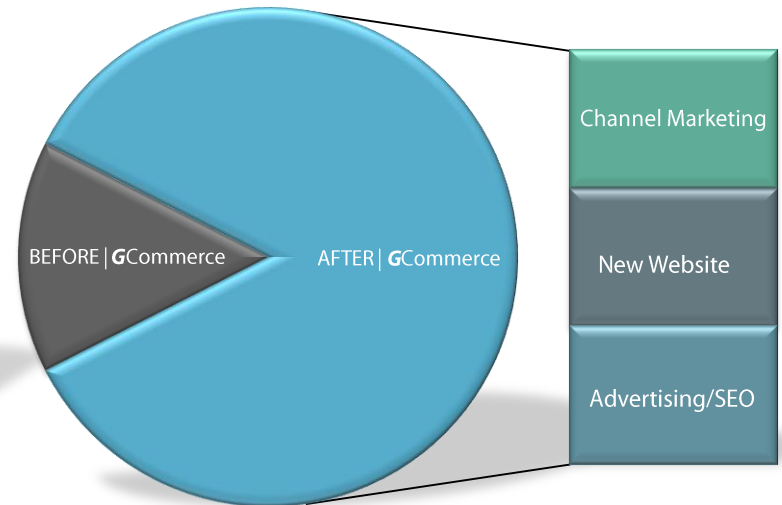


## Washington Court Hotel: A City Hotel with Limited Online Presence



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### **Why was GCommerce Hired?**

gCommerce began working with the Washington Court Hotel, located on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. in April 2004 and continues through today. This four star quality hotel features 274 rooms, nearly 25,000 square feet of meeting and conference space, restaurant, bar and gift shop located only three blocks from the U.S. Capital Building and two blocks from historic Union Station.

Like many city hotels in the US, the property had a strong group, VDR and transient base during the week, but died on the weekends and attracted few leisure travelers. The strength of the weekdays with group and business travelers ensured that their occupancies would run in the high 60's to low 70's, but the 20% occupied weekends and lack of leisure travelers were a problem this hotel needed to fix. The internet had not been used as a primary source of business for the property, and expertise in that medium did not exist on property. gCommerce was hired to utilize the internet to create an online presence for the hotel and drive leisure business into the weekends and both leisure and business travel into low compression periods in the market.

### **What Did We Do?**

The first task was to identify the primary competitive advantages of the property as they related to the transient weekend market. We conducted a market study and reviewed a tremendous amount of available data. The competitive set was evaluated, and a positioning statement was developed. The positioning statement was quickly tested to favorable results, and the development of a new website began.

Coinciding with the launch of the site, gCommerce executed an aggressive distribution strategy that placed hotel inventory in front of millions of perspective clients. On each distribution channel, the message was tailored around the new positioning statement, driving home the sustainable competitive advantages to the transient market. Promotions and packages were developed that spoke to both leisure and business transient travelers and targeted historic need periods.

Once the site launched, gCommerce switched gears to build a sustainable and high-rate base of business that the hotel could rely on well into the future. An online customer database was created and aggressively marketed to via monthly email campaigns, growing to over 10,000 records in the first 12 months. gCommerce reviewed the competitive marketplace and conducted a 1-2 hour "RevMax" meeting with the hotel staff once a week. Competitor pricing, market demand and pace were reviewed and matched with new opportunities to impact specific dates.

### **Results**

In the three months before gCommerce came on board, the hotel generated an average of just \$5,697/month through the internet. gCommerce made some immediate changes while the new website was being developed helping the hotel to generate an average of \$41,990 over the next 3 months. The new website launched, and was supported by a detailed Search Marketing program provided by gCommerce to gain visibility for the hotel on the major search engines both organically and through paid search marketing. The Washington Court Hotel's website produced over \$1 Million in reservations in the first full year, with nearly another \$1 Million coming from the newly implemented Online Travel Agent sites. Over 80% of the internet bookings in the first year included weekend stays, meeting the client's objectives.

The Washington Court Hotel remains as a client of gCommerce still today and things haven't slowed down a bit. In fact, online sourced revenues have increased every year, even in the face of a depressed economy in the last couple of years. Today, The Washington Court Hotel generates more than \$4 Million dollars/year through online sources with the help of gCommerce.