

Title: Practical Ways to Boost your Business

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PRATICAL WAYS TO BOOST YOUR BUSINESS

Quality edge gets the inside scoop on how one couple is transforming their property in order to increase their quality rating.

The owners of The Pebbles in Weymouth, Paul and Karen Beukers, were anxious to raise their game and increase their quality rating. Their property, which they bought in 2003, is a guest accommodation with eight bedrooms. Following initial refurbishment, they moved from three diamonds to four stars – just!

With high standards of housekeeping and small but smart fully refurbished bathrooms, the property presented well, but felt a little dated and cramped. Paul and Karen were frustrated by the lack of business in the winter and unhappy with the type of guests they were attracting – typically, they were low-spending and items occasionally went missing from rooms, which made them reluctant to spend more on in-room facilities. Karen was also struggling to cope with cleaning all the rooms during busy periods.

They wanted to reposition The Pebbles as one of Weymouth's best places to stay and attract business guests who would book year-round. Their ultimate goal was to achieve a Silver award.

Karen and Paul took time to discuss changes that would make the property more appealing to business guests without turning off their regular leisure guests. Once a plan was agreed – they were full of ideas! – the challenge was funding the work to begin in January 2008, when cash flow was limited. VisitBritain gave them support and guidance on how to exploit online marketing opportunities, especially commercial ones that offer the advantage of no up-front fees, just commission on any bookings received.

The results were impressive and their morale rose. Business travellers started to make bookings and Paul and Karen began to upgrade the rooms, gradually increasing their rates.

Changes made in six months

- Reduced the number of bedrooms so only en-suite rooms were bookable
- With fewer bedrooms, removed two tables from dining room to give more space
- Removed additional beds in family room to make it into a spacious double (see photos)
- Replaced dated pine beds with new divans and leather headboards
- De-cluttering of dated entrance lobby to create a stylish area with leather tub chairs
- Fresh flowers in reception and a selection of current magazines
- Higher-quality duvets, pillows and Egyptian cotton bed linen, throws and scatter cushions
- Hairdryers in all rooms, rather than providing them on request
- Flat-screen TVs in bedrooms
- Upgraded toiletries in bathrooms and now provide bath sheets instead of bath towels
- Offer daily newspapers to all guests
- Room information rewritten in a more approachable style
- Copy on website rewritten in a friendlier tone.
- Uploaded new pictures on to site as each room was upgraded
- Simplified terms and conditions to be clearer and added them to email confirmations
- Stopped adding a surcharge to credit card payments
- Improved breakfast with more choice, local produce, free-range eggs, fresh fruit platters, compotes and home-made jams. Improved presentation of buffet and rewrote menu

Increased income

Paul and Karen have seen a huge increase in turnover, with income in May 2008 up 89% compared with May 2007. In June 2008, income was up 24% compared with the previous year. They have seen a steady increase in business guests, many of whom have already re-booked. Single occupancy rates have been increased substantially and double rates slightly. The type of guests they now attract suit the family much better and they suspect the price rises have helped achieve this shift. Their regular guests are full of praise for the changes and Paul and Karen are looking forward to their next assessment, hoping they may achieve the coveted Silver award.

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Before



After

