

By: Paolo Boni  
President & CEO  
VFM Leonardo, Inc.

# HOW TO USE ONLINE VIDEO TO INCREASE CONVERSIONS

“Use online video to increase conversions,” it seems straightforward but many hoteliers ask for specifics on how exactly to use video. What should our video focus on? How do we develop a story? Should we have people in our videos? How long should a hotel video be? How much should we budget for video production? And the list goes on...

Since using video to market hotels online is a concept that the industry as a whole has been slow to adopt, hotel marketers are demanding guidance on how to get the most value from their investment in online video. They buy into the value, but don't know where to start when adding video to their eBusiness strategies.

There are no hard and fast rules for hotel video that guarantees the greatest conversions because there are a number of factors that come into play - hotel location, type, seasonality, just to name a few. There are, however, steps any hotel can take to get started with video.

## 10 Steps to Getting Started with Video

### 1. Do your research.

Check out what your competitors are doing. In addition to asking yourself why you are competing with them and evaluating their strengths and weaknesses, take a look at what content they have available to travel shoppers. Do they have video? If so, who are they targeting? How are they differentiating themselves? What is their value proposition? Use the [Merchandising Health Index tool](#) to find out how much and which types of visual content other hotels have available online and how your hotel compares.

### 2. Define your message and target audience.

Basically, you need to craft your story in a way that is relevant to the guests you are looking to attract. Are you primarily targeting business travelers, leisure travelers or both? Regardless, many hoteliers start off with one video that provides a general overview of the hotel and the features and amenities that appeal to most guests. Taking the time to think through and refine your message is well worth the time and effort. When developing your story, focus on what makes your hotel unique. It doesn't have to be some big fancy difference – every hotel can differentiate on something.

Featured on:

**HotelExecutive.com**  
YOUR VIEW FROM THE TOP

This article has been reprinted with permission from HotelExecutive.com.



### 3. Choose a style of video.

There are so many different options for video production. How do you know which is the best for your hotel? The type of video you choose should fit with the story you defined in step 2.

Here are three types of video that are commonly used by hotels:

#### Photo slide show

This type of production is video-like without actually shooting any footage. They are created using still photos and adding motion effects, supers, music and/or voiceover.

Examples:

[Hilton Garden Inn Portland Airport](#)

[Hilton Garden Inn Philadelphia City Center](#)

#### Storyboarded video

This is probably the most common type of hotel video. They are storyboarded and shot on-site at the hotel with voiceover.

Examples:

[Orlando Airport Marriott Hotel](#)

[Las Terrazas Resort](#)

[Crowne Plaza Tysons Corner](#)

#### Guided tour

In this type of video, a hotel employee takes the viewer through a guided tour of the hotel and/or the surrounding area to highlight points of interest and differentiation.

Examples:

[The Atlanta Marriott Marquis](#)

[The InterContinental New Orleans](#)

There are two things to note:

#### Voiceover

If you're going to make the investment in video, get voiceover. Showing your hotel visually is great and engaging, but travel shoppers need to view it in context. Voiceover should help convey the experience and emotion that guests have at your hotel and make your visual story even more powerful.

#### Length

The length of your video depends on the type you choose and the story you're telling. However, don't try to put too much in one video. If it's too long, you will lose people's interest.



*In order to make their final decision, they want to continue to read and explore [...] products by delving into the detailed long copy and visual information more closely.*

Adobe Scene 7

#### 4. Determine your investment.

In the past, video production was quite costly, but that's no longer the case. If you're questioning how much you should budget for video, this should give you an idea. If your ADR is \$150.00 and producing a full-motion video costs \$1,000, your one-time production costs are covered by seven room nights. There are additional costs, including distributing your video so that travel shoppers actually see it, but with the right partner you can get it out on thousands of electronic channels for less than \$200.00 per month, two room nights nearly covers that cost. Video production and distribution is a minimal investment for a high return. Use this [ROI Calculator](#) to see what your estimated return on video distribution would be.

#### 5. Choose an experienced company to produce your video.

Producing a promotional video in-house is not advisable unless you have a professional videographer and editor on your staff. Leave the Handycam video productions to your guests. When looking for a company to produce your video, your best bet is to choose one that specializes in hotel and travel videos because they will have relevant experience and expertise. Be sure to take a look at samples of videos they have done for other hotels. This way you will know what to expect.

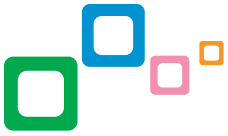
Video quality is important because travel shoppers may make assumptions about your hotel based on the quality of your video. Make sure the company you choose produces high-quality and professional videos.

When making a decision on high definition or standard definition video, consider the type of hotel you have and whether high definition video is worth the added investment. Generally, it's not necessary for limited-service or budget hotels to pay a premium for high definition video while luxury, upscale and full-service hotels should consider high definition.

#### 6. Package your video.

Once your video is produced, the best way to package it is in an easy to navigate video player with bandwidth detection capabilities so that it can be viewed regardless of Internet connection speed. A research study by Adobe found that "users want to quickly find or briefly read about products to uncover alternatives. Then in order to make their final decision, they want to continue to read and explore [...] products by delving into the detailed long copy and visual information more closely."<sup>1</sup>

The ideal experience for online travel shoppers is one where rich media (your video) is accompanied by other supporting images and alternative rich media (like virtual tours and/or Flash presentations) as well as written content to provide context and additional details. Give travel shoppers more than a video; give them an experience and an opportunity to fully explore what your hotel has to offer.



*The average holiday booked online takes 29 days and 12 searches on 22 different travel sites.*

Google

*This “billboard effect” increases both reservation levels and average daily rates.*

Chris Anderson  
Assistant Professor  
Cornell University

## 7. Get your video out there where travel shoppers can view it.

Like any form of advertisement, you need to get your video out to your target audience. Where is that audience? Well, it’s hard to say exactly. One thing is certain though, travel shoppers are looking everywhere. The average holiday booked online takes 29 days and 12 searches on 22 different travel sites.<sup>2</sup> In order to influence as many booking decisions as possible, your video needs to be out there where travel shoppers can see it – your own website, OTAs (which many use to research and compare hotels, not just book), social media sites, video sharing sites, travel review sites, and the list goes on. Don’t attempt to get your video and other visual content out to all of these sites yourself, use a trusted partner that has the distribution, viewing technology and relationships to get it out there for you.

## 8. Find additional ways to utilize your video.

Even though you’re producing your video with the primary goal of increasing conversions through a strong online presence, that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t use your video in other ways as well – email signatures, events, staff training, on screen in your lobby, on guest room TVs, etc. Use it in as many ways possible.

## 9. Track your success.

Tracking look-to-book conversion rates for video can be a challenge because a travel shopper might view your video on YouTube and then call your hotel directly to book. Or a travel shopper could view your video on Travelocity and then book through your hotel website – you really don’t know where they are viewing your video before they make a booking.

The good news is that you can use an analytics program to track the video viewing to booking conversion rates on your own website. What about the rest of the channels it’s available on? Views on third-party channels are what drive the most conversions. Travel shoppers often use these sites as research and comparison tools and then book through the hotel directly. When a hotel has a presence on OTAs, it receives reservations not only through those channels, but also through other channels, such as its own website or telephone reservations. According to a hotel Internet marketing study by Cornell University assistant professor Chris K. Anderson, this “billboard effect” increases both reservation levels and average daily rates.<sup>3</sup>

To determine how well your video is performing on third-party channels, what you should be tracking is the number of views it’s getting. If you’re a [VBrochure Premium or Ultra Premium](#) customer with your video in distribution to the VNetwork™, you have access to media viewing reports to see how many views your video gets and on which channels. The more views you have, the more bookings you should be getting. Many customers begin seeing results within the first couple of months!

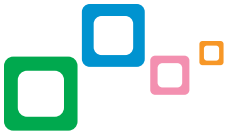
*Travel shoppers are actively seeking online video at every stage of their buying decisions – from early research to the final purchase.*

Google and OTX

## 10. Determine your next steps.

Once you have a solid overview video, it's a good idea to get more granular about your hotel's specific differentiators. Not all travelers are looking for the same experience. Both leisure and business travelers are heavily relying on video and other rich visual content to support their purchases. A business traveler is looking for a hotel experience that makes their business trip a success so focus on the relevant features like airport shuttle, proximity to conference facilities and business areas, breakfast hours, internet capabilities and business facilities, evening dining options, etc. while a family looking for vacation accommodations is looking for different things. But, video is important to both of these groups of travelers. According to a study by Google and OTX, travel shoppers are actively seeking online video at every stage of their buying decisions – from early research to the final purchase.<sup>4</sup>

[The Broadmoor Colorado Springs](#), for example, has segmented videos about activities, dining, golf, spa, etc. Even if you're not a luxury resort like The Broadmoor, there are specific differentiators that you can create short, segmented videos about. [The Orlando Airport Marriott Hotel](#) has two videos: one targeting business transients and the other targeting meeting planners. With video, the possibilities are endless.



## ABOUT VFM LEONARDO

VFM Leonardo's [VScope®](#) and [VBrochure™](#) products leverage the distribution capabilities of the [VNetwork™](#), the most universally accepted and largest online visual content distribution network for the global travel industry. VFM Leonardo offers the most effective digital asset management and online merchandising systems available today with over 1,000,000 visual images (photos, virtual tours and videos) for 90,000 hotels worldwide currently in distribution across the VNetwork. All four global distribution systems (GDSs) - Amadeus, Galileo, Sabre, Worldspan - as well as Pegasus source hotel visual content through VScope. Tens of thousands of travel-related channels including online travel agencies, travel research and supplier web sites, search portals; Travelocity, Orbitz, Priceline, Tripadvisor, Yahoo! Travel, Kayak, Google and more also source visual content through VScope.

VFM Leonardo's VBrochure™ Online Merchandising System is part of the largest, most universally accepted and online visual content distribution network (VNetwork™) for the global travel industry. VBrochure is a user-friendly system that helps you merchandise your hotel in its best, most current light, wherever travel shoppers are shopping on the web.

For more information, visit [www.vfmleonardo.com](http://www.vfmleonardo.com).  
Follow us on Twitter at [@VFMLeonardo](https://twitter.com/VFMLLeonardo).

### **VFM Leonardo Head Office**

111 Peter Street, Suite 530  
Toronto, Ontario  
Canada M5V 2H1

Toll Free: 1-877-593-6634

Tel: + 1 416 593 6634

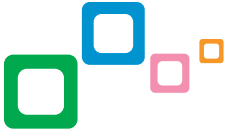
Fax: + 1 416 593 7572

Web: [www.vfmleonardo.com](http://www.vfmleonardo.com)

Email: [insidesales@vfmleonardo.com](mailto:insidesales@vfmleonardo.com)

### **VFM Leonardo Global Offices**

Canada - United States - United Kingdom - Israel - Singapore



## REFERENCES

1. Adobe, Adobe Scene7 Viewer Study: What Shoppers Want, Jan. 2010.
2. Times Online, 10 hottest online travel trends, April 22, 2009.
3. Results of Media Usage and Booking Tracking Study by VFM Leonardo and Omni Hotels, June 2007. Ten hotels with rich media, 120,000+ consumers tracked, one month period.
4. Anderson, Chris, Cornell University Center for Hospitality Research, The Billboard Effect: Online Travel Agent Impact on Non-OTA Reservation Volume, Oct. 2009.
5. Google and OTX, The Traveler's Road to Decision, June 2009.