

CASE HISTORY

Synopsis: *Off-season cooperative marketing builds sales for multiple partners within an established brand*

Client: **HILTON HOTELS CORPORATION**

Situation: The four Hilton-owned and branded hotels in the Chicago area were suffering the usual off-season (summer, or non-convention) doldrums, which compounded the traditionally soft weekend period for urban hotels, as well. At the same time, each hotel faced severe budget limitations, and none individually could afford to launch a major promotional effort. The hotels had relied primarily on traditional price-cutting to attract summer and weekend business. With new competition springing up all around from such companies as Hyatt, Westin, Holiday Inns and Marriott – which all had significant budgets to help launch and establish their presence in the marketplace – the Hilton group's lack of competitive budget was made even more extreme.

Action: I recommended and implemented a cooperative program which combined the resources of all four hotels for the first time. Equally important, I negotiated with and attained media placement virtually exclusively on a barter or trade-for-rooms basis; barter, in fact, accounted for 80 percent of program funding. I led the agency team in working with the individual hotels to develop a series of package promotions. Magazine, newspaper, television and radio advertising were created with the theme "Wherever you Chicago, there's a Hilton for you" which ran in nearly a dozen surrounding Midwestern communities.

Results: The results of this campaign astounded both the client and the agency!

Package sales for the Palmer House increased 56 percent; for the Conrad Hilton, 75 percent; for the Arlington Park Hilton, 26 percent; and for the O'Hare Hilton, more than 600 percent, with the O'Hare Hilton actually exceeding the Palmer House in total package sales for the first time ever over a protracted season! Total room nights sold via the package promotion campaign increased proportionately – overall, up 62 percent for the combined hotels versus the previous year!

