

## Housing Pirates, Poachers & Interceptors

### What are Housing Pirates and Poachers?

Housing “Pirates” and “Poachers” are third party companies that misrepresent themselves by claiming to be the housing provider for a given convention or trade show who profits by booking registrants outside the official room block. Pirating companies research online event lists and convention calendars then typically target exhibitor lists, then using deceptive tactics such as:

- Claim to have hotel rooms available at a lower rate
- Inform registrants that the hotel is “sold out” and to book immediately
- Represent themselves as being affiliated with the event, illegally using logos and proprietary materials
- Distribute forms and offers that look official and legitimate, but they are not

### How do “Pirates” & “Poachers” Impact Organizations?

- Takes away the ability to fill contracted room blocks
- Puts the organization at financial risk with attrition penalties and complimentary meeting space
- Organization may lose qualification for the amount of space needed at the convention center
- Risks organization’s ability to rebook preferred hotels and receive discounted rates

### The Risk for Attendees

Unfortunately, room poachers often don’t deliver on promises to customers. Exhibitors and attendees booking with anyone other than the official housing provider risks:

- Arriving on-site to find out their reservations don’t exist and their credit card had been charged
- Not receiving hotel or rate originally booked, receiving a higher rate at a different hotel
- Hotels not in close proximity to the convention center and not on the bus/shuttle route
- Rooms cancelled with significant deposits lost or hefty cancellation fees charged to credit cards
- Credit cards are charged in full at the time the reservation is made as well as additional hidden costs
- No protection should you need to make changes or cancel reservation

### What Can Organizations do to Combat Housing Poachers?

- Protect your online exhibitor list, consider other ways to still give exhibitors the exposure they need
- Inform registrants of the official housing provider and the proper booking channels
- Communicate to exhibitors and attendees the benefits of staying in the block
- Be proactive with email marketing campaigns
- Warn Exhibitors and Attendees of potential “Pirates” and Poachers”
- Provide a list of companies registrants should beware of and avoid
- Ask registrants to inform the official housing company if contacted by any other company
- Immediately send cease and desist letter – see sample below
- File a complaint with the Better Business Bureau

Orchid Event Solutions has the tools to help prevent room blocks from being attacked, as well as the resources to fight back against these soliciting companies. We work closely with Passkey, to educate and fight the threat housing poachers have on the convention and meeting industry.



## Taking Legal Action

Cease-and-desist letters are a good first step in the legal process against unauthorized 3<sup>rd</sup> party housing companies. Such letters can cite "tortious interference," which claims the poacher is intentionally interfering with contractual relations between the group and the hotels. While it is not illegal to solicit attendees to sell them discounted rooms for an event, there is a clear case for legal action for infringement on intellectual property if the 3<sup>rd</sup> party is using Association logos in the solicitation material. The main purpose of the Cease and desist letter is to send a warning to room poachers that the organization is aware of their activities and sets the tone that more serious legal consequences will follow.

### SAMPLE CEASE AND DESIST LETTER

Sent via email, facsimile, & U.S. Registered Mail

Convention Housing Services  
Attention:

Dear Mr. / Ms.

Please be advised that this firm represents GROUP NAME. It has come to our attention that your company has been contacting our participants falsely implying and representing GROUP NAME regarding hotel booking services in CITY at their MEETING NAME. Furthermore, your company is using deceptive business practices to lure our participants into non-sanctioned facilities. In addition to engaging in deceptive business practices, you are also interfering with GROUP NAME's contractual relationships. Our firm is in the process of collecting information from the local Convention and Visitors Bureau to determine the nature and extent of your deceptive business practices.

In the interim, we hereby demand that you immediately:

1. Cease and desist any and all contact with our participants regarding their hotel booking requirements
2. Immediately cease the use and distribution of copyrighted and/or proprietary material
3. Deliver-up for destructions all unused or undistributed copies
4. Undertake in writing to desist from using any of our materials in future

Failure to give assurance that you will cease and desist from these deceptive business practices will result in GROUP NAME seeking a restraining order in addition to other remedies provided by law.

We will await to hear from you by no later than close of business on \_\_\_\_\_.

This is written without prejudice to our rights, all of which are hereby expressly reserved.

Sincerely,

Attorney and Firm Name



## IMPORTANT NOTICE: Text to include on the event website

Sham housing companies are approaching **GROUP NAME** members and exhibitors with fraudulent offerings of hotel rooms at significant discounts. Lured by highly attractive rates, exhibitors and attendees fall prey to these imposters losing significant deposits, discovering hidden costs, up front charges or being bait and switched to hotel rooms they never booked.

Of course, these companies are in no way affiliated with **GROUP / EVENT**, or the official hotels in **CITY**. They troll the internet and association Web sites looking for annual events and then gain access to email addresses for direct contact or draw attendees to their Web sites posing as your association's sanctioned housing provider. Do not give them your credit card information.

Orchid Event Solutions is the **ONLY** official housing company for this event and will not contact you directly to make a reservation. Booking through **GROUP NAME'S** official housing provider, Orchid Event Solutions ensures you will be working with a reputable company, that your credit card information is secure, and that you will benefit from all services provided to conference attendees at the official hotels including shuttle transportation to the convention center.

If you are contacted by anyone asking if you need a room reservation for the **EVENT**, or if they represent themselves as the "**GROUP NAME** housing provider," please get as much information as you can, then contact Orchid Event Solutions at [help@orchideventsolutions.com](mailto:help@orchideventsolutions.com) or call toll-free 1-888-747-7850.

### Why Stay at a Conference Hotel?

**GROUP NAME** has secured room blocks for attendees and exhibitors at a variety of hotels to meet all tastes and budgets. These participating hotels are providing discounted rates to you based on a guaranteed percentage of attendees staying in these official conference hotels.

#### When you book your room with Orchid Event Solutions you will receive the following benefits:

- Immediate email acknowledgement of your hotel assignment;
- Peace of mind that you have a reservation at an "official" **GROUP NAME** hotel at the discounted rate
- Complimentary access to the internet in your hotel guest room
- Receive important meeting related materials in your hotel room (door drops)
- Protection in the event the hotel has oversold guest rooms
- And much more!

#### When rooms are booked at hotels NOT within our official hotel block and/or you do not use Orchid Event Solutions:

- **GROUP NAME** is exposed to penalties for not fulfilling our room block commitments, by avoiding hotel penalties, **GROUP NAME** is able to keep show costs down
- **GROUP NAME** risks our ability to rebook preferred hotels and receive discounted rates
- **GROUP NAME** risks losing qualification for the amount of space needed at the convention center
- **GROUP NAME** is unable to assist in the event a reservation can't be located in the hotel's system
- **GROUP NAME** is unable to help protect reservations in the event the hotel "oversells" its room inventory

Please support the **GROUP NAME** by staying at the official hotels. We think you will find the increased networking opportunities, quality hotel services and amenities, and provided transportation to be worth it!