



CHECK-IN

Focusing on issues important to all members of the Hospitality Industry

Check This Out

✓ **These shoes are made for walking!**

In a TripAdvisor survey of more than 1,400 U.S. travelers this year, 87% said walking is their primary exercise while traveling. Hiking and biking were also popular activities. To win those travelers who prefer to work out beyond the four walls of the fitness center, some enterprising properties are now offering walking tours and even free bicycles.

✓ **Strange as it may seem...** you can spend the night in a gas station if you so desire. Just travel to Germany and park yourself in the Gas Station room at the V8 Hotel in Boblingen. The room features a gas pump and furniture made from auto parts. Plus, you'll get to sleep in a race car bed. Vroom, vroom!

✓ **Learn to play chess or mix a drink... at a hotel?** That's right. To meet the demands of travelers who wish to stay mentally engaged and busy while on the road, hotels now offer a whole "menu" of classes for their guests. Enjoy surfing lessons in Palm Beach, etiquette classes for young travelers in London, self-defense classes in Chicago and the list goes on. There's definitely more to the hospitality business today than rooms, food and beverage!

✓ **Word-of-mouth recommendations by friends and family still rule!**

Sure, travel websites and social media are important and should be part of any property's marketing planning, but good, old word of mouth recommendations still carry more weight when luxury travel decisions are being made, according to a recent survey by Virtuoso. The most important factor in decision-making was a travel consultant's advice, followed by travel publications.

28 Best Practices for Hotel Operators: Part Two

Continued from our last newsletter, here are more best practices from leading hospitality experts:

Employees themselves don't always have to be the focus of cost containment. You also can enact savings through them. Think of your associates. They know more about the way things are working and how efficient they are. **(18) Ask them how they can work more efficiently.**

Even better, **(19) develop an open-door culture that encourages associates to come to you with best practices.**

Also, cost containment and sustainability go hand in hand.



(20) Seek out "green" solutions to increase savings and foster goodwill with your client base.

(21) Rethink the way you dispose of waste. If you sort and recycle trash, you can save thousands of dollars in haul-away fees.

(22) Replace old light bulbs with energy-efficient CFLs.

(23) Install in-room card slots that activate electrical lighting and electrical outlets. This technology is being used throughout the world, with the notable exception of the United States.

(24) Replace old PTAC units. The systems only have a five-to-seven-year shelf life anyway, and the new models are considerably more efficient and energy-saving.

(25) Embrace social media. It's the most inexpensive form of advertising and facilitates a direct connection to your guests. Here, too, you must first **(26) develop a strategy. Don't enter the space without a road map.** Your "space" will require several minutes to an hour of attention every day.

For many travelers, social media is an instantaneous part of life. They can send pictures to Twitter, post comments to Facebook, and write a review on TripAdvisor in a matter of seconds. That's why it's so important that you **(27) manage your online reputation and respond when necessary.**

And don't be afraid to give your hotel a positive social media boost. Always **(28) survey guests when they leave your hotel, and post positive comments to your Facebook page and other channels.**

Source: Patrick Mayock,
HotelNewsNow.com, 06/11

What's Your Sunday Occupancy Rate?

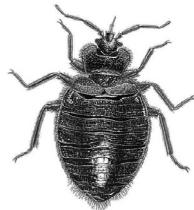
On average, over the last 12 months, U.S. Sunday occupancy was 47.3%, with a low of 37.2% in December 2011 and a high of 57.9% in July 2011, according to data from STR, parent company of *HotelNewsNow.com*.

Don't Let the Bedbugs Bite – Last in the series

This list of practical and useful things to know about bedbugs was written specifically for hospitality and property management professionals.

- ◆ Can you get rid of bedbugs yourself? It's possible but it takes a lot of work, knowledge and experience. Most folks are much better off leaving bedbug control to a competent pest professional.
- ◆ Are bedbugs resistant to today's chemicals? That's a controversial subject; however, bedbugs can be successfully killed by those products that are currently labeled for bedbugs. Within reason, the efficacy of bedbug treatments is more significantly affected by the quality and thoroughness of the bedbug control work performed rather than the products used to kill the bedbugs.
- ◆ Isn't the bedbug problem just a lot of hype being promoted by the media and the pest management industry? Not at all. The incidence of bedbugs is certainly on the rise across the country and many independent pest management consultants find that bedbugs take up as much as 50% of their time.

- ◆ Bedbugs are difficult to detect in the early stages. It's rare that a person who unknowingly brings bedbugs home from a trip will discover that she/he did so until they begin to notice they are bitten and the problem is already established in their own home. This is equally true for hospitality



locations. Adopt a scheduled inspection process to assist in early detection of bedbugs.

- ◆ People may react to bedbug bites differently and the bites may appear different on different people. Generally speaking, bedbug bites appear as raised, reddened bumps on the skin that are usually itchy. There are thousands of photos of bedbug bites available to view online.
- ◆ Can you feel the bedbugs bite? It's doubtful that you will. Bedbugs make their living by being stealthy. That is, they need to sneak in, find a suitable place to bite, stick in their piercing mouthparts, suck your blood

and sneak away. If you could feel them do this, you'd wake up and simply kill the bedbug. Like mosquitoes, bedbugs inject an anti-coagulant and an anesthetic so you won't feel the bite and the blood flows.

- ◆ A good bedbug control company will have a sound bedbug management program. Their program will be thorough and make sense to you. They will stand behind their work. They will send at least two technicians to do the work and provide you with information on how to prepare for their visit, and give you viable recommendations on what you can do to enhance the overall results of your bedbug management program.
- ◆ Hungry bedbugs seek out their hosts. They are attracted to heat, carbon dioxide and other factors given off by their victims. It's possible that bedbugs can find their way from room to room and apartment to apartment through many available pathways.

Remember, a sound bedbug control program needs to be thorough! If the program sounds too simple or too good to be true, it probably is!

Source: *Paul Bello*,
www.HotelManagement.net, 09/10

We Love Hearing From You!

Thank you for the responses we received about the craziest amenities guests have asked for.

Adam Medeiros at the Manor Hotel, Hollywood, CA, writes that various guests at his property have asked for "tickets to an L.A. Lakers [basketball] game and a helicopter ride to Catalina Island and hotel accommodations on the island. Some easier and less expensive requests have included Pinkberry frozen yogurt with fresh berries and a filing cabinet."

Pamela Lent, General Manager at the Super 8, Morris, MN, wrote:

"The craziest amenity I have been asked for came after we started up a more deluxe continental breakfast that included yogurt and fresh fruit. A guest wanted a blender so they could make their own smoothie!"

Katrina Campbell, Managing Owner of the Falls Motel, Thompson Falls, MT, says this: "Our motel is in a prime hunting and fishing region. With that in mind, we have been asked to add a walk-in cooler for guests to hang their game in; we have been asked to build a corral for horses for hunters who want to 'pack in'; and

we have been asked to add hooks and boot dryers for fishermen's waders."

And lastly, **Mayur Desai of the Best Western Berkshire Hills Inn & Suites, Pittsfield, MA**, says: "We have had two crazy amenity requests in the last month. One was from a senior couple who requested a gas mask for bed since her partner was experiencing 'digestive problems.' The other request was from a member of a construction crew who asked for earplugs and nose plugs because his co-worker was 'unbearable.'"



Katie Snider
HR Editor

Can We Ask About Criminal History on Our Employment Application?

Recently released EEOC guidance on using criminal background information in the employment process has raised issues about including a question regarding criminal history on employment applications. The EEOC guidance on the use of criminal background checks and arrest and conviction disclosures recommends that employers not ask about convictions on job applications. If and when employers make such inquiries, the inquiries “[should] be limited to convictions that are job-related for the position in question and consistent with business necessity.”

MRA – The Management Association recommends that employers continue to ask about the criminal history of employment applicants, where applicable, in order to protect their businesses from serious problems that may occur if they hire an applicant with a criminal conviction that has a substantial relation to the job for which the individual is hired. If you do not ask about criminal history on your employment application, you may not know, for example, if you are hiring an individual who has been convicted of embezzlement as your bookkeeper or accountant.

However, you may want to limit the request for information about criminal history to those jobs for which a criminal history may be relevant. The criminal conduct for which the individual was convicted must be substantially related to the job for which the applicant is applying. Typically, these jobs involve handling money or valuable company property, dealing with at-risk individuals (i. e., children, mentally challenged individuals or the elderly), driving or safety-sensitive positions. It may be difficult to justify asking an individual applying for

certain positions about his or her criminal background.

In order to protect your business interests while complying with the law, MRA suggests taking these steps:

- ◆ Develop a written policy and procedure for screening applicants and employees for criminal conduct. This should include these considerations:
 - The jobs for which a criminal history may be relevant. Analyze job descriptions to determine which tasks or job circumstances make criminal history important.
 - The specific offenses that relate to each such job.
 - Whether the criminal conduct will be disregarded after a certain amount of time has elapsed.



- ◆ Communicate the policy to your managers and train them on its use.
- ◆ Don't ask all applicants about their criminal history. Include a check box on your employment application where you can indicate if the applicant is required to provide information about criminal convictions.
- ◆ Include a disclaimer that a criminal conviction will not automatically exclude the applicant from consideration for employment.
- ◆ Don't ask about arrests that did not result in convictions. Innocent until proven guilty applies here.
- ◆ Provide applicants who report criminal convictions with an opportunity to explain and discuss the circumstances of the conviction.
- ◆ Consider each reported criminal conviction individually. Assess

the relevance of the specific offense to the job, the length of time since the conviction, the explanation of the applicant and any other mitigating factors.

Most employers in the states served by the MRA are probably already in compliance with the EEOC's concerns about applicants' criminal backgrounds. Employers in Wisconsin and Illinois are prohibited from making decisions based on arrest or conviction records that are not job-related. The Iowa Civil Rights Commission has cautioned employers to carefully consider the recency and relevance of convictions to the jobs applied for.

While it is not necessary to remove the question relating to criminal background from your employment application, MRA recommends that employers review their applications to ensure they contain appropriate language. Employers should also review their practices with regard to applicants who report criminal convictions to ensure they are treated in a legally compliant manner.

For more assistance with reviewing your employment application see “Auditing Your Employment Application – Dodge the Legal Landmines” in MRA's Online Resource Center.

Source: *HR Digest*, MRA – The Management Association, Inc., 08/12

Did You Know...

According to the U.S. Travel Association, direct spending by resident and international travelers in the U.S. averaged \$2.2 billion a day, \$92.8 million an hour, \$1.5 million a minute and \$25,778 a second.

Each U.S. household would pay \$1,000 more in taxes without the tax revenue generated by travel and tourism.

2013 Spring Calendar

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

The Americas Lodging Investment Summit
1/22 - 1/24; Los Angeles, CA; alisconference.com

BITAC Food & Beverage East 2013
1/27 - 1/29; Fajardo, Puerto Rico; bitac.net

Innkeeping Conference & Trade Show
1/28 - 1/31; Las Vegas, NV; innkeepingshow.com

Hotel Association of Canada Centennial Conference
2/4 - 2/5; Toronto, Canada; hacconference.ca

11th Annual Hospitality Law Conference 2013
2/11 - 2/13; Houston, TX; hospitalitylawyer.com

85th Hospitality Training Conference
2/23 - 2/26; San Diego, CA; chart.org

39th Annual Ocean City Hotel, Motel & Restaurant Trade Expo
3/3 - 3/4; Ocean City, MD; oceancitytradeexpo.com

Nightclub & Bar Convention and Trade Show
3/19 - 3/21; Las Vegas, NV; ncbshow.com

Quick Quotes

We live in a world full of beauty, charm and adventure. There is no end to the adventures we can have if only we seek them with our eyes open.

— Jawaharal Nehru, Indian Prime Minister, 1889 - 1964

✓ 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,

"The present" just didn't happen. It was created by all of us and those who came before us. We create our own worlds and the person we are. Through our choices, we live and work where we do, we enjoy the activities we do, and we've shaped our personalities.

Each of us is creating our own future, consciously or not. We must face three questions though:

- 1) Is the future I'm headed toward one which will bring me joy, peace and satisfaction?
- 2) Am I taking steps to create that future?
- 3) Am I "wired" to be successful and thrive on playing that role? In other words, if I get where I'm headed in my journey through life, will I be where I absolutely thrive?

If you're unhappy with your work skills, your parenting, your ability to handle difficult situations, or your social skills in public, acknowledge that to yourself. Just say, "OK! Here's who I am! This is what I like about myself and here's where I need to improve." Write it down in order to remind yourself.

If a better education is what you need, look into it, then act. If it's something in yourself you'd like to change (such as smoking, diet or exercise, start now. If you need help with it, get help!

Within our work communities is a wealth of knowledge and experience. Ask for advice on your issues. I am so impressed watching people make life-changing decisions about their lives and futures.

Our lives continue to unfold, offering new choices and opportunities. We are called to grow and become finer people.

Too often we make good decisions, but delay acting on them. So day after day we're stuck in our rut. We live the choices we made in the past, but we can become whatever we decide today. We create our tomorrows...every day.

Resolve to create in yourself the finest person you can imagine. Don't let the future "happen to you." Create it!

Love,

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



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

What improvements are you planning for your property in 2013?

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

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