HRS Category Creation Agency Brief

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Why we're briefing you

We are looking for a strategic agency partner to help define and establish a market category that reflects the full scope of what we offer, with HRS as its reference point. We believe that category is lodging and meetings.

Who we are. HRS has served corporate lodging since 1972. 35% of Fortune 500 companies work with us, along with the leading hotel chains and payment providers. Our results are real: Deutsche Telekom, for example, achieved 45% cost avoidance against public rates.

What we do, in one sentence. HRS runs lodging and meetings for large enterprises as one programme, end to end: we source, book, pay for and reclaim every type of stay and meeting, with AI agents doing the work and customers steering it.

The same platform also powers two specialised offers:

- **Crew & Passengers:** lodging for airline and rail crews, plus accommodation for passengers during disruptions.
- **Insurtech:** a platform where insurers book accommodation for claimants that fits their policy terms, connected to their claims systems by API.

We've already started. The whole company understands the focus on lodging and meetings and is aligned behind it. What we need from you is help to:

- **Get the most value from it:** turn a direction we've agreed internally into a category with a name, a point of view and a story that's ours.
- **Get the market to see it the same way:** buyers, analysts and the RFP process should describe the space in our terms.
- **Compound commercial results:** every launch, deal and renewal should add proof to the same story, so it drives new logos and growth from lodging into meetings and back.

Focused, but with room to grow. The category has to be clearly about lodging and meetings. It also has to be wide enough to take in new products and deeper experiences as we build them, from payments on the road to the quality of the stay itself, without needing a new category every time.

The market shift: lodging and meetings are converging

Enterprises are starting to run lodging and meetings as one spend category, but no vendor has named or claimed it yet. That gap is the opportunity.

Buyers are merging the two remits

- 58% of travel programmes are now involved in meetings management, and 57% in meetings sourcing. 39% say travel and meetings are more integrated than before; only 7% say less. (GBTA × Cvent)
- 60.5% of European travel buyers are now jointly responsible for travel and meetings, up from 50% a year earlier. (Business Travel Show Europe research)
- Only 23% have fully consolidated travel and meetings under one team, so most are still in the middle of the shift. (GBTA × Cvent)

The overlap happens in the hotel

- 55% of travel teams sometimes manage hotel room blocks for meetings, and 48% sometimes negotiate meeting space or group rates through their regular hotel RFP. Transient, groups, long stays and meetings run on the same supply.
- In HRS's own model, lodging and meetings together are about 40% of corporate travel spend: transient 20, meetings 10, groups 6, long stay 4.

Buyers want it, but can't staff it

- 82% say they would benefit from closer integration. The top benefits they name are consolidated data (76%) and greater savings (74%).
- 62% of travel managers say their teams are understaffed. 42% name overloaded, under-resourced teams as the main barrier to integration, well ahead of technology (10.9%).
- Most meetings still sit outside the managed programme: we estimate 80% are unmanaged, many of them simple meetings booked by assistants and team leads who have a day job.

The old buying packages are breaking up

- Today buyers procure in fixed GBTA-style lots: TMC, booking tool, expense, payments, meetings. As vendors sprawl into each other's lots, buyers lose track of who does what. We expect these packages to give way within about two years, which leaves room for a clearly defined category.

What this means for the brief: the convergence is real but not yet named. Buyers want one programme for lodging and meetings, and they need it to run without adding headcount. The category we claim has to name that programme *and* say who does the work.

The problem we need you to solve

What HRS does has moved ahead of how the market describes it. Buyers still file us under old labels.

- **No category exists for what buyers are converging on.** Analysts and RFPs still split the space into TMC, booking tool, hotel programme, meetings (SMM), payments and expense. Our end-to-end lodging and meetings offer doesn't fit any of these lots, so in an RFP we get compared on fragments.
- **Buyers know HRS for parts of what we do.** We are known as a B2B enterprise solutions provider, and customers see some of what we do. Few see us as the company that runs the whole lodging and meetings programme. In the US, where we are building presence, most prospects don't know us well yet.
- **Fast-moving competitors own the AI narrative.** VC-backed all-in-one platforms and the large TMCs talk loudly about AI agents. They sell breadth across travel. We sell depth in lodging and meetings, but we haven't framed that depth as a category.

The assignment

We're not asking for a name. We're asking you to shape how the market thinks about lodging and meetings, and to make HRS the category champion of the space as it takes shape.

The convergence is happening with or without us. Buyers are merging their remits, vendors are colliding, and the old buying lots are breaking up. The company that becomes its champion will set the criteria buyers use to judge everyone else. We want that to be HRS.

We see the assignment as answering four strategic questions:

1. **What is this category, really?** Is "lodging and meetings" the frame, or is there a sharper truth underneath it? Define the category and its boundaries so they hold as we add products and deepen the experience.
2. **Why must it exist now?** What's broken in how enterprises run stays and meetings today, what is changing, and what buyers lose if they don't move.
3. **Why is HRS its champion?** Our right to win: 50+ years of depth, software and service combined, and agents that execute. It has to be framed so that competitors can't claim it by adding a feature.
4. **How does the market come to believe it?** How a category turns into behaviour: language buyers repeat, criteria that show up in RFPs, analysts who adopt the frame, and a commercial engine where every launch and every deal adds proof.

The outcome we need is a category strategy we can run with: a name and definition, a point of view, HRS's role in it, and a plan to make the market see it our way. How you get there is yours to propose.

Ambition and partnership

We want to start as soon as possible. Within one year, the category should be live and understood in the market.

What success looks like after one year

- Buyers and analysts in our core markets use our category language without being prompted.
- RFPs and buying criteria reflect the way we define the space.
- Every product launch, customer story and sales conversation adds to the same category story.
- The commercial impact shows: more new logos, and more customers buying lodging and meetings together.

How we want to work together. We're looking for a partner, not a supplier. We expect senior strategic thinking, real challenge to our assumptions, and direct access to our leadership team and CEO, who will own the decisions. Product Marketing will be your day-to-day partner. We bring data, customers, market access and a team that builds fast with AI. We want you to use your expertise to guide us through this process and maximise the value of the investment we're making.

What we'd like to see from you

Not a credentials deck. Show us how you think.

- Your point of view on the convergence, and what you think the category could become.
- How you would create a category that combines software and service, and how you'd test it with buyers.
- Where you see the biggest risk in our ambition, and how you would de-risk it.
- B2B category-creation work you've led where the market adopted the language.
- The team you would put on this, how you'd structure the engagement, and your commercial proposal.