



# CHECK-IN

Focusing on issues important to all members of the Hospitality Industry

## Check This Out

- ✓ **Spa is big business – and getting bigger all the time.** According to SRI International research done for the Global Wellness Tourism Congress (GWTC), the global wellness market is estimated at \$439 billion, with over 40% of all expenditures coming from tourists in North America.
- ✓ **You may wish all your guests were Danish!** A Hotels.com survey reveals that guests don't typically steal items from hotel rooms. (Of course, this does not include those little shampoo bottles, which everyone takes!) Denmark is the most honest country with 88% of respondents saying they've never taken anything, while 57% of Colombians admitted to having taken items. Books, magazines and linens are the most common purloined amenities.
- ✓ **On the "road" again.** With overall improvement in the economy on the rise, people are traveling more and more. Of nearly 300 travel counselors surveyed by American Express Travel, 45% said their summer travel bookings are up compared with last year. That despite the fact that 67% have found the cost of travel to be higher this year.
- ✓ **Touch the earth...stay in a yurt. Touch the sky...stay in a nest?** Soar like an eagle, or just imagine you're one. Check into the Treebones Resort, a unique lodging and dining experience on California's breathtaking Big Sur Coast with expansive views in all directions. The resort is known for its cliff-top yurts, but also offers a woven wood "nest" big enough for two, that overlooks the Pacific Ocean. The nest is part of a campsite, complete with picnic table and water access.

## Seven Habits of Highly Effective Hoteliers

There's little doubt that you've read or at least heard of the famous business and self-help book entitled, "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People," by Stephen R. Covey. It's time for a little homage to be paid – adapting the title of this book and giving hoteliers like you seven ideals to strive for in the next year. This isn't the definitive, be-all-end-all "Seven Habits" list for hoteliers – just something to start you off on the road to effectiveness.

### 1. Know thy guest (customer).

It's easy for people to break up with a faceless organization, but much harder for them to part ways with a business that understands who they are. With website analytics, guest surveys, third-party review sites and social media all at your disposal, it's now easier than ever to build dossiers for every guest – or, at least, type of guest – whether they be past, present or future.

This extends into the physical realm, as the more of a "face" you can give your organization, the more satisfaction and, ultimately, loyalty will be instilled. This face is really a presence developed around genuine guest-staff interactions.

### 2. Survey your competition.

In the early years of Walmart, the store's founder, Sam Walton, was famous for visiting all of his potential competitors. He gleaned whatever he could, picking up tips and tricks both small and large, but also witnessing the recurring patterns in healthy stores. You must do the same. Start with a little web surfing by browsing your competitors' websites and social networks. But the real meat comes with site visits — you have to visit each property and stay as a guest, maintaining a "tabula rasa" type attitude about their operations. You

never know what you might observe.

### 3. Be a strategist and tactician.

It's all too easy for a bunch of erudite hoteliers to gather around the living room with a bottle of scotch and discuss the big picture – the current state of affairs in the industry and what should be done. Taking action is a whole other story. You must be both the big thinker (strategist) and the logistician (tactician), able to see the long-term forecast while moving short-term operations into position to make this future attainable. Julius Caesar, one of the great conquerors of all time, was famous for saying, "Fortes fortuna adiuvat," or, "Fortune favors the bold." To be bold, you must first act.

### 4. A hotel runs on its stomach.

Caesar wouldn't have been able to conquer France, Spain and Egypt without keeping his armies well fed. For hotels, this adage applies to both your guests and your staff. No matter what your present situation is, you simply must have quality food & beverage services, whether at the lobby bar, in the restaurant or via room service. It's a great way to generate positive memories among those staying with you, but it's also an easy way to ensure their wrath.

The staff situation is trickier, since you may not provide them with meals. In any case, hop on board the healthy-eating bandwagon, either through the foods you offer in your café, vending machines or by making educational materials available.

For smaller properties without foodservice options, partnering with local restaurants to offer special discounts to your guests can be mutually beneficial and effective.

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## Maintenance News

### Room Inspection Checklist

As the busy summer season winds down, it's a good time to take a look around your property and survey the wear and tear. A good rule of thumb is to start inspecting 25% of your rooms each month and make the necessary repairs – each room would then be properly maintained at least three times a year. If your maintenance inspections come in conjunction with a “deep cleaning” program, every room should be maintained in near perfect condition. Here is a basic inspection checklist of key guest room items:

#### **Air conditioners and heaters.**

Check that switches and control valves are working properly, the thermostat dial positions are working, and the thermostat probe is secure and operational. Make sure filters are clean and replace them if needed. Inspect the fan and motor; clean, lubricate and secure them in place. Clean evaporation and condenser units as well as condensation pans and drains.

Clean, maintain exterior grill. Check for leaks in the refrigeration system.

**Electrical.** Check to see if lamp switches are working correctly, socket and swivels are tight and in good repair. Inspect lamp shades for holes and make sure they're clean; lamp base/body should be in good condition. All lightbulbs, timer switches and heat lamps should be working properly. Clean all fixtures. All switch/outlet plates should be inspected.

**Guest room appliances.** Check televisions for clear audio and video. Make sure the remote is clean and working properly; replace batteries if necessary. See if the phones are working and windows/mirrors are in good condition.

If you run a full-service hotel and have brought your PAR levels down significantly, now is the time to review them and get fully back in stock on essential items, like linens and towels. Attending to these “behind the scenes” details will keep your guests happy for years to come.

Source: *Richard Wolf, hotelmanagement.net, 2010*

## We Love Hearing From You!

We only received one response to our request for kid-friendly ideas, but this reader shared some great ones.

**Kym Oglesby, Days Inn Philadelphia Convention Center, Philadelphia, PA** writes, “Here at the Days Inn, we make sure to keep these products on hand to make our small guests’ stays more fun and memorable...”

- ◆ Coloring books and crayons
- ◆ Healthy breakfast foods, like pop tarts, juice boxes and a variety of yogurt toppings
- ◆ Lollipops – for every kid when they check in
- ◆ Bubble solution and funny sunglasses – when they go to the park”

Thanks, Kym! All great ideas. I'm sure the parents appreciate all your extra effort, too.

### Send us your ideas – we'll send you \$25!

**What time-saving measures do you employ on a daily basis, either in maintenance or housekeeping?**

Email us at [check-in@americanhotel.com](mailto:check-in@americanhotel.com) & include your full name, property name and address.

## The Top “Fives & Tens” in 2014

The 10 most popular emerging destinations (those on the cusp of becoming popular):

- ◆ Cuba
- ◆ Myanmar/Burma
- ◆ Vietnam
- ◆ Galapagos Islands
- ◆ Bhutan
- ◆ Cambodia
- ◆ Chile
- ◆ Iceland
- ◆ Turkey
- ◆ Belize

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The five biggest travel trends:

- ◆ Multigenerational family travel
- ◆ River cruising
- ◆ Active or adventure trips
- ◆ Celebration travel
- ◆ Luxury cruises

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The five most popular international destinations...

- ◆ Italy
- ◆ South Africa
- ◆ France
- ◆ Australia
- ◆ New Zealand

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The five most popular destinations for families...

- ◆ Italy
- ◆ England
- ◆ Hawaii
- ◆ Costa Rica
- ◆ Mexico

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And, lastly, the top five travel destinations inside the U.S....

- ◆ New York City
- ◆ Maui
- ◆ Napa Valley/Sonoma
- ◆ Las Vegas
- ◆ Hawaii (the Big Island)

Source: 2014 Virtuoso® Luxe Report





**Katie Snider**  
HR Editor

### Five Reasons Private Exchanges Are Hot

Private exchanges are a hot topic in employee benefits and they're continuing to pick up steam.

Exchanges provide an accelerated pathway toward defined contribution healthcare – an age-old strategy that can be taken to the next level with the right platform.

Here's how they work: The employer determines how much it can contribute toward the healthcare of each employee, and plan participants have the ability to use those funds to "shop" from a variety of health plans on a private exchange. Depending on the employer, employees may also be able to apply the funds to other products, such as dental plans and voluntary disability coverage.

Early adopters are reaping significant benefits. According to Bloom Health, premiums under a private exchange model are 22% less than the national average. Employees are also electing health savings account-eligible plans six times more often than other plans, leading to greater consumerism in the purchase of healthcare.

This approach isn't a fit for everyone. It should be considered

alongside the many other innovative strategies emerging in the marketplace. Where it is a fit, employers are finding success for the following reasons:

**1. The employee is in the driver's seat.** There's rarely a one-size-fits-all plan that meets the needs of everyone. A defined contribution strategy allows you to give employees the freedom and financial support to pick the plan that works best for them.



**2. Better education means better health choices.** The best exchanges ask "real-life" questions about the kinds of health events employees expect in the coming year or what they might do if faced with a large medical bill. From that, the technology generates a personalized health profile that recommends the best plan for each employee with an estimate of anticipated costs.

**3. Exchanges provide certainty around future healthcare costs.** A huge benefit for employers is the peace of mind that comes with

knowing there will be no cost-related surprises. The employer sets an amount to contribute, which can be kept flat or indexed to inflation or company growth.

**4. Total compensation transparency allows a clear view.** To the chagrin of many benefits professionals, employees are often unaware of the full value of the benefits package provided by their employer. A private exchange platform allows you to clearly state, upfront, what the employer is contributing. It changes the opening message from "what I pay" to "what I get"!

**5. Employers benefit from a lower administrative burden.** The straightforward nature of a private exchange makes it easier to administer than traditional plans, especially in multi-location operations. Employers decide on a prepackaged bundle of plans instead of working on the details of a single plan design (no fine-tuning of deductibles, copays or coinsurance to meet the needs of every employee).

**Should you explore an exchange?** Interest in private exchanges is rapidly increasing. Demand is anticipated to rise even more as public exchanges gain traction. Get ahead of the market and examine your private exchange opportunities today.

Source: Anthony Fioretti,  
*HR Digest*, 5/14

### Seven Habits...continued from front page

#### 5. Technology is good.

In spite of whatever "lethargic" reputation the hospitality industry has garnered with respect to technology, there is nevertheless a lot of innovation happening. With smartphones, website tracking and social media everywhere these days, we can now use such tools as Big Data to see the patterns and better serve our guests. Moreover, green initiatives are now in vogue, and for good reason — they can save a property millions in utilities expenditures. The point here is that

you have to keep an open mind as to how these innovations might help your business, and sometimes, if you want to get ahead, you have to spend little on technologies that aren't yet "proven" or mainstream.

#### 6. Technology is bad.

The flip side of this coin pertains to hoteliers who look only to technology to fix their problems. However useful it is, technology cannot replace real guest service. You may not be the world's best at social media, but if you deliver a memorable on-site experience, consumers will still come.

Likewise, you simply cannot replace the rapport that is built upon positive face-to-face communications and staff members who truly care about their guests' well-being.

#### 7. Better late than never.

You might not be doing everything right. You might not be doing half of it right. Whatever your case may be, it's never too late to catch up with current trends and position your business for success.

Source: Larry Mogelonsky,  
*hotelsmag.com*, 01/13

## 2014 Summer/Fall Calendar

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

### **Hotel Data Conference**

8/12 - 8/14; Nashville, TN; [hoteldataconference.com](http://hoteldataconference.com)

### **Western Foodservice & Hospitality Expo**

8/17 - 8/19; Anaheim, CA; [westernfoodexpo.com](http://westernfoodexpo.com)

### **HSMAI's MEET National 2014**

9/3 - 9/4; Washington, DC; [meetconference.com](http://meetconference.com)

### **Florida Restaurant & Lodging Show**

9/7 - 9/9; Orlando, FL; [flrestaurantandlodgingshow.com](http://flrestaurantandlodgingshow.com)

### **SPATEC Fall North America**

9/14 - 9/17; Scottsdale, AZ; [spatecna.com](http://spatecna.com)

### **HD Americas – Hospitality Design Expo & Conference**

9/16 - 9/17; Miami, FL; [hdamericasexpo.com](http://hdamericasexpo.com)

### **IMEX America 2014**

10/14 - 10/16; Las Vegas, NV; [imexamerica.com](http://imexamerica.com)

### **The Lodging Conference**

10/20 - 10/23; Phoenix, AZ; [lodgingconference.com](http://lodgingconference.com)

### **HFTP Annual Convention & Trade Show**

10/22 - 10/25; New Orleans, LA; [hftp.org](http://hftp.org)

### **The Lodging Green & Sustainability Conference & Expo**

10/28 - 10/30; Las Vegas, NV;  
[cvent.com/events/lodging-green-sustainability-conference-expo](http://cvent.com/events/lodging-green-sustainability-conference-expo)

## ✓ 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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## Quick Quote

*No one realizes how beautiful it is to travel until he comes home and rests his head on his old familiar pillow.*

— Lin Yutang, 1895-1976, Chinese writer & inventor



**Jim Leahy**

## ***Letter from the Chairman***

Dear Friend,

Write your will! Be sure your husband or wife has a will. Your parents should have wills.

There have been too many wakes and funerals lately, too many people dying. And when I ask about things later, too many die without wills. It's so hard on those left behind.

When we die without a will, each state "writes" a will for us, and probably not the one we'd write. In Illinois, half the possessions go to the surviving husband or wife, half go to the surviving children. Whether the "children" are in their forties, or whether they're under six years old, they may end up owning a portion of a house, car, bank account and stocks.

The court may even appoint an administrator to see that the kids' share of the assets are properly managed for them. Your spouse (or you) may have to get court approval to write checks or sell "your" car.

Probate (the court's oversight of the estate) will probably last over six months and could cost thousands of dollars. Expect a large, painful (and unnecessary) legal mess.

Some of us may have parents who don't want to talk about it. Don't let them get away with that! Confront them as a family. Their deaths will carry enough emotional problems without having legal ones as well. Maybe find an attorney for them. Let your parents know how your state laws will affect their assets.

Be sure your will (and your parents') are current. A 20-year-old will may not take into account deaths, marriages, divorces, new assets, and new children or grandchildren. Update it.

Please don't put this off. Set dates. Follow up.

Love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Jim'.

If you want to read any of Jim's previously published letters, go to [americanhotel.com/check-in](http://americanhotel.com/check-in).

**Read Check-In online at [americanhotel.com/check-in](http://americanhotel.com/check-in)**