

Starwood Hotels and Resorts Engaging travelers near and far



Starwood Hotels and Resorts
White Plains, New York
www.starwoodhotels.com

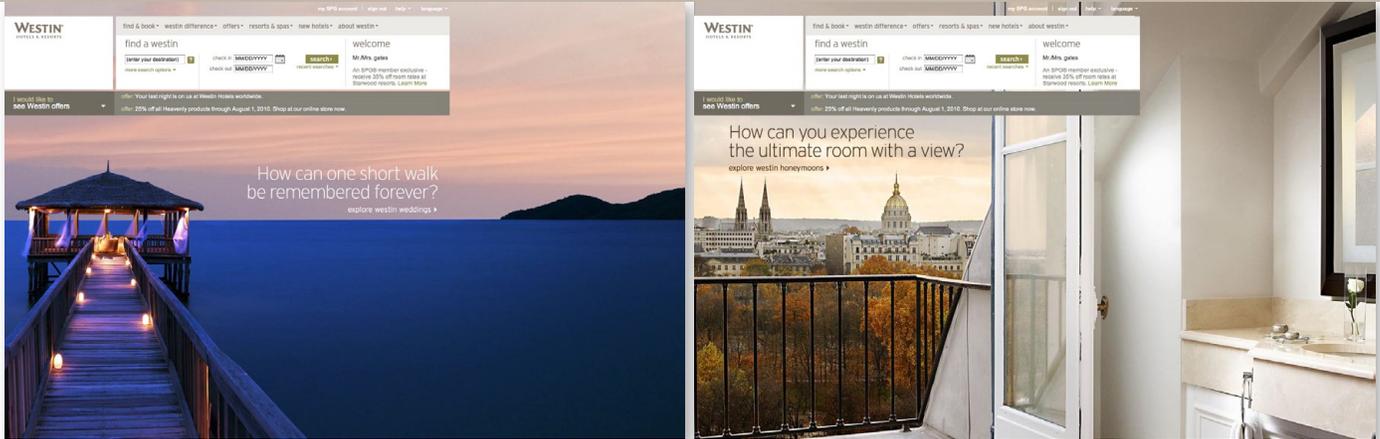
Vanguard hotel and leisure company uses Adobe® Creative Suite® 5 Web Premium software to create and deliver high-impact content to attract travelers worldwide

From vacationers looking to relax to corporate travelers expecting the best amenities to make their stay more comfortable and productive, global travelers have high expectations for their trips. Whether it's an exotic island locale or a high-end urban getaway, chances are they'll choose a property by Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide.

As one of the world's leading hotel and leisure property operators, Starwood Hotels boasts 982 properties in more than 100 countries and employs approximately 145,000 people worldwide to staff popular chains that include St. Regis, Sheraton, Westin, W, The Luxury Collection, and others.

Generating revenue

For Starwood, promoting its diverse brands as travel destinations of choice is key to the company's success. "We're a customer-driven company," says Stephen Gates, senior creative director at Starwood Hotels. "Each brand in our portfolio has its own personality, look and feel, and special way of attracting and engaging guests. Our job is to make sure that they stay distinct and continue to be top of mind for travelers." To that end, Starwood is using Adobe Creative Suite 5 Web Premium software to create a rich, highly tailored experience for each hotel with interactive content that engages customers across a range of media, from online to mobile.



Challenge

- Creating a unique online experience and brand message for each of its ten brands
- Accelerating production of web and mobile applications
- Increasing online bookings, revenues, and customer satisfaction

Solution

- Differentiate diverse brands using Adobe Creative Suite 5 Web Premium software
- Deliver engaging, interactive online experiences for customers using Adobe Flash Professional CSS
- Rapidly develop landing pages or mobile application prototypes using Adobe Fireworks® CSS and Dreamweaver CSS
- Enhance images from various hotel destinations using Adobe Photoshop CS5 Extended

Benefits

- Drove online reservations and revenues and enhanced company's image as a choice provider of accommodations worldwide
- Enabled rapid prototype development and collaboration for faster creation of web and mobile applications
- Efficiently developed and deployed creative assets to deliver unique, immersive online experiences for each of the company's ten brands
- Tracked and analyzed web traffic to help optimize content for a better experience
- Increased brand perception and online revenue by double digits for one of the Starwood brands

"Because the hotel and travel business is so competitive, every customer interaction on our site has to be memorable," says Gates. "We have to bring ideas to life quickly and test and iterate on concepts to determine the designs with the greatest impact. For projects like the Westin.com redesign, Adobe Creative Suite 5 software streamlined site design, development, testing, and optimization to deliver an experience that engages our customers and keeps them coming back to us. A double-digit lift in brand perception and revenue for Westin.com underscores our success."

Starwood's ten branded websites account for a large percentage of its overall revenue. Each site highlights the unique characteristics and uncompromising service offered by each brand, enticing travelers to book a stay for their next trip. "The more compelling the online experience, the more likely customers are to choose a Starwood hotel, helping us increase bookings, revenue, and customer satisfaction," says Gates.

For Starwood's web team, working with the different brands is like working with ten different clients, each with its own look, initiatives, and projects. The team is responsible for all website design and development for Starwood's global brands, as well as online advertising, social media, and mobile application design. Managing multiple branding campaigns, rotating location-specific imagery, and maximizing the interactivity of the various sites is a huge task.

A more efficient production process

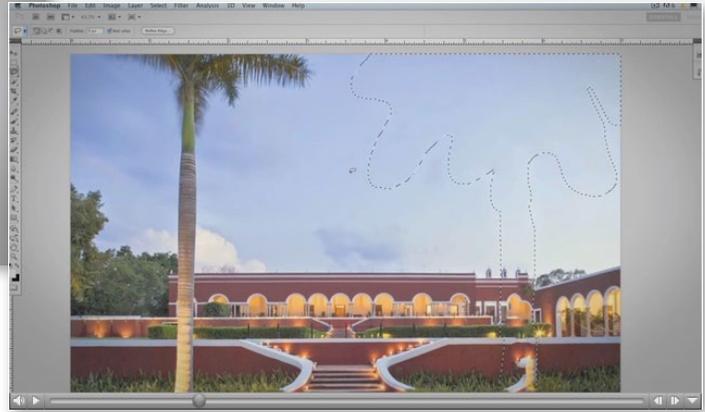
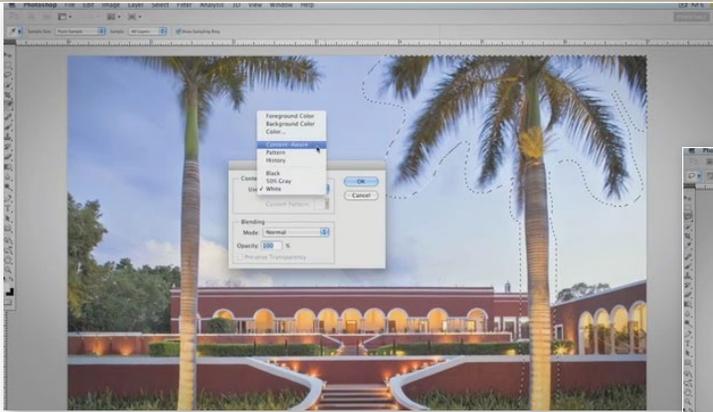
Starwood's web team is routinely challenged to create the most engaging, revenue-driving websites and mobile applications as quickly as possible. With Creative Suite 5 Web Premium, the process is shortened at virtually every stage. The powerful, integrated set of applications helps designers take their creativity to new heights while accelerating production timelines and delivery of final pieces.

Because Starwood is a brand-focused company, it doesn't push all of its brands through cookie cutter sites. "We create unique immersive experiences for all of our brands—such as the Le Meridien MoodBoard, Westin.com, and the Sheraton Community Globe—that are only possible with Adobe Flash® Professional CS5 software," says Gates.

When the company set out to redesign Westin.com, it wanted to offer customers a personalized experience that reflected their choices. The visual navigation was designed in Adobe Photoshop® CS5 Extended and tested using a prototype created in Flash Professional CS5. The end result is a truly interactive, enjoyable online experience.

Adobe Photoshop CS5 Extended, Dreamweaver® CS5, and Flash Professional CS5 also let the team take advantage of a faster, more iterative design and user testing cycle, so they could quickly sell the ideas through to senior management. "We went into testing with nine different prototypes created in Adobe Flash Professional CS5, made changes throughout the process, and were ultimately able to narrow it down to just one choice," explains Gates.

Starwood Hotels creates all website designs using Adobe Photoshop CS5. New features in Photoshop CS5 like Content-Aware Fill cut hours off of the team's workload.



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New features in Flash Professional CS5 make it easier for Starwood's web team to work across locations and geographies. The Text Layout Framework supports creative use and management of text across different languages and geographies, which is critical for a company that supports multiple global brands. XML-based FLA source files also facilitate Starwood's multi-user environment by enabling team members in different locations to work on a project simultaneously.

“Travel and leisure websites lend themselves well to experiential content like big photographs, video, animation, and other interactive elements,” says Gates. “At the same time, these sites are ultimately e-commerce tools that must work flawlessly. We need a way to effectively blend an engaging experience with a powerful business tool—and do it independently for each brand—and that's what Adobe Creative Suite 5 Web Premium provides.”

Creating a memorable experience

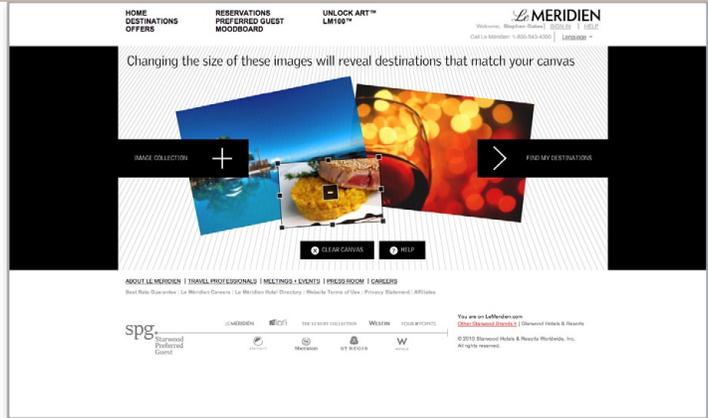
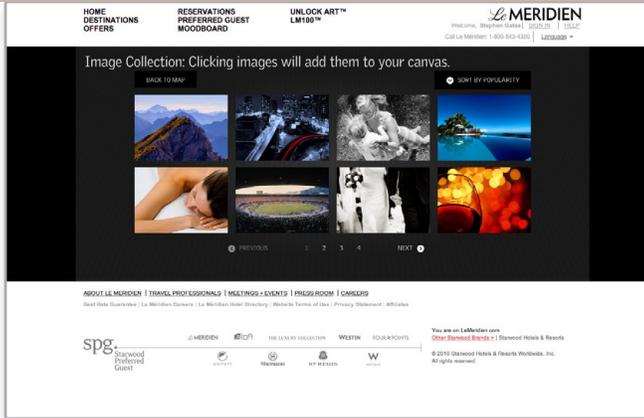
Adobe Photoshop CS5 and Illustrator® CS5 play prominent roles in idea generation, as designers work with a variety of files such as 2D and 3D images, animated images, and static print files. The tightly integrated Creative Suite 5 components make it easy for team members to move files between applications as needed and instantly modify content to complete their compositions, saving them hours of valuable time.

“Attention-grabbing imagery is key to creating outstanding online experiences,” says Trina Elstner, Starwood Hotel's associate creative director. “People relate and make a connection to their dream destination when the images are right.” For example, when the company wanted its Le Meridien site to reflect the brand's emphasis on art and discovery, the web team created the Le Meridien MoodBoard, which makes hotel destination recommendations based on imagery that site visitors choose, while creating their own digital piece of art.

Elstner loves the efficiency of Photoshop CS5 Extended for working with images from various hotel destinations. “We save time using features such as Content-Aware Fill in Adobe Photoshop CS5 to remove elements where we may have to overlay text,” she says. “Within minutes, the images are perfect—while in the past, achieving the same look might take hours or even days if the images were sent out for retouching.”

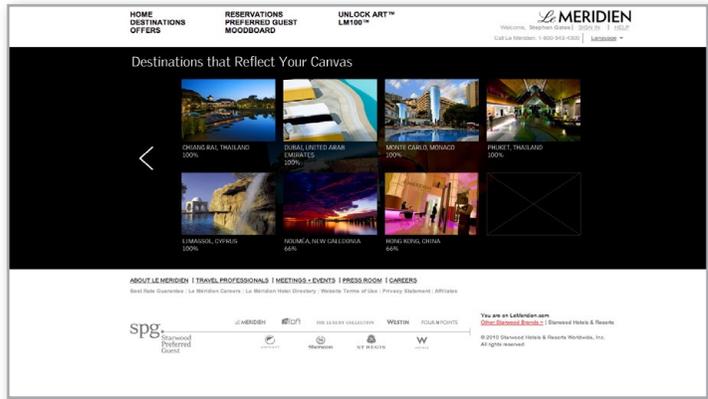
Once images are selected and modified, designers can leverage Dreamweaver CS5 and Adobe Fireworks CS5 to rapidly develop landing pages or mobile application prototypes that can be easily shared among team members for review. Starwood uses Adobe CS Live services, which integrates with Adobe Creative Suite 5 software, to simplify and accelerate the creative review process. For example, Adobe BrowserLab, available within Dreamweaver CS5, helps the team make sure they deliver a consistent customer experience across various browsers, while Adobe CS Review helps keep projects on track by letting team members and outside partners in different locations conduct shared reviews from within the applications.

Adobe Flash Professional CS5 is the core technology that lets Starwood Hotels create rich, unique experiences that drive ROI for its branded websites. Flash Professional CS5 is also used to test concepts and sell them through to senior management.



“With Adobe Creative Suite 5 Web Premium, we can push our innovation and creativity further and find new ways to engage our customers. That just simply isn’t possible with other software.”

Stephen Gates
Senior creative director, Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide, Inc.



Toolkit

Adobe Creative Suite 5 Web Premium.

Components used include:

- Adobe Photoshop CS5
- Adobe Illustrator CS5
- Adobe Dreamweaver CS5
- Adobe Flash Professional CS5
- Adobe Fireworks CS5
- Adobe BrowserLab
- Adobe CS Review

Adobe SiteCatalyst, powered by Omniture

For more information

www.adobe.com/products/creativesuite/web

After online content goes live, the web team uses Adobe SiteCatalyst®, powered by Omniture®, to balance creative expression with commercial responsibility. The team actively analyzes how customers interact with individual websites and instantly adjusts images or messaging for optimal results.

Delivering a better message

With Adobe Creative Suite 5 Web Premium software, Starwood is providing its creative team with leading, intuitive creative and development tools available to produce distinct, compelling online experiences for customers. The Adobe solutions help Starwood reach customers on a variety of platforms including web and mobile devices, and enable the company to leverage existing designs for use in different markets and media.

“The way we attract and connect with our customers worldwide is constantly evolving,” Gates says. “Adobe Creative Suite software has always enabled us to reach global audiences with unique, immersive experiences that convey the quality of our brand and the exceptional experience travelers will enjoy at our hotels. With Adobe Creative Suite 5 Web Premium, we can push our innovation and creativity further and find new ways to engage our customers. That just simply isn’t possible with other software.”



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