



CHECK-IN

Focusing on issues important to all members of the Hospitality Industry

Check This Out

✓ It's the height of luxury, literally!

The world's highest hotel is now open for business in Hong Kong. Towering some 1,600 feet above the island's bustling streets, the Ritz-Carlton Hong Kong is located in the city's tallest skyscraper and offers unrivaled panoramic views of the world famous, picturesque Victoria Harbour.

✓ Guest care converging with day care?

Well, it happens every day at the Houstonian Hotel where a staff of 30 oversees the care of children under 12, an especially popular amenity for the thousands of parents who belong to the hotel's health club, and for hotel guests traveling with their children. The staff makes use of the urban resort's outdoor campus as well as its indoor health club resources to create a fun, creative environment for the kids.

✓ Relax...you're on vacation.

According to a recent survey, it turns out pretty much everyone enjoys a relaxing holiday sprinkled with a bit of sightseeing. Other popular types of vacations include outdoor camping/hiking trips and, for younger men, adrenaline-pumping vacations. Least popular were cosmopolitan holidays with lots of shopping/dining and trips involving adventure travel.

✓ Say "I do" without all the hometown hoopla!

Tying the knot while on vacation is still – well – a vacation. Add to it a beautiful sunset, a gorgeous beach, a day or two of pampering at the spa and quality time with a small number of family and friends, and it's easy to see why planning a destination wedding is an increasingly popular – and many times a more relaxing choice – for busy couples.

Tips for Generating Positive Hotel Reviews

So, your hotel went through a rough patch and a spate of bad reviews has toppled your ranking on TripAdvisor's Popularity Index. Meanwhile, your closest competitor has soared to the top – what can you do? Well, you can wait for guests to post positive reviews, pushing the bad ones down the list. But that might take a while, and in the meantime, those bad reviews are keeping travelers away.

Sometimes your guests need a little nudge to remind them to tell the world how fabulous you are. To that end, here are some tips for generating positive reviews.

Be remarkable. In the age of social media, remarkable means worth remarking about. Set realistic expectations of your property and empower employees to exceed them in creative and memorable ways. It's the little details guests remember: the birthday cupcakes sent by the front desk; the extra bath amenities to replace the stash in the guest's suitcase, etc.

Independent boutique hotels rank high on review sites because they provide unscripted, intuitive service. Don't be shy. Toss that script aside and be spontaneous. Encourage your happy guests to write reviews by handing them a card with review sites' URLs listed or place the card in their room. Or send your guest a text message or e-mail a few minutes after they leave, while they're still basking in the afterglow of their stay and have extra time during travel. But don't overdo it; badgering guests may have the opposite effect.

Be scrupulous. Beware of artificially stacking the deck with glowing reviews, which may set expectations your property can't

meet, leading to more bad reviews. Moreover, any attempt to game the system, like offering incentives and rewards in exchange for reviews, jeopardizes the integrity and spirit of social media. You risk penalties from review sites and traveler backlash.

Monitor and engage. TripAdvisor is the largest travel review site, but far from the only place travelers are talking about your hotel. You might be missing out on business from online travel agencies like Expedia and Travelocity because of low rankings and lackluster reviews. Strive for consistency in reputation on all platforms. Use a social media monitoring tool to track and consolidate mentions across the web and compare performance with competitors. By interacting with guests before, during, and after their stay via sites like Facebook, Twitter and Foursquare, you'll encourage them to spread the word.

Recognize and reward. Encourage staff to go that extra mile by sharing feedback throughout the hotel and recognizing and rewarding individuals and departments for high ratings and favorable mentions.

Convert upset guests into advocates. Travelers tend to judge hotels less on problems that occur than on how well they're handled. Anyone who uses social media to voice displeasure is also likely to be vocal when an issue is expertly handled. Empower your employees to resolve complaints with ingenuity and flair. Check in with guests at various touchpoints during their stay to catch issues in real-time, and never let a guest leave dissatisfied.

Source: Daniel Edward Craig,
www.hotelnewsresource.com

Maintenance News

Carpet Maintenance: Keep Spots from Becoming Stains

Well-maintained carpeting not only sets the tone for your property, it is also a good investment. Keeping up with maintenance is an ongoing process and it's best to have a regular schedule for cleaning. Spot and stain removal is one of the most challenging aspects of maintaining the appearance level of carpets. It should be performed on a daily basis, since just one unsightly spot can ruin an otherwise perfect appearance.

Here are some professional tips developed to properly treat spots:

- ◆ "Spot" a spot as soon as possible. The only difference between a spot and a stain is time.
- ◆ Always pretest the spotting product in an inconspicuous area to determine colorfastness. (See more on this subject at right.)
- ◆ Read and understand the product label before using any cleaning product.
- ◆ Wear gloves and goggles for safety when required.
- ◆ Allow additional dwell time to remove difficult spots.



- ◆ Be patient — some difficult spots can take several spotting applications.
- ◆ Remove solvent-based spots first before extraction (e.g. gum, ink, paint, and other severe spots and stains) before cleaning the carpet. Most water-based spots will not need to be removed prior to extraction cleaning.
- ◆ Agitate from the outside of the spot toward the center to avoid spreading the spot.

Testing for Colorfastness

- ◆ Find an inconspicuous piece of carpet (perhaps in a closet) or clip a strand of each carpet fiber color.
 - ◆ Apply the cleaning solution full strength to the spot or fibers.
 - ◆ Give the chemical time to react, at least five minutes.
 - ◆ Visually inspect for any color change. Blot with a clean white towel to see if any dye has bled.
 - ◆ If the pretest shows any adverse effects, do not proceed.
- There are a number of carpet spot removers on the market that work very well. General spot removers

work on most common spots and stains when used on a regular basis.

Specialty spotters are available for dealing with specific types of stains, such as chewing gum, coffee, proteins (blood, food), shoe polish, lipstick, paint, oil and grease, rust, and iodine, etc.

The key is to identify the cause of the stain and react quickly as part of an ongoing carpet cleaning and maintenance program.



Supplies Needed

- ◆ Drop Cloth — To protect adjacent surfaces from spillage, soiled towels, etc.
- ◆ Towels — A white terry or cotton towel is preferred for absorption and for observing color transfer.
- ◆ Rinse Water — To flush out spots.
- ◆ Extraction Equipment — To aid in rinsing and removing spots.
- ◆ Scissors — To trim fuzzing or sprouts on carpet.
- ◆ Safety Equipment — Safety glasses, gloves, wet floor signs.
- ◆ Steam Iron — For wax removal and hot transfer process.

We Love Hearing From You!

In response to our question about use of guests' suggestions:

Asit Waghani of The Midwest Hotel in St. Paul, MN, writes:

"One of our guests asked us to put the [local] weekly newspaper in the lobby and to have a bulletin board with notices and announcements posted on it. We implemented that idea, making that guest, as well as many others, happy."

A bulletin board can be handy to post meeting times and locations, or to just tell guests what time they can expect breakfast or dinner. You might also wish to post menus from local restaurants and brochures detailing attractions and local points of interest.



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*Any neat housekeeping tips
you wish to share?*

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



Katie Snider
HR Editor

Knowledge Transfer is Essential to Your Business

The sharing of company knowledge that has developed over time is critical to an organization's sustained success. Knowledge transfer is a particularly important issue at this time because as baby boomers reach retirement age and leave the workforce, valuable knowledge will be lost if it is not transferred to others in an orderly and appropriate way. Also, as the economy improves, employers can expect to experience more turnover as employees leave for new jobs.

Knowledge transfer has become essential in the last decade for several additional reasons:

- ◆ Advances in information technology have created the potential for the diffusion of knowledge. There may be multiple tools available for capturing various types of knowledge and without an organized system for preserving it, knowledge may be "lost" because employees don't know where to look for it.
- ◆ Knowledge appears to be an increasing part of many organizations' assets.
- ◆ Organizations have become less hierarchical and more decentralized with more employee involvement. This results in knowledge creation by more employees and does not provide for a more structured pathway for the transfer of knowledge.

"Knowledge" includes any information that is vital to the organization and its smooth operation. Often, it is information that is unique to the company. It could be manufacturing processes, sales techniques, training

protocols, recruiting procedures, formulas and the like. The secret formula for Coca Cola® had to be transferred to a co-worker by its inventor or the company could not continue after the inventor's death. A more common example is the key employee who leaves the company in a crisis when he leaves because he carried so much company knowledge only in his head.

Employers can protect themselves from loss of knowledge by establishing policies and procedures that encourage and simplify the transfer of knowledge. Some of the most important components of such a plan are as follows:



- ◆ **Integration.** The different types of knowledge that exist in an organization should be acknowledged and organized in an integrated system. This enables employees to understand the importance of gathering and maintaining company knowledge as well as how to memorialize such knowledge for others' use.
- ◆ **Training.** Make training and cross-training part of the company culture. Ensure that each employee's job can be done by at least one other employee. Encourage employees to learn as much as they can about the company and to develop their skills.
- ◆ **Ideas.** Encourage the generation, sharing and evaluation of creative ideas.
- ◆ **Procedures.** Require employees to maintain written procedures for any of their unique or complicated job

duties. This makes it easier for another employee to step in if the job incumbent is sick, takes another job or retires. Written procedures also make it easier to cross-train co-workers as documented instructions can serve as a reference checklist.

- ◆ **Company confidential information.** Similarly, proprietary information, including trade secrets, formulas, processes, etc., should be put in writing and shared with those within the company who have a "need to know."
- ◆ **Mentoring.** Encourage mentoring relationships, particularly as employees near retirement age. Retirees are often eager to mentor younger employees because they do not want to see the knowledge they helped develop lost when they retire. A mentoring relationship is one way to formalize the knowledge transfer process.

Although we live in the electronic age, low-tech methods of knowledge transfer are as important as the high-tech methods that are now available. Much knowledge remains implicit and is most efficiently transferred in person, emphasizing the importance of job rotation, cross-functional teams, group meetings, training and discussions that take place over coffee breaks or lunch. Organizations need to give considerable thought to how they will ensure the retention of knowledge in spite of personnel changes.

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

2011 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.

ALIS Summer Update

July 11; Dallas, TX; www.alisconference.com

Resort Hotel Association 2011 Annual Conference

July 15 - 18; Ridgedale (Branson), MO; www.rhainsure.com

Midwest Lodging Investors Summit

July 17 - 19; Chicago, IL; www.midwestlodginginvestors.com

CHART's 82nd Hospitality Training Conference

July 30 - August 2; Las Vegas, NV; www.chart.org

Hotel Data Conference

August 3 - 4; Nashville, TN; www.hoteldataconference.com

Western Foodservice & Hospitality Expo

August 28 - 30; San Diego, CA; www.westernfoodexpo.com

HSMAI's Affordable Meetings® National

September 7 - 8; Washington, DC; www.affordablemeetings.com

Florida Restaurant & Lodging Show

Sept. 8 - 10; Orlando, FL; www.flrestaurantandlodgingshow.com

Quick Quotes

When preparing to travel, lay out all your clothes and all your money. Then take half the clothes and twice the money.

— Susan Heller

✓ 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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Please note: Submitted photos and information are not returnable. Submissions may be edited.

Check-In is published four times a year by American Hotel Register Company.

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Jim Leahy

Letter from the Chairman

Dear Friends,

There is a rhythm to our lives. Our daily habits become rituals. We often settle into a comfortable existence and one day becomes like the last.

For some of us, that's the way life should be: predictable and non-threatening. We have our favorite TV shows, hangouts and games.

Others of us tend to go with the flow and trust that our lives will be unpredictable and fresh. We're open to new people and experiences.

Some of us seem to be optimistic by nature; others are pessimistic. Some of us have self confidence, others fear failure. Some welcome change, others are threatened by it. In either case, our lives may be just as happy.

In my experience, you who serve in the hospitality industry are likely to welcome newness in your lives. No two days are the same. The people who populate your lives keep changing. You're open to new challenges, yet you may not feel in control of your life.

How do we change our future? How do we improve the rhythm of our lives and prepare for a bigger, richer life? How do we take control?

The answers are in each of us. Sit and reflect – go "inside." The answers won't be found in other people. Ask yourself: "Who am I? What do I want in life? What is my vision of myself in my personal life? In my work life? Who in my life do I admire and want to imitate?"

After each question, listen – wait for an answer. The answers will be unique to you. There never was, nor will be, anyone exactly like you.

As the answers unfold, learn more. Talk to people who do the things that interest you. Ask what a typical day is like for them. See if you need more education, experience or advice. You may need to expand your knowledge, change your attitudes or create new daily rituals. The hospitality industry has so many opportunities!

We each get one shot at living our lives. Make the most of yours! Become the man or woman you were born to be!

Love,

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



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