



CHECK-IN

Focusing on issues important to all members of the Hospitality Industry

Check This Out

✓ Everything old is new again.

Boutique lodging is hot right now in Chicago, and many of the city's newest properties are gut rehabs of buildings designed and built during the 1920s and 1930s. These hotels average fewer than 225 rooms and may be independently owned or affiliated with national chains, but that affiliation is downplayed as hotels try to avoid the cookie-cutter look. Other cities are experiencing a "boutique boom" right now, including Indianapolis, Columbus and Cleveland.

✓ Suite fitness – now there's no excuse not to exercise!

Some hotels are creating special suites for fitness-minded guests who desire more privacy. These fitness suites, which have treadmills, elliptical machines, weights and more, feature flat screen TVs and wet bars, as well as all the usual hotel room amenities. Some hotels have even gone a step further and remodeled the bathrooms to provide large soaking tubs and rainforest showers. The suites, of course, command a premium rate – after all, fitness isn't free!

✓ Roughing it, in style.

Next time your guests are looking for an exciting experience and you're looking to charge a higher rate, invite them to sleep on the roof (weather permitting, of course)! The Affinia Hotel in Chicago is charging \$10,000 a night for the "Inside Out Suite" which includes a private butler and a customized dining experience, complete with champagne. While you might not want to charge as much, it might be fun to adapt the idea to your property and see what happens.

A Tale of Two Marketing Attempts

As a consultant, I travel a lot. One of the slim benefits of being away from my home and family for extended periods of time is that I rack up a ton of points at hotel chains. As a result, I've attained premium status at two of the hotels that I frequently visit. I'm not looking to throw either one under the bus, so I'll refer to them anonymously as Hotel A and Hotel Z.

Interestingly enough, I typically make an effort to attempt to stay at Hotel Z, sometimes going out of my way to accrue those valuable points. Whereas, with Hotel A, I visit when conferences are booked there, or when clients have a preferred provider. Yet, what I've noticed is that these two chains treat me entirely differently in their marketing approaches. I recently booked a room only days before my arrival (which I frequently do, being a business traveler) and they each delivered a different experience. Keep in mind that both hotels send me emails and promotions on a regular basis, almost to the point of too many messages. But I still allow them to bombard me and haven't relegated them to spam yet, because once in a while there's a gem in there. In the last two weeks, preceding stays, both hotel chains sent me personalized messages.

Here's what happened:

Hotel A: I booked a room just days before my arrival and was pleasantly surprised when a day or so later I received a message from the senior rooms controller welcoming me back to the hotel (I stayed there previously this year). The email was addressed to me by name and the message read: "As a valued [status] Member, I want to personally welcome you. I am delighted to once again be your hotel ambassador during your

stay at [hotel name and location omitted]. We would be delighted to fulfill the special requests that you noted on your reservation. Please reply to this email with any request updates."

Wow! How cool is this...special requests? I could have my favorite beverage waiting for me or some mints on my pillow...whatever I wanted! I'm special! While this is how I felt, I didn't actually request anything special, but did take note of the personal, thoughtful gesture.

Hotel Z: Again, I booked just days in advance and received a follow-up message of an entirely different nature. The note was addressed to me by name (which for the record, I appreciate over "Dear Valued Customer"), but this one from the hotel general manager read: "It is my pleasure to confirm your reservation at [hotel name omitted] and we look forward to welcoming you back to an exceptional experience in [location omitted]. As a [status] member, you can, if you should desire to, upgrade to our executive [description omitted] view room for an additional [price omitted]. Guests taking advantage of this offer will receive 2,000 bonus points as a token of our esteem. More details may be found by clicking the box on the right."

OK, I already paid more than I wanted for this room, but here the hotel is trying to upsell me to the "executive experience." Now, I enjoy being treated like an executive, but I wasn't about to succumb to this marketing tactic just to fork over more money.

The motivation behind both of these messages was entirely the same – to upsell me so that they can squeeze more dollars from my wallet. I get that. But they each went about it differently.

Continued inside...

Choosing the Proper Matting is Key to Effective Hard Floor Maintenance

Differences in materials, construction and cleaning all play an important role in choosing the right matting for your property.

Mats used in the past consisted of face fabric fibers – such as polypropylene and olefin – and vinyl backings.

While these materials are still available and in use today, many manufacturers are producing mats made of recycled content with fabric faces of 100% polyethylene terephthalate (PET) – or polyester reclaimed from plastic drink bottles – and rubber backings made from recycled tires. The benefit is, of course, that the products are environmentally friendly, which makes them a more responsible choice. All types of recycled mats are available – outdoor mats, antifatigue mats, safety mats and kitchen mats — even mats with your business logo.

Many manufacturers are also promoting recycling programs that allow you to return your old, worn out, rubber-backed mats to them, and then they will certify that these mats won't go to a landfill and will be recycled for use in new mats or bio-fuel.

Select The Proper Length

In many instances, there is simply not enough matting in place at a property to effectively capture soil and water, so when selecting matting, be sure to follow The Carpet and Rug Institute (CRI) guidelines for best results: a minimum of 8 to 12 feet of matting should be in place at entrances before any person walks onto a bare floor surface. In the Northeast, you should use a minimum of 20 feet of matting to effectively capture soil and moisture.

Most manufacturers now recommend high-performance, 3-mat systems for most properties.

These systems include a scraper mat for use outdoors and a scraper/wiper mat for use indoors followed by a wiper/finishing mat.

Mats can be color coordinated to match your décor and produced using recycled content to suit your green business initiatives.

Construction Is An Important Consideration



It's a fact – a mat that features a permanent, bi-level surface will hold and store more soil and moisture than a traditional nylon or ribbed olefin mat.

This helps prevent soil and moisture from being tracked into the building and helps reduce slips and falls by providing a clean, dry floor surface.

Use of a bi-level entrance mat will save you money on labor and materials in the long run, since it keeps your floor clean and shiny longer, which in turn, extends the time between floor refinishing.

Best Cleaning Methods

High-performance mats do require a little extra cleaning effort, but you make up for this through cost savings; by not using high-performance mats where necessary, you risk extra expenditures in floor maintenance, such as frequent stripping and refinishing.

Mats can be cleaned several ways. For best appearance, vacuum at least once daily, and more frequently in high-traffic areas. Doing so prevents soil from building up inside the mat, making removal at the end of the day easier and less time-consuming.

Periodically, it's beneficial to use carpet extractors, which will remove accumulated soil, mud and moisture from mats – especially on sloppy winter days.

Finally, a pressure washer is a great machine to use when it comes time to refresh your mats. Pressure washers can remove salt, sand and soil that accumulates during the winter months.

Cost Considerations

When choosing matting and floor care equipment, cost is always an important consideration.

For example, you can purchase high-performance floor mats that will save you labor and material costs in the long run by extending the time between floor refinishing.

Or, you can purchase floor mats that will initially cost less, but will require floors to be refinished more frequently. Remember, whatever you decide, the old business adage – “pay me now or pay me later” – applies.

We Missed Hearing From You!



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

*Did you ever have a special
problem with a guest?*

How did you solve it?

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



Katie Snider
HR Editor

The Case for Informal Learning

We've recently seen some ups and downs in the unemployment numbers. Regardless, millions of Americans remain unemployed. Contributing to this is the post-recession reality of organizations adjusting to doing the same amount of work – or even more work – with fewer employees than they needed two or three years ago. It doesn't appear this will change anytime soon.

When organizations downsized a couple years ago, the contributions of each remaining employee stood out and became incrementally more critical to the success of the organization. Gaps in skills and competencies also had far greater impact on the organization's ability to succeed. In today's challenging business world, successful organizations must respond quickly to ever-changing market conditions and be ready to rapidly seize new opportunities. Your workforce must be primed to continuously learn, apply that learning, innovate and continuously improve. Of course, traditional instructor-led classroom training is a tried-and-true method that formally accomplishes some learning and development objectives. On the rise is something called informal learning, that complements and enhances the formal learning process.

Informal learning is any learning or knowledge transfer that takes place that is not instructor-led and that causes employees to apply the information and change how they think about or do something. It is often embedded in workplace interactions and happens subconsciously. Some examples of informal learning are mentoring and coaching, wikis and blogs, books and manuals, social networking, job rotation and special projects, the Internet,

and self-paced technology-based training. Informal learning certainly isn't new. As long as there have been employers, employees have sought information about the company culture, their boss, how to complete their work, and policies from whatever source they can find. Some estimates state 90% of what employees learn about the company and how to do their job happens informally. The problem is that some sources of information are good and are consistent with the organization's



messages and preferred methods and some are inaccurate and have messages that conflict with those of the organization. On the positive side, informal learning is also often less costly than other types of learning and development activities, and it can be accomplished in smaller segments of time. For these reasons and more, organizations are recognizing the value of leveraging and managing informal learning rather than just letting it happen around them.

According to Jay Cross, the author of *Informal Learning*, some ways organizations can support informal learning are to:

- ◆ Set up wikis and collaborative documents to avoid confusion over what is current and to make knowledge available to everyone.
- ◆ Provide workers with smart phones and Internet access.
- ◆ Set up conversation nooks.
- ◆ Provide coaches and mentors to high performers and long-term employees, not just newbies and problem employees.
- ◆ Create an open database of employees' knowledge, skills, experiences and hobbies to

locate who knows what.

- ◆ Not punish people for failed experiments (if you never fail, you're not innovating).
- ◆ Remember timeliness trumps perfection— distribute information while it's still fresh.

Recognizing and leveraging the role informal learning plays in your organization's development strategy is key to an agile workforce that will lead the organization to growth and continued success.

Source: *HR Digest, MRA—The Management Association, Inc., August 2011*

Continued from page one...

Hotel A made me feel special and heck, I may have even paid more to upgrade to its executive room, just because of the kind and personal gesture that the hotel offered to me. Hotel Z, on the other hand, gave me the feeling that it didn't care much about my stay at all. What the hotel wanted was my extra money to make its upsell quota. This not only made me feel cheap, but made me wonder why I try so hard to book with this chain.

The moral of this story is that in today's world, you must treat people with respect. Just knowing my name, acknowledging my loyalty, and tempting me with bonus points isn't enough. Treat me like a person and I'll give you my repeat business any day.

Source: *John Lovett,*

ClickZ.com, November 3, 2011

John Lovett is a veteran industry analyst and expert consultant who has spent the past decade helping organizations to measure their digital marketing activities. As a senior partner at Web Analytics Demystified, Lovett regularly consults with leading enterprises to offer strategic guidance for building innovative digital measurement programs. Lovett is also a trusted advisor to vendors within the digital measurement community. His deep industry knowledge and forward-thinking perspective help both vendors and clients alike to transcend mediocrity by changing the shape of business using strategic measurement practices.

2012 Spring 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 23 - 25; Los Angeles, CA; www.alisconference.com

Innkeeping Conference & Trade Show

January 23 - 26; Little Rock, AR; www.innkeepingshow.com

BITAC Food & Beverage 2012

January 29 - 31; Naples, FL; www.bitac.net

10th Annual Hospitality Law Conference 2012

February 8 - 10; Houston, TX; www.hospitalitylawyer.com

CHART's 83rd Semi-Annual Hospitality Training Conference

March 3 - 6; Austin, TX; www.chart.org

The 38th Annual Spring Trade Expo

March 4 - 5; Ocean City, MD; www.oceancitytradeexpo.com

Hotel Association of Canada Annual Conference

March 5 - 6; Toronto, Canada; www.hacconference.ca

Nightclub & Bar Convention and Trade Show

March 12 - 14; Las Vegas, NV; www.ncbshow.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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Jim Leahy

Letter from the Chairman

Dear Friend,

You have been chosen to be a gift to the world – a gift to your world. Your world needs your energy, your creativity, your compassion and your love.

The world needs change and you can begin it. The world needs love and understanding and you must bring it about.

Every day you touch many. They are the hungry, the tired, the impatient and the “different” ones. They come to you from other towns and other lands. They come as strangers. They may not want to be with you. They may not care. But each one is in your life for a reason.

The world needs you to be a big person, a person of morals, a person of compassion, a person of forgiveness and a person of love. There are moments when no one but you can solve a problem...little things...big things.

Resolve to be that big person. Be a person for others. When appropriate, help others overcome their fears and frustrations. Give them confidence and pride. Be a light to them.

If this sounds too overwhelming for you, if you think you're not big enough to handle it, then change! Your life is not an accident. You are meant to be who you are and where you are.

Each of us must make a difference. Our world has too much fear, hatred, misunderstanding and evil. Each of us must take responsibility to bring about change. We each must become the best and noblest that our lives let us.

Be that gift which the world needs. Be that agent for change, for love and for forgiveness. When life calls, be the one that says, “Here I am!”

Love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Jim'.

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

Quick Quotes

A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.

***— Lao Tzu, Chinese Philosopher,
circa 600 B.C.***

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