



Top Floor Episode 3: Dude, Calm Down *How to Find Your Hotel's Voice in Social Media*

[00:00:00] **Susan Barry:** This is Top Floor, episode three. You can find the show notes topfloorpodcast.com/3.

[00:00:13] **Announcer:** Welcome to Top Floor with Susan Barry. This weekly podcast ride up to the top floor features tangible tips and excellent stories from the experts and characters who elevate hospitality. And now your host and elevator operator, Susan Barry.

[00:00:32] **Susan Barry:** Welcome to the show. It is my great pleasure to welcome Calvin Tilokee for today's ride up to the top floor. Calvin's career spans positions in hotel and restaurant companies, where he focused on revenue, strategy, reservations, and distribution. Calvin also started what I think is the funniest account on Instagram, @revparblems, in 2016.

And he's grown that audience to somewhere between 19- and 20,000 people. At the height of the pandemic, Calvin started a new company, Revpar Media, to leverage his success on Instagram on behalf of hospitality clients. Calvin's here to talk with us today about finding your hotel's voice on social media.

But first we are going to answer the Emergency Call Button. Today's marketing emergency comes from Keslie, who asks: "We are located in a beach town with a lot of condos and rental houses available. How can my hotel compete with vacation rental properties in our area?"

So, what do you think Calvin? Any good ideas?

[00:01:50] **Calvin Tilokee:** Oh, that's an issue that's been facing the industry for some years. I think what you gotta do is you got to highlight your attributes as a hotel. I've done both as a guest. Obviously, I've stayed in tons of hotels, but over the years have actually used some vacation rentals depending on where you are. And each one of them has their own perks.

If you do want to hang out, you know, just kind of lounge around, a hotel room is not the best place to do that. Even the nicest hotel rooms, you're like, you want to get out of them. You know? So, in that case, the vacation rental has the benefit of outdoor space, your own private kitchen. So your day is a bit more leisurely, and you can move at your own pace.

However, you have no housekeeping, if something goes wrong, that person is not there. You know, if your sink stops up or something's wrong with the shower, there's nobody to call. Right. So from the hotel standpoint, I think you've got to constantly market your attributes, the services you provide. I

think a lot of times people are using the vacation rentals because they like the open space, you know, more of a communal kind of space.

So highlight those things. If you have those things where people can sit in the lobby, some of the great views you may have, you always want to focus on what you do best and what you have that the competition doesn't.

[00:03:07] **Susan Barry:** I agree with you. I think my advice to Keslie would be lean into the fact that you're nothing like home.

If you're at a hotel, you don't have to clean up and wash the dishes after breakfast. You don't have to worry that the bed is made after you've tossed and turned all night. So I agree with you. I think leaning into those differences is probably better than trying to turn your hotel into an Airbnb or try to make it seem more like a VRBO listing.

Right? Well, Calvin, thanks for being here. I'd like to start with a brief overview of your background. So, what was your first job in hospitality?

[00:03:50] **Calvin Tilokee:** Well, um, my first real job was a reservations manager at a Hilton property in Westchester County, New York, where I'm from, um, I did that for about four years.

I was a res manager, but prior to that, I did go to hospitality school. So I did internships, which we all know are just jobs that you'll hold for three months, you know? Um, so yeah, I worked at that same hotel as a GSA front desk. Yeah. For about a year, you know, for a summer. I've waited tables prior to that. We had a hotel on campus so we worked front desk shifts there. I did housekeeping in that hotel. And then we had events where we would do F&B and service and purchasing and stewarding and all that.

[00:04:34] **Susan Barry:** I know your career path has taken you back and forth from hotels to celebrity chef-driven restaurants and back to hotels. Can you talk a little bit about how leading a reservations operation in hotels and restaurants are alike and how they're different?

[00:04:54] **Calvin Tilokee:** Yeah, it's a good question. You know what? They really aren't different. I couldn't think of too many differences, which I think speaks to the fact that we all have a lot of transferable skills in hospitality that we may not realize.

And I think once you start really tapping into things like yield management, you know, trying to fill. Say, for example, if you have a suite at your property that can fit eight people, you'd prefer to have eight people in there, right? Because they want to spend more money around the hotel, probably room service, these things, but that's yielding properly your property.

In a restaurant it's no different. You know, on a, on a busy Friday night, a busy Saturday night, you don't want to put two people on a four top during dinner right at the 7:00PM, 8:00 PM time slot. So it's using that same kind of mentality. I oversold the heck out of a restaurant, right? Because this is New York.

[00:05:43] **Susan Barry:** This question just occurred to me because it's interesting to hear you say how similar the two are. It makes perfect sense. I worked in restaurants like all coming up and, you know, observed the same thing.

Like we're not putting two people at an eight top or whatever. Right. Do restaurants have any type of training program or is it more intuitive? So in hotels, you know, you can buy a book about how to manage yield for a hotel. Can you buy a book about how to do it for a restaurant?

[00:06:14] **Calvin Tilokee:** That's a good question.

[00:06:15] **Susan Barry:** Um, maybe you should write one.

[00:06:18] **Calvin Tilokee:** Yeah. And that's not one that I could say I have the answer to, but, um, I do see a point. I do think that there's probably more of a focus on it in the hotel business. I will say, I mean, in my experience, I think you raise a good point about training period. I don't think we do a great job of it in hotels, which I think leads to a lot of the turnover we've experienced, but I'd say we do even less on the restaurant side, at least in my experience.

I mean the restaurant jobs I've had, it's show up and, you know, I mean, they really just, just throw you in, it's talk about sink or swim.

[00:06:51] **Susan Barry:** Shadow someone for a shift, and then you're on your own.

[00:06:55] **Calvin Tilokee:** Exactly, exactly. I mean, there was no training really about, I mean, the training I got at that restaurant for as the res manager, there was really just on the system, like how to, you know, get the phone calls out of the queue and tracking conversion and, and that kind of stuff. So software stuff. Okay, we had a script to answer the phone. I'd say that that was about it, right? This is how you answered the phone.

[00:07:18] **Susan Barry:** That's also true in hotels in a lot of circumstances that there is a huge focus on people, understanding systems and not as much of a focus on people understanding theory and strategy.

[00:07:33] **Calvin Tilokee:** It's really, it's an interesting point. Yeah. It's an interesting dynamic.

[00:07:39] **Susan Barry:** So now that you started your own company, what do you miss about hotels?

[00:07:44] **Calvin Tilokee:** Um, I miss people, you know, I'm a people person, that's, you know, one of the things that attracted me to this industry. I enjoy - as much as I was on the revenue side for a big part of my career - ultimately we're all there to create great memories for these guests.

And I like being a part of that. I do miss that. I miss being able to see the look on a guest's face when they show up and you know, everything's great for them. Right? And, you know, cause I travel quite a bit, and I know how I like to feel when I travel. And I think it's, it's delivering that same thing to guests.

So I do, I do miss that. I miss the comradery of being in the office. You know, a big part of what I do on Instagram is just, you know, just kind of cracking jokes with, with the people you work with. And I do.

[00:08:28] **Susan Barry:** Is there anything that you don't miss about being in hotels?

[00:08:32] **Calvin Tilokee:** Um, meetings. You know, a lot of these, these unnecessary meetings that, you know, could have been an email, you know, and not to overuse that cliché, but it's a cliché for a reason because it's like, why are we sitting in this room talking about the stuff that we could have just done in 30 seconds on an email.

I used to sit in three-hour EC meetings because I had a GM that was super chatty and listen, I can be chatty. I definitely am chatty. There's no hiding that, but it's the time and the place like when, when I've got a forecast to do or budgets due, I don't need to sit to do three hours on anything? There's nothing that should take three hours in a hotel. This is not open-heart surgery here.

[00:09:17] **Susan Barry:** Why did you start @revparblems?

[00:09:20] **Calvin Tilokee:** It happened organically. It really did. I've always had a great sense of humor. I like to laugh. I like to make other people laugh, and I like to keep the workplace kind of light. Things can get stressful, and I've realized, actually, my coping mechanism is just comedy.

I started making these memes at my first director of revenue job. This was back in like maybe 2012. And I would, I would - this is how old I am - I'd make them - you'd have to print. I printed them out, and I put them on my door. And I'd rotate them out every so often. And, you know, people got a kick out of it. We had these weekly conference calls where everybody would just kind of go through what their hotels are seeing and whatever, and something would come out of that meeting.

And it would be funny and I'd make a meme out of it and send it to the, uh, the distribution list. And people started getting a kick out of them. So then I just started a group, oh it was actually started as a Facebook group, years ago. And, um, the thing with Facebook though, is you post as yourself, right, even if you're in a group. So, I would just start making these memes, and the idea was for everybody in the group to just kind of make their own memes and put them in there. So we all get kind of share, but it got to a point where I was the only one who could do one every single day. So it kind of became known as Calvin's group.

And then because of that, people thought that the posts I was making were happening at my hotel because everybody knew who I was. So they would have, they, they assumed that the joke I made had to deal with something that just happened at my hotel.

[00:10:47] **Susan Barry:** Were you ever nervous that you would get in trouble?

[00:10:50] **Calvin Tilokee:** Not really. It was on my mind, but you know what, I, I looked at it as a positive. I kind of looked at it like, I mean, my VPs were on there in that group and stuff, you know, but it was like, listen, you can't come up with sh*tty star reports and be cracking jokes. So, you know, that's not going to be a good look for you.

Right. So it kinda, it kinda made me make sure to, to continue to perform and make sure that my hotel was doing well, that I was doing well so that these jokes wouldn't look as if I just wasn't, I didn't care, or I, you know, I was messing around.

[00:11:24] **Susan Barry:** Were there any unintended consequences of starting @revparblems?

[00:11:30] **Calvin Tilokee:** I think probably the only thing is kind of typical social media stuff where you're dealing with a lot of people's baggage. I realized, and I've realized this more now as, as the pandemic has happened and things have gotten a lot harder for a lot of us in the industry. Um, so I've become more lenient about it, but sometimes you just, you make an innocent joke and people are using the comments as like a dumping ground for all the issues.

And it's kinda like, "Dude, calm down. This is a joke. This is the point of the page. You get it, right? Is to like, it's the laugh about this stuff? You know.

[00:12:06] **Susan Barry:** I've noticed, I feel like you keep a pretty even hand. I've never seen you like bite anyone's head off, which I think is a commendable trait on your part.

[00:12:15] **Calvin Tilokee:** Thank you. Thank you. Yeah. I try to. I think the closest I've been to that is very early on. I made a, I made a meme about, you know, saying that if your hotels are open right now, you need to be thanking your, your sales, revenue and accounting teams. But I, and I said, I called it "the revenge of the nerds," you know?

Because we're typically the nerdy ones in the building dealing with numbers and all this stuff and people, I think don't, don't pay enough attention. You know, so that's, I was just really highlighting the fact that I hope now you guys realize how important these roles are. That's really was the only thing.

And, someone who was in operations, as usual, as they always do, made it about them and how hard they work. And you know, this is, you know, we're the ones keeping the guests happy. And it was, I, I stopped short of calling him out of his name, but it's kind of like, dude, right now is not the time. Okay? Right now I'm highlighting somebody else, so give me a break. That's the closest I've been to actually going back with somebody in the comments.

[00:13:18] **Susan Barry:** What is the best thing that's happened to you as a result of your raging success on Instagram?

[00:13:26] **Calvin Tilokee:** Formulating relationships with people that I otherwise never would have met. It's been really cool. I mean, I I've, I've traveled to a few different cities and you know, here in the country and you get recognized, uh, like I'd go, you know, the Expedia conference in Vegas and people like running up to you and it's like, whoa. You know, it's, it's a little... at first. It's kind of shocking. You're like, I didn't think it was that big of a deal, but clearly it resonates with a lot of people. And, um, I'm grateful for that.

I was in Scotland a couple of years ago on a vacation. And I'm staying at the Glen Eagle resort, which is very old-school, white glove service, very famous, but it's in the middle of nowhere. I mean, you have to take a five-hour train ride from London to get there. The first night we get there, I'm in the restaurant with my wife. And this girl comes through the restaurant in a front desk uniform, and

she's like, she's walking really fast with purpose. And she walks right up to us, looks at my wife, looks at me and then goes, "Mr. @Revparblems?" And I was like, this has gotta be some kind of a prank. I am in the middle of the Scottish highlands, I mean hours from civilization. I'm like, are you serious? She's like, "Oh my God, I'm such a big fan. I've been following you for years," etc., etc. She wanted to take picture with me and everything. I was like, I mean, that's awesome.

[00:14:44] **Susan Barry:** That's so cool. That's really neat. I feel like you do a great job of being funny and really getting to the truth of the hotel business and of hospitality, without ripping guests apart too much. So your account is not built on: This guest is stupid, and here's why, etc.

Was that a deliberate decision on your part or is it just part of your personality?

[00:15:11] **Calvin Tilokee:** I'm just not that guy, you know, that's, that's not what I'm about. That's not what I don't, I don't find that stuff funny either. I don't think it puts you in a good light. And I, you know, quite frankly, I think if that's how you feel, then this is probably not the industry for you. You know what I mean?

Of course guests can be, can be a pain. Of course, you know, nothing I talk about is fun. I just make fun of it. I mean, missing forecast is not a fun thing, right? Missing budget is not a fun day, having to walk somebody is not a fun thing. But I kind of, you know, I try to just bring some levity to those situations so we can kind of shrug it off and get back at it.

If you want to find a creative, funny way to express that feeling, then I can respect that, but to just be there guest bashing and stuff like that -- that is not for me. I mean, some people enjoy that. It's just not my style and it's not something that I enjoy.

[00:16:00] **Susan Barry:** Understood. As I scrolled back through your posts. I looked at a lot of posts. I went deep into the deep cuts, and I saw something that you posted on the first day your account was live. It's this thing that we always talk about in hotels in the, especially on the commercial teams: Hope is not a strategy. What do you think that means in 2021?

[00:16:28] **Calvin Tilokee:** Well, I think we might need more hope now than we did back then, but it's the same as it ever was.

I think it's more important now to have a plan. We were operating in competitive markets pre-COVID. I mean, just speaking for myself, working out of New York City, it was a dog fight then, with all the supply coming in. It was getting harder and harder to get business, fill your hotel, hit pace, you know, keep up in pace to where you were in years previously. It got harder and harder to do that.

Now, completely obliterate all the demand, and you've still got, for the most part, the same supply. I know some hotels have closed and things, but I don't think it's, it's not to a level where you're going to say, "Well, okay, well, hey, half the market closed, so we should all be good now." It's nowhere near that significant.

So everybody's fighting for less business now, and it's going to be even more important to strategize, to know who your target guest is, know who your target demographic is and build around that and build your strategies, your rate strategies, your marketing, everything, to find that person. So

forecasting and being diligent about what you're doing. You know, you can't just change rates, willy nilly. You gotta have an idea of what you're trying to do.

[00:17:49] **Susan Barry:** You founded Revpar Media at the height of the pandemic in April, 2020. And that really rings a lot of bells for me because I started my company in the spring of 2009 at the height of the financial crisis. Can you tell us about Revpar Media, what your mission is, and what services you offer?

[00:18:13] **Calvin Tilokee:** Sure. Um, well that basically came out of the idea of trying to help hotels do social media properly. Obviously @revparblems has been going for a while as I was working, and I started to realize what worked on social media, what I was good at, the creativity, and quite frankly, the revenue mind of strategy and analysis, knowing when to post certain things.

A lot of it is very spontaneous and creative, but early on a lot of my content was posted at times I knew people would be feeling it. You know, I may get an idea for something about a forecast, but I'd post that closer to the middle, to the end of the month, because that's when people are going to be doing that.

You know, if you've got something about budget or, you know, checking in a guest, I'd post those on the weekend because that's when the ops people are working, and it's going to hit home for them, right? So, kind of taking that approach to social media and learning those things over the course of years, led me to, as an end-user in the hotel space, whether we were doing it in-house or we had an agency doing these things, to really kind of measure what they were doing. And I realized that we don't, we don't do enough of that from the hotel side. We're not strategizing social media.

It goes one of two ways. We either give it to the youngest person in the office and say, you know, you're the Instagram person now because you know, you know how to do this stuff. Or you're paying agencies exorbitant amounts of money that can get you followers, but then they don't understand the hotel business, and they don't know how to convert those followers into paying customers, paying guests.

So my brainchild of Revpar Media was to bridge that gap. I have extensive experience in hotels. I understand the business, I understand revenue management, strategy analysis, but I also have the creativity and knowledge of how to do that and translate that to social media. So my mission is to help hotels do it properly and utilize it as a true part of the marketing funnel, as opposed to just this offshoot something, "Hey, we know we need to be on social media but we're not taking it seriously." You know, you're not going to get results with anything. If you don't take it seriously.

[00:20:22] **Susan Barry:** A lot of people, I think, expect a revenue management expert to be more analytical than creative. Where do you think your creativity comes from? Does your revenue management expertise or experience inform the creative work, or is it a separate skill set?

[00:20:40] **Calvin Tilokee:** That's a really good question, as far as where it comes from. I don't, I don't know. You reminded me, make me dig way back. But I remember I was maybe, this was maybe fifth grade when we, we had those computers with floppy disk and stuff like that. We had a project to do, and the project was to make, using the computer where you had to put in type in commands and stuff back in those days, make a, make a video, a kind of a digital video. And I made, I made one of my brother being born or like him, my parents bringing him home. So, I remember I had like a cityscape in the background and like a car driving, like bringing him home and stuff. So I mean,

[00:21:20] **Susan Barry:** I wasn't expecting a touching moment from this question.

[00:21:23] **Calvin Tilokee:** Me, either me, either buddy. You kind of brought one out of me that I completely forgot about, but I mean, I was maybe 10 years old when I did that, right? So, you know, I had a level of creativity even then. I also did some writing when I was younger that got into the school paper for like writing a short story.

Um, I think I've, I've always had it. There was a second part to that question, but I forget now.

[00:21:48] **Susan Barry:** Just if, if you think that revenue management is a separate skillset or if your creativity is of a piece with the analytical.

[00:22:00] **Calvin Tilokee:** I think, yeah, no, it's a piece. I think anybody, any good revenue manager's going to have a bit of both.

I've heard a phrase saying that revenue management is part art, part science. I think I lean a bit more to the art, creative side of it. I think I'm naturally that kind of person, but your data and your analytics also need to be strong obviously. You can't have too much of one or the other. I think anybody, if you're, if you're only going to go off the numbers, you're not going to be successful.

Right. Because number one, they have RMS systems for that now. So you'll be out of a job. Right, but I think you have to use the data, and read the trends and the analysis, and use that to drive your creativity. Okay. How do I use this information to come up with a creative way to position this hotel, a creative way to display these rates and get that out there at the right time?

[00:22:54] **Susan Barry:** As you know, we like to make sure that our listeners come away from each episode of top floor with a couple of very practical, tangible tips to try either in their business or their hotel or restaurant. I'd love to get your thoughts on issues that I think many hoteliers are facing right now. So when I started my company in 2009, a lot of hotel companies really scoffed at the value of social media and digital marketing.

It was still the wild, wild west. Over the years, there is a lot more acceptance of social as a viable channel, but it still seems to be low on the priority list. You referred to that a little bit earlier. What are two or three reasons that hotels should invest in social today?

[00:23:46] **Calvin Tilokee:** Well, the biggest reason is this is where your customers are.

Period. Everybody's got a phone, everyone's on some form of social media, whether it be Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, they're on there. I think it's highlighted now, you know, in the pandemic where people couldn't travel, right. There was no chance of them driving by your hotel and seeing it and saying, I'll stay there.

You know, everybody, we were all stuck in our houses and on our phones. And to me being a bit more of a visionary in that department was, I was like, guys, now was the time to spend your money on that marketing and get on Instagram and get on social media because everyone is on their phones all day. What else were we going to do?

Right. So that customer, that guests, that you're looking to stay at your hotel is on Instagram, is on Facebook, is on Tik TOK.

[00:24:39] **Susan Barry:** If a hotel has never been on Instagram before, how should they start? Do you have a couple of top tips? Do you think they should sponsor ads to get new followers? What do you think they should do?

[00:24:52] **Calvin Tilokee:** I specialize in doing things organically. Not that there's anything wrong with ads, but I think that that's kind of what sets me apart. I mean, I've built my audience organically. I've never done any ads for @revparblems. So I would start with that. I think the first couple of things I always tell a new client is your bio.

Your bio is a lot more critical than you think. If you name yourself, say Holiday Inn Express Chicago, right? That's your Instagram name, but then there's a line that says "name" when you set up the account. People put it again. You don't need to do that. That line is searchable by Google. So what you may want to put instead is "Boutique Hotel O'Hare Airport."

Right. Something like that. So now when somebody's searching for that, your Instagram will show up. I think that's a key one the same way, you know, you're looking at it on Google and all of these other things, that's something you want to do. So utilize those keywords.

Develop a plan. That's where everything is going to fail, and that's what I think I was alluding to earlier when you just say, "Hey, let's just throw it to the intern and let them do it." Or even with an agency. And I think a lot of times the agencies end up giving you this vanilla cookie-cutter content because we as a hotel, we're not giving them a strategy, we're not telling them:

Hey, these are the people we need to reach. This is how old they are. This is how much money they make. These are all the locations they are. Go get 'em. Build the content to go find those people. You know, so they may be handcuffed a bit, but come up with that plan.

Highlight your attributes. What about our hotel is special? What about our hotel do we want to put out there to guests, that's going to attract them to come stay with us as opposed to the guy down the street or across the block. Right. That may be your special rooftop. That may be a special kind of room that, but you know what, it's probably the people in the hotel, right?

You have superstars that work at the front desk that are constantly mentioned on TripAdvisor. Highlight those people. That's what this is all about. At the end of the day, this is a people business. It's all about creating connections.

And that would be another thing I would say for hotel to get on social media is that you can create authentic connections. It feels more real than your website. When people find your website, they expect it to look pretty and curated and they know those pictures are Photoshopped and that's fine. It's supposed to look that way, but people go on social media to get the behind the scenes, to get a more real feel. You know, find somebody who's good on camera, who wants to participate, have them give you a little tour of the rooms or the lobby and put that in your story highlights. You know, start to develop that connection on social media, because that's what that guest's journey is beginning now whether... the sooner we realize that, the better we're all going to be. It's not when

they show up at the desk, but at the time they show up at the desk, there's been three or four touch points that have made them choose this hotel.

And right now that is likely starting on Instagram. They're going to find you on Instagram. Somebody may tag them in a post or they'll search and they'll find you, that's where it's at.

[00:27:58] **Susan Barry:** One of the things that comes up for me a lot when people make suggestions about what are a hotels differentiating features, is I think back to the really boring hotels I worked at. You know, I had some really rockstar, beautiful properties, and I also had some very like: "Here we are in an office park." And so to hear you say the thing about rockstar people really rings true with me because it's, you know, some hotels just don't have anything special to talk about. They don't have a rooftop bar; they have, you know, boring breakfast and a clean room and that's all they've got.

So I love the idea that you can sort of get beyond just the physical features of their property and highlight who the people are that bring it to life.

What do you think is the biggest mistake hotels make when they start on Instagram or social?

[00:28:58] **Calvin Tilokee:** In general, people have not taken it seriously. It's just something that's an afterthought. And I think that's a result of a lot of the issues in our industry right now. Not to get too, you know, on my soap box here, but going back to things like training that we talked about during this show, right? I can count on two fingers the amount of hotels I've worked where I got a real onboarding training schedule for any position.

Because we're constantly firefighting. We're constantly short-staffed, we're constantly, "Oh let's just hire this person and just throw them out at the desk. We'll teach you, you know, on the fly."

And then you get them where they're good enough, and then you let them go. And they're not supported, and then you wonder why three or four months from now they're looking for another job or that they don't want to stick it out, and why it's hard to hire people now.

Everybody's talking about the hiring crisis because these are all part of these problems. We don't take anything seriously enough, it seems. And social media is just part of that. The mindset in the industry is just, "Let's just get it done."

And it's almost like, like survive as opposed to thrive, right, as opposed to let's set up a plan. Okay. You know what, maybe we're going to be a little short-staffed for the next few days, but let's find the right people. Let's train them properly.

If we're going to do Instagram page, if we're going to actually promote this hotel on social media, then let's do it right. Let's set up a plan. Let's find a person that we can dedicate this to, even if it's three days a week. I'm not saying ... you may or may not need a full-time person for that, right. Or if you want to go the agency route, but hey, go to an agency and say, "Listen, this is, these are the things about our hotel that are great, this is what our guests are saying. This is what we want to highlight. This is what we need to improve on." But show us how to build that. How do we put that out there?

[00:30:47] **Susan Barry:** Do you think it's hard to demonstrate return on investment harder in social media than it is in other channels?

[00:30:53] **Calvin Tilokee:** It's not an immediate return. I mean, and I think that's another issue in this industry.

You know, it would a lot of times, and I'm speaking from my personal experience, a lot of times anything that's done it's, you want immediate return, right. You know, owners build a new meeting room? Million dollars in catering revenue by next year. Right. Or we invest in a piece of technology. We need to fire two people so we can make the money right back.

Right. And so that's just how we think in this business, unfortunately. But social media, I don't think is any less of a return on investment than your e-blasts, than your website, but we all do those things. Right. And we, we invest thousands of dollars every month. And we budget for this every year and your websites, your emails or even salespeople going on some of these trade shows, right? Do you book a piece of business every single show? Probably not, but, but what you're doing is you're investing in the fact of putting yourself and your brand out there in front of a lot of people on a consistent basis with the expectation that at some point that's going to return, that's going to return a group to you, that is going to return guests to you.

If you started a hotel Instagram page today, you're not going to sell out your hotel in a week. That's going to take time to build up, to build up your follower base, your, your strategy and get that all working. But eventually in the long run, if you stay consistent with that, people are going to find you, people are going to learn about this hotel, and they're going to say, you know what, the next time I'm in that area, this place looks really cool. I'm going to remember that place. I'm going to bookmark this post because when I'm actually going. I'm going to Chicago in three weeks and you know what? This, this hotel looks really cool. I may want to stay there.

[00:32:38] **Susan Barry:** Let's look ahead. What predictions do you have for the future of top-line revenue in hospitality? Look into your crystal ball and tell me what you see.

[00:32:52] **Calvin Tilokee:** I will say, everybody keeps talking about, you know, getting back to 2019 numbers and things like that. I don't see that happening for a couple of years. I'd say late 2023 at the earliest.

I think you're going to see more hybrid positions, which I think is good ultimately, because again, going back to this whole hiring issue that we're having, um, you need to get the right people in these positions, but pay them properly, right. What you don't want to do, you know, hey, a lot of people say, "Oh, if you, if you paid us better then..." True, but you don't want to pay the wrong people better.

Right. I think, I think we have an opportunity now to get some of these people who, uh, you know, like some of those Instagram accounts where we're talking about these people who just want to bash guests and have this attitude and let's get them out. Let's create a position where instead of it's a GSA, right, maybe make everyone at your desk sort of like a concierge for lack of a better term. But support them with some technology where they're not spending three hours doing paperwork at the end of the day and all these checklists and stuff like that, answering phones. Let's try to streamline that as much as possible, pay them a little better, but get the right people in there. Get the right people into these positions.

I think from a revenue standpoint, because that's my background, you'll see a lot more commercial-type positions where you're doing revenue, maybe a bit of marketing, a bit of sales and PR and having a revenue person that's a bit more involved in all of that. I think that's going to be something that, that comes out of this as well.

[00:34:30] **Susan Barry:** Calvin Tilokee, thank you so much for being here. Your wisdom, your tips, your humor, your creativity. I know that all of our listeners are going to get a lot out of our conversation today. So I appreciate you riding up to the top floor with us. However, before you go, we are going to head back downstairs, go out to the loading dock because that's where all of the best stories get told.

[00:35:05] **Announcer:** Going down.

[00:35:07] **Calvin Tilokee:** I see, well, let me light up a cigarette for this one, even though I don't smoke, but, uh, okay.

[00:35:15] **Susan Barry:** So what is a story from your travels or your career that you would only tell down here at the loading dock?

[00:35:25] **Calvin Tilokee:** Um, I'm going to tell this one, because it kinda ties into the topic for today about social media and doing it right.

But I worked at a hotel once that was a luxury property where we had a general manager who, let's just say, didn't understand branding very well. Right. So. I constantly had these conversations with him about picking the right influencers, for example. So he wanted to bring these influencers that were, you know, leaning up against a tree with a bikini on and like, yeah, well we should get her to stay with us.

She's got 300,000 followers. I'm like, this is a luxury property, man. Like, this is not, it's not South Beach Miami. There's a time and a place for all that stuff. But this, this doesn't vibe at all with what we're doing. And countless of these conversations and then you're like, you know what, at some point you just got to say, "You're the GM. Do what you want, man. I'm I'm done with this."

But it really took the cake when he hired a fitness lady to do a class on our rooftop simply so he could date her.

[00:36:33] **Susan Barry:** Oh, my God. So maybe it wasn't that he didn't understand branding. He was branding himself, not your luxury property.

[00:36:45] **Calvin Tilokee:** Exactly, exactly. And you know what? It's... You know, you didn't need to bring the hotel into that.

You've got the business card, right. You could just say, Hey, listen, you know, I'm the GM of a luxury hotel. Let's, uh, let's go out for a drink, and maybe we'll talk about what I could do for you. You know, we don't need to bring the hotel into this. That didn't need to come to the RevMax meeting. You know, keep that to yourself.

But yeah, he went and hired this girl and, um, next thing you know, he, he brought her to some kind of work party on the rooftop and it was like, So, this is why we reduced our PR budget for, so we could bring this person in so you could get a date?

[00:37:24] **Susan Barry:** Thank you again for being with us. It was wonderful to get to talk and hear about your career.

And I hope you'll come back.

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[00:38:49] **Announcer:** Thanks for listening to the Top Floor podcast at www.Topfloorpodcast.com. Have a hospitality marketing question? Reach us at 850.404.9630 to be featured in a future episode.