



# CHECK-IN

Focusing on issues important to all members of the Hospitality Industry

## Check This Out

- ✓ **Put your guests to work for their supper?** Here's one property that does! Guests at the Crowne Plaza Copenhagen Towers can get a free meal voucher if they can produce electricity for the hotel by riding an exercise bike that's attached to a generator. Riding for about 15 minutes produces about ten watt hours of electricity. Maybe we should try this "greener" approach to guest service here in the States!
- ✓ **Build your own bedbug detector for about \$20!** Researchers at Rutgers University constructed a homemade trap using a plastic cat-food dish, an insulated jug (like those sold in camping supply stores), some dry ice, paper and talcum powder. Bedbugs locate their blood meals by sensing carbon dioxide in the air, and dry ice is the solid form of carbon dioxide. Place the dry ice in the jug and leave the lid partially open. Place the jug in the bowl which has been dusted with a little talcum powder. Fold the paper to create a nice ramp that makes it easier for the critters to crawl up the side of the bowl to their death. Leave the contraption alone for at least 11 hours at room temperature. Hopefully, your bowl will be empty!
- ✓ **These busy bees are generating honey – and goodwill.** Several hotels, including the Fairmont chain, keep honeybee hives, either on their rooftops or in their herb gardens. As the push for local, sustainable cuisine increases, incorporating hotel-harvested honey into recipes has become increasingly popular. Keeping bees gainfully employed is simply good business that offers delicious benefits!
- ✓ **Some of the most popular vacation-rental destinations in the Midwest** include Wisconsin Dells, WI; Branson, MO; Harbor Springs, MI; Michigan City, IN; Traverse City and New Buffalo, MI, according to *tripadvisor.com*.
- ✓ **Luxury hotels might not be discounting room rates, but they are offering some interesting add-ons.** Besides free nights with the purchase of multiple-night stays, these value-added extras might include a free buffet breakfast daily, a complimentary massage or facial in the spa, and more. Some resorts offer free guided hikes and tours of area attractions, wine tastings, kitchen tours and perfectly prepared picnic baskets. Or at one property in the Maldives, you can pay for five nights in a villa and stay five more for free in exchange for five hours a day of eco-friendly volunteer work during the first five days.
- ✓ **And still other properties are pulling out all the stops to drive business.** Many hotels are turning to promotional schemes, like limited-time sales, private sales for select customers, last-minute deals and lower, nonrefundable rates. LeParc Suite Hotel in West Hollywood, CA, launched two 48-hour sales, offering rooms discounted by 40% to guests who booked within the designated time frame. Guests were notified in advance of the sales via Facebook and Twitter.
- ✓ **Finally, there's some light at the end of the tunnel!** The hospitality industry is poised for a rebound in late 2010, according to Ernst & Young. Business travel will increase by 2.5% this year and inbound international travel to the U.S. should increase by 3%.

## Learn more about Clean the World



Clean the World™

**Clean the World**, a charitable organization, distributes recycled soap products and appropriate educational materials to impoverished people worldwide. Through their hospitality program, properties contribute a tax-deductible fee while Clean the World takes care of the collection, recycling and distribution of the sanitized amenities to people suffering from a lack of available hygiene products. In 2009, Clean the World distributed more than 230 tons of hygiene products throughout the world. To find out more, go to [www.cleantheworld.org](http://www.cleantheworld.org).

## HopeSoap Update

In the last issue of *Check-In*, our inspirational *On the Road* story about **HopeSoap**, the brainchild of Celeste LaCroix, brought lots of positive feedback, questions and requests for contact information.

For those of you who didn't see the story, Celeste collects leftover amenities from hotels in her area, re-processes them, and then donates them to homeless shelters and those in need. Celeste would be happy to answer any questions you might have about starting a similar outreach in your area. Email her at [celestelacroix@hotmail.com](mailto:celestelacroix@hotmail.com).

## We Love Hearing From You!

Here are a couple of interesting ideas from our readers on how they minimize maintenance costs while improving the guest experience at their properties.

**Marilynn Hopkin, Guest Services Manager, America One Vacation Rentals, Indian Shores, FL**, writes: "We manage privately owned condominiums as vacation rentals on the Gulf of Mexico. Of course, the economy has affected us in many ways. Those who do come expect more for their money and will not hesitate to ask for monetary compensation for the slightest inconvenience.

"Therefore, preventive maintenance is absolutely necessary. I started getting calls about dishwashers not working properly and complaints of cloudy glassware, etc. We found that the

dishwashers were being run without detergent because renters were reluctant to purchase this item with their groceries. Now I buy a large box of dishwasher tabs and leave two or three tablets with the dish towels. This has resulted in eliminating calls and complaints from unhappy guests."

Spend a little money to save even more money – a great idea, Marilyn!

Then **Larry and Arlene Smith, the innkeepers at The Alaskan Motel, Westport, WA**, created a long-term, money-saving solution to eliminate a recurring housekeeping (and guest satisfaction!) problem.

"Because we are a seaside motel, the majority of our guests want seafood. Whether they catch it themselves or buy it at fish markets, they all want to cook and eat their

seafood. Needless to say, that can really make a mess in a room, as well as clog drains and leave strong odors. To alleviate this problem, we constructed a covered and lighted fish cleaning station that has easy access to water and garbage disposal.

"We 'invite' our guests to clean their fish at our cleaning station, and then provide all the materials they might need, like a propane cooker and instructions on how to clean the many varieties of seafood available in our area. We even have a bar and seating area for our guests so they can enjoy their meal! Needless to say, it has been a very popular idea that has saved us a tremendous amount of time and money in room cleaning."

A big thanks to Marilynn, Larry and Arlene for their ideas!



**Bill Pickens**  
Maintenance Editor

### Choosing the Right Vacuum Cleaner

If you need to purchase a vacuum cleaner, you have many options. You want to make sure you get the right one for your property, but how do you make the best choice?

First, buy only a commercial vacuum cleaner, not a retail vac. Commercial vacs are made to commercial specifications, with heavy-duty motors specially designed for hospitality use. These vacs also have longer (28' to 50') cords that allow housekeepers to clean larger areas without stopping to unplug them and change outlets. The cords are heavy-duty, with grounded 3-prong or 2-wire double-insulated plugs. These vacs meet OSHA requirements, are UL-listed for commercial use, and have warranties that range from 90 days to 2 years – retail vacs used in a commercial setting have no warranty. In addition, you can obtain warranty

### Maintenance News

service if needed at an established service center network.

What other factors do you need to take into account before purchase?

**Weight.** A lightweight, ergonomic vac can help reduce housekeeper fatigue and injury.

**Sweep.** The width of the cleaning path, or sweep, is also important. For guest room cleaning, a 12" to 15" sweep is suitable. Larger-sweep vacs are available for cleaning ballrooms, conference rooms, etc.

**Decibels.** You don't want to disturb guests during the cleaning process. Vacs operating at fewer than 70 db are considered quiet.

**Air movement.** Measured in cubic feet per minute (CFM), the higher the CFMs, the better.

**A word about amps.** Keep in mind amps are only a measure of how much electricity a vac uses, not how efficiently the electricity is used.

**Filtration.** Filters are important because they help keep the dust from re-entering a room and from getting into the vac motor. There are many choices: 2-, 3- or even 5-layer

filtration, allergen filtration, HEPA filtration, and more.

**Onboard tools.** The convenience of onboard tools to clean blinds, curtains and other above-floor areas will save your staff time and no doubt keep rooms cleaner.

**Dust collection.** There are three basic choices: dust cups that allow dust collection without the need for bags; disposable paper bags that, in some cases, offer another layer of filtration; and cloth shake-out bags. Whichever dust collection method you choose, be sure to have your staff empty or dispose of the collection device before it is overly full, as this will put more strain on the motor, which can shorten its life.

**CRI Green Label Seal of Approval.** Granted to vacuum cleaners that meet the strict standard of the Carpet and Rug Institute's Green Label testing program for dust containment, soil removal, and carpet appearance.

For more information to help you make your purchasing decision, please see pages 1176-1177 of our 2010-2011 Buying Guide.



**Katie Snider**  
HR Editor

### Coaching— A Key to Performance Improvement

Coaching is a *proactive process* in which one individual (frequently the leader) *guides* someone else (typically the employee or team) toward *successfully accomplishing an assignment*.

**Proactive process** implies that coaching is done before the fact. For example, coaching is appropriate when new or “stretching” assignments are delegated to someone who may not have all the required knowledge, skill, or confidence. It is also useful for helping someone move good performance to an even higher level. It is typically differentiated from counseling, which takes place when the employee has demonstrated performance deficiencies that must be rectified.

**Guides** implies that the coach does not provide all the answers and does not simply direct the employee in what to do and how to do it. Directing employees is a “telling” approach, not a guiding approach and is appropriate in emergencies or when the employee does not have the required knowledge. The “telling” approach does not encourage the employee to think through the situation. Unfortunately, many supervisors and managers have become adept at the “telling” approach, even when it is neither required by the situation nor desired by the

employee. Proper coaching encourages the employee to step out of the passive role and seek answers independently.

**Successfully accomplish an assignment** implies that the employee should experience success the first time and, by doing so, develop a greater sense of confidence and competence to handle future challenges. This is in



contrast to the belief of some supervisors that subscribe to the “sink or swim” method, which can reveal whether a person is resourceful, but may equate to lost productivity, increased frustration, and poor employee relations. The coach should plan for the actual coaching discussion and have a clear idea of what is to be accomplished in the session. The coaching session can also be used to define what the employee is to achieve or to follow up on the initial coaching session.

Whether you are trying to improve an employee’s lagging performance or help a solid performer reach the next level, coaching is most effective when it is an interactive process that is planned ahead of time.

Source: *HR Digest*, MRA—  
The Management Association, Inc.,  
March 2010

### Five Steps to Effective Coaching

This five-step format is an effective way to structure a coaching discussion:

#### 1. **Open the discussion and spark employee interest.**

- ◆ State the purpose of the coaching discussion – what you want to accomplish.
- ◆ Discuss the benefits of learning new skills.
- ◆ Check the employee’s receptivity and discuss what he or she wants to achieve.

#### 2. **Get the employee’s views about his or her current performance and skill level.**

- ◆ Ask the employee to analyze his or her current performance and skill level.
- ◆ Probe for barriers to completing the assignment.
- ◆ Ask for the employee’s ideas about how to address those barriers.

#### 3. **Give the employee your feedback and views.**

- ◆ Acknowledge and praise areas of agreement.
- ◆ Point out areas of concern and/or disagreement.
- ◆ Share your experiences and expertise.
- ◆ Suggest alternative approaches.

#### 4. **Resolve differences.**

- ◆ Discuss benefits and drawbacks of different approaches.
- ◆ Vent any interfering emotions.
- ◆ Agree on goals for future performance and begin action planning.

#### 5. **Work out details of the action plan.**

- ◆ Finalize and summarize the plan.
- ◆ Get the employee’s commitment to the plan.
- ◆ Set a follow-up date.
- ◆ Express your appreciation for the employee’s feedback.



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

*What methods do you use  
to reward or retain your  
best customers?*

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

## 2010 Summer/Fall 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.

### **Midwest Lodging Investors Summit**

July 11 - 13; Chicago, IL; [www.midwestlodginginvestors.com](http://www.midwestlodginginvestors.com)

### **ALIS Summer Update**

July 13; Los Angeles, CA; [www.alisconference.com](http://www.alisconference.com)

### **Resort Hotel Association 24th Annual Conference**

July 18 - 21; LaJolla, CA; [www.rhainsure.com](http://www.rhainsure.com)

### **CHART's 80th Semi-Annual Hospitality Training Conference**

July 24 - 27; New Orleans, LA; [www.chart.org/conferences](http://www.chart.org/conferences)

### **Hotel Data Conference**

August 4 - 5; Nashville, TN; [www.hoteldataconference.com](http://www.hoteldataconference.com)

### **Western Foodservice & Hospitality Expo 2010**

August 14 - 16; Los Angeles, CA; [www.westernfoodexpo.com](http://www.westernfoodexpo.com)

### **HSMIA's Affordable Meetings® National**

September 8 - 9; Washington, DC; [www.affordablemeetings.com](http://www.affordablemeetings.com)

### **Florida Restaurant & Lodging Show**

Sept. 12 - 14; Orlando, FL; [www.flrestaurantandlodgingshow.com](http://www.flrestaurantandlodgingshow.com)

### Quick Quotes

*Like all great travelers, I have seen more than I remember, and remember more than I have seen.*

— Benjamin Disraeli

### ✓ **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 Friend,

I know a lot about you!

You like people and you care about them.

You have learned or are learning poise, self-control and clear communication.

People look at you with respect as a professional.

You handle situations and people you never thought you could handle.

You are not afraid to try new things and you adapt easily to change.

People feel comfortable around you; they trust you.

You are committed to the happiness, welfare and comfort of others.

What you do has meaning.

Strangers believe in you and look to you for guidance.

You are kind and honest and can handle hard work.

Strangers don't frighten you.

You are competent and can handle responsibility.

You believe in hospitality and want to see your property be successful.

You have learned or are learning tolerance and acceptance of those who are different.

People count on you for good judgment.

You are proud of who you are; you have self-respect.

You hope for a better life and want to share it with others.

You know when and how to take charge of situations.

Your family believes in you and counts on you.

You want the world to be a better place because of you.

And, above all, you believe in yourself, your future, and the value of your work.

I love you for being the person you are. I thank you for being there for me and the thousands of others that you serve. You're wonderful!

Love,

### **Thanks for your letters, Jim!**

*I spoke with Linda Stiverson at Camp Michindoh Ministry this morning. She told me how much she enjoys the Check-In newsletter, and especially enjoyed your "Turn Life's Challenges into Successes" series. She uses them in her devotion sessions. Linda asked me to forward her thanks to you.*

— Doug Hurley, M.H.S., American Hotel Register Company

*Thank you for a great letter! I loved your message of intention and focus on creating a meaningful life. Your positive outlook is a great example!*

— Amie Emmons, West Mountain Inn, Arlington, VT

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