

10 Proven Ways to Get More Bookings

The STR Optimization Playbook

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Introduction

This playbook is designed for individual short-term rental owners, growing property investors, and property management companies who want to maximize bookings, increase revenue, and create exceptional guest experiences without expensive consultants or lengthy learning curves.

Whether you're managing 1 property or 1,000, these 10 proven strategies form the foundation of successful STR operations. Each strategy has been battle-tested across thousands of properties, from cozy beach cottages to luxury city apartments. We've seen these tactics generate 30-50% revenue increases within the first 90 days of implementation.

Arryva manages over 10,000 properties worldwide. We've learned what works, what doesn't, and most importantly how to implement these strategies efficiently and systematically. This playbook distills that knowledge into 10 actionable, immediately implementable tactics.

Each strategy includes the reasoning behind it, specific implementation steps, and a Quick Win you can execute today. We've also included key statistics from our portfolio data to show the real-world impact of each tactic.

Whether you choose to implement these strategies yourself or partner with a management company like Arryva, the knowledge in this playbook will help you make more informed decisions about your short-term rental business.

Who This Is For

- Individual owners managing 1-9 properties
- Growing investors with 10-99 properties
- Property management companies at any scale

Optimize Your Listing Titles for Search

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STRATEGY 1

Your listing title is the single most important factor in Airbnb and Vrbo search rankings. Most owners write titles like 'Beautiful Beach House' — generic, forgettable, and invisible to search algorithms. The platforms use your title to determine which searches your property appears in, making it your primary SEO tool.

Top-performing titles include three elements: specific location keywords, unique amenities, and guest capacity. For example, 'Oceanfront 3BR w/ Private Pool | Steps to Beach | Sleeps 8' outperforms 'Nice Beach House' by 3-5x in search impressions. The specificity helps the algorithm match your property to what guests are actually searching for.

Each platform has different character limits and optimization strategies. Airbnb allows 50 characters, so every word must earn its place. Vrbo allows 80 characters, giving you room for more detail. Booking.com uses your property type as part of the title, so focus your custom text on differentiators.

A/B test your titles monthly by tracking view-to-booking conversion rates. Change one element at a time — swap a generic adjective for a specific amenity, add a location landmark, or lead with your most unique feature. Small title changes can drive 20-40% increases in listing visibility.

QUICK WIN

Rewrite your title today using this formula: [Unique Feature] + [Location Keyword] + [Guest Capacity]. Track impressions for 2 weeks and compare.

3-5x

More search impressions with optimized titles

STRATEGY 2

Properties with professional photos earn 40% more revenue than those with smartphone pictures. In the scroll-heavy world of Airbnb and Vrbo, your photos are your storefront. The first 5 images determine whether a guest clicks through or keeps scrolling.

Lead with your hero shot — typically an exterior twilight photo or the most impressive interior space. Follow with the living area, master bedroom, kitchen, and then a lifestyle or amenity shot. Include photos that help guests visualize their stay: coffee on the patio, a fire pit at sunset, kids playing in the pool.

Drone photography adds significant perceived value for properties with outdoor space, views, or unique locations. Stage every room before shooting — remove all personal items, add fresh flowers, set the dining table, fluff the pillows, and turn on all the lights. Natural light supplemented with professional lighting creates the most inviting images.

A professional photo shoot costs \$300-500 and pays for itself within the first booking. Update your photos seasonally if your property has outdoor appeal — summer pool shots and winter fireplace scenes keep your listing fresh and relevant throughout the year.

QUICK WIN

Rearrange your first 5 listing photos today. Lead with your best exterior or hero shot, then living area, master bedroom, kitchen, and a lifestyle or amenity photo.

40%

More revenue with professional photos

Implement AI-Powered Dynamic Pricing

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STRATEGY 3

Fixed pricing leaves money on the table every single night. Dynamic pricing tools like PriceLabs, Wheelhouse, and Beyond Pricing analyze millions of data points — local events, competitor rates, seasonal demand, booking pace, and day-of-week patterns — to set the optimal price for every night of the year.

The biggest mistake STR owners make is pricing based on gut feeling or what their neighbor charges. Professional revenue management considers 50+ variables simultaneously. A college graduation weekend might justify 3x your normal rate, while a Tuesday in February might need a 40% discount to avoid sitting empty.

Minimum stay requirements are just as important as nightly rates. A 2-night minimum on weekdays and 3-night minimum on weekends maximizes revenue while reducing turnover costs. Adjust minimums seasonally — drop to 1-night during slow periods to capture business travelers and last-minute bookings.

Orphan day management is where advanced hosts separate from amateurs. When you have a single open night between two bookings, drop the price aggressively or offer it as a free extension to an adjacent booking. An occupied night at 50% rate beats an empty night at full price every time.

QUICK WIN

Sign up for a free PriceLabs trial today. Connect one property and compare its pricing suggestions to your current rates. Most owners find at least 10 nights in the next month where they are significantly underpriced.

20-40%

Revenue increase with dynamic pricing

Distribute Across 6+ Booking Platforms

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STRATEGY 4

Most STR owners list exclusively on Airbnb. That means they're missing 25-35% of potential bookings from travelers who prefer other platforms. Vrbo captures family travelers, Booking.com dominates international markets, and Google Vacation Rentals is growing rapidly.

A channel manager like Guesty, Hostaway, or Lodgify synchronizes your calendar, pricing, and availability across all platforms in real time. Without one, double bookings become inevitable. With one, you can safely list on 6-10 platforms simultaneously without any additional daily management.

Each platform attracts different guest demographics. Airbnb skews younger and experience-focused. Vrbo attracts families booking further in advance with higher average stays. Booking.com brings international travelers with strong last-minute booking behavior. Understanding these differences lets you tailor your listing description and photos for each audience.

Direct booking websites are the ultimate distribution channel — zero commission fees. Services like Hospitable, Lodgify, or a simple WordPress site with a booking widget let you capture repeat guests and referrals without paying 15-20% platform commissions. Even converting 10% of your bookings to direct saves thousands annually.

QUICK WIN

List your property on Vrbo and Booking.com this week. Both have free listing creation. Use a channel manager free trial to keep calendars synced and prevent double bookings.

25-35%

More bookings with multi-platform distribution

STRATEGY 5

The highest-rated properties don't have better amenities — they have better communication. Proactive, timely messages at 5 key touchpoints create a premium experience that drives 5-star reviews: booking confirmation, pre-arrival (3 days before), check-in day, mid-stay check-in, and post-checkout.

Automate the predictable, personalize the exceptions. Use scheduled messages for confirmation details, check-in instructions, and checkout reminders. Save your personal attention for when guests message with questions or issues — that's where the 5-star moments happen.

Response time directly impacts your search ranking on Airbnb. Hosts who respond within 5 minutes rank significantly higher than those who respond within an hour. Set up instant replies for common questions (WiFi password, parking, early check-in) using saved messages or automation tools.

The mid-stay check-in is the most underutilized communication touchpoint. A simple 'How's everything going? Anything you need?' message on day 2 of a stay catches small issues before they become negative reviews. It also creates a positive emotional touchpoint that guests remember when writing their review.

QUICK WIN

Set up 5 automated messages today: booking confirmation, pre-arrival info, check-in day welcome, mid-stay check-in, and a checkout thank-you with a review request link.

4.9★

Average rating with proactive communication

Build a 5-Star Review Engine

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STRATEGY 6

Reviews are the currency of short-term rentals. 72% of guests read reviews before booking, and properties with fewer than 10 reviews get significantly less visibility in search results. Building a systematic review engine is essential for long-term success.

The review request timing matters enormously. Send your request 2-4 hours after checkout — guests are still feeling positive about their stay but haven't gotten distracted by daily life. Make it personal: reference something specific about their stay and include a direct link to the review page.

Negative reviews happen to every host. What matters is your response. Public responses to negative reviews are read by 89% of future guests. Address the issue specifically, explain what you've done to fix it, and keep the tone professional and empathetic. A thoughtful response to a negative review can actually increase bookings.

Track your review rate (reviews received divided by total stays). Top-performing properties maintain a 60-70% review rate. If yours is below 40%, your review request process needs work. Consider offering a small incentive like a local restaurant recommendation or a discount on their next stay as part of your follow-up message.

QUICK WIN

Create a review request template with a direct link to your Airbnb review page. Schedule it to send automatically 3 hours after every checkout. Track your review rate monthly.

72%

Of guests read reviews before booking

Create a Seamless Check-In Experience

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STRATEGY 7

The check-in experience sets the tone for the entire stay. A confusing or frustrating arrival creates negativity that colors everything else — even if your property is perfect. Smart locks, clear directions, and a digital guidebook eliminate 90% of check-in friction.

Smart locks with unique codes for each guest eliminate key handoffs, lockouts, and security concerns. Generate a new code for each booking automatically through your PMS. Include the code in your check-in day message along with step-by-step arrival instructions with photos.

A digital guidebook (Touchstay, Hostfully, or a simple PDF) should cover: WiFi details, thermostat instructions, appliance guides, emergency contacts, house rules, and local recommendations. Properties with comprehensive guidebooks see 35% fewer guest messages asking basic questions, freeing you to focus on real issues.

Local recommendations are a secret weapon for 5-star reviews. Curate a list of your favorite restaurants, coffee shops, activities, and hidden gems. Organize by category and include specific dish recommendations or tips. Guests remember hosts who helped them discover something special about the area.

QUICK WIN

Create a one-page digital check-in guide with: door code instructions, WiFi info, parking details, and your top 5 local restaurant picks. Send it with your check-in day message.

35%

Fewer guest issues with digital check-in guides

STRATEGY 8

Cleaning is the operational backbone of any STR business. A missed or subpar clean is the fastest path to a 1-star review. Building a reliable cleaning system with redundancy and quality control is non-negotiable at any scale.

Create a detailed, photo-documented cleaning checklist. Every surface, every drawer, every light switch. Include staging instructions — how towels should be folded, where pillows go, what the coffee station should look like. This ensures consistency regardless of which cleaner handles the turnover.

Always have a backup cleaner. Your primary cleaner will get sick, go on vacation, or quit — usually at the worst possible time. Build relationships with 2-3 cleaning professionals and rotate them occasionally so everyone stays familiar with your property and standards.

Same-day turnovers are where the money is. If you can reliably flip a property in 4 hours or less, you can accept back-to-back bookings and capture significantly more revenue. This requires a tight checkout time (10-11am), an efficient cleaning crew, and a later check-in time (3-4pm). The gap is your buffer for delays.

QUICK WIN

Create a photo-documented cleaning checklist for your property. Include 15-20 photos showing exactly how each room should look post-clean. Share it with your cleaning team this week.

< 4 hrs

Target turnover time for same-day flips

STRATEGY 9

Most STR owners operate on intuition rather than data. They don't track occupancy rates, average daily rates, RevPAR, or booking lead times. Without these numbers, you can't identify problems, measure improvements, or make informed investment decisions.

Track these 5 KPIs monthly: Occupancy Rate (occupied nights / available nights), Average Daily Rate (total revenue / occupied nights), RevPAR (total revenue / available nights), Booking Lead Time (days between booking and check-in), and Review Score. These five metrics tell you everything about your property's health.

Compare your metrics to local market data using AirDNA, Mashvisor, or AllTheRooms. If your occupancy is below market average, your pricing is probably too high. If your ADR is below average, you may be undervaluing your property. The market data gives you a benchmark for every decision.

Seasonal analysis reveals patterns that inform your entire strategy. If January occupancy drops 40% year over year, you need a winter pricing strategy. If weekend ADR is 2x weekday, focus your minimum stay strategy on capturing full weekends. Data turns reactive hosting into proactive business management.

QUICK WIN

Log into your Airbnb hosting dashboard and record your current occupancy rate, average daily rate, and average review score. Set a monthly reminder to track these three numbers.

50%

Of hosts never analyze their performance data

STRATEGY 10

Platform commissions eat 15-20% of every booking. For a property earning \$50,000 annually, that's \$7,500-\$10,000 going to Airbnb and Vrbo. A direct booking strategy doesn't replace platform bookings — it supplements them with zero-commission revenue from repeat guests and referrals.

Start simple: collect guest emails (with permission) and send a post-stay thank you with a direct booking link. Offer a modest incentive — 5-10% discount for booking direct — and you both win. The guest saves money, you save the platform commission, and you build a valuable guest database.

A direct booking website doesn't need to be complex. A single-page site with photos, amenities, an availability calendar, and a booking widget (Lodgify, Hospitable, or Bookingninjas) is enough. Add a Google Business Profile for your property to capture search traffic from guests who search your property name.

Social media presence builds brand awareness that drives direct bookings over time. Share property photos, local area content, and guest experiences on Instagram. A property with 1,000 Instagram followers can realistically convert 5-10% of those followers into direct bookings over a year — that's 50-100 commission-free stays.

QUICK WIN

Create a simple Google Form or direct booking page. Add the link to your post-checkout automated message with a 10% repeat guest discount offer. Track how many past guests book direct.

15-20%

Commission savings on direct bookings

Ready to Go Passive?

You now have 10 proven strategies to increase your bookings, optimize your revenue, and create better guest experiences.

But implementing all 10 takes time, tools, and consistent execution. That's exactly what Arryva does — so you don't have to.

Start Onboarding

Free setup, no long-term contracts

arryva.com

Schedule a Call

Talk to our team about your portfolio

[Book at arryva.com](https://arryva.com)

Email Us

Get answers to your questions

sales@arryva.com

What Arryva Handles for You

- ✓ Dynamic Pricing & Revenue Optimization
- ✓ Multi-Platform Distribution & Listing Management
- ✓ 24/7 Guest Communication & Support
- ✓ Cleaning Coordination & Quality Control
- ✓ Maintenance Triage & Vendor Management
- ✓ Owner Dashboard with Real-Time Analytics

10% flat fee + \$99/mo per listing

No hidden fees. No long-term contracts. You keep your listings.

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