the property: by owner, with a Realtor, a broker or a consultant? What's the difference? Where can you find help?

- **Is your property for sale? (Yes / No / Not Yet, but it will be Soon)**

**If Yes:**

*Have you notified Acorn that your property is or will be for sale? (Yes / No)*

*Have you watched Acorn's Inns for Sale Tutorial Video? (Yes / No)*

*If your property is for sale, is it listed on Acorn's Inns for Sale page? (Yes / No)*

*If your Realtor has suggested increasing your property's yearly revenue, have you consulted with Acorn about ways to do so? (Yes / No / My Revenue is Fine for the Sale)*

- **If you are selling or have recently purchased your property, have you requested or received a copy of Acorn's Inn Owner Handbook? (Yes / No)**
- **Have you recently purchased your property? (Yes / No)**
- **If you recently purchased your property, have you taken advantage of Acorn's free one-hour consultation? (Yes / No)**
- **If you are a new innkeeper, have you taken advantage of Acorn's Aspiring & New Owner Webinars? (Yes / No)**

Finally, we offer our Acorn clients several services to help guide them through the selling process. These services include:

- Complimentary copy of Acorn's Ultimate Inn Owner Handbook
- Link to Free Inn for Sale Tutorial Video
- Free Listing on Acorn's Inns for Sale Page
- Consultation to discuss Increasing your Property's Value & Marketability
- Free 1-Hour Consultation with new Buyers