



***Hotel Sax: Turning Everyday Joe's into J-Lo's***  
***2008 Bulldog Award Winner***  
***Best Travel and Hospitality Campaign***

## **Overview**

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In June 2007, Chicago welcomed a new addition to its hotel scene. After a \$25+ million dollar renovation, the city finally said goodbye to the dated House of Blues Hotel and welcomed its more luxurious replacement, the Hotel Sax Chicago. Though many associated the space with its former tenant, the Hotel Sax Chicago was a completely new hotel and, thus, a new product. The complete makeover included renovation of all 353 guestrooms, lobby area, meeting and event space and bar. Located within Chicago's legendary Marina City, the Hotel Sax Chicago was introduced as a luxurious yet chic hotel providing dramatic style and exceptional service in comfortable, uniquely Chicago surroundings.

The hotel's management company, Gemstone Hotels & Resorts International, LLC, aimed to position the new lodging destination as an elegant, yet approachable alternative to other downtown luxury hotels. They quickly began to establish unbeatable service standards and an unprecedented level of comfortable luxury. Our goal, as the Hotel Sax' public relations agency of record, was to introduce the new space and its artistic, eclectic ambiance as a separate entity from the House of Blues Hotel. We wanted to inform the public that the Hotel Sax Chicago was a new product on the hospitality market. In order to convince Chicagoans and business and leisure travelers of the high level of luxury offered by the new hotel, we introduced totally unique amenities and experiences. These offerings set the stage for media attention and created an identity for the Hotel Sax Chicago.

## **Local and National Objectives**

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At Zapwater Communications, we knew that the Hotel Sax would be perceived as luxurious. We needed to ensure that it would create a new kind of luxury, one that was modern and cutting edge without a trace of stuffiness. During the original pitch to represent the Hotel Sax Chicago, Zapwater Communications unveiled its creative concept for Celebrity Rider-Inspired Packages. These packages would allow guests the opportunity to live like celebrities and stay in the most luxurious suites filled to the brim with amenities inspired by the actual contract riders of their favorite celebrities.

Soon after the official opening of the Hotel Sax Chicago, hotel management incorporated the five-star deal into their permanent package selection. Each celebrity-inspired package

includes a two-night stay and VIP access to Crimson Lounge, located off the lobby of the hotel. Amenities included in the packages are inspired by real life contract riders and the personalities of various celebrities. These packages allow guests to stay at the Hotel Sax the way celebrities have stayed with them in the past.

For two nights, guests can live like artists from past to present by booking packages that cater to the styles of celebrities like Jennifer Lopez or the Rat Pack. For example, rooms booked with the J.Lo Rider-Inspired Package are filled with white lilies, a drawn bath sprinkled with rose pedals and lined by candles, hot apple pie, a fruit platter and chocolate chip cookies. These are only some of the luxurious amenities offered to create a space that Jennifer Lopez herself would enjoy!

The Celebrity Rider-Inspired Packages serve as a reminder to travelers that something new and innovative had broken onto the Chicago hospitality scene. As excitement grew surrounding the new package, word of the Hotel Sax Chicago's arrival also spread. Concurrently, the new hotel demonstrated the ability to make every guest feel like a VIP. The campaign to promote the Celebrity Rider-Inspired packages drew the greatest press the Hotel Sax had seen since its opening.

In an effort to increase awareness surrounding the new Hotel Sax Chicago and its inventive new approach to providing a unique guest experience, Zapwater Communications began to heavily pitch the Celebrity Rider-Inspired Package to local and national press. Specific targets were chosen to either build awareness around the new brand or attract guests to stay at the hotel. Rather than focusing solely on local and travel media, Zapwater specifically reached out to national news media in an effort to suggest the package as a component of a "hospitality trends" story. In addition, the package was heavily pitched to luxury blogs in an effort to incorporate new media.

## **Biggest Hit**

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In September 2007, a Producer from ABC's nightly news program, Nightline, contacted a Senior Publicist at Zapwater Communications. The production team was interested in featuring the Celebrity Rider-Inspired Package as part of its recurring "Sign of the Times" segment. The segment focuses on news items that may fly under the radar of national news, but that represent a changing world, whether by way of economics, lifestyle, politics or other layers of our society.

Soon after, video footage for the program was taped at the Hotel Sax. The program aired on November 14, 2007 with a viewing audience of four million people. The media exposure has greatly increased awareness surrounding the Hotel Sax and the luxurious amenities offered for its guests. In addition, the Celebrity Rider-Inspired Package was perceived as a true innovation for hospitality packages. Considerable media attention surrounded the package in the weeks following its announcement and continues to grow. Several high profile placements include Time magazine, Entrepreneur.com, Chicago Tribune, Chicago Social magazine and Forbes Traveler.