



CHECK-IN

Focusing on issues important to all members of the Hospitality Industry

Check This Out

- ✓ **Free Wi-Fi is hot!** Good beds and a hot breakfast are still important to guests, but the most desired amenity today is free wireless internet access, according to a recent survey by J.D. Power and Associates.
- ✓ **Did you know that 11,000 baby boomers a day will turn 65 for the next 19 years?** Sure, it seems like just a lot of numbers, but they can add up to success in the next few years for savvy hoteliers. Focusing some of your marketing efforts on Boomer travelers will benefit your business, since they like to travel and will continue to spend an average of \$3,300 annually on leisure travel. Even though they have been affected by the recession, they are still the wealthiest and the most active senior consumer segment.
- ✓ **You can really get away from it all** at some of the world's most remote hotels. For example, to get to one lodge in Australia, you must hop on a chartered plane, drive through the Outback, then cruise down a river before arriving at the property. If you're in Peru, you might consider a private retreat on a private island in the middle of Lake Titicaca. There are no cars, phones, or TVs, but there is a 24-hour butler! Then there is an undersea lodge in Key Largo, Florida, where guests can actually take the plunge! To get to your room, you have to scuba dive over 20 feet to what was once an underwater laboratory.
- ✓ **I don't think so!** As much as you love to please your guests, here's one request that just couldn't be fulfilled at a resort in New York: a guest asked for his fireplace to be changed from gas-burning to wood-burning...right away!

Do's and Don'ts of Hotel Technology

DO...

- ◆ Have the staff who do in-room check-in offer to help guests connect their computer to the room's broadband connection
- ◆ Clearly display broadband charges, if your hotel has any
- ◆ Have plenty of power sockets by the desk
- ◆ Have an emergency flashlight in the guest room
- ◆ Have a CD/DVD lending library if you have such a player in the room
- ◆ Make the lighting in the bathroom sufficiently bright and natural enough for doing makeup
- ◆ Have an illuminated makeup mirror in the bathroom
- ◆ Have a simple but easy-to-read digital clock in the bathroom
- ◆ Have easily accessible power sockets at both the left and right side of the bed
- ◆ Check the noise of the fan coil unit in the guest room
- ◆ Have a shelf in the bathroom where guests can place their mobile phone/PDA
- ◆ Sleep and work in your own guest room from time to time and see how comfortable and practical it really is
- ◆ Install a power socket inside your guest room safe to charge items while locked away
- ◆ Remember that guests trust their cell phones to wake them up, so provide enough space for the phone and charger on the bedside table
- ◆ Monitor what is written about your property in *TripAdvisor* and other websites

DON'T...

- ◆ Use Walkie-Talkies in public areas without discreet earpieces
 - ◆ Provide a bedside clock that makes a ticking sound
 - ◆ Charge for local phone calls unless you really have to
 - ◆ Make it difficult to use a mouse on the desk by having one with a glass surface
 - ◆ Charge for Wi-Fi use in banquet and meeting rooms, if the guest already paid for use in their room
- 
- ◆ Charge exorbitant rates for printing or copying in your Business Center
 - ◆ Issue replacement room keys without first seeing a valid photo ID
 - ◆ Print folios – ask guests if you can email them (saves paper costs!)
 - ◆ Assume your backup power generator will auto-start in the event of a power failure. Test it.
 - ◆ Put “last updated...” on your website if you don't do it frequently
 - ◆ Put a chair at the desk which is uncomfortable to sit in, even if it looks nice
 - ◆ Just rely on technology to operate your business – it will fail and at the worst possible time. Make sure you have a contingency plan in place for ALL systems and test it periodically.

Source: Terence Ronson, Pertlink Ltd., www.pertlink.net

We Love Hearing From You!

We really had some fantastic responses to our question about rewarding and retaining your best employees.

Katrina Campbell, Owner of the Falls Motel in Thompson Falls, MT, writes: "We want our housekeeping staff to know how important the work they do is to the customer. Every time a customer writes a positive comment card, we post it on our "Brag Board," a large bulletin board we keep in the housekeeping office. We reinforce the idea that they are actually a part of the marketing team and positive comments are guarantees that those customers will come back. Our staff has commented that this 'little thing' makes them feel proud of their job and more invested in the company." Thanks, Katrina!

Jay Lloyd, General Manager of the Suites at Hershey, PA, has some great

ideas too: "We're fortunate enough to have a small staff where we can break into two or three groups. Myself and our assistant general manager take each group out for dinner each quarter. We use this time to review what successes we had in the last quarter and what we could have done better. We also issue the 'Employee of the Quarter' award. Each staff member votes on this award and the winner gets a \$150 gift card. The employees feel empowered since they vote for the winner; they get to vote on which restaurant will host our next dinner."

Then **Annette and Ron Fallaha of the Fall Inn to Nature Bed & Breakfast in Flagstaff, AZ**, provided these suggestions: "We send our employee home sometimes with a meal. One time we hosted a jewelry party and when she picked out something she really wanted, we surprised her and gave it to her as a

gift. When there are unopened bottles of wine or snacks that are left by guests, we let her take them home."

And lastly, but certainly not least, **Lorraine Worrell, Property Director of Suffolk Family YMCA in Suffolk, VA**, writes: "I have been blessed to have several tenured staff in my department. They are constantly surprising me with their commitment and hard work to ensure each of our members are treated special."

"I use several methods to make sure my employees know how much I appreciate them. I create computer-generated cards that read something like this: 'No one 'snickers' at a clean facility, thank you for your hard work' or 'You are a 'mint' to work with, we are

continued on next page



Bill Pickens
Maintenance Editor

Protect Your Property from Bedbugs

Whether you have had a bedbug infestation at your property or not, our industry has been affected by all the negative publicity about bedbugs. The problem continues to grow and should be addressed by every property regardless of size or location. There are several methods available to eradicate these pests, and then to prevent them from returning. Taking a multi-layered approach using a combination of methods is the most effective.

For example, fully encasing your mattresses, box springs and pillows will help prevent infestations, which protects both your guest and your bedding investment. If you already have a problem, encasements are a cost-effective solution when used on already compromised bedding, because they trap bedbugs and prevent their further migration to other areas.

Maintenance News

Disposal bags can help prevent the spread of bedbugs when moving any affected beds off the property. Without encasing them first, you may be moving the bugs throughout the property which only increases the problem.

Heat is an enemy of bedbugs. According to scientific resources, temperatures of 120° or hotter will kill both the bedbugs and their eggs. An eco-friendly method is to use steam to treat the rooms. Use a steam cleaning system to apply the steam directly to most surfaces. Concentrate specifically on the tufts, folds, and edges of the mattresses, then treat the rest of the room, including baseboards, molding and floorboards. And don't forget the headboards, picture frames and the draperies. Treat not only the room with the bedbugs, but the surrounding rooms too, since the bugs may have spread to those rooms through cracks and crevices.

Chemicals are another effective way to treat bedbugs. There are many options available. Sprays are the most common. Foggers are also

available. Again, it is important to treat the entire area.

Other more unusual tools for fighting bedbugs include:

- ◆ Barriers to keep bedbugs from crawling up legs of beds and furniture
- ◆ Dissolvable laundry bags for transporting contaminated linens and other items
- ◆ Monitors to track movement of bedbugs in an area
- ◆ There are even trained dogs that can be used to detect infestations

In addition, many reputable services are available that can treat your property.

Learn about different options and keep informed on the latest developments in eradication technology. Be proactive in the battle. Train your staff to inspect rooms for signs of bedbugs. Consider appointing a bedbug control officer to coordinate and monitor your efforts. It's always easier to treat the problem earlier than later. We can win this fight!

blessed to have you' or 'It is such a 'joy' to have you on my team. Enclosed will be a Snickers®, York® Peppermint Pattie or Almond Joy® candy bar.

"Sometimes it's the little things that make the biggest difference. Another method I use to reward my staff is by providing food at our staff meetings. Sometimes it is prepared by me and sometimes we order out. I also use lottery tickets as prizes for department issue questions and discussions. That makes the entire meeting fun.

"The main time of the year I show appreciation is during the International Executive Housekeepers Appreciation Week in September. On the first day, I have balloons around the facility and make a poster with each employee's picture, name and something special about them on it. This year I added a poster for members and co-workers to make comments about and to the employees. During the middle of that week, I present each employee with a small gift.

"Realizing that you need to have great people around you only makes you better. Putting yourself in their shoes every so often makes you appreciate what you have, too. Guests, members, co-workers and customers all benefit from the work we do. It is a pleasure making sure that they have the environment to be productive in whatever capacity they work."

A big thank you to everyone for your wonderful ideas! Keep on sending them and we'll send you a check for \$25.



Katie Snider
HR Editor

Human Resources News

Building Morale on a Budget

Is your company's morale suffering because there is no projected year-end bonus for employees? Or maybe your organization needs to trim back in other areas. The economic picture is gradually improving, but the need for caution is still a wise option, so it may be time to rethink your motivational strategies.

Money is not everything. In fact, studies show that money is not the best employee motivator. Some of these tried-and-true strategies are easy on the budget and raise morale so that employees AND your business will benefit:

Praise. Other than giving a pat on the back (which, by the way, is a great motivator), what else can we do? Try publicly acknowledging exceptional performance, perhaps at an all-company meeting or on a prominently located "Wall of Fame." Allow employees to nominate fellow employees for recognition.

Feed employees cake. The way to an employee's heart is through his/her stomach, right? Maybe not, but if a group has performed exceptionally well, do not underestimate the power of food. Donuts, a pizza lunch and sodas at breaktime are all low-cost ways to say "thanks" or "good job."

Promote promotions. If someone receives a promotion, but you're not able to immediately pay the salary increase that would typically accompany a promotion, try another type of reward. Call the local newspaper and have the

promotion announced in the business section. Typically, there is no cost, and the employer has just made public recognition of the person's achievement and increased the organization's visibility at the same time. After all, who doesn't like to see their name in lights?

Write a note. Include a note in an employee's personnel file commending the individual for a job well done. While you're at it, send the employee a note of thanks as well. A few moments to put gratitude in black and white can mean a great deal.

Strengthen your coaching and mentoring programs. Your willingness to invest in the future of employees speaks volumes. It tells employees you are interested in their success, as well as the future success of the organization.

What do these ideas have in common? Recognition! All these ideas focus on acknowledging the employees and their hard work. Recognizing employees tells them they are valued and appreciated, which can be as effective a currency as cash in a down economy!

After trying some of the above ideas, find which strategies are most comfortable and which seem to have the greatest impact. Be sincere in your efforts – most people can spot a phony, and if overused, even the most sincere efforts lose their impact.

Morale building and motivational strategies do not have to be complicated or expensive. Keep it simple and sincere, you'll reap the benefits of employee satisfaction.

Source: *HR Digest*, MRA–
The Management Association, Inc.,
October 2010



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

Is your property planning any new initiatives to capture more business in 2011?

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

Spring 2011 Calendar

Find out what's new and what's happening in the industry by attending a trade show or conference. Here are some events scheduled in the coming months.

The Americas Lodging Investment Summit

January 24 - 26; San Diego, CA; www.alisconference.com

Hotel, Motel & Restaurant Supply Show of the Southeast

January 25 - 27; Myrtle Beach, SC; www.hmrsss.com

BITAC Food & Beverage 2011

January 30 - February 1; Hollywood, FL; www.bitac.net

CHART's 81st Semi-Annual Hospitality Training Conference

February 5 - 8; Lake Buena Vista, FL; www.chart.org

2011 Hospitality Law Conference

February 9 - 11; Houston, TX; www.hospitalitylawyer.com

Hotel Association of Canada Annual Conference

March 7; Toronto, Canada; www.hacconference.ca

Nightclub and Bar Convention and Trade Show

March 7 - 9; Las Vegas, NV; www.ncbshow.com

HFTP's Development Conference

March 14 - 15; Las Vegas, NV; www.hftp.org

Quick Quotes

The world is a book and those who do not travel only read one page.

— St. Augustine

✓ 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,

Dealing with "problem people" is something we'd all like to avoid. Yet those of us who spend our lives serving others can't very well choose which guests we'll help. How do we handle "know-it-alls" who are wrong, those with an attitude problem, people who expect absolute perfection, or people who seem mean spirited? Wouldn't it be nice if we could just erase them from our experience?

Since we can't eliminate them, let's figure out how to deal with them in a kind, caring, professional way.

First, show them understanding and patience. Look them in the eye. Speak slower, not faster. Show interest in their issue by listening sympathetically. Don't interrupt. Their problem is THEIR problem, not yours. You don't have to feel anger or frustration.

If you find yourself starting to feel anger or resentment, take a deep breath and let it out slowly. Keep yourself in control. Slow down your speech. Showing anxiety or emotion could heighten their emotion. Let them talk. Often they just want to get something off their chest. Give them your undivided attention.

Acknowledge their feelings! Say "you must feel (angry, frustrated, or whatever emotion they are expressing)". This starts to move them from the emotion to logic, so they can start listening to solutions. Don't offer a solution while they are still expressing the emotion. Acknowledge the importance of the occurrence to them.

If appropriate, offer an apology. Avoid the blame game and finger pointing. If you need more information, ask for it respectfully. Use words like "I didn't understand what you meant when you said..." or "Please help me understand...". Assure them that you will do your best to resolve the situation. Be willing to ask another person for help.

When the issue is finally settled, identify the root cause of the problem: communication, training or processes, and try to see that it is corrected. Don't dwell on the incident. Never talk about it to other guests or friends outside the hotel. Promptly forgive those involved and move on, confident that you're better able to handle the next "event."

Love,

If you want to read any of Jim's previously published letters, go to www.americanhotel.com ▶ Check-In.

Thanks for your letters, Jim!

The newsletter has a lot of good info, but the commentary from Jim Leahy moved me on a personal level so much that I shared it at our weekly staff meeting. I just wanted to extend my gratitude and thanks for your newsletter. I look forward for more to come.

— **Michael Kenner, Executive Housekeeping Manager, Embassy Suites Washington DC - Downtown**

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