



CHECK-IN

Focusing on issues important to all members of the Hospitality Industry

Check This Out

- ✓ **Please pass the salt?** The Salar de Uyuni in Bolivia is the world's largest salt flat and a major tourist destination. Anyone visiting this exotic part of the world should check into one of the region's most unique hotels. Called Palacio de Sal, (Palace of Salt), the hotel was constructed from about 1 million 14-inch salt blocks, which were used as floors, walls, ceilings and furniture, including the beds, tables, chairs and sculptures. The hotel even has a dry sauna, a steam room, a saltwater pool and whirlpool baths for guests to relax in.
- ✓ **A \$48 million terminal – for pets?** Taking pet-friendly to a whole new level, New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport is opening a new luxury terminal in 2016, featuring flat screen TVs, a full-service salon, a swimming pool and a resort – all just for pets. Dubbed The Ark for obvious reasons, it is JFK's answer to addressing the needs of the 70,000 pets that travel through the airport each year. Pets can stay for a few hours or days while their owners wait for flights or go out of town. The terminal will accommodate dogs, cats, and even exotic animals, and will have an on-site veterinary hospital.
- ✓ **The end of minibars...** Earlier in the year, Hotels.com surveyed 5,000 travelers, and apparently, potato chips, peanuts and liquor in mini bottles are no longer as appealing as they once were. When asked what amenity they never use, 24% of respondents indicated minibars, 20% answered a bathroom phone, and still others listed shower caps, trouser presses and DVD players as amenities they never use.

How to Help Your Staff Empathize with Guests

With all of the online guest reviews and social media postings available to prospective guests these days, it seems like the walls of our hotel lobbies are made of glass and that the service provided within is transparent for all to see.

Personally, I think this has caused the hotel industry to focus more than ever on guest service excellence, which is certainly a good thing.

Yet many hotel managers I encounter are frustrated that their guest service training is not leading to an improvement in guest surveys

nor in their TripAdvisor rankings. Perhaps this is because too many hotel training programs are still teaching hospitality as if it were the summation of a series of communications techniques: Smile at the guest, maintain eye contact, use their name three times, and they will all leave the front desk happy

True hospitality superstars know that while delivering hospitality requires good communications skills, it also takes more.

Guests are at the core of hospitality

The real spirit of hospitality is centered on caring about as well as caring for the guest. When colleagues care for the guest, they take care of their fundamental needs for clean, comfortable and safe shelter. Yet when they care about the guest, they

are able to provide for their needs on a deeper, more humanistic level.

Most guests can sense when they are encountering a service provider who is simply going through the motions and using scripted messages that mask an attitude of indifference. Kind of like the waiter who comes by to clear a plate of nearly untouched food and asks: "How was your dinner,

good?" prompting most of us to simply agree and say, "It was good." Most of us leave and never return; some will take their complaint elsewhere such as to



Yelp or Facebook.

When you read negative reviews and guest surveys, most guests say something like, "What went wrong was this, but what was really upsetting is that no one seemed to care about our situation."

To ensure frontline colleagues care about as well as for guests, make sure they can empathize and understand the various situations, stories and circumstances that play out daily on the other side of the front desk, the other end of the phone call and the other side of the guest room doors.

Of course it is ideal to just hire staff who can personally relate to your guests or who otherwise possess the emotional intelligence to imagine what it might be like for

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others. Yet realistically, it is difficult to find candidates who have enough life experience to do so on their own. Instead, make sure your guest service training program helps them gain insights into what guests are going through daily.

If they've not been asked to think about it, most frontline colleagues view travel as being fun, exciting or even glamorous whether it is business or leisure. To those who have not lived out of a suitcase, it might seem desirable to have someone on hand to make up your bed, serve you a meal and to wash your dirty dishes. If your only experience of leisure travel has been going on family vacations as a youth, it is difficult to imagine the stress that your parents might be feeling to try to have fun while on a vacation that got off to a rocky start or that is going way over budget.

Here are some suggestions for conducting guest empathy training with your frontline colleagues:

1. During meetings, discuss the diversity of reasons why guests might be visiting your hotel.

For resort markets, this might include family vacations, reunions and birthdays, but also memorial services, the first trip without a grandparent or even a "bucket list" trip for someone with a bad diagnosis. Explore how badly a family might need this vacation, to have time together, in today's over-scheduled lifestyle of the typical two-career household.

For hotels serving mostly a corporate clientele, talk about the pressure to produce while on the road that business travelers might have, the need to get the contract signed, the deal closed or the problem resolved.

2. Ask colleagues to think about the more somber reasons why guests might be visiting. That it is not always for a wedding; it might be to attend a funeral. If you have medical centers nearby, it might be to receive treatments or tests

or to visit family in the hospital.

3. Focus also on the good times being enjoyed and the "once in a lifetime" events, such as special milestone birthdays and events such as baby showers, Bar Mitzvahs and christenings.

4. Challenge colleagues to ask guests what's bringing them to town during registration and then to report back to the next meeting what they found out.

5. Hold a brainstorming session regarding all of the challenges guests might encounter en route to the hotel, such as airline travel delays, uncomfortable airplane seats and traffic nightmares. Then talk about how the front office team in particular has a unique opportunity to turn things around for guests once they arrive.

Source: *Doug Kennedy*
HotelsNewsNow.com, 04/15

Six Housekeeping Tips to Improve Room Turnover

Housekeeping is often recognized as the hardest-working and most vital job on a hotel's operations team. Here are six tips to help your staff improve room turnover times safely and quickly.

1. Hotels are cutting back on guest room amenities overall, which can positively affect housekeeping's room turnover time. If a housekeeping cart doesn't need a glass rack for cups, it may be able to fit into a guest room.

2. Consider having linens bagged and placed outside of guest rooms rather than placing them in carts during rounds. This can speed up the turnover process and drastically reduce the overall weight of housekeeping carts.

3. If possible, consider having two carts to speed up turnovers: one cart designated to strip down and clean rooms and another to set the room up. Separate the bulk of what overloads

the cart between two carts, allowing housekeepers to focus on one job at a time.

4. If your carts must remain outside the guest room, consider carts with locking mechanisms to protect frequently stolen amenities. The loss of amenities is felt not only as a monetary loss for hotels, but also costs housekeeping additional time.

5. Broken or wobbly wheels exacerbate the problem of pushing heavy carts, or make efficient carts inefficient. Replace wheels as they begin to degrade to avoid injuries that are easily preventable.

6. Do frequent inspections of carts and consider cart upgrades every five years.

Source: *Elliott Mest, Hotel Management, 10/15*

Share your stories –
we'll send you \$25!



Did you ever have a special problem with a guest? How did you resolve it?

Email:
check-in@americanhotel.com

Include your full name, property name and address.



Julie Baker
HR Editor

Is It Time to Reboot Your Orientation or Onboarding Program?

An employee's initial impression of an organization can either affirm his or her decision to come aboard or trigger a serious episode of "buyer's remorse." An excellent orientation program can help make and solidify a positive first impression. Consider the following as you update your program:

1. Include subject matter experts:

Schedule time for members from various departments, like IT, Office Support and Accounting to present information about their areas. This will help new employees develop key contacts within the organization and it will provide them with the most current and accurate information available. As an alternative to having department representatives attend each orientation in person, presentations can be video recorded and updated as information changes.

2. Employ a multimedia approach:

Don't let your orientation sessions be dry! Use a variety of methods for presenting information. Limit lectures, and when they are used, incorporate videos, question and answer sessions, and other variables. Having a more interactive presentation will help new employees be more engaged in the process, and get to know the organization as well as fellow new co-workers. Humor is also a good way to portray a positive image of the organization and encourage discussion. Finally, consider the audience:

employees in technical positions, creative roles, or those of different generations may respond best to different information and formats.

3. Lunchtime/breaktime: Encourage department leaders to take new employees out to lunch on their first day or during the first week to introduce them to fellow team members and start assimilating them into the department.



4. Remote orientations: When employees work from long distances, it may not be possible to have new employees experience orientation in person. Given that orientation is intended to help new staff feel that they are truly part of the organization and receive must-have information about their benefits and other technical information, video-conferencing is a better option than simply completing

a session via phone. Use it whenever possible. Be sure that your orientation leaders follow best practices for remote meetings and that the tools and technology used are easily accessible to participants. Have technical support available to assist as needed to keep things running smoothly.

5. Transitioning to their teams:

Develop a checklist to use in transitioning employees from organizational to team orientation. The checklist can be used as a communication tool to keep all involved parties aware of what has been covered and what areas are still outstanding.

6. Ongoing updates: Schedule check-in meetings with new employees following their first week at work. Frequently, 30, 60, and 90 days are the intervals used for these meetings. Spending a few minutes talking with a new employee can provide valuable information for continuous improvements to your on-boarding program.

Having a well-prepared, welcoming orientation program helps employees acclimate to the organization more quickly. A strong orientation program provides new employees with important tools, a positive first impression, and a foundation for success that will play an important role in engaging, retaining, and helping new employees succeed over the long term.

Source: Rhonda Blum, MRA HR Digest, 04/15

We Love Hearing from You!

We received an email from **Tiffany Sterling, Executive Housekeeper at the Port-O-Call Hotel in Atlantic City, NJ**, about an unusual request from one of her guests: "The craziest guest request I ever received was at another hotel I worked at in Atlantic City. We had a guest that would come a few times a year and



she would request that we leave a few packs of C-fold paper towels in the room before she checked in. She would cover the entire room and the bathroom with the paper towels in the hopes of creating a "germ shield".

That's a great story – thanks for sharing it with us, Tiffany.

2016 Spring Calendar

Find out what's new and what's happening in the industry by attending these upcoming trade shows or conferences:

BITAC® Food & Beverage 2016

1/31 - 2/2; Scottsdale, AZ; bitac.net

HSMIAI Digital Marketing Strategy Conference

2/17; New York, NY; hsmia.org/events

2016 Hospitality Law Conference

2/22 - 2/24; Houston, TX; hospitalitylawconference.com

Ocean City Hotel, Motel & Restaurant Spring Trade Expo

3/6 - 3/7; Ocean City, MD; oceancitytradeexpo.com

The International Restaurant & Foodservice Show of New York

3/6 - 3/8; New York, NY; internationalrestaurantny.com

Midwest Foodservice Expo

3/7 - 3/9; Milwaukee, WI; wirerestaurant.org/expo

Nightclub & Bar Convention & Trade Show

3/7 - 3/9; Las Vegas, NV; ncbshow.com

HI Connect® 2016

3/17 - 3/19; Nashville, TN; hiconnectevents.com

2016 AAHOA Annual Convention & Trade Show

3/29 - 4/1; Nashville, TN; aahoa.com

Quick Quote

Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness... broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime.

– Mark Twain, b. 1835, American author & humorist

✓ 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 send us your thoughts.

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

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Jim Leahy

Letter from the Chairman

Dear Friends,

With a new year upon us, it's a good time to think about how to make it better.

Here are a few thoughts about improving our lives in 2016:

Become more accepting and less opinionated about others and their choices.

Encourage younger folks, the uneducated and those in need.

Appreciate the people and the blessings in your life and express that appreciation.

Forgive those who deserve forgiveness. Forgive those who don't deserve it, and forgive yourself most of all.

Share with those in need. Share your specialness.

Laugh more. See the humor in your burdens.

Find pleasure and goodness in the beauty of the world and in the people who surround you.

Don't envy those who appear to have more. They have their own burdens and struggles.

Heal relationships. Apologize if you were wrong. Apologize even if you don't believe you were wrong.

Show loyalty in what you say and what you do.

Find time to do things right. Find time to do things you value. Find time for yourself.

Your habits can define you. Your eating, drinking, smoking and pastimes help define you. If you don't like the person you're becoming, change.

Be willing to listen more. Listen with compassion when others are in need.

Keep your promises.

Be kind to all things and to all those you encounter.

Celebrate the person you are and the person you're striving to become.

Express love. Our broken world needs more of it.

Love,



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