

CHECK-IN

with American Hotel Register Company

Focusing on issues important to all members of the Hospitality Industry

Check This Out

- ✓ Believe it or not, visiting the in-laws just got better! In response to a survey indicating that 36% of Americans would rather stay at a hotel than with family, and 97% would prefer a hotel over staying with in-laws, Indigo Hotels is offering an **Escape the In-Laws package** through Jan. 14. The package features breakfast for two and a Family Decompression Kit, complete with aspirin, aromatherapy oil, and a bottle of wine.
- ✓ Adapting strategies like revenue management, looking at fixed versus variable expenses, strategizing on rates and reducing turnover by providing associates with a sense of appreciation can help hotel owners **adapt to the challenging economy and boost profitability** while weathering the storm.
- ✓ According to the second annual Travel Trust Index Report released by boo.com, online travel review and booking sites continue to gain the public's trust. In fact, **online travel resources are strongly preferred** over more traditional options such as travel agencies and the news media.
- ✓ Ready to give your guests a "delicious" vacation? The Specialty Travel Agents Association (STAA) recently presented its **top travel picks for 2009**. It's no surprise that culinary travel is one of the fastest growing segments in the industry. People love to talk about food, but more importantly, they love to eat and learn about what they're eating. Also strong in 2009 is ecotourism, sustainable tourism, and green tourism. Countries that are tops on travel lists include South Africa, Mexico, New Zealand, and Thailand.

Ensure Return Visits by Making Your Guests Feel Comfortable

Many different types of guests from many different backgrounds and cultures walk through your doors every day. Among them might be:

- the tired business traveler who has been to twelve cities in two days
- the family that has saved for eight months to go on that special vacation
- the newly married couple or the couple that is celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary
- the parent that is missing a child's birthday due to a business trip



Guests come to your hotel from different time zones and by different means of transportation.

Some are excited to be in your establishment, and some are not. At the front desk, you are often the first person guests come in contact with, so it's important to remember that you represent your company and your community.

Guests like to do business with people they feel comfortable with. It is important to mirror their behavior in order to make them feel comfortable. Every guest has two basic types of needs: personal and practical. How well you satisfy those needs shapes your guests' perceptions of the service you provide.

Source: DDI Training Manual

Personal needs include feeling valued, respected, important and special as well as being heard, understood, and cared about. Meeting these needs will make your guests feel valued and understood. You can satisfy personal needs in the following ways:

Maintain or enhance guests' self-esteem by calling guests by name, complimenting them when appropriate, and showing them you care about their needs.

Listening and responding with empathy means listening carefully to what your guests are saying and showing you genuinely care. Watch for signs of how your guests feel and adapt your behavior to theirs. Acknowledge the facts and feelings of your guests and never interrupt them.

Involving guests means asking for their opinion and having them participate in decisions that affect them. If a decision or choice needs to be made, ask what they prefer. It's important to make guests aware of all the available options.

Guests stay at your property for many different reasons, and they have many hotel choices. The way they are treated at your property is a major factor that goes a long way toward capturing their future business. When you take the time to get to know your guests and fulfill their personal needs, you'll ensure return visits and satisfied customers.

Information Technology in the Hospitality Industry

Traditionally, hotels were largely dependent on cards and paperwork at the front desk to keep in touch with old and current customers. They were largely at the mercy of the desires of vacationers to arrive, and on their own efforts and staff to be ready for potential surges or long droughts of occupancy. Luckily, such inconvenience and old-fashioned methods are long since past, thanks to advances in information technology.

The first area in which information technology became important was in regards to billing. Old-fashioned paper-based bookkeeping was time consuming and inefficient, and was not able to quickly tell a hotel owner what the situation of their hotel was. Luckily, advances in modern record keeping allow for a hotel owner to keep track of what they have on hand, how much of it they have, and how much it costs. Accounting is complicated, but advanced accounting software, especially that tailored to the unique needs of the hospitality industry, helps to enable hotel owners to make smart decisions. Services and products that are no longer used can be quickly cut off to save money, while those who show demand can be increased in quantity or modified so as to reduce the heavy usage.

Most hotels are familiar with booking rooms and reservations over the phone, but information technology has expanded well beyond that. Hotels can now work with various online travel companies and booking services to have their rooms booked online, with no need to employ expensive staff. This also allows a hotel to advertise their open rooms and special deals directly to persons who would be most likely to purchase them, instead of wasting lots of money advertising in an unfocused

manner. High quality information technology thus allows for better arrangement and management of bookings in order to allow a hotel to better maximize occupancy, and to know in advance when large groups or lean times are approaching. This allows a hotel manager to make plans regarding temporary staff, good times to renovate or expand, or other concerns, because he/she can determine



the state of their hotel currently and for the next few months with only a few clicks on the computer.

The advances in information technology extend well beyond booking, however. The internet is essential for vacationers who wish to contact those back home, and for those traveling on business to get in touch with the office. Therefore, wireless internet has become a very common and very useful service for hotels to provide. Many business minded persons even require that a hotel offer internet services so that they can keep working while on the road. Luckily, such services are easy to provide, as all that is required is a wireless router and various devices to ensure the entire hotel is filled with the network. Modern advances in wireless

internet also allow for the wireless internet provided for hotel visitors to be used to network the hotel itself. Security cameras, door locks, and other devices essential to hotel security and safety can be wired into the network, so that staff are alerted whenever a door is propped open, a fire alarm goes off or suspicious activity occurs. Though the hotel guests are wholly unaware of it, this sort of added safety and security keeps them safe, and in the event of a problem they will most certainly appreciate the benefits of such a system.

As advanced as it is, information technology in the hospitality industry is still going forward. Intelligent booking systems enable rapid and efficient guest feedback, along with the ability to predict who is likely to use the hotel again and inform them via e-mail or text messages when good deals arrive. Hotels with room service or other guest services can offer their menus online, allowing for quick updates, high-quality photos, and other ways to allow

guests to see and order services before they even arrive. There are also advances in terms of payroll and inventory which make information technology a valuable asset for saving money and maximizing profits. The unique nature of the hospitality industry makes it a great place for new and emerging information technology, and forward-thinking hotel owners and managers are always looking for smart equipment and software to invest in.

Nick Nikolis is working in Atlantica Hotels and Resorts as IT manager in Rhodos. Atlantica Hotels and Resorts is a Europe Hotels chain currently offering lodging services in Cyprus, Greece, and Egypt.

Source: EzineArticles.com



Send us your ideas and we will send you \$25!

**What extra security measures have been put in place
at your property in the past year?**

*E-mail or fax us—see the back page for contact information.
Please include your full name, property name, and address.*

HR news



Katie Snider
Human Resources Editor

Tools to Verify Employment

Eligibility and Avoid SSN Mismatches

New federal rules released August 10, 2007, increase the potential for fines and criminal prosecution for employing illegal immigrants. The immigration crackdown and the substantial fines that may result from employing undocumented workers make it more important that employers have a reliable way to check to see if their employees are in this country legally.

The federal government offers employers several options for verifying their workers' names and Social Security numbers (SSN) and validating work eligibility. Performing such a check can help an employer prove due diligence in the case of an employment audit. It is critical to keep a record of the steps taken to verify workers' eligibility to work because employers who make a good faith effort to comply are less likely to be penalized if an illegal worker is found to be working for them.

Free government programs include the Social Security Number Verification Service (SSNVS), which checks only Social Security Administration (SSA) records.

✓ To verify up to five names – call SSA at 800-772-6270, or 800-772-1213. Both numbers are open for service weekdays from 6 am to 6 pm, CST.

✓ To verify up to 10 names – www.ssa.gov provides an instant response.

✓ To verify up to 250,000 names – the SSA's website provides verification overnight. Employers are required to register. Additional information is available at www.ssa.gov/employer/ssnv.htm.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) E-Verify system is also available. Formerly known as the Basic Pilot program, this voluntary program is aimed at helping employers verify the eligibility of individuals to work in the US by matching their names, SSNs, and immigration status using the Social Security and immigration databases. Additional information is available at www.dhs.gov/ximgtn/programs/gc_1185221678150.shtm. Currently about 19,000 employers participate. The DHS has announced plans to issue a proposed rule requiring all federal contractors to participate. The DHS also plans to improve the system by including photographs that exist in federal databases as well as state driver's license photos.

The E-Verify program rejects names that do not match government records, however, it cannot detect a person using someone else's full identity — including name, Social Security number, and date of birth. The DHS hopes to address that

problem with a new program that electronically transmits a photo when an employer submits data for an immigrant worker.

Employers using the verification programs must check every new hire, not just immigrants. Failure to consistently verify all individuals may result in claims of discrimination on the basis of race and/or national origin.

Expired Documents. When completing the I-9 employment verification process, a new employee should be provided with the front and back sides of the I-9 form. The back side contains several lists of documents from which the new hire may choose. The new hire is required to present a document from List A (to show work authorization) and a document from List B (to show identity) or a document from List C, which establishes both identity and work authorization.

Documents that establish work authorization must be current (i.e., unexpired) to show the present ability to work in the US. Documents that establish identity do not need to be current since identity does not change. As long as the photo on the document shows the same individual, it is acceptable as proof of identity. The bottom line is that List A and List C documents must be unexpired, but documents on List B are acceptable even if they have expired.

Source: HR Digest, MRA—The Management Association, Inc., October 2007

Maintenance news



Bill Pickens
Maintenance Editor

Hazardous Chemicals and Fire

Managing flammable chemicals can be tricky. Here are some tips to remember:

1. Know your chemical – consult the MSDS sheet.
2. Remember, 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. Think "covered" or "closed" for containers.

6. Properly bond and ground when transferring liquids.

7. Maintain good housekeeping; keep liquids segregated, organized, and safely stored according to fire codes.

8. Use approved storage equipment.

9. Never become complacent; flammables and the fire danger they present are very serious matters.

10. Remember the "Fire Triangle" to ensure your equipment and practices follow established regulations and procedures that reduce fire risks. The fire triangle consists of air, heat, and fuel. All three components must be present for a fire to start.

Air provides oxygen for combustion.

The amount of heat required for ignition varies with the characteristics of the fuel and may be introduced by a variety of sources, including electric or friction sparks, open flame, or heating elements.

Fuel is any substance that will sustain combustion after the initial application of heat to start it: paper, wood, plastic, fabric, natural or bottled gas; the vapors from gasoline, kerosene, diesel fuel, butane, etc.; cooking oil, or nail polish remover.

Removing any one leg of the fire triangle stops a fire from starting. Safety equipment used for storing, transporting, or dispensing flammable liquids is designed to control one or more legs of the fire triangle: containing the liquid fuel, dissipating heat, or closing out oxygen.

2009 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 in the coming months.

The Americas Lodging Investment Summit
Jan. 26 – 28; San Diego, CA; www.ahla.com

33rd Hotel, Motel & Restaurant Supply Show of the Southeast
January 27 – 29; Myrtle Beach, SC; www.hmrsss.com

The 2009 Hospitality Law Conference
February 9 – 11; Houston, TX; www.hospitalitylawyer.com

Upper Midwest Foodservice & Lodging Show (UP Show)
February 23 – 24; Minneapolis, MN; www.upshowonline.com

15th Annual Minnesota Monthly Food & Wine Experience
Feb. 28 – March 1; Minneapolis, MN; www.foodwineshow.com

Nightclub & Bar Convention and Trade Show
March 1 – 4; Las Vegas, NV; www.ncbshow.com

Semi-Annual CHART Hospitality Training Conference
March 7 - 10; Portland, OR; www.chart.org

AH&LA Legislative Action Summit
March 16 – 17; Washington D.C.; www.ahla.com

National HR in Hospitality Conference & Expo
March 17 – 19; Lake Buena Vista, FL; www.hrinhospitality.com

Quick Quotes

The journey not the arrival matters.

— T.S. Eliot

*To travel is to discover that everyone is wrong
about other countries.*

— Aldous Huxley

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Check Out

Your feedback, suggestions, stories, and ideas are what make the pages of this newsletter interesting and useful to everyone in the hospitality field. Please take a moment to jot down your thoughts. Send your responses to:

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Jim Leahy

Letter from the Chairman

Dear Friends,

Lately I seem to be spending time with people who are struggling with issues like an adult child who is an alcoholic or a baby born with birth defects.

The questions that arise are: Why me? Why do these "defects" exist? Why do suffering, drug abuse, disease, poverty and intolerance exist?

Somehow, one or another of life's problems seem to affect most families in every nation over every generation since the beginning of time. Why would a loving God permit it? Could this loving God be causing it?

I sometimes find it helpful to start with the question: Why am I given the "gift" of this (problem)? Then I can look at how I've grown and changed because of it.

It all seems to get back to why we exist, the purpose of our lives.

If the reason for human existence is to create the beautiful life, amass possessions, one-up our neighbor, and be able to indulge in our amusement, wealth, selfishness and power, then these trials and difficulties have no meaning.

If, however, the purpose of my life is to create within myself a person of compassion, kindness, character, and love, then these difficulties seem to have purpose.

Without problems in my life, would I have more time and money to indulge myself? Would I be more self-centered, more focused on my entertainment and my glorification? Would I be as understanding, tolerant and loving?

In looking back over my own life, it seems that personal growth occurred most often when my self esteem was lowest. When I felt vulnerable, hurt, or in need, I was most likely to grow in my sensitivity to others. In the sorrows and struggles of life we find our compassion and humanity.

In my next 2 or 3 newsletters, I'll list some ways that we can cope with our difficulties. I'll talk about how to deal with a world that's unpredictable, scary, or even threatening.

Our lives have meaning. There is a reason for each of us to be here. We are gifts to one another.

Love,

Jim

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