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## ABVI Surpasses 750 Hotel Milestone

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By *Glenn Haussman*

America's Best Value Inns (ABVI) may be just eight years old, but the rapidly expanding brand already has 768 properties either open or in the pipeline. With so many hotels, parent company Vantage Hospitality is already the 12th largest hotel company in the world.



It's an accomplishment that was heralded last week during the company's annual conference. According to Founder, President and CEO Roger Bloss, the sheer volume of added hotels is all part of the plan.

"We stayed on the development track for 2007. We have reached new milestones and gained recognition with our innovative approach and strategies," said Bloss.

According to Bloss at the end of 2006 the brand had 692 member properties. This year the company approved 136 more while removing 60 from the system. "Our brand did not jump into a leadership role by sitting back and waiting for magic. Our potential for success is unlimited and we will bring more magic this year. We promise to provide new programs and strategies," said Bloss. "We have reached an impressive milestone. But its just stepping stones for this company. We are bringing comprehensive resources right to our customer's doors."

According to Patrick Mullinix, VP of Development, part of the brand's success is due to last year's introduction of a flexible new build prototype. According to Mullinix, they can be built at either three or four stories, and range from 60 to 80 rooms. The prototype is also customizable in a variety of ways to better appeal to local market fundamentals. "The initial response is great. We have several prototypes under construction," said Mullinix."

Mullinix also noted the company is finding great success with the introduction last summer of a weekly live interactive webcast where hotel owners can learn about ABVI's brand affiliation model. SPIN, an acronym for Sales Presentation Internet News is presented by Bloss and is designed to open a dialogue between the company and potential members.

Bernie Moyle, Partner, CFO and COO shared his thoughts on the company's marketing programs, which are designed to maximize consumer impressions without the cost of a full scale marketing campaign. He pointed to a strategic alliance with Dominoes, which according to Moyle yielded \$400,000 in marketing value at no cost ABVI members. The agreement includes the ABVI logo in certain emails from Dominoes to their customers. More than six million have been sent so far. And Dominoes gets their logo on certain ABVI keycards.

The company will also be expanding its local radio advertisement schedule in 2008 from 16 markets to 25. It will also launch a national campaign too. ABVI will also be investing more

heavily in search engine marketing, citing a 400 percent return on this year's investment. Website visits also jumped 44 percent, while online reservations increased rose 66 percent. Overall, reservations were up 28 percent, while the company's revenue growth increased 17 percent, a 70 percent increase over total room growth.

The company also took a moment to highlight the need for continued education. And ABVI practices what it preaches. The company has 19 executives that have attained CHA certification. "You'd be hard pressed to find any other brand with so many certified staff members," said Bloss, noting the company has a variety of programs designed to educate hoteliers at a fraction of the typical cost.

Finally, Bloss looked to the future of the brand. "Our potential for success is unlimited and we will bring more magic this year. We promise to provide new programs and strategies. But you must make customer service a priority, not an afterthought because it impacts every member of the system. Make each guest experience a positive one, their advertising the brand is the best form of marketing we could achieve," Bloss told hotel owner members.



**Glenn Haussman**, Hotel Interactive's Editor In Chief, has been specializing in the hospitality industry for more than 10 years. He often speaks at lodging industry events, is quoted frequently as an expert source by newspapers and is an adjunct professor at New York University.

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