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consumers also want to feel that they have an excellent deal, whatever their level of spend. Increasingly they will see the price quoted as a basis for negotiation rather than being carved in stone.

How can owners respond to these trends? With pound-euro exchange rate fluctuations, certainty and confidence can be created by offering an attractive fixed exchange rate or quoting prices and accepting payment in sterling. When it comes to the demand for a deal, the first step is not to be fazed when your customer wants to negotiate. You can respond by making a deal suitable for your market – or you might choose to be proactive and pre-empt

the bargain hunter by making a special offer.

Traditional incentives such as free meals or a bottle of wine, while always welcome, are now in stiff competition with those owners who are offering a discount or a more imaginative incentive. You might use offers to gain advance bookings – ‘10 per cent off summer weeks for bookings made before the end of March’ – or you might use them strategically later in the season to sell odd weeks that remain empty. Owners find both approaches to be successful and last year saw the level of most discounts at 10 to 25 per cent, with a few as high as 40 per cent.

Booking patterns

In 2009, there were more bookings for summer weeks made during the spring than is normal – and some August bookings were made even later. This could be attributed to uncertainty. While there does appear to be more optimism and a greater sense of certainty this year, it pays to be prepared for later bookings as well as expecting customers to negotiate.