

Web in a Box

After a 2 year wait, this product has now been released to serviced accommodation providers.

In a recent press release Marco Truffeli states that “Web in a Box is a revolutionary step forward in how we sell Scotland. In under an hour and half, accommodation owners can create their own commercial website from which to showcase their rooms to every computer user in the world which is linked into the VisitScotland.com sales channels.”

The cost at £10 per bed space a web site with fully integrated on line booking provision looks to be a reasonable bargain.

Unfortunately there is a huge flaw in this development. For a web site to be “commercial” it has to be listed by the search engines and ranked in a high position. The web in a box can only use text and pictures that are already on your vs.com site entry and, via a template, you are able to reorganise the existing information to form your web in a box site.

The main search engines such as google consider this sort of site as a “duplicate” site. You can understand why they do this; there is no point clogging up the internet with sites all displaying the same information. The search engines react to these duplicate sites by not listing them or in some cases dropping them from the search engines altogether. We have consulted with several experts from Internet companies across Scotland and they have all agreed that the web in a box site will not be indexed by the major search engines.

Of course vs.com want this product to be successful, not because they are interested in the web site but because they want you to update your availability so that they can book your accommodation on line.

If visitsotland.com had wanted to benefit the accommodation providers of Scotland they would have designed a booking system that could be added to the owners own web site. The trouble with this would be that you would get bookings reducing the possibility of the call centre filling your availability.

You will be accepting bookings under the terms and conditions laid down by vs.com which might be very different to your own. Some commercial on line booking systems such as Supercontrol allow you a 24 hour period to confirm the booking. This allows you to reduce the possibility of double bookings and also ensures that previous customers that have made it on to your black list can be politely rejected.

Keeping your availability up to date on the vs.com web site will clearly increase your chance of getting a booking. If you are on a tight budget then you can get a web site up and running using a template from one of the large internet companies such as www.land1.co.uk for less than £30 per annum and you can get on line booking for about £70 per annum from www.holiday-bookings-online.com .

If you want a free web site, email, domain name and hosting then go to <http://office.microsoft.com/en-gb/officelive/default.aspx> .