



CHECK-IN

Focusing on issues important to all members of the Hospitality Industry

Check This Out

- ✓ **It's the little things that count, like a drink!** According to Hotels.com, travelers appreciate the small details that make their stays easier and more comfortable. When asked which simple amenity they would like to see more of in hotel rooms, 43% said complimentary bottled water. Other desired amenities included in-room safes, electrical outlets on desks or lamps, and robes. Foreign travelers especially value power adapters.
- ✓ **It's the ultimate bachelorette pad!** Check into the Palms® Casino resort in Las Vegas and ask for the Hot Pink Suite. This 2,350-square-foot suite's dreamy décor features corseted, lace-up chairs, a sunburst mirror made from 65 Barbie dolls, custom Barbie art, terrazzo bubble floors and everything else you'd expect to find in Barbie's Dream House.
- ✓ **The winner and still champion is ... the Big Apple.** The 2014 Virtuoso Luxe Report, an annual survey of elite travel advisors, shows that New York has reclaimed the top spot on the list of most popular U.S. vacation destinations, followed by Maui. Napa Valley/Sonoma was bumped to third place from a first place ranking in 2013. Las Vegas took fourth place and for the first time, Hawaii's Big Island joins the list.
- ✓ **In Paris, love and locks may be a bad combination.** Instead of carving hearts into trees, couples in Paris express their eternal love by hanging "love locks" on bridges, fences and gates. Critics say the locks create a hazard and hanging one is actually an act of vandalism. In fact, a railing on the Pont des Arts collapsed recently under the weight of layers and layers of locks.

Voice Reservations Remain an Important Channel for Your Business

Online bookings have grown significantly in recent years, while voice reservations have declined. That being said, voice remains a productive and important channel of communication in the industry.

Voice is an especially important channel for certain properties, such as those offering a variety of accommodations, packages and rate options. It is also important for hotels with higher rates and longer stays, as well as any property offering out of the box accommodations. The more choices guests have to make and the more money and time they are investing, the more likely they will pick up the phone to call for advice.

While calling may have declined, today's front desk and reservations agents are fielding much more challenging calls than ever before. When it comes to information, the balance of power has shifted. In the past, callers had only the information in a hotel directory or a tourist guidebook to go by, but today's guests often spend hours researching properties online.

Prospective guests usually call because they are confused by online guest reviews and social media postings or overwhelmed by the number of room types and packages they have viewed online. Also, they may call when they want to verify that the online rate is in fact the lowest rate, or when they are driving or otherwise multitasking while making a reservation.

In the meantime, you may find you're spending a disproportionate amount of time focusing on electronic channels, while neglecting voice. If you are concerned that you or your staff has fallen victim to this trend, it's time to refocus your efforts:

- ◆ Spend one hour each month listening to real calls from real callers. You can simply sit with your staff or ask your call center to provide call recordings.
- ◆ Ask your staff or call center reps to list the most challenging objections they receive, like those regarding price, product and/or processes. Then, help them find new ways to overcome these objections.
- ◆ Review your reservations sales process checklist. Has it been updated for today's highly informed callers? For example: "As I'm checking those dates, are there any questions I can answer for you about our location or amenities and services?"
- ◆ Review the list of standards from your rating service (such as Forbes, AAA or brand). Do they focus mostly on how to complete a booking with a caller who says, "I want to make a reservation." If so, do you also have sales standards in place?
- ◆ Have you provided your team with training for the questions asked by today's highly informed callers who have viewed pictures online, such as how to reassure callers who have read conflicting reviews that they are making a good choice?
- ◆ Do you know your call conversion rate? What is your average revenue per booking for an in-house reservation versus online? If not, take time to measure and calculate these metrics.

Source: Doug Kennedy, HNN, 03/14

Storing & Managing Hazardous Chemicals

If you have hazardous chemicals on the premises as most hotels do, you'll need to consider purchasing safety cabinets or updating the cabinets you currently have to correctly house your chemical inventory. Safety cabinets come in a wide range of sizes and shapes, and have different safety ratings. You might need cabinets that are NFPA, OSHA, EPA or FM approved and U, UL or ULC listed. Ratings are important considerations for meeting local state regulations.

It is important to identify and inventory all chemicals to be stored in an area. For instance, the housekeeping area may have cleaners and aerosols. In the janitorial or maintenance area, you may have paints, spray paints, thinners, cleaners, gasoline, WD-40, or fertilizers. The pool area will have pool chemicals. The kitchen, banquet, and dining areas may store Sterno, propane torches and cleaning chemicals.

A review of the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for a chemical will determine its characteristics and recommended storage practices. To avoid generating toxic explosions and to prevent fires, it is critical to segregate incompatible chemicals.

One factor in choosing a cabinet is how the chemical relates to the cabinet construction material. Non-flammable acids and corrosive liquids should be stored in polyethylene or wood laminate. Less aggressive corrosive liquids that exhibit flammable characteristics need a chemically-resistant steel



cabinet with polyethylene-lined shelves.

While regulatory codes do not mandate the specific color, the industry has customarily observed certain colors for defined liquids:

- ◆ Yellow: Flammable liquids
- ◆ Red: Paints and other combustible liquids
- ◆ Blue: Corrosives
- ◆ Green: Pesticides and insecticides
- ◆ White or Gray: Waste materials or outdoor lockers

Safety cabinets typically come in single or two-door styles, with manual close or self-closing doors. Manual-close doors open a full 180° and require the user to physically shut the doors. Self-close, self-indexing doors have a mechanism that automatically shuts doors. Fusible links hold the doors open during use, but if left open, the links will melt in the event of a fire to automatically close the doors.

Self-closing safety cabinets are required by certain states and certain districts within states. Contact your local jurisdiction if you are unsure of your local requirements.

Also, keep in mind that managing flammable chemicals can be tricky. Here are some tips to remember:

1. Know your chemical – consult the MSDS sheet.
2. It's not the flammable liquid itself that burns, but rather the invisible vapor that forms, mixes with air, then burns when the liquid is heated to its flashpoint or above and ignited.
3. Maintain adequate ventilation; avoid confined areas where vapors can accumulate.
4. Eliminate potential ignition sources.
5. Keep containers covered or closed.
6. Properly bond and ground containers made of metal or special, conductive plastics when transferring liquids. If a container is made from a material that does not conduct electricity, such as polyethylene plastic or glass, bonding or grounding is not necessary.
7. Maintain good housekeeping – keep liquids segregated, organized, and safely stored according to fire codes.
8. Use approved storage equipment.
9. Never become complacent!

Remember the "fire triangle" to ensure your equipment and safety protocol follow established regulations and procedures to reduce fire risk. The fire triangle consists of air, heat, and fuel. All three must be present for a fire to start. Removing any one leg of the fire triangle stops a fire from starting.

Safety equipment should be used for storing, transporting, or dispensing flammable liquids because it's designed to control one or more legs of the fire triangle: containing the fuel, dissipating the heat, or eliminating the oxygen.

Following these best practices and tips will go a long way toward keeping your property safe.



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

What home "remedies" do you use in cleaning or maintenance?

Email check-in@americanhotel.com & include your full name, property name and address.



Julie Baker
HR Editor

The Foundation of a Learning Organization

Whether you run a large property or a small inn, I think it's important to create an organization that values employee learning in all its forms. Employee learning is at the heart of organizational excellence, but it is much more than the simple sum total of individual knowledge. A learning organization actively creates, captures, transfers, and mobilizes learning within a changing environment. Your business' success depends upon interaction among learning employees. It is essential to create an environment in which learning and development is available to all.

People learn in various ways, depending upon their role, level of authority, personality, learning style, and even attitude. For example, higher level managers are at risk of being isolated from structured training, and even if they decide to take a class, the odds are high that some urgent matter will take them away. While many employees may thrive in a classroom, other employees may react negatively to a classroom, or simply learn better with real-time, structured experiences.

Blended learning using a variety of approaches can keep every employee involved in development experiences.

Here are some ideas:

1. **360° appraisals** offer a full view of where an individual is on the leadership spectrum, with important perspectives about blind spots or shifting priorities.
2. **On-the-job learning** involves an everyday "stretch" assignment



with new business challenges, requiring the learner to conduct research or create a new process. Such opportunities can re-energize talented, but possibly under-challenged, employees.

3. **Job rotation programs** allow employees new experiences with the chance to gain skills in a real-world setting tailored specifically for their development. Plan strategically and with care to minimize disruption to the organization.

4. **Simulations** offer the opportunity for an employee to grapple with real-world challenges without the risks of real-world mistakes. Leverage the benefits by following simulations with debriefings during which participants apply what they have learned to real-world situations.

5. **Action learning** is a process of group collaboration to solve real, current workplace problems. Under the guidance of a skilled facilitator, cross-functional groups brainstorm solutions, then categorize and prioritize the results, with the goal of implementation.

6. **Mentoring** challenges employees to draw on their expertise and interests and connect with other team members. HR is well-positioned to serve as a clearinghouse for talent and development needs. For higher level executives, these activities have the added advantage of getting them back in touch with everyday business operations.

Organizational learning does not occur on its own. A learning organization actively promotes, facilitates, and rewards learning and interaction.

Source: *Laurie Walker, HR Digest, 6/14*

Green Tips for Travelers

Help make your guests' stay as eco-friendly as possible, by making the following tips available in each guest room:

1. During your hotel stay, let management know that you want to participate in a linen and towel reuse program.
2. When you leave the room, turn off the AC/heat, lights, and television.
3. Open the draperies during the winter to let the sun naturally heat the room and close them in the summer to keep the room cool.
4. Use public transportation and walk where sensible and safe. Use the hotel van or rent a hybrid whenever possible.
5. Only take maps or brochures necessary for your trip.
6. Do not use the shower to warm the room or steam clothes.
7. Look for recycling bins throughout the hotel and dispose of items appropriately.
8. Check out using the hotel's electronic program available on the TV, via email, or PDA.

Source: *AH&LA.com*



2014-2015 Fall/Winter Calendar

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

International Spa Association (ISPA) Conference & Expo
10/13 - 10/15; Las Vegas, NV; attendspa.com

IMEX America 2014
10/14 - 10/16; Las Vegas, NV; imexamerica.com

The Lodging Conference
10/20 - 10/23; Phoenix, AZ; lodgingconference.com

HFTP Annual Convention & Trade Show
10/22 - 10/25; New Orleans, LA; hftp.org

Green Festivals
10/24 - 10/26; Chicago, IL; greenfestivals.org/chi
11/14 - 11/16; San Francisco, CA; greenfestivals.org/sf

The Lodging Green & Sustainability Conference & Expo
10/28 - 10/30; Las Vegas, NV; cvent.com/events

AH&LA Fall Conference
11/8 - 11/11; New York, NY; ahla.com

International Hotel, Motel & Restaurant Show
11/9 - 11/11; New York, NY; ihmrs.com

The Americas Lodging Investment Summit
1/26/15 - 1/28/15; Los Angeles, CA; aliscofference.com

✓ 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 Friend,

What would you love to do? What would you be? Do you have a dream? What would you make of your life if no one was to stop you? What is stopping you? What can you do about it?

We need dreams. Life can feel pointless if we fall into a lifeless, dreary rut. Our lives crave meaning.

And I don't mean being popular, rich or important. Those are our reward for finding something worth living for.

It's a matter of asking what would excite me. If I could do anything, whether for pay or not, what would it look like? Whom would I do it with? Where would it be?

In the hospitality field, there are so many opportunities! Jobs exist in sales, foodservice, in accounting, in management. Hospitality jobs are found on cruise ships, in restaurants, at resorts, and in cities. With the right skills and attitude, you'll find positions in just about every country in the world.

If you're not the person you want to be or not doing a meaningful job, what do you have to change? What can you do to be that person and have that position? What's different between you and the person you can become?

Consider training for a job, improving your education, learning a foreign language, or even just talking to someone who is doing the sort of job that looks like fun.

We can each become the person we want to be. Start by asking yourself – who is the person I want to be? Believe in yourself! Challenge yourself! Life can open doors for you if you're prepared. I have met you and a hundred others like you. You're special. You can do it! Dream your dream and start to live it.

Love,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads 'Jim'.

If you want to read any of Jim's previously published letters, go to americanhotel.com/check-in.

Quick Quote

Whenever you go on a trip to visit foreign lands or distant places, remember that they are all someone's home and backyard.

— Vera Nazarian, b. 1966, American author

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