



CHECK-IN

Focusing on issues important to all members of the Hospitality Industry

Check This Out

- ✓ Who would guess there's a ray of sunshine in the gloomy economic forecast? Believe it or not, **the U.S. dollar is still strong in many areas of the world**, and it has dramatically transformed the cost of visiting a number of highly attractive destinations, like Australia, Mexico, Scandinavia, and Canada.
- ✓ Viva Las Vegas! Even as the recession has taken its toll on gaming revenues, Las Vegas is still growing, with **more than 13,000 new hotel rooms scheduled to open this year**. In fact, the city is marketing itself as the most affordable, accessible destination for corporate travel and events.
- ✓ Yes, the economy is bad, but your business can succeed. Be creative! Instead of simply lowering prices and cutting your profit margins, **offer enticing guest incentive packages** to boost occupancy. Here's a list of some common and not-so-common incentives. Many properties are marketing them in combination for more impact—and bookings.
 - ◆ Free breakfast
 - ◆ Free car rental
 - ◆ Free spa service
 - ◆ Free night or dinner for two with purchase of multiple nights
 - ◆ Free room upgrade
 - ◆ Free room service dinner for two
 - ◆ Gift card in varying amounts with booking or per night stay
 - ◆ Free luggage
- ✓ Ohio State Park Resorts attract kids (and their parents) the good, old-fashioned way—**paying them for good report cards**. Kids can turn each "A" into a \$10 credit that will be applied or deducted from their family's tab.

As our sales staff visit hospitality properties around the U.S., they let us know when they come across interesting stories and ideas. Here's a timely one from **Ruth Tuma** who writes, "These are hard times, not only in Michigan, but everywhere across our nation. What industry leaders are telling hotel owners is that they must set themselves apart to survive.

That is exactly what GM Ellen Markel and her staff at the Days Hotel in Grand Rapids, MI, are doing. They are the first hotel in downtown Grand Rapids to "go green," and they mean business! Recently renovated, this 175-room hotel donated or recycled every possible item they could out of their building and replaced it with either eco-friendly or recycled material. This included almost 15,000 yards of wallcovering and over 9,000 yards of carpeting!

The minute you walk into the property now, there is a strong and proud "green" presence. Having implemented more green initiatives than I can list, they began in November 2008 by installing an ozone laundry system and converting to Green Seal-certified cleaning products. The property was recently awarded the State of Michigan's Green Lodging Michigan (GLM) Steward Certification."

The GLM program certifies facilities based on environmental initiatives such as air quality, energy efficiency, solid waste reduction, toxic waste management, water conservation, purchasing, and communication. There are three

levels of certification: Partner, Steward, and Leader, which can be earned by completing a self-assessment checklist and achieving a minimum number of requirements and points.

As Ruth continues, "Only 17 points away from earning the highest ranking available, Ellen is not stopping her green initiatives. She is now working on improving air quality and water conservation to help achieve this goal.



Ellen says the hotel's owners are very passionate about recycling and made the original decision to go green. She was thrilled to follow their lead and requires all departments to submit quarterly green initiatives. Some upcoming projects include an adopt-a-highway cleanup program, sponsorship of recycling containers at local festivals, and installation of a guest room energy management system with sensors by third quarter of this year. In addition, Ellen and her staff are currently in the process of converting 250 guest corridor fluorescent lightbulbs from T12s to T8s. In fact, the property is expected to have Energy Star certification by third quarter of this year.

The state of Michigan strongly encourages and, in some cases, requires their employees to use only green hotels for their lodging needs. Going green is a great way to help attract more business while reducing our carbon footprint and improving the earth."

To view a complete list of initiatives at this Days Hotel, visit www.dayshotelgrandrapids.com/green.cfm.

We Love Hearing From You!

In the last issue, we asked the question: What extra security measures have been put in place at your property in the past year?

Diane Pouliot and Linda Benway of the Casablanca Motel in Manchester Center, VT, write: "Along with the standard security measures taken to safeguard our computers and business information, we have made some changes to the lighting on our motel property.

We have a 10-unit cabin property situated on three acres of land that offers a unique alternative to the conventional motel. Our guests park their cars in between the cabins which are set up in a "U" shape, three cabins per side, with one double-unit cabin in the middle of the "U". Since we are in a rural, country setting, just one mile from the center of town, it gets very dark once the sun sets behind Vermont's second highest mountain peak.

Although we haven't had much trouble with people on the property who shouldn't be here, we did have a

concern about our guests' safety as they went to and from their cars in the dark. For security reasons as well as safety for ourselves and our guests, we installed dusk-to-dawn lighting that comes on automatically when the sun sets and turns off automatically when the sun comes up again in the morning. We placed these lights at the corners of our "U" and in strategic places between the cabins and the office. This allows us to see anyone who may be coming to the office late at night or someone who is in a place they should not be, as well as provides needed lighting for our guests to navigate outside after dark safely.

We have also installed motion detectors at strategic locations to alert us to the presence of someone or something moving past certain locations. This allows us to keep a close eye on movement outside. Also, after being surprised by a transient person crossing between the cabins and our house last year, we installed motion lighting on the

back part of our house. Motion in our back yard will now trigger a light which acts as a deterrent to anyone who doesn't want to be seen."

Gerrit DeYoung, Guest Service Representative and Night Auditor at the Motel 6 in Willcox, AZ, offers some basic tips to increase both safety and security: "Now we have the local police department drive by and look over our parking lot and buildings, even though the town is fairly crime-free. We also have had a new, electronic door locking system installed. To increase the safety of our guests, new grab bars have been installed in the showers so no one falls and gets hurt."

Lighting, motion detectors, police...what other security measures have you implemented recently?

Your thoughts are worth \$25! Send them to us! Addresses are printed on the back page. Make sure to include your full name, property name, and address.



Bill Pickens
Maintenance Editor

Saving Green by Going Green

If you're a regular reader of this column, you've probably seen more than one article on how to save money while making your property greener. In today's tough economic climate, these ideas are more relevant than ever. Here are a few:

1) Convert lighting to compact fluorescent lighting (CFLs). There are an average of five bulbs used in each guest room alone. Have you reviewed your lighting needs lately to ensure you are maximizing CFL usage and reducing energy costs?

According to Energy Star, qualified bulbs like CFLs use about 75% less energy than standard incandescent bulbs and last up to 10 times longer.

2) Install ceiling fans to circulate the air. This allows you to raise the temperature on your air conditioning.

Maintenance News

3) Reset thermostats. You may be surprised to find out that you can increase or decrease the settings a few degrees without anyone noticing.

Also, do you have the thermostat set the same 24 hours a day? Is there a reason for that?

4) Adjust temperature limiters on PTACS to save energy and money.

5) Install low-flow faucet aerators and showerheads to limit water flow. Most guests won't notice this, but making the switch will reduce overall water usage.

6) Keep your money from going down the drain! Make sure toilets are working properly. Install new flappers or fill valves. Some systems can save up to 3,000 gallons a year!

7) Display linen re-usage signage. Placing reminders in guest rooms asking guests if they need their linens washed every day is a simple, but effective way to reduce laundering costs.

8) Don't just use Energy Star-qualified lightbulbs, switch to Energy Star appliances as well for significant energy savings over the life of the product.

9) Use microfiber products for cleaning. They clean effectively with fewer chemicals and can remove up to 98% of surface bacteria.

10) Switch to concentrated forms of sustainable cleaning products versus ready-to-use.

This saves money since you aren't paying higher shipping costs for the increased volume of product, and it reduces your carbon footprint too.

If you're already putting some of these "green" money-saving ideas into practice, I applaud you! If not, please consider incorporating as many of them as you can into your daily, weekly, or monthly maintenance schedules. You'll be amazed at how easy it is to include them, and the savings can really add up.





Katie Snider
HR Editor

Accentuate the Positive— Managing the Negative Employee

Sometime during our careers, most of us have worked with an individual whose negative view of the world affected co-workers. Left unchecked, an employee with a negative attitude can infect the entire workplace, leading to a culture of negativity, which is much more difficult to turn around than a negative individual. That is why it is so important to effectively manage those who demonstrate their negativity at work before their attitude spreads.

Negative employees may display any of a number of behaviors that make them difficult to work with. They may complain, whine, gossip, have attendance problems, or they may be uncommunicative, intimidating, rude, and/or unmotivated. You know it when you see it! Co-workers may avoid working with them since it can be an unpleasant experience and difficult to get anything accomplished. Similarly, managers may avoid confronting negative individuals, often because they are intimidated or know it will be an unpleasant discussion. But the negative individual must be confronted and coached before the problem escalates. Negativity is a habit, and the negative individual may not even be aware of the effect of his behavior.

The manager must not be afraid to confront the employee. Some negative employees exhibit such hostility and are so difficult to communicate with that those around them actually fear them. These negative individuals thrive on this

intimidation and use it as a way to avoid discussion of their behavior or work assignments. The tactic often works if you let it.

As a first step, the manager should meet with the individual to discuss the negative behavior and determine its cause. This step can be particularly revealing when the individual was a good employee at one time, but has recently demonstrated a negative attitude shift. The negativity may be caused by legitimate concerns, which should be acknowledged and addressed by the manager. For example, the employee may feel she was unfairly passed over for a promotion and is venting her frustration through negative behavior. The manager should acknowledge the employee's disappointment, review the reasons she was not promoted, and discuss with the employee what steps she can take to improve chances of a future promotion.

Even though there may be a legitimate reason for the employee to be frustrated or disappointed, the manager must make it clear to the employee that adopting a negative attitude is not an acceptable response. A bad attitude will not change those conditions that contributed to the employee's anger or frustration and will only create additional problems. It is helpful for the manager to point out the effects of the individual's negative behavior on co-workers and the work environment, and coach the employee on the proper way to handle the problem. Be sure to place consequences on continued negative behavior. The manager may not be able to change the way the individual views the situation, but the manager can influence the behavior displayed during work hours.

Some employees may deny their negative behavior or be unable or unwilling to discuss it, making it

difficult for the manager to address any underlying issues. The manager should carefully explain what behaviors are not acceptable and what behaviors are expected in the future, as well as the consequences for continued negative behavior. The employee must be required to take responsibility for his or her negativity and understand that negativity is a choice. If the individual is so unhappy with the job or the organization, there are options available, including looking for a new job elsewhere.

Employees who choose to continue to display negative behavior at work are, in effect, choosing the consequences. They are subject to discipline under the organization's established disciplinary procedures, up to and including termination. Documentation of the unacceptable behavior is particularly important since the nature of the problem is less objective than some obvious disciplinary issues, such as striking a supervisor or sleeping on the job.

As a manager, the attitude you bring to work every day is one of the biggest influences on your workers' attitudes toward work. Model the behavior you expect from your employees by being open, positive, and easily accessible to your employees so that issues don't grow into attitudes.

Source: Nancy N. Stott, HR Information & Solutions Director, MRA—The Management Association, Inc., HR Digest, November 2008

Adopt the G.U.E.S.T. Model

- G – Greet each guest with a smile*
- U – Use each guest's name in person or on the phone*
- E – Evaluate each guest's needs to determine the best response*
- S – Show sincere interest in each guest's situation or problem*
- T – Thank each guest and extend a warm farewell*



Send us your ideas – we'll send you \$25!
What incentives are you using to boost your business?

*E-mail or fax us—see the back page.
Please include your full name, property name, and address.*

2009 Calendar

Trade shows and conventions are a fantastic way to find out what's new and what's happening in the industry. Here are some events scheduled for the coming months.

2009 AAHOA Annual Convention and Trade Show

April 22-25; National Harbor, MD; www.aahoa.com

2009 CHART Regional Training Forum

April 24; Minneapolis, MN; www.chart.org

The 9th Annual Resort Conference

May 3-5; Palm Beach Gardens, FL; www.hsmi.org

Hospitality Design 2009 Conference & Expo

May 14-16; Las Vegas, NV; www.hdexpo.com

National Restaurant Association (NRA) Show

May 16-19; Chicago, IL; www.restaurant.org

NYU International Hospitality Industry Investment Conference

May 31-June 2; New York, NY; www.scps.nyu.edu

HOTEC Design North America

June 11-14; Pasadena, CA; mcleaneventsinternational.com

HITEC 2009

June 22-25; Anaheim, CA; www.hftp.org/HITEC

AH&LA Summer Summit

June 23-24; Chicago, IL; www.ahla.com/conventions

Quick Quote

Certainly, travel is more than the seeing of sights; it is a change that goes on, deep and permanent, in the ideas of living.

— Miriam Beard

✓ Check Out

We hope you've enjoyed this issue.

Your feedback, suggestions, stories, and ideas make our newsletter interesting and useful. Please take a moment to jot down your thoughts and send them to us.

E-Mail: check-in@americanhotel.com

Mail:

American Hotel Register Company
Attention: Check-In
100 South Milwaukee Ave.
Vernon Hills, IL 60061

Fax: 847-743-1083

Please note: Submitted photos and information are not returnable. Submissions may be edited for space and clarity.

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Editor: Lynda Jeppesen



Jim Leahy

Letter from the Chairman

Dear Friends,

In my last newsletter, I promised that I'd list ways to deal with the burdens and trials of life. How can we best cope with the worries, the craziness, and the suffering that life gives us? What do we have to do to be happy? This is the first of a four-part piece on turning life's challenges into successes.

1) Be a gift to others. Bring them joy. Share with them the love and beauty within you. Consider helping people who are less fortunate. Start with those at work who may be struggling with language or life issues. Consider volunteering. We never seem to find happiness when we focus exclusively on ourselves.

2) Make yourself your best friend. Forgive yourself for your past failures, embarrassments, and regrets. Pamper yourself. Love yourself. Spend time with people and activities that make you happy and feel alive. Celebrate yourself! (But not with alcohol, drugs, or excessive food.) Smile and laugh more.

3) Eliminate the meaningless clutter and distractions in life. If you feel overwhelmed, identify and eliminate pointless activities. Get rid of messiness. Delete from life the stuff you don't need to read or do. Bring order and focus to your life. Separate what's really important from what seems urgent.

4) Seek the divine, however you may see him (or her). Consider joining a religion or spiritual group where you will be welcomed. Happy, content people generally have God in their lives.

5) Don't "enable" alcoholics or drug users in your life. Let them "take the hit" and face their shortcomings. Don't cover or make excuses for them. Join Al-Anon if it's helpful. Give up alcohol completely if it's causing problems for you.

6) Figure out what you'd really like to be when you grow up and start making appropriate changes. I'm 67 and still trying to figure out where my life's adventure might be heading.

7) Find activities and people that give your life meaning and happiness. Bring life and love and vitality to your world. Make happiness one of your goals. It's found within us, not beyond some distant horizon.

8) Live the life you intend to live. Become the person you intend to become. Intend happiness, love, virtue, and service to others. Intend to be someone special. Don't let your life just happen by accident. Live your life with intention. A book I find inspirational here is "Intentions" by Dianne Martin.

Love, *Jim*

The list will be continued in our next newsletter. If you can't wait, go to www.americanhotel.com ▶ Check-In.

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