



# CHECK-IN

Focusing on issues important to all members of the Hospitality Industry

## Check This Out

- ✓ **Say goodbye to room service!**  
Room service revenue has declined markedly in the last five years, according to PKF Hospitality Research, and now accounts for only about one percent of the revenue at hotels that still offer the amenity.
- ✓ **It's simply hair raising.** Deep in a dark cavern under a pottery store in Avanos, Turkey, the owner runs a museum dedicated to women's hair. He has more than 16,000 tresses, all tagged with the addresses of their owners. Leave your contribution when you visit and you just might win a free pottery-making class!
- ✓ **Claustrophobic? Stay away from this place!** It's the world's deepest hotel room. Located in the Sala Silvermine in Sweden, you can spend the night in dark, somewhat dank comfort disconnected from the outside world. After all, cell phones don't work over 500 feet underground. You will be provided with all the cozy comforts of home, connected by intercom with the hotel staff, who are located above ground for your convenience.
- ✓ **Go where the affluent go...**  
The 2014 Virtuoso® Luxe Report shows some new entrants as "emerging destinations." While Cuba remains the tourism destination most on the rise, the Galapagos Islands' popularity is escalating once again, while Iceland and Belize cracked the "Top 10." Italy continues its reign as the top destination for international travel in 2014, followed by South Africa, France and Australia. This year New Zealand makes an appearance on the list as well.

## Ideas for Improving Your Meeting Spaces

In this buyers' market, meeting planners demand nothing but the best in everything they purchase, and booking hotel meeting spaces is no exception. Since your property, if it has meeting space, must now compete with restaurants, universities, museums, churches and unused office space, you have to be ready to provide the right kind of space that fulfills the needs of these discriminating consumers.

Here are a few relatively inexpensive investments to consider.

**Wi-Fi.** The overwhelming opinion among businesspeople is that Wi-Fi needs to be free. They demand a strong signal in all rooms with easy login and enough bandwidth for many different devices.

**Cellular reception.** People shouldn't have to run outside to make calls. If you have issues, consider installing a signal booster.

**Tablets.** According to Gartner, Inc., over 195 million tablets were sold last year, and the market continues to grow. Your business guests are tech-savvy and chances are travel with tablets. Welcome them to meetings with stands, styluses and loan them attachable keyboards.

**Power.** Review your power supply and bandwidth capacity. Does each room have enough plugs? Are they conveniently located? With lots of people accessing the web via the same IP at the same time, be sure you offer trouble-free connectivity so you don't frustrate business guests.

**Technicians.** Hire fast-responding technicians to keep things running smoothly. Ensure they have adequate supplies in case anything breaks.

**Food.** Instead of providing food at designated break times, have a variety of snacks available all day.

More planners specifically seek locations with healthy menus, so be sure to provide these options when creating meeting menus.

**Windows.** Natural light can add to the warm, collegial atmosphere of a meeting, but sun glare can make computer monitors and projectors hard to see. Use curtains or blinds, and make sure they're clean of dust.

**Table setup.** Table shapes can determine interaction. A long, rectangular form can hinder conversation. At a circular table, however, everyone can see each other, which can foster dialogue. Also, with all the devices, notebooks and meeting paraphernalia, one needs a lot of space to spread out.

**Chairs.** Match chairs to the room's purpose. Keep a variety on hand, ready to fulfill your customers' needs.

**Flexible space.** Consider moveable panels that can divide ballrooms or expansive halls to create smaller, interactive pop-up workspaces.

**Identity.** You want every guest experience at your property to be great, and this extends to your meeting or conference space. Make it pleasing to the eye and enhance the décor to engage meeting guests.

By addressing the increasing demand for "smart rooms" (rooms with built-in technical features), accommodating ever-expanding technological needs, plus providing the right amenities and foodservice options, you should be able to keep your property competitive in your market, and drive more conference revenue in the years to come.

Source: Larry Mogelonsky, LMA Communications, 02/13

## We Love Hearing From You!

Thank you for the many creative recycling ideas!

**Kathy Polit, Bull Shoals Lake Resort, Midway, AR** writes, "We always ask our guests if they would like to recycle, and most everyone is glad to help. It was because of many guest requests that we now have a recycling program. We always mention the program in our newsletter and post it on our Facebook page.

"It's easy for the guests. Their cabins have plenty of spare trash bags and all they do is load the recyclables in a bag and leave it out. We pick it up every morning along with the regular trash, then sort it and take the glass, aluminum and plastic to a local daycare center for mentally disabled adults which runs a recycling program. We all benefit, the guests feel good about recycling, we use less dumpster space and it provides jobs in the community.

"For those guests who don't wish to participate, we open their trash bags and sort it accordingly. We also have recycling cans down by our docks and in other areas."

**Mariann Barnard, Town & Country Inn and Suites, Quincy, IL** says, "Recycling is successful when you make it easy for both your guests and hotel staff. Here are a few quick tips. Put recycling containers right next to the garbage cans so everyone has easy access to them. If they are separated, garbage will go into the recycling and vice versa. We have recycling bags in the guest rooms right on the desk. Our housekeeping staff just collects the bags and we are able to put them in our single-stream recycling container next to our dumpster. The amount of trash

we recycle is now greater than our other trash!

"In our meeting rooms, we serve water in glass pitchers and do not offer bottled water. No one has complained – if they demand bottled water, we offer a recycling container in the meeting rooms to dispose of them. We also use linen 'save the planet' cards in the guest rooms."

**Linda at The Casablanca Motel, Manchester Center, VT** writes, "We have recycling bins the size of trash bins in each of our ten cabins. They are located in the same spot as the trash bins. Many guests use them for items they think are recyclable, but most guests do not know which is which, so we placed a page in our in-room binders to educate them.

"It's our housekeeping staff that makes the real difference – they check the trash and do the sorting. Overall, our property keeps about 40% of our post-consumer waste out of landfills."

Lastly, **Stephen Pittman, Doubletree Hotel & Suites by Hilton, Jersey City, NJ** says, "Jersey City is proud to have just donated 400 lbs. of "slightly" used soap to the Global Soap Project® – an organization that melts down the bars to make new soap for families who are in need around the world. Each year, an estimated 2.4 million children die from hygiene and sanitation-related illnesses. The Global Soap Project is working to prevent those deaths and to improve global health by recycling used hotel soap and turning it into new bars that are distributed to vulnerable populations around the world.

"I have to give a big thank you to our housekeepers who have contributed their time to helping with this effort!"



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

*As the summer travel season approaches, what kid-friendly extras do you offer traveling families?*

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

## Password Security

"123456" is finally getting some time in the spotlight as the world's worst password, after spending years in the shadow of "password."

Security firm Splashdata, which every year compiles a list of the most common stolen passwords, found that "123456" moved into the number one slot in 2013.

Here's the full list of worst passwords from 2013, according to Splashdata:

- |              |             |
|--------------|-------------|
| ◆ 123456     | ◆ letmein   |
| ◆ password   | ◆ photoshop |
| ◆ 12345678   | ◆ 1234      |
| ◆ qwerty     | ◆ monkey    |
| ◆ abc123     | ◆ shadow    |
| ◆ 123456789  | ◆ sunshine  |
| ◆ 111111     | ◆ 12345     |
| ◆ 1234567    | ◆ password1 |
| ◆ iloveyou   | ◆ princess  |
| ◆ adobe123   | ◆ azerty    |
| ◆ 123123     | ◆ trustno1  |
| ◆ admin      | ◆ 000000    |
| ◆ 1234567890 |             |

Here are some tips to make your password more secure:

Use passwords of eight characters or more with mixed characters. Even passwords with common substitutions like "dr4mat1c" can be vulnerable to attackers' sophisticated technology. Random combinations like "j%7K&yPx\$" can be difficult to remember. One way to create more secure passwords that are easy to recall is to use passphrases – short words with spaces or other characters separating them. It's best to use random words rather than common phrases. For example, "cakes years birthday" or "smiles\_light\_skip?"

Also avoid using the same username/password combination for multiple websites. Especially risky is using the same password for entertainment sites that you do for online email, social networking, or financial service sites. Use different passwords for each new website or service you sign up for.

Source: [splashdata.com](http://splashdata.com)



## Human Resources News

**Katie Snider**  
HR Editor

### Making the Right Hire

Companies are increasingly using criminal background checks to help identify who the best employees might be – or more precisely, who they might not be. But has screening gone too far? Are good workers slipping through the cracks because of a checked box on a job application or a mark on a criminal record? How can you hire the best employees while complying with laws that limit employers' use of criminal background reports?

The information below is based upon the EEOC's recently issued guidelines for employers when considering criminal records. Read the full text at [www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/arrest\\_conviction.cfm](http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/arrest_conviction.cfm).

Incorporate these best practices to avoid overlooking your best new hire:

- ◆ Eliminate practices that exclude people based on any criminal record. Do not use blanket bans, such as "Must have clean background" or "Felons need not apply."
- ◆ Remove criminal record inquiries from applications.
- ◆ Some jurisdictions require employers to wait until the point of interview or job offer so the employer may objectively assess the relevance of a record within the context of the applicant's qualifications and experience.

### Consider...

- ◆ The essential job requirements and actual circumstances under which the jobs are performed. Does the position require customer contact? Supervision? Handling money or clients' belongings?
- ◆ Specific offenses that may demonstrate unfitness for a job. Instead of "any felony," what types of offenses might indicate a poor fit for the specific job?
- ◆ The duration of exclusion for that crime. Consider evidence of rehabilitation as well as how much time has passed since the offense.

- ◆ Develop a narrowly-tailored policy regarding screening for criminal conduct. Record rationales used and document any consultations and research considered in crafting the policy.
- ◆ Limit inquiries about criminal records to convictions directly related to the specific position.
- ◆ Keep criminal record information confidential and use it only for its intended purpose. Be respectful, responsible, and maintain confidentiality.
- ◆ Train managers, hiring officials, and decision-makers about how to implement your new hiring policy in a consistent and nondiscriminatory manner. Ensure everyone understands the practical and legal reasons behind your policy changes.

Note that while these guidelines are a good starting point, some jurisdictions have more stringent laws (prohibition on considering arrest records) and some employers (e.g., direct care providers) may be subject to laws mandating the use of criminal background checks for job candidates.

Consider the person – not just the record – and you may find that second chances lead to a first-rate workforce.

Source: *Emily Baxter, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy, Council on Crime and Justice, HR Digest, 10/13*

## Maintenance News

### Pool Safety Tips

Not every accident is preventable, but there are steps you can take to lessen the chances of a tragic pool accident happening at your property. Here are some simple tips to get you started.

First – and most obvious – **post signs** stating that there are no lifeguards on duty, if that is the case. Make this message stand out – don't bury it in a list of other pool rules. If it's unsafe to dive or if there are other possibly unsafe conditions, such as beachfront properties with sudden drop-offs or out-of-bounds areas, post prominent signs in obvious locations to alert your guests to the possible dangers. Pictogram signage will convey this vital information to guests who speak any language.

Next, **keep the swimming area itself as safe as possible**. Maintain pools and patios, making sure that the surrounding surface is not slippery. Apply slip-resistant materials where needed. Mark off the deep end with buoyed ropes. Store pool toys and supplies in a shed to prevent children from playing with them when attendants are not around.

**Always be prepared**. Have buoys, pool safety hooks, and backboards on hand – and know how to use them. Have a defibrillator (AED) in one or more locations. One located near the pool area may save a life.

Finally, be ready. **Know what to do if a poolside emergency occurs**. Develop plans of action for various situations and routinely practice them with your staff. Learn the Heimlich maneuver. Know CPR and rescue breathing and have your staff trained in these procedures. Your local Red Cross, hospital, and fire or police department may offer classes on these and other proven lifesaving techniques.

By taking simple steps like the ones listed above, you can enjoy the sounds of splashing swimmers, knowing that your property and staff members are well-prepared for any critical situation.

## 2014 Spring/Summer Calendar

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

### 10th Annual Hotel Technology Forum

April 16 - 18; Las Vegas, NV; [hospitalitytechnology.edgl.com](http://hospitalitytechnology.edgl.com)

### HR in Hospitality Conference & Expo

April 28 - 30; Las Vegas, NV; [hrinhospitality.com](http://hrinhospitality.com)

### Hospitality Design Expo & Conference 2014

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

### National Restaurant Association (NRA) Show 2014

May 17 - 20; Chicago, IL; [show.restaurant.org](http://show.restaurant.org)

### HSMIA's MEET WEST 2014

June 16 - 17; San Diego, CA; [meetconference.com](http://meetconference.com)

### HOTEC Design East

June 16 - 19; Key Largo, FL; [hotecna.com/designeast](http://hotecna.com/designeast)

### HITEC 2014

June 23 - 26; Los Angeles, CA; [hftp.org](http://hftp.org)

### Quick Quote

If God really intended men to fly,  
he'd make it easier to get to the airport.

— George Winters

### ✓ 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.

**Email: [check-in@americanhotel.com](mailto:check-in@americanhotel.com)**

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

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

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Editor: Lynda Jeppesen



Jim Leahy

### Letter from the Chairman

Dear Friend,

Reflect on what is truly of value in life. What gives our lives meaning? Set priorities on the basis of that!

Dare to live the life you aspire to! If you need to make changes in yourself, change! If you need more education, get it! If your friends don't respect and encourage you, find new friends! If you're not a person of honor and honesty, resolve to change that! Your life and your future belong to you.

We are who we choose to be. As children, we blame others for our life's situation. As adults, the world opens to us and lets us be the very best we can be. Sometimes in our 20s, we should be able to stop blaming our lives on others and face the fact that we can now choose what we will become.

We shape our lives through our jobs and education, through our friends and through the way we spend our leisure time.

You are fortunate if you are surrounded by friends, family, maybe a spouse, and possibly children who love and believe in you. In their love, they want to be proud of you. They want you to be the very best that you can be.

Listen to them and listen to your inner voice. They are truth tellers. If life isn't what you want it to be, look at your values. Do your priorities match your values? Are you living a life that is consistent with what you believe in?

Somewhere within each of us is a voice demanding to be heard, calling us to use our unique talents to achieve our life's purpose.

Become the person you were created to be. Listen to that inner voice. Eliminate those attitudes and habits which hold you back. Learn and practice the gifts that will make you special.

Be a person of compassion, forgiveness, tolerance and character. Be a person who can step forward when someone must make a decision. Commit to creating in yourself a person of confidence, pride and integrity. Create your future. Start today!

Love,

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)