



CHECK-IN

Focusing on issues important to all members of the Hospitality Industry

Check This Out

- ✓ **Leading with LEED...** Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide has opened five **eco-friendly Element Hotels**, the first major hotel brand to require that all properties pursue Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification for green features.
- ✓ **Speaking of making a difference...it's even easy to do while on vacation.** Civic-minded travelers can be matched with charitable organizations, schools and other nonprofit groups on the website, stuffyourrucksack.com. It's an innovative online exchange where those in need throughout the world can post their wish lists and travelers can find out what's needed nearby. For example, schools may need books, or a map or pencils; an orphanage may need children's clothes or toys. Travelers can pack items from a charity's wish list, then take them to the charity while they're vacationing.
- ✓ **Talk about guest service!** A family vacationing in Germany realized they had left their 4-year-old daughter's stuffed bunny at home. Since she could not fall asleep without it, the family asked the concierge at their hotel in Berlin to remedy the situation. He did, sending a bellhop on a five-hour roundtrip journey to retrieve the bunny from the family's home!
- ✓ **Sleeping on this plane is a lot more comfortable than you'd expect.** That's because it's actually a modern luxurious suite, complete with sauna, jacuzzi, flat-screen TV, a 24/7 hostess, and best of all, full access to the authentic cockpit. It's grounded and waiting for guests at the Teuge Airport in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

Leftover amenities offer dignity – and hope

One person can really make a difference...

Sandi LaFreniere, Territory Manager, tells this uplifting tale from her travels on the road:

"This is a very interesting story of a woman who goes to several hotels [in my area] and collects leftover soap, shampoo and conditioner. She is an inspiration, as she volunteers her time and money to re-process these items and then donates them to shelters and those in need. I happened to be at a [property] when she came to pick up leftover items

and saw her finished samples, which she had brought along to show others at the property. The soap looked great, packaged and ready to deliver to shelters. I asked her to send me some information about her work, and she sent me this letter."

"Dear Sandi, Thank you so much for this opportunity. I look forward to having your readers bring Hope Soap to their communities.

"While traveling, I had always brought home the excess soap, shampoo, conditioner and body lotion and donated it to the local shelter or dropped it off at Goodwill. One day I happened to ask how many people that the shelter was helping and was floored to hear that they were attempting to service over 200 people every night! I knew immediately that my little bag just wasn't enough and I had to come up with a better plan. I decided to

enlist the help of local hotel housekeepers and asked them to put the used toiletries in a bucket which I supplied to them. At first, I called many hotels and no one would help me, but then I got started with one where I had contacts. It worked! I now pick up from eight hotels every Monday and I am supplying all of the shelters in the city of Norwalk, CT, as well as shelters in the towns of Westport and Fairfield, CT.

"I couldn't do this without the help and dedication of the housekeepers, who are a

wonderful group of people. In addition to amenities, they now also pass on to me cleaned items from lost and found, and things like sheets that do not meet the high standards of the hotel but are welcome at the shelter.

"I work with many other wonderful people at the hotels too. We are using items that would be thrown in a landfill and I like the feeling I get when I make deliveries to the shelters knowing that I am helping to stretch their limited resources a little farther." The letter is signed by Celeste LaCroix, founder, HopeSoap."

So next time you're collecting all that leftover soap and shampoo around your property, think about how something so small can make such a positive impact on those less fortunate, and take the time to donate them to your local emergency shelter.



We Love Hearing From You!

We received some terrific responses to the question posed in our last issue about interesting interview questions. Thanks to all!

Nathan Neilan, GM, Howard Johnson Inn & Suites in Oacoma, SD, writes: "In an interview I will ask the person, 'Are you here for a job or are you here to work?' What's the difference? A job is just something people come to do to get paid. Work is for a person who is willing to learn and succeed to know all they can about the business."

Courtney L. Brocato, Assistant GM, Holiday Inn Express, Costa Mesa, CA, poses two questions to her applicants: "The most interesting interview questions I ask are 'How long do you think it would take you to make a favorable difference to our company?' and 'What is your definition of (the position)?"

"Applicants are usually put on the spot with these questions, but

this is how I determine how someone would react under pressure. Working in the hotel business, there are times when you get stressed and these questions weed out people who can't handle pressure pretty quickly."

Sherrie Burts Crawford, GM, Comfort Suites, Simpsonville, SC, sent us an unusual question, but one that can be very revealing in an interview: "I ask prospective employees one question that they probably have never been asked before, but it really helps me get an idea of who I am dealing with: What does common sense mean to you?"

Linda Benway quizzes applicants about why they applied at her **Casablanca Motel in Manchester, VT**, versus applying for a position at another property.

"I find out a lot by the way someone answers this question. If they tell me something about my motel or otherwise show an interest

in my company, then I feel they know something about where they are applying and have given some thought to working here.

"If they answer with something like 'because I need a job', it tells me they are not really interested in working here, they would work anywhere. As a small employer, I am looking for someone who wants to work for my company and has given it some thought as to what it might be like to work here."

And lastly, **Don Neuharth, EconoLodge Inn & Suites at the Lake, Osage Beach, MO**, says that he asks prospective employees if they are willing to be yelled at by guests. As Don says: "Though it is rare, we think our employees need to realize that sometimes an unhappy or out-of-control guest will yell at the guest services agent. We think it's important that applicants understand that dealing with the public can be a challenge."



Bill Pickens
Maintenance Editor

Minimizing Comps

When you're forced to comp a room, the cost goes right to your bottom line. Here are a couple of the more common reasons for comp'd rooms and what you can do to avoid them at your property.

Hair in the bathroom. The best solution is have your housekeeping staff go over the guest bath one last time after the normal cleaning procedure is completed.

One of the products that really helps pick up those stray hairs is sticky roller tape. In case you haven't tried these, they work great! These rollers are available with long handles to avoid back stress, or your staff can use handheld rollers, similar to those used to get rid of pet hair on clothing.



Maintenance News

Other popular products include Swiffer® Sweeper or 3M™ Easy Trap cloths, that effectively capture dust and hair. Either can be used with long or short-handled dusting tools, or just used by hand. Use them to dust the guest room, use them on the bathroom floor, too. Just remember to use two different cloths for each area to avoid cross contamination.

You can also pick up hair from the floor with a vinyl roller with a super-sticky surface that can be washed with warm, soapy water and used again and again.

Smoking odors in non-smoking rooms. While many properties are now totally smoke-free, the problem of comping rooms for guests due to previous guests smoking in the room

still exists. Prompt treatment of the room with either an ozone machine (while the room is unoccupied) or with chemical sprays is the key.

Ozone is unstable and casts off its extra oxygen molecule to combine with gases and destroy odors.

You can also choose from a variety of chemicals that will do the job. Be sure you pick a product that eliminates odors, not just covers them up. Key words to look for include sanitizer, neutralizer, eliminator or odor counteractant. Other products may leave a nice scent in the room that will last only a few hours.

By making these few simple changes to your housekeeping regimen, you can reduce or even eliminate comps (along with hair and unwelcome odors!) and increase your revPAR.





Katie Snider
HR Editor

Hiring Challenges in a High-Unemployment Market

The economic challenges of the last couple of years have not affected all sectors equally. Some businesses have done fine – they never stopped hiring, while others have struggled.

If you've done any hiring in recent months by posting jobs online, you've probably been deluged with applications and you've also found that many applicants didn't meet the posted job requirements. Fortunately, there is a solution that can solve both of these problems, while helping you write postings that are more effective.

The natural response when receiving a lot of applications from unqualified candidates is to edit the job posting to further emphasize the job requirements. The problem with this approach is that your posting may start to appear unwelcoming. It also won't typically deter under-qualified candidates, who may not read the job posting carefully or may ignore what it says. But it's likely to scare away good candidates who have high standards for their next employer.

The best solution is to use a feature that almost all job boards and most website applicant tracking systems incorporate. The feature is typically called "screening questions", and, if properly deployed, provides a powerful filtering mechanism

and a remarkably effective solution for eliminating unqualified applicants.

To illustrate how screening questions resolve these issues, let's consider two scenarios, one in which you can focus on a single requirement as a "dealbreaker," like whether a candidate speaks Spanish or has a Class B commercial driver's license. The second scenario would be a hiring situation that involves a variety of important requirements.

Let's start with the first scenario.

The problem:

You need to hire a guest services rep who speaks Spanish. You've listed this requirement in the job posting but are receiving many applications from non-Spanish speakers.

The solution:

It's okay to mention this requirement in the job

posting, but then it's essential to turn it into a screening question as well: "This job requires the ability to speak Spanish fluently with our customers. Please describe your Spanish language skills."

This provides a better filter, eliminating those applicants who do not have the requirement.

Better yet: Some job boards let you assign scores to answers. Make this question a Yes or No, and assign a score of "1" for Yes, and "0" for No. Later, you can sort the scores to show just those applicants who meet the requirement.

Now, let's look at the second scenario.

The problem: The job you're posting has four criteria that are

really important, yet none fit into a simple Yes or No response.

The solution: Re-write your criteria as multiple choice or ratings questions, such as "Rate your [skill] from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) level of proficiency." Most applicant tracking systems and some job boards will let you assign scores to the answers, and then you can sort responses by the cumulative totals. When it's time to review candidates, you can focus on the most qualified.

Screening questions can still save you time, even if you don't have the technology in place that lets you assign scores or sort applicants. When you review online applications, don't start reading cover letters, resumes, or the rest of the applications until you've reviewed answers to the screening questions and filtered out candidates who don't meet your most important criteria.

Use of screening questions

for important criteria

has a secondary benefit too, in that it allows you to transform your job postings. Rather than simply using them to scare off unqualified candidates, you

can shift the focus to writing upbeat, engaging job postings that attract top-notch talent.

Source: *George Blomgren, HR Digest, MRA-The Management Association, Inc., October 2009*



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

How do you minimize maintenance costs without sacrificing guest satisfaction?

E-mail us & include your full name, property name, and address.

2010 Spring/Summer 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.

HSMIA's Affordable Meetings Mid-America

April 14 - 15; Chicago, IL; www.hsmia.org

Go Green Expo

April 16 - 18; Philadelphia, PA; www.gogreenexpo.com

HSMIA Resort Business Summit & Customer Connection

May 3 - 4; Palm Beach Gardens, FL; www.hsmia.org

Hospitality Design Expo & Conference

May 19 - 21; Las Vegas, NV; www.hdexpo.com

National Restaurant Association (NRA) Show

May 22 - 25; Chicago, IL; www.restaurant.org

AH&LA Summer Summit

June 15 - 16; Scottsdale, AZ; www.ahla.com

AAHOA Annual Convention & Trade Show

June 16 - 19; Chicago, IL; www.aaoha.com

HITEC 2010

June 21 - 24; Orlando, FL; www.hftp.org/HITEC

Quick Quotes

**Stop worrying about the potholes in the road
and celebrate the journey.**

— Fitzhugh Mullen

**A journey is best measured in friends,
rather than miles. — Tim Cahill**

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.

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Jim Leahy

Letter from the Chairman

Dear Friends,

I recently read the quote, "How we spend our days is (of course) how we spend our lives," from Annie Dillard. I find it a wonderful reminder that our days aren't a rehearsal for our real life, they ARE our real life!

If we spend our free time in endless TV or Internet pastimes, are we shaping the lives we intend to live? When we look back on these years, will it be with pride, or will it be a blur of monotony? Are we creating memories?

Each of us was created for a reason. Each day is a gift to be celebrated. Each is an opportunity to learn, to serve, to make a difference to others and to be grateful.

I sometimes meet people whose lives seem filled with work followed by mindless pastimes. Their lives seem like little more than "coping." That's not what our lives were meant to be.

Our lives are too precious to be wasted on emptiness. We each have talents to be shared, interests to be explored, goodness to be celebrated, and wisdom for the benefit of others. Life happens, and we can be spectators or participants.

Choose the life you intend to live and LIVE IT! Choose activities that enhance your life with purpose and meaning. Surround yourself with friends who encourage your hopes rather than pull you down. Be open to change and new ideas.

The most marvelous aspect of the hospitality industry is the many interesting "strangers" we meet every day. Each has his or her story, background, and reason to be away from home. Hear their stories (as appropriate).

Our lives call us to be grander, nobler, and kinder. We seem to be given work, hardships, and challenges that are intended to teach us wisdom and use our talents. We are created not for ourselves alone, but for a greater world.

Create the life you choose to live now. Create it with intention.

Love,

Thanks for your letters, Jim!

I look forward to your newsletters. They always come with helpful information, which is easy to apply in our daily lives of operating a business in these difficult times. I have applied your simple techniques and find that it pays to treat people the way you want to be treated. People want to feel special and appreciated. As long as they are guests of mine, it is my job to do just that. I don't mind going that extra mile because so often you get a smile in return. The suggestions that you give don't require a big budget, just simple, common sense. Thank you for the time you spend compiling this newsletter.

Amy Duncan, Hochatown Country Lodge, Broken Bow, OK

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