



CHECK-IN

Focusing on issues important to all members of the Hospitality Industry

Check This Out

- ✓ **Clean those remotes!** A recent study on contamination levels in hotel rooms found that the two most contaminated in-room items were TV remotes and bedside lamp switches. The highest level of contamination outside the room, though, was reserved for items typically found on housekeeping carts, like sponges and mops. By identifying which items are at highest risk for contamination, it lets housekeeping staff devote more time to cleaning them, which ultimately makes cleaning efforts more valuable and hotels safer.
- ✓ **Help your guests keep the weight off?** Yes, you can! According to a survey done for Omni Hotels, 56% of business travelers would like to see more low-fat options on hotel restaurant menus, 73% want healthful snacks in-room, and 70% would like bottled water available as well.
- ✓ **While in Paris...don't flush!** On the list of the world's strangest tourist attractions is the Sewer Museum. Head deep into the city bowels of Paris for a firsthand look into the sewage system of the City of Light. Don't worry – you won't get dirty. There are grated walkways throughout the museum, but you will have to put up with the smell!
- ✓ **Want to live like Elvis?** Do it, baby! While visiting Memphis, just book the Graceland Suite at the Heartbreak Hotel in Memphis. It's designed to look like a mini-version of the Graceland Mansion, and has been designed like Elvis' own living room, dining room, billiard room, and even his jungle-themed den!

Ideas for Your Hotel Blog & Newsletter – Part 2

Continued from our last newsletter, here are more content ideas for your hotel blog or newsletter...

Act like a travel agent

What are all the things that could help to sway a visit to your area?

- ◆ Give average temperature for the area if you have overseas visitors.
- ◆ Suggest some potential holiday itineraries with maps.
- ◆ Explain what's happening at other attractions in the area (and ask for a reciprocal arrangement).
- ◆ Tell guests about specific things to do if they are coming with an elderly relative, young child or the family dog, for example.
- ◆ Write about specific festivals and events happening in the region.
- ◆ Suggest some potential holiday itineraries with maps.

Become your guests' personal local guide

Give visitors an incentive to visit and something to look forward to.

- ◆ Suggest some potential day trip itineraries highlighting local places of interest.
- ◆ Give the weather forecast for the coming week so guests know what to wear and what to bring.
- ◆ Describe local walks, with pictures of the views.
- ◆ Give guest or staff reviews on things to do (e.g., walks, days out and local attractions).

From the garden

If you are proud of your garden or outside space:

- ◆ Describe your seasonal activities (e.g., planting, pruning, harvesting).
- ◆ Give gardening tips on pruning, pest control and garden maintenance.
- ◆ Tell readers what fruits and vegetables are in season, and how you are reflecting these in your menus.

- ◆ Show your garden in all its glory with photos.

Testimonials

There's nothing like a bit of social proof to demonstrate your abilities to please your customers.

- ◆ Ask customers for their feedback, and ask if you can use their quotes. Better still, video them.
- ◆ Tell the story of where one of your team has gone the extra mile for a customer.
- ◆ Show pictures of happy guests (with their permission, of course).
- ◆ Laugh at your own mishaps or recipe failures with a funny story.

Joint ventures

Team up with others who share your customer list.

- ◆ Ask them to write a guest feature article or blog (e.g., a wedding photographer on top photo tips; your fishmonger tips for buying fresh fish and fish recipes; your florist for tips on getting cut flowers to last longer, on flower arranging, etc.).
- ◆ Ask your local suppliers for their stories, too.
- ◆ News and awards from other local businesses including complementary businesses, such as restaurants.

Your news

And of course, don't forget to blog or email about what you are up to, what you have planned, what's to look forward to.

- ◆ Mention what specials or offers you are running, and what's in it for your customers to take up the offer.
- ◆ Tease your readers with future and current promotions, offers and packages.

Source: *Caroline Cooper*,
www.HotelNewsNow.com, 05/11

Don't Let the Bedbugs Bite – Part 1 in a series

This list of 100 practical and useful things to know about bedbugs was written specifically for hospitality and property management professionals. These bits of information were gleaned from years of firsthand field experience and working with industry colleagues across the country.

- ◆ Do not underestimate them; bedbugs take a lot of knowledge, experience, time and effort to eradicate successfully.
- ◆ Keep a heightened level of vigilance to ensure you are properly detecting and dealing with bedbugs.
- ◆ Train your entire service staff about bedbugs so they can discover signs of infestation early, before it can grow to a significant problem.
- ◆ Bedbugs are “equal-opportunity infesters” and don't discriminate between properties based on location or quality, as a discerning vacation or business traveler might do. Every lodging is subject to bedbug infestation.
- ◆ If a guest picks up bedbugs from a hotel room, it's often because the prior guest brought them in.

- ◆ Bedbugs are hitchhikers and depend on people to travel from place to place.
- ◆ Don't rely on a guest reporting a bedbug problem as your first alert. A problem may be there for months before you discover it.
- ◆ Keeping rooms that might have bedbugs out of inventory will not “starve them out.” These pests can lie in wait between hosts for surprisingly long periods of time. Research data indicates they can survive up to a year without feeding in some conditions.
- ◆ As a hotel manager, you can tell guests about bedbugs without raising a red flag or making your property seem as if it is infested. Recently I attended a presentation given by a resort manager in which he discussed how he handles the bedbug message at his location. It was encouraging to hear he had implemented a well-prepared bedbug management program and was rather candid in his communications with concerned guests. While bedbugs can be a touchy subject at the end of the day, the truth is the truth.
- ◆ Bedbug litigations are increasing as well. In one published case,

a hotel was ordered to pay a significant sum by the court. This sum was partly due to the fact that there was an ongoing bedbug problem, the property took inadequate actions to address the problem, and management had the front desk staff tell guests that the bedbugs were ticks. If a property is not going to adequately address the problem, or if the property attempts to hide or misrepresent a bedbug problem, it can be more difficult to successfully defend such a situation.

- ◆ Until you have not seen a bedbug or have not experienced bites for several weeks, it's best to assume you still have the pests and act accordingly.
- ◆ How can you confirm a room no longer has bedbugs? Bedbug-detecting canines are about 99% accurate. High-tech electronic bedbug traps can also work. However, you can also build an effective trap for less than \$10. Such traps use dry ice/carbon dioxide to attract bedbugs, but remember, they may only attract those bedbugs that are hungry.

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

We Love Hearing From You!

The question posed in the last issue about your property's top amenity provided lots of interesting ideas – and answers – thank you! **Denise Luhman, Resort Manager at the Canada House Beach Beach Club, Pompano Beach, FL**, writes her property provides “bikes for guests to check out and ride around the neighborhood.”

Katie Noland, Assistant General Manager at Hotel Ignacio, St. Louis, MO, also gave us two great ideas: “We have Tempur-Pedic® beds in every room and Kindles are available for guests to ‘check out.’ Each one is downloaded with different

magazines, newspapers and even the guest's favorite book!”

Katrina Campbell, Owner/Manager of the Falls Motel, Thompson Falls, MT, says this: “The best amenity that our motel offers (other than excellent customer service!) is a DVD player in every room. We have a small property, so the systems in use at larger properties are not feasible for us. When the convenience store next door added a movie rental kiosk, we decided to install DVD players in the rooms so guests could take advantage of this service. Our guests thank us all the time for adding this amenity.”

And lastly, **Alan Moline of the Yogo Inn, Lewistown, MT**, says the staff at his property is the best amenity that he offers by far: “Everyone on the Yogo team would go miles out of their way just to help a guest. Our maintenance manager drove a guest who did not have a car to the next town on his only day off, our staff pitched in money to help a motorcyclist who lost his wallet, and more. I have seen more good deeds done by the staff at this small property than anywhere else. I'm proud to be a part of this team – they're terrific!”



Katie Snider
HR Editor

Leading Engaged Employees

Organizations that effectively lead engaged employees realize significant advantages over their competitors. Benefits are many, including improved financial results. Consider these few key practices that unleash greater effectiveness and results in your organization.

Inspire & share passion. While it's important to paint reality, even less-than-encouraging news can be shared in a positive way. Set expectations to be positive.

Hire engage-able team members. Mental agility and the ability to adapt to rapidly changing conditions are competencies that bring versatility to the organization. These individuals have a keen interest in learning and exploration – and have the ability to see patterns across complex problems.

Earn trust daily. Constant, authentic contact and a caring approach show genuine interest in the well-being of employees. Add consistency in messaging and credibility is enhanced. Engaged employees often know they are sought after – whether inside or outside their current organization. Lack of these basic skills in their leaders can be a driver for them to seek change.

Stress employee “ownership” – tailor coaching. The stark reality is that many companies no longer have the capacity to retain only average performers. Engaged team members may choose to leave if they see obvious performance issues not being dealt with in a timely, up-front, or consistent way. Organizational fit or lack thereof, is another reality of performance that needs to be addressed.

Reinforce line of sight – visualize the destination. The connectivity of daily efforts and results to organizational objectives and goals brings reality into focus. The leader must continuously share future

expectations as well as future plans for the organization.

Share feedback. Immediate, ongoing, and candid feedback is a signature approach that engaged employees are seeking from their leaders. Giving feedback simply means telling people how they're doing at work. Two-way feedback means giving and receiving feedback – be prepared to listen to what others have to say without being defensive, listening for ways to improve your own performance and that of the business. Feedback motivates people to perform well consistently. The reality is that feedback isn't often provided or provided often enough.

Communicate even more – talk and listen. As important as sharing your wisdom and ideas is, it is equally important to know when to embrace one of the most under-utilized leadership skills: listening. Leading from the inside out by realizing the value in unleashing others' thoughts and ideas fosters creativity.

Capitalize on strengths. Zero in on strengths of talent, skills, and knowledge – and capitalize on the strongest connections across them. Individuals who are aware of their strengths are more likely to perform consistently, happily, and successfully. Excellent workplaces focus on the “strengths mix” of the whole team and deploy individuals for optimal impact. Maximizing strengths becomes a positive self-perpetuating circle.

Get to know team members – model the engaged.

Check your own engagement first. Are you truly a role model or are you in need of a tune-up or change?

These suggestions along with other sound, fundamental leadership traits and attributes drive heightened engagement, retention, and ongoing commitment. Clearly, engaged employees set the bar! Now figure out how your organization can best leverage a power-packed combination – effective managers with engaged employees.

Source: *HR Digest, MRA – The Management Association, Inc., 03/12*

Protect Your Hotel with .hotel

The domain *.hotel* is a new top-level domain extension (like *.com* or *.us*), which is reserved for hotels and related businesses worldwide. Market savvy hotels will soon be able to take advantage of this name to promote their businesses online, with registrations such as *www.marriott.hotel*, *www.hongkong.hotel*, or *www.beach.hotel*. Actual registration is expected to launch by early 2013, and at least one domain name registrar is offering pre-registration which is free of cost at this time. However, applicants should be aware that while pre-registration is a good way to begin the process of buying a desired domain name, it is not possible to guarantee registration at this time. Most Internet providers will offer *.hotel* domain name registrations when the process launches.

The *.hotel* domain names are supposed to be available initially to hotel industry community members, such as individual hotels, hotel chains, hotel marketing organizations and associations. Each registrant will be required to comply with specified hotel industry community eligibility criteria. In addition, evidence will be needed to register a *.hotel* domain name. Domain name registrars may use hotel association membership lists, registered trademarks or other positive evidence for verification of an entity's qualification to register a *.hotel* domain name. So, if your hotel business has not registered all of its important trademarks, now is the time to cover that gap. Owners of registered trademarks will have the opportunity to register *.hotel* domain names based upon their registrations before open registration begins.

The benefits of a *.hotel* domain name include making hotel websites more accessible to consumers and giving them greater confidence in making reservations online and, most importantly, giving the global hotel industry improved visibility online.

Source: *Jennifer Sickler, www.HotelManagement.net, 05/12*

2012 Summer/Fall Calendar

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

ALIS Summer Update

7/9; Dallas, TX; alisconference.com

Resort Hotel Association 2012 Annual Conference

7/15 - 7/18; White Sulphur Springs, WV; rhainsure.com

Midwest Lodging Investors Summit

7/16 - 7/18; Chicago, IL; midwestlodginginvestors.com

CHART's 84th Hospitality Training Conference

7/21 - 7/24; Chicago, IL; chart.org

Western Foodservice & Hospitality Expo

8/12 - 8/14; Anaheim, CA; westernfoodexpo.com

Hotel Data Conference

9/5 - 9/6; Nashville, TN; hoteldataconference.com

HSMAI's MEET

9/5 - 9/6; Washington, DC; hsmaimet.com

Florida Restaurant & Lodging Show

9/21 - 9/24; Orlando, FL; flrestaurantandlodgingshow.com

Quick Quotes

**Travel and change of place impart
new vigor to the mind.**

— Seneca, Roman Philosopher, 4 BC-65 AD

✓ **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,

Years ago a man named Charles Adams wrote, "No one ever attains very eminent success by simply doing what is required of him (or her); it is the amount and excellence of what is over and above the required, that determines the greatness of ultimate distinction."

Our industry – hospitality – is the fastest growing industry globally. The work varies from low skilled to highly skilled. There is always a need for those of you who are capable, who work hard and who want to excel.

It's an industry in which book learning will be important for reaching the upper positions in big hotels. But an upbeat attitude, a desire to learn, and a willingness to try new tasks will open doors and prepare you for advancement.

Our industry is demanding. It operates around the clock, 7 days a week. Guests are demanding, sometimes tired, frustrated and not well-mannered. It's a fantastic place to truly learn listening skills, good manners, great communications and the ability to handle the unexpected.

You are fortunate to work here. Your best talents will be sharpened. Those around you want to help you improve. But you may have to ask for help. Look for the best mentor. Be willing to be open with your questions.

Prepare yourself for success. Read about the industry. Shower daily. Walk tall, have good posture. Greet people with a welcome and caring attitude. Expect to like each of these strangers. To each, you ARE your property. Your competence and your manner tell them what they can expect in their visit.

Be willing to go the extra mile when necessary. Your property won't be judged by guests for doing the absolute minimum, but for exceeding it! You shouldn't just try to "get by," but rather be the person of excellence, the "can do" person.

Set your goals on being special and competent. We need that from you.

Love,

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



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