



Best Practices for Piracy and Poaching Prevention and Responses

Room block pirates and poachers are businesses that actively seek to recruit or divert event participants, primarily attendees and exhibitors, away from official room blocks and into other hotel bookings, using a range of techniques to approach event participants and gain their business.

Examples of Piracy and Poaching Practices:

- 1. Selling fictitious reservations and credit card fraud:** With this practice, event participants believe that they have made a reservation, however, they arrive to find that no reservation has been made and their credit cards may have been charged by pirates and poachers.
- 2. Misrepresentation resulting in bookings outside the block:** Pirates and poachers may misrepresent themselves in many ways in order to entice participants to book through them. Examples include “bait and switch”, where they sell reservations that are inferior to what was promised (such as further from the event site), or say that the official hotel blocks are full when they are not.
- 3. Trademark infringement:** In this case, pirates and poachers will utilize the trademarked/servicemarked property of the event owner (such as the logo or logotype or the unique meeting name) in correspondence to event participants in order to appear to be an official agent for the event.
- 4. Unauthorized access, use and selling of data:** Pirates and poachers obtain lists of past, current or prospective attendees through a variety of means including unauthorized use of websites or databases. In some cases, they may also purchase lists from sources that are not authorized to sell the data.
- 5. Obtaining inventory through misrepresentation or omission:** In many cases, pirates and poachers obtain room inventory by deceiving the lodging establishment, such as a hotel, or the hotel’s wholesalers through misrepresentation or failure to disclose their intent.

Stakeholders:

Prevention and response practices’ implementation related to piracy and poaching involve the following stakeholders.

1. Event organizations or their official housing bureau
2. Hotels
3. Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs)
4. Industry organizations

<h2 style="margin: 0;">Prevention Practices for Room Block Piracy and Poaching by Stakeholder and Type</h2> <p style="margin: 10px 0 0 0;">The following recommendations can be implemented prior to an event in order to reduce the likelihood of room block piracy and poaching or to mitigate the impact. Organizations can select and customize these practices to meet their needs.</p>	Fake reservations / credit card fraud	Misrepresentation resulting in booking outside the block	Trademark infringement	Unauthorized access, use and selling of data	Obtaining inventory through misrepresentation
Event organizations or official housing bureau					
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide information to attendees and exhibitors on the event website and in all other marketing materials clearly listing official vendors and logos/logotypes and potential personal risks.	✓	✓			
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide incentives to attendees and exhibitors to stay within the official blocks, including registration discounts or access to services such as shuttles.	✓	✓			
<input type="checkbox"/> Use a single system to manage registration and housing bookings, Alternatively, provide a seamless integrated process that links both systems together, preferably allowing registrants to benefit from a registration discount for booking inside the block.	✓	✓			
<input type="checkbox"/> Include an alert about the official room block and potential room block piracy and poaching risks in the registration system, preferably with a requirement that the reader acknowledge that they've seen the notice.	✓	✓			
<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct a pre-arrival audit of reservations and registrations. Notify event participants that are not booked in the official block and alert them of possible room block piracy and poaching.	✓	✓			
<input type="checkbox"/> In communications to event participants, include requests to forward information on official blocks and risks from room block piracy and poaching to all housing decision makers (such as procurement departments and travel managers).	✓	✓			
<input type="checkbox"/> In consultation with legal counsel obtain and maintain trademarks/servicemarks for the organization and event.	✓	✓	✓		
<input type="checkbox"/> Make copying logos/logotypes more difficult by disabling right-click copying, shrink wrapping (overlying a transparent image), or slicing and dicing it into several components.	✓	✓	✓		
<input type="checkbox"/> Remove or restrict access (such as with the use of a firewall or password protection) to online lists of past, current and prospective members, attendees, exhibitors and sponsors. Alternatively, remove lists as soon as the event concludes.	✓	✓		✓	
<input type="checkbox"/> Request permission to collect and publish event participant data and limit the information that is included on any published lists.	✓	✓		✓	
<input type="checkbox"/> Include a clause in hotel contracts about room block piracy and poaching including communication expectations.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Clearly communicate to anyone with access to participant lists of appropriate use of the data. Apply "seeding" and "salting" practices to lists to alert organizers of room block piracy and poaching and identify leaks. Seeding adds names to lists that are monitored for unauthorized contact. If multiple lists are distributed, "salting" adds unique names to each one in order to trace which list has been compromised.	✓	✓		✓	

<p>Prevention Practices for Poaching and Piracy by Stakeholder and Type</p> <p>The following recommendations can be implemented prior to an event in order to reduce the likelihood of room block piracy and poaching or to mitigate the impact. Organizations can select and customize these practices to meet their needs.</p>	Fake reservations / credit card fraud	Misrepresentation resulting in booking outside the block	Trademark infringement	Unauthorized access, use and selling of data	Obtaining inventory through misrepresentation
Hotels					
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide training to sales and conference services teams on room block piracy and poaching.	✓	✓			✓
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop procedures and provide training to front desk staff in case of any arrivals without reservations that may be due to room block piracy and poaching, including alerting sales and conference team and event organizers. Review training prior to major group arrivals.	✓				
<input type="checkbox"/> Review citywide event calendars with sales team to identify dates that are at a high risk for room block piracy and poaching and to ascertain legitimacy of any requests for group rooms over those dates.	✓	✓			✓
<input type="checkbox"/> Involve leisure and transient sales departments in managing against room block piracy and poaching over high-risk dates. This may involve closing off dates or restricting bookings to packages only (referred to as closing off land-only bookings).	✓	✓			✓
<input type="checkbox"/> Add restrictions to multiple individual or group bookings over high-risk dates, such as requiring pre-payment or sub-block contracts.	✓	✓			✓
Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs)					
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide education to the hotel and wholesaler community, as well as to prospective clients attending familiarization trips, about room block piracy and poaching prevention and responses.	✓	✓			✓
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop local action plans for responses to room block piracy and poaching in consultation with hotels, housing bureaus and local chapters of industry associations.	✓	✓			✓
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide educational resources on room block piracy and poaching on the DMO's website and outgoing communications.	✓	✓			✓
Industry Associations and Trade Media					
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop and distribute industry-wide education about room block piracy and poaching, including articles, webinars, and presentations.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Response Practices for Room Block Piracy and Poaching by Stakeholder and Type The following recommendations can be implemented as soon as room block piracy or poaching is identified. Organizations can select and customize these practices to meet their needs.	Fake reservations / credit card fraud	Misrepresentation resulting in booking outside the block	Trademark infringement	Unauthorized access, use and selling of data	Obtaining inventory through misrepresentation
Event organizations or official housing bureau					
<input type="checkbox"/> In consultation with legal counsel (preferably with specialization in meeting industry issues), issue a cease and desist letter intended to stop the behavior.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<input type="checkbox"/> Report to the hotel and destination marketing organization that room block piracy and poaching is occurring. Ask hotels to also notify their wholesalers.	✓	✓			
<input type="checkbox"/> Issue an alert to event participants.	✓	✓			
<input type="checkbox"/> Research how the data was accessed.	✓	✓		✓	
<input type="checkbox"/> In consultation with legal counsel, report room block piracy and poaching to applicable official agencies, such as the Better Business Bureau, or the Attorney General’s office or other local or federal entities.	✓	✓			
Hotels					
<input type="checkbox"/> In consultation with legal counsel and in coordination with the event organizer, (preferably with specialization in meeting industry issues), issue a cease and desist letter to stop the behavior.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<input type="checkbox"/> Report to the event organizer and destination marketing organization that room block piracy and poaching is occurring.	✓	✓			
<input type="checkbox"/> In consultation with legal counsel and in coordination with the event organizer, report the room block piracy and poaching to applicable official agencies, such as the Better Business Bureau, or the Attorney General’s office or other local or federal entities.	✓	✓			
<input type="checkbox"/> Research channels through which room block pirates and poachers were able to secure rooms.					✓
<input type="checkbox"/> Notify credit card fraud departments and request support in closing the merchant account of the pirate or poacher.	✓				
Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs)					
<input type="checkbox"/> Collaborate with stakeholders, including the Convention Industry Council, to acquire additional tools, research data and strategies to address the issue of piracy and poaching.	✓	✓			✓

Note: These materials should in no way be construed as a substitute for legal advice. Industry professionals are encouraged to seek legal advice regarding contracts and other legal matters.