



AN INDEPENDENT HOTEL'S GUIDE TO DRIVING DIRECT BOOKINGS

Tried and true tactics for fighting back.





When OTAs entered the scene, they whisked the industry off our feet, giving us visions of a utopia where the playing field was leveled and marketing came easy.

In reality, their “partnership” model seems more like the dealings of a schoolyard bully.

The commissions are disproportionate, new expectations are thrust upon you, the threats come pouring in and they start trying to lay claim to more and more of what's yours.

Today, they aren't just stealing your lunch money: They're stomping on your ADR. They're buying your property-specific keywords. They're trying to mess with your own channels. Their threats are always looming. At this point, an atomic wedge wouldn't shock anyone.

You're ready to reduce your OTA Share, but how do you start? Most independents don't have a clue. Do you wax-on-wax-off your courtesy shuttle first? Or do you need to repaint the lobby by hand with disciplined up-down strokes? Luckily, our fight-back plan wasn't written by Mr. Miyagi, so you can skip the sweat and cut straight to success.



LESSON #1

BREAK PARITY, NOT PARITY AGREEMENTS

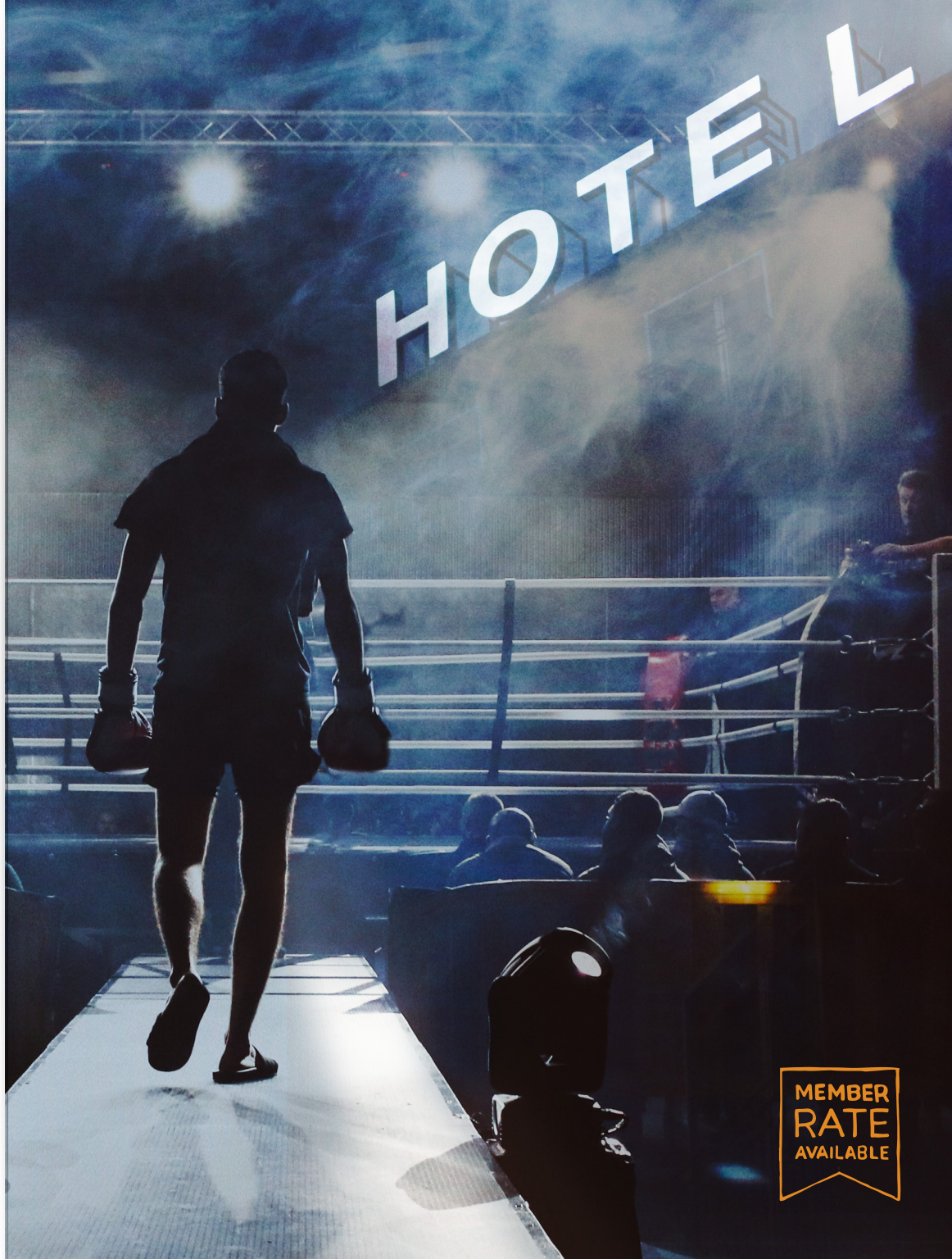
You aren't going to beat the OTAs by flipping them the bird and ignoring your parity agreement. That'll hurt. The OTAs want you to believe that if you don't give them the lowest rate, they can cut your listing or push it to page three—or at a minimum they'll shove it into a locker.

But there's a perfectly legitimate and seriously effective way to undercut the OTAs on your own site: Member Only Rates.

Like AAA and AARP rates, you're in the clear to offer these private rates on your site.

This does require you to be part of a program that has members. That's easy.

But from there, you can follow in the wake of the chains and many Stash Partners who offer members a modest discount—just a 10% discount is proven to move the needle.



MEMBER
RATE
AVAILABLE



LESSON #2

WANT DIRECT? *BE DIRECT*

Overheard at a Front Desk:

"I did book direct! I booked directly on Orbitz!"

It makes us all twitch, but it's reality. Many guests don't know why they should Book Direct.

They see the same prices on your site as they do on the OTA's site. It's apples-to-apples for them (and you are contractually obligated to give the OTAs your apples at the exact same price.)

The age-old marketing acronym WIIFM "What's in it for me?" shouldn't be ignored. You can do this a number of ways that stay true to your brand. Here are some ideas.

- Book direct to earn free nights.
- Book direct to get our exclusive member rates.
- Book Direct, Save Animals: Every time someone books direct, we donate \$5 to the local animal shelter.

Test your message. Appeal to hearts, mind and wallets and see what converts. Stash provides our Partners with a free widget to help you drive members from your homepage to your confirmation page.





LESSON #3: JUST SAY “NO” TO REPEAT OTA GUESTS

Paying a bounty on a new guest isn't the end of the world when you have rooms to fill. But when you're paying a finder's-fee on that guest's second, third, and fourth visit, that really stings.

Every independent hotel needs a strategy to convert that OTA guest to a direct booker.

1. Capture the Email: Because we all know the OTA isn't going to fork it over.
2. Gently ask them to book direct next time.
3. Give them a benefit for doing so.

With Stash, we make this super easy for our partners with our OTA Conversion Kit. You can certainly roll-your-own, but if you want a free, turn-key solution, we've got you covered.

With Stash, we found that 80% of members book direct when they return.

The guest enrolls—you capture the email—and then Stash sends them an email (and a reminder email) to book direct and score double points at your hotel. You, of course, are welcome to drive the message home via email too!





LESSON #4

GIVE TRAVELERS WHAT THEY WANT: *POINTS*

You'll rarely find us praising the chains, but we are grateful for one thing: they have trained travelers to book direct to get their loyalty points.

In fact, the #1 reason frequent travelers book direct is to earn the points and loyalty perks.

eVOC Insights, LLC. "The Battle for Loyalty: Online Travel Agencies vs. Suppliers"

Frequent travelers, the 20% of travelers who account for 80% of room nights, are four times more likely to consider loyalty program memberships when selecting a hotel. They need something in return for all their nights away from home. Not a bottle of wine or a cheese plate, they want points. Because only points can turn their must-do business travel into an anniversary getaway to Belize, or a family trip to Hawaii to make up for all the family dinners they've missed.

When you partner with Stash, you get an affordable amenity for your best guests and a tried-and-true tactic to get them to book direct.



Need help getting your OTA Fight-Back Plan in place?

PARTNER WITH STASH— WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK.

All Stash Partner Hotels get unlimited access to the following tools:

- 1. 0% COMMISSION CHANNEL:** A reservation on our site costs the same as a reservation on your own site. You just pay for the points.
- 2. MEMBER ONLY RATES:** Booked on your site and ours.
- 3. THE PREFERRED PERK OF TOP TRAVELERS—POINTS:** Give them what they want need.
- 4. A SLICK BOOK-DIRECT WIDGET:** With stupid-simple integration support.
- 5. DETAILED REPORTING:** Is it reporting overkill? Maybe. But it's better than smoke and mirrors.
- 6. A POSSE:** Team up with a network of independent hotels.
- 7. AN ADVOCATE:** Stash Partner Advocates help strategize with you to help you crush your goals.



Let's talk about how Stash can give you a
boost in the battle against OTAs.

Email us at hotel-partnerships@stashrewards.com