



The latest research from guest experience management experts HGEM has revealed over 1300 guests' views on making Christmas bookings.

The results show that guests like to plan ahead - when organising a work Christmas party over half (53%) prefer to book at least 3 months in advance, and 42% leave it no later than a month before the event to book a festive gathering with friends. Additionally, timing is key, with almost half of guests (49%) saying that the ideal date for their Christmas party would fall two weeks before Christmas Day.



When choosing a venue, half of guests (50%) rate the choice of dishes on the menu as the deciding factor, with restaurants emerging ahead of pubs, hotels and bars as guests' preferred venue. A spend of between £15-£30 per head is expected by the majority of guests during the festive period, with a slightly higher spend anticipated when celebrating with work colleagues.

During a telephone enquiry, a lack of knowledge and an unfriendly tone were rated as the most off-putting team behaviours, which could result in a lost opportunity to convert to a booking. Guests also anticipate an efficient booking process, with 68% expecting the call to take less than five minutes, emphasising the need for team members to be

prepared with the relevant information for a seamless process. As the majority (86%) of guests expect to be asked about a deposit as standard, operators should avoid focusing on this and instead use the call to provide detailed and engaging information about their offering.

To help operators ensure that their team members are prepared to handle Christmas bookings effectively, HGEM are offering recorded Christmas calls. These provide valuable insight into team members' performance when taking bookings. Operators in the casual dining, pub and hotel sectors benefited from this actionable data during last year's programme, with leading hotel brands Malmaison and Hotel du Vin improving their average call score by almost 20% in the months leading up to Christmas.

HGEM Founding Director, Sally Whelan, said: 'We know that pre-bookings for the festive period play a critical part in overall Christmas trading figures. With menus, drinks offers and the marketing campaigns to support it now in place, how ready are your front line team? Do they appreciate the important role they now play? You need to be confident that every telephone enquiry is being handled professionally and that your team have the skills to convert these enquiries into bookings.'

HGEM is the UK's leading expert in guest experience management (GEM). The company provides hospitality operators with tools for intelligence gathering, guest engagement and learning, working closely with them to help generate revenue growth through effective GEM.

With a personal approach and modern software, HGEM services include Mystery Guest visits, online feedback, social advocacy, performance analysis and learning management. Clients include Wagamama, Turtle Bay, Greene King, Malmaison and Peach Pubs.

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