VyRal

A LeakReceipts Field Guide

# LeakReceipts for Independent Hotels & Motels

The Field Guide: where the money leaks, how to prove it, and how to close it

For: Independent Hotel or Motel — Channel and Chargeback

by VyRal Dynasty

**LeakReceipts for Independent Hotels & Motels** The Field Guide: where the money leaks, how to prove it, and how to close it

First edition, November 2026, revised 12 November 2026. Built from VyRal's lane research as it stood on 11 November 2026.

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**How every number in this book is labeled.**

- **VERIFIED** means the figure comes from a named, dated source, and the source is printed next to it.
- **CALCULATED** means it is arithmetic on verified numbers or on your own numbers, and the math is shown.
- **ESTIMATE** means a reasoned range, and it is always called one.
- **STRUCTURAL** marks a standing rule of the trade (a law, a contract term, how the paperwork works), not a market figure.
- **STILL BEING MEASURED** means VyRal has not verified a figure yet, so no number is printed.

If a number is not labeled, it is a blank for you to fill from your own paper.

**What this book is not.** This is education, not legal, tax, accounting or financial advice. Where a fix says a professional decides, a professional decides. Nothing here says that any company, customer or person did anything wrong. The fixes show you how to check your own paper and ask in writing.

**About how this book was made.** This book was assembled with AI from VyRal's sourced research on this trade and checked against those sources. AI can make mistakes. Before you act on a figure, check it against the source printed beside it. Rules and rates change, and every figure carries its date for that reason.

**Before you share any document with anyone, Vera included,** black out account numbers, Social Security numbers and anything else you would not hand a stranger.

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# The short answer for your trade

Two counterparties compute against your rate before you ever see a dollar of it: the OTA computes its own commission, and the card network decides a chargeback against you by default the moment you go quiet. Between commission overcharges never reconciled, chargebacks lost to silence rather than argument, and ancillary charges never captured under a disclosed policy, most of what leaks out of a small hotel or motel never shows up as one big number — it shows up as a habit of not checking three documents you already have: the OTA statement, the chargeback notice, and the folio.

## Your leak map

Every leak this book covers, biggest first. The size grade is VyRal's research grade for how much money a leak tends to move in this trade. It is a grade, not a dollar figure. Your own paper sets the dollars.

| # | Leak | Size grade | Evidence | Fixes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Visa VAMP / Chargeback Ratio Monitoring | Significant | VERIFIED | 1 |
| 2 | Chargeback "Lose By Default" Response Window | Major | STRUCTURAL | 1 |
| 3 | FTC Junk Fees Rule — Mandatory Fee Disclosure | Major | STRUCTURAL | 1 |
| 4 | OTA Commission Reconciliation Gap | Major | STRUCTURAL | 1 |
| 5 | Ancillary & Policy Capture (No-Show, Incidental, Damage, Cancellation) | Significant | STRUCTURAL | 1 |
| 6 | Pride Economy: Property Improvements and Amenities | Small but common | STRUCTURAL | 1 |
| 7 | Self-Employment Tax / Entity Structure Boundary | Small but common | STRUCTURAL | 1 |
| 8 | Merchant-Model Virtual Card "Double" Processing Cost | Moderate | STILL BEING MEASURED | 1 |

Then there are 2 more leaks to check, each with its own fixes, in the chapter called More leaks to check.

# What people in your trade say hurts

Before we built a single fix, we went and read what people in this trade say out loud: forums, trade press, regulators' complaint files and court records. These are the pains that kept coming up, the ones with the most sources first. If one of them is yours, you're not imagining it.

## The booking site pays me with a virtual card that costs fees, declines, or expires

On many booking-site reservations I'm paid with a one-time virtual card. My processor charges me a business-card fee to run it. It often can't be charged until after check-in and declines if the amount or date is off, and if I miss the window the money is gone. Some owners say payouts for finished stays sat unpaid while support didn't answer.

*Found in 5 public sources; newest dated 2026-10-20. VERIFIED count from VyRal's public research log; the sources are listed at the back.*

## Guests dispute the charge after they stayed or no-showed, and I usually lose

Guests dispute real charges after a stay or a no-show, and the bank makes me prove it. On booking-site reservations I often don't have an ID, an email, or proof the guest saw the cancellation policy, so I lose the dispute. Some owners say the site still charged them commission on a no-show they never got paid for.

*Found in 4 public sources; newest dated 2026-10-20. VERIFIED count from VyRal's public research log; the sources are listed at the back.*

## I can't price lower on my own site, and the platform's discounts come out of my pocket

Booking-site contracts have kept hotels from offering a lower rate on their own website, and lawsuits say a hotel that does gets pushed down in search. On top of that, loyalty and promotion discounts are often funded by the hotel. When two of them stack, the room sells well below the rate I set.

*Found in 4 public sources; newest dated 2026-10-17. VERIFIED count from VyRal's public research log; the sources are listed at the back.*

## Wages, power and insurance climb faster than my room rates

Owners name supplies, labor, utilities and insurance as their top pressures, and many say they're short-staffed even after raising pay. Liability renewals are up again, more for anyone with past claims, and some franchise systems buy coverage for owners and bill them. Low-rate motels spend more of each dollar on utilities, so there's little room to absorb increases.

*Found in 4 public sources; newest dated 2026-10-14. VERIFIED count from VyRal's public research log; the sources are listed at the back.*

## A city audit comes back years later with back occupancy tax, interest and penalties

Local auditors keep finding hotels that under-report gross receipts, don't tax pet, cot or cancellation fees, keep exemptions without paperwork, or file returns wrong. They bill several years back at once. Separately, one case found city tax had been left off booking-site virtual-card payments for three years.

*Found in 3 public sources; newest dated 2026-05-07. VERIFIED count from VyRal's public research log; the sources are listed at the back.*

## Card fees eat my margin, and I can't just tack on a surcharge

Card networks set the swipe rates and a small motel can't negotiate them. The owners' association calls the fees out of control and has lobbied Congress. Under the federal price rule, if I require a card with no real alternative, any processing fee has to be inside the advertised total price.

*Found in 3 public sources; newest dated 2025-11-11. VERIFIED count from VyRal's public research log; the sources are listed at the back.*

## My channel manager drops a sync, I sell the same room twice, and I pay to walk the guest

Room counts have to stay in step across my property system, channel manager and every booking site. A delayed update, a wrong room mapping or a hand edit in an extranet can oversell. Walking a guest costs another hotel's rate, staff time and often a bad review, and some reviewers describe channels that wouldn't connect and support that was hard to reach.

*Found in 2 public sources; newest dated 2026-06-22. VERIFIED count from VyRal's public research log; the sources are listed at the back.*

# Get your paper together

Every fix in this book starts with paper, not memory. Memory rounds in the other side's favor. Paper doesn't.

Pull the last 90 days. Put it all in one folder, paper or phone, and label each piece with its date. Black out account numbers and Social Security numbers before you share anything with anyone.

**The paper that proves each leak:**

- Your contracts, invoices, statements, pay records and the messages around them.

**My folder checklist**

Last 90 days of statements or pay records _____

Every contract or agreement I work under _____

Every invoice, ticket or settlement for the same 90 days _____

The messages that changed a price, a scope or a date _____

# Leak 1: Visa VAMP / Chargeback Ratio Monitoring

Size grade: Significant · Evidence: VERIFIED

**What it is.** Visa tracks a merchant's fraud-plus-dispute count against its settled online and phone (card-not-present) transactions. A hotel at 1.5% or more, with at least 1,500 fraud reports and disputes in a month, can be put in Visa's monitoring program, which brings fees from the hotel's processor and the risk of losing card acceptance.

**Why it leaks.** A hotel that never calculates its own ratio can drift into a monitoring tier without knowing it — turning chargebacks already lost into an ongoing tax on every future disputed or fraudulent transaction, on top of the original loss.

**The number to hold it against.** 1.5% — Visa's "Excessive" fraud-plus-dispute ratio for US merchants on card-not-present sales since April 1, 2026 (was 2.2%); a merchant is counted once it has 1,500 or more fraud reports plus disputes in a month. Source: Visa, Visa Acquirer Monitoring Program Fact Sheet, 2025.

*VERIFIED · Primary — government or regulator*

> **Ask yourself:** Do you know your current fraud-plus-dispute ratio as a percentage of settled transactions — the same number Visa is already tracking on your account?

## 1. Not tracking your own dispute-plus-fraud ratio Visa is already watching

Fix approved · leak evidence: Verified

**Fix 1 — Do it yourself (free).**

1. Ask your processor for your monthly count of disputes, fraud reports, and total card-not-present transactions.
2. Divide disputes plus fraud by total transactions. That's your ratio.
3. Watch it each month. In the US, Visa's merchant threshold dropped to 1.5% on April 1, 2026, but Visa only formally counts a merchant once it reaches 1,500 or more fraud reports plus disputes in a month - most single properties never get there. Your processor can still set its own tighter limits.
4. Refunding a guest doesn't take a fraud report off the count, so prevention matters more: clear policy at booking, verify cards on card-not-present

bookings, and answer guest questions fast.

5. Ask your processor if you are near or in any monitoring program.

**Fix 2 — The words to send, under your own name.** Fill in the brackets, keep a copy, and send it from your own email or by mail. Nobody sends it for you.

> Question to my processor (email):
> Subject: Dispute and fraud ratio - merchant ID [MID]
>
> Hi [PROCESSOR CONTACT],
>
> Could you please send me, for each of the last [6] months:
> 1. Number of Visa disputes and fraud reports on our account.
> 2. Total settled card-not-present transactions.
> 3. Our ratio as you calculate it.
> 4. Whether our account is in, or close to, any card-network monitoring program, and any fees charged for it.
>
> Thank you,
> [YOUR NAME]
> [PROPERTY NAME] | [PHONE]

**Fix 3 — Done for you.** **LeakReceipts · Statement Audit**

WE DO: read your processor statements each month, calculate the ratio from your own numbers, show the trend, and draft the question to your processor. YOU DO: send it and change any front-desk or booking practice you choose.

**Keep it closed.** Check the ratio monthly. Treat every new dispute as a chance to fix the policy wording or booking step that caused it.

**What this fix can't decide for you.** Program terms are Visa's and the acquirer's; thresholds and fees can change. We report the ratio from his own statements; his processor confirms status.

| My receipt for this leak | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Owed by my paper | Paid or billed | Gap (CALCULATED: owed – paid) | Fix 2 sent · answer |
| | | | |

FREE FIRST CHAPTER

# That's Leak 1 of 8.

The full Field Guide for Independent Hotels & Motels walks through every leak on the map you just read: why it happens, the paper that proves it, and three fixes for each one — one you do yourself for free, the words to send under your own name, and what LeakReceipts can do for you while the decision stays yours.

**Get the full guide:**
leakreceipts.com/ebooks/independent-hotels-and-motels

**Run it on your own numbers:**
leakreceipts.com

**WE WALK BY FAITH NOT BY SIGHT — 2 Corinthians 5:7**