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Hotel Buyouts Demystified: Q&A with Rent-A-Resort

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For groups that require privacy, few options offer more appeal to high-profile meetings and events than hotel buyouts. With the entire property as a blank slate, meeting planners are able to push creative limits and **implement decor** in ways not possible otherwise. Then there's the **exclusivity factor**—not having to share hotel spaces with other guests is sure to boost attendance. But before planners consider a buyout for their next event, there are some important points to keep in mind.

Daniel Rudolf is head of sales and marketing at **Rent-A-Resort**, a venue finder based in Germany that serves meetings and incentives in Europe, Caribbean and Asia, with plans to enter the **North American market**. The intermediary negotiates buyouts on behalf of corporate planners, event agencies and travel groups. Rudolf spoke with *Smart Meetings* about the buyout process from the perspectives of the meeting planner and hotelier.

Is there an ideal type of property for a buyout?

There is not really a perfect type of property since every client has different needs. Our clients book via Rent-A-Resort because they are looking for their group's privacy, which makes more sense for a resort than, for example, a city hotel. A resort with all of its surrounding activities can be transformed into an event venue, which is only the case if rented exclusively. A buyout would make less sense for a city hotel where the primary purpose is accommodation.

What are the most important factors clients must consider when selecting a hotel?

The hotel should not be tied to contracts with certain groups, such as tour operators, as this will limit its ability to be rented. The hotel should not have infrastructure open to the public, such as restaurants, bars or health clubs, as a real privatization will not be possible due to outside guests who cannot be prevented from visiting the hotel during an exclusive event. Rent-A-Resort knows which hotels are suitable and at which date a buyout will be possible at a realistic price.



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What message do you have for clients who are on the fence about hotel buyouts?

Despite many clients who would only consider a buyout for their event, most event planners still tend to request a certain number of hotel rooms for the simple reason that they do not think it would be realistic to rent an entire hotel. However, for almost any required number of rooms, there is a hotel which could be rented exclusively. It's just a matter of finding the right property and choosing the right date in order to stick to the budget. It's always worth a try if a buyout could be possible at the same cost but with all the benefits of a privatized hotel.

How big does the property need to be for a typical buyout?

Buyouts can be the right choice for a small event requiring a hotel with 20-30 rooms, or for a car launch in a resort with 1,000 rooms or more. Currently, most of our clients request properties that have 150-500 rooms.

How often can most hotels accommodate buyouts per year?

This is very hard to say, as each hotel has a different point of view regarding buyouts. Many hotels do not accept buyouts at all due to contracts, or because the nature of the resort does not allow such privacy to their guests. Rent-A-Resort works a lot with season extensions, which is by far the most cost-efficient period for our clients since the property will make additional profit on dates which have a lower occupancy rate. Some properties actively promote buyouts to their meetings, incentives, conferences and events (MICE) clients so they will host buyouts several times per year.

What are some of the biggest advantages of buying out a property?



Branding will be possible anywhere in the property, and upon arrival the participant will feel like arriving at the event space instead of checking into a hotel where the event takes place. The organization will be much easier to handle since the entire hotel staff will be dedicated to the event. Usually, event planners who start working with buyouts do not want to go back.

Which groups find buyouts most appealing?

Incentives are indeed one of the main reasons to consider buyouts since it makes the participant feel more special. Many of our clients combine a buyout with an air charter, which makes this sentiment even stronger when their own plane is waiting for them at the airport to bring them to their own hotel.

Buyouts also play a role for many conferences where, for corporate reasons, they do not wish to mingle with other guests or groups—especially with competitors. In cases where privacy is the main argument, some clients tend to prefer a cruise charter. Indeed, there is no more privacy than a boat in the ocean. Rent-A-Resort also specializes in cruise charters with its sub-branch, Rent-A-Cruise.

What kind of unique branding and decor opportunities do buyouts bring?

A buyout makes it possible to adapt the corporate identity to the entire resort. We have seen clients who transformed the entire hotel decor into whatever they want to the event to deliver. Of course, no property would accept this with other guests in the hotel so a buyout is indispensable.

How important is it for groups to be flexible about dates in order to secure a buyout?

Buyouts are generally requested one year in advance and during the off-season, which is the period when prices are realistic and not necessarily higher than normal. In cases of seasonal closures, season extensions are by far the most cost-efficient dates. Rent-A-Resort knows most dates in advance from our partner resorts, but most client requests are fixed in terms of dates. Our mission is to find the best price for the date requested.

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