2530 Theyre Not a Partner Theyre Competition

Product Book · https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/2530-theyre-not-a-partner-theyre-competition/

The third-party platform presents itself as a channel. In reality it's a competitor — for the Guest's attention, loyalty, and future booking behavior.

A partner takes a fee. A competitor takes the relationship. Third-party platforms do both.

This doesn't mean abandoning them. Some are too embedded in Guest behavior to ignore entirely, and the covers they send are real covers. But the independent operator who understands what's actually happening uses third-party platforms deliberately — with a strategy for converting platform Guests into direct relationships as quickly as possible.

The platform is the acquisition channel. The relationship is built in the dining room.

Acquire through the platform. Retain through relationship. Every Guest the platform sends you is a Guest you haven't earned yet — a transaction waiting to become a relationship, or not, depending on what happens after they sit down.

The operator who treats a third-party acquisition the same as a return visit from a known Guest is leaving the relationship work undone. They're accepting the cover and letting the platform keep the Guest. That's **Relationship Arbitrage** running in their favor — and it compounds every period, every cover, indefinitely.

The defense against **Relationship Arbitrage** isn't technology. It's the same thing that defends against every threat to the independent operator's position: the relationship the chain structurally cannot replicate.

Build the Guest intelligence system that captures direct relationship data — your data, not platform data. Know your Guests by name, by occasion, by preference. Give them a reason to book direct. Give them a reason to come back without being reminded by an algorithm.

The Guest who books directly, returns regularly, and refers actively is a Guest the platform never owned. That's the moat at work.