



CHECK-IN

Focusing on issues important to all members of the Hospitality Industry

Check This Out

- ✓ **More good news in the hospitality sector!** Hotels are reporting a rebound in business from group customers, like companies, associations, religious groups, and social organizations across the country. The U.S. Travel Association forecasts a 7% increase in meeting and convention spending this year, which follows a decline of 15% in 2009. Hotels and convention bureaus are offering aggressive deals and packages, which seem to be driving the business, but there is reason for optimism in an otherwise uncertain economic forecast.
- ✓ **Pampering pets is just smart business,** but here's one property that really takes it to an extreme. The ritzy Jumeirah Essex House In New York City now offers doggy turndown service for its four-legged guests. The hotel hired a designer to create a memorable experience, including luxury bedding, treats made by the hotel's pastry chef, and a matching placemat and bowl set. Guests can also choose from a collection of fashionable collars and leashes when they take Fido out walking, and of course, each pet receives a gift bag, complete with logo'd fleece blanket that can be monogrammed upon request. Bow WOW!!
- ✓ **Celebrating wedded bliss doesn't just begin on your special day.** Couples are turning bachelor or bachelorette parties into multiday events that typically take place at a resort destination, like Las Vegas, the Bahamas, or Mexico. Sometimes the wedding party will all travel together to a location, then separate for activities. The girls will usually go to the pool, spa or shopping, and the guys go golfing, hiking or fishing. Plenty of partying is on the agenda too.
- ✓ **Ready for a shower? Go outside!** The Gansevoort Park Hotel in New York has a three-level rooftop lounge that features what's fast becoming a popular amenity – an outdoor shower. During the hot summer weather, bar patrons can rinse off between drinks when they step onto a platform that sprays from the floor up!
- ✓ **The next time you're in Milwaukee, stay in the pink and you'll be supporting a great cause.** Employees of the InterContinental Milwaukee have personal connections to people with breast cancer, so they started the Pink Room Project at the hotel. Some rooms have been decorated with a pink theme, and a portion of the proceeds for each night's stay is donated to a local breast cancer support organization.
- ✓ **In-the-know travelers can score big by shopping private sale websites.** Luxury hotels have been hit hard in this economy, but do not want to be seen in the market as price slashers to capture business. They have been marketing their excess rooms with substantial discounts on websites, like *Jetsetter.com* or *VoyagePrive.com*.
- ✓ **She wants what?!** At luxury hotels, no task is impossible for the intrepid concierge. A pop star staying at a hotel in Montreal insisted on drinking raw milk – straight from a cow – first thing every morning. The concierge made regular trips in the middle of the night to a farm a couple of hours outside the city in order to be back in time for the guest's breakfast. Now that's service!



On The Road...

Wanda Roland, Territory Manager, is used to getting special requests from her customers, but this one was a little unusual:

“The general manager from my Sleep Inn called me with his monthly order. He was reading down the list: three cases of shampoo, two cases of conditioner, two cases of lotion, and then he said, ‘two donkeys!’

“While I was thinking I would really need help with this order, he explained that his housekeeper writes the list in Spanish. She and the other members of the housekeeping staff call ironing boards ‘donkeys’ because in Spanish the word ‘ironing board’ is ‘burros de planchar,’ so she had listed two donkeys on the order. We had a good laugh and I told the GM that I would need to know color and size before I could order the donkeys.”

Hotel Satisfaction Up

Looking on the bright side, the fragile economy is creating lots of goodwill in the market. According to a new study by J.D. Power & Associates, guests are happier with their hotels than they were 2009, and they are more satisfied with their lodging experience, especially regarding costs and fees, reservations and guest rooms.

We Love Hearing From You!

Well, we always receive terrific ideas from our readers, and here are some more, in answer to questions we asked in previous issues of **Check-In**.

Pam Hall, Facilities Manager, McGuire's Resort, Cadillac MI, writes: "You asked how to minimize maintenance cost without sacrificing guest satisfaction. I have been in management for 30 years at McGuire's Resort, first, as executive housekeeper and now as facilities manager. We have one maintenance man, who is super and can fix anything, but it's not possible for him to do everything all the time, so we had our golf course employees help him over the winter do small repairs, clean carpets, etc. When they went back to work on the golf course for the summer, I asked if any of them would like to try resort maintenance. Much to my surprise, they said yes. For the last two months they have cleaned carpets, painted, changed light

bulbs, fixed door locks, made name tags, trimmed trees, taken over daily care for the pool, hauled laundry, repaired wallpaper, cleaned the parking lot, and more. They love it! It gives them a break from working on the golf course, but most of all, it gives them the feeling of ownership and being more a part of the resort as well. We saved money by not hiring another person, they pick up a few extra hours and everyone is happy." Thanks, Pam!

Then **Terry Butler at The Country Inn of Hoyt Lakes, MN**, sent in this clever idea:

"We always have so many phone chargers in our lost and found that we finally started selling them. We put a basket at the front desk with those that go unclaimed and offer them to guests for just a few dollars. Guests love the idea they can get a backup one at a great price if they forgot theirs. It also helps remind them at check-out if they left their charger in the room."

Finally, in answer to the question of how you retain your best customers, **Cia Sun, Manager of the Sand Dollar Inn in Gold Beach, OR**, writes:

"The one thing our best customers tell us they appreciate the most is this: We set freshly brewed coffee and rolls out at whatever time they designate. Usually, our best guests stay for multiple days, so we keep the order at the front desk for the length of their stay. Even if they need to be out at 4 am, they know there will be enough fresh coffee ready to accommodate everyone in their party. Of course, there is coffee in their rooms as well, but this allows our guests to meet in the breakfast room to start their workday together over hot coffee and rolls." Nice touch, Cia!

Thank you for taking time out of your busy day to email your ideas to us – keep them coming and we'll send you \$25!



Bill Pickens
Maintenance Editor

Maintenance News

Keep Your Property Safe from Fire

Virtually every place of business has the occasion to use flammable or combustible liquids, and hotels are no exception. To some degree, you and your staff use cleaning solvents or maintenance items, like paint, thinner, and fuel or oil to keep your property in top operating condition. Use of these hazardous materials is necessary, but they can certainly present catastrophic problems if not handled and stored properly.

A simple spark can create a fire which can rage through a hotel in no time...injuring people, destroying assets, and threatening the very existence of your business.



That's where safety storage cabinets can help...before a fire starts! Be sure to select products that are designed to reduce the risk of fire. Look for equipment that complies with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) standards, and can be used in specific areas, which most likely have hazardous materials that require safe, compliant storage.



Here are a few areas around your property where safety cabinets are needed:

Housekeeping

Recommendation: a small 12-gallon safety cabinet for:

- ◆ Cleaners
- ◆ Aerosols

Kitchen Banquet Area

Recommendation: either a 30-gallon or 45-gallon cabinet for:

- ◆ Sterno®

Maintenance/Lawncare

Recommendation: a larger 45-gallon safety cabinet for:

- ◆ Spray Paint/Paint
- ◆ Thinner
- ◆ WD-40
- ◆ Cleaners
- ◆ Pool Chemicals
- ◆ Gasoline





Katie Snider
HR Editor

Human Resources News

Making the Grade: Becoming an “A” Player

What does it really mean to be an “A” player? Does every employee need to be an “A” player? How do you know your employees have what it takes to make the grade?

Jack Welch and GE are often credited with the “A” player concept. In one of his books, Welch writes about GE’s approach with “A,” “B,” and “C” players, and how shifting the focus from the “C” player – the bottom of the organization – to the “A” and “B” players – the top of the organization – can have a profound impact on the organization’s culture. (Note: In this approach, there are no “D” players, because these individuals are moved out of the organization.) An April 2009 McDonaldland website article¹ provides a brief definition of each type of player:



An “A” player:

- ◆ Challenges the status quo in order to drive positive change
- ◆ Delivers on objectives without needing someone to hold his or her hand
- ◆ Succeeds in tasks despite deadlines, politics, and team involved
- ◆ Wins

A “B” player:

- ◆ Does what he or she is supposed to do
- ◆ Has a good track record
- ◆ Needs guidance sometimes, but not hand-holding
- ◆ Sometimes goes above and beyond, but this is not the norm
- ◆ Has the potential to step up to be an “A” player
- ◆ Wins most of the time



A “C” player:

- ◆ Sometimes does what he or she is supposed to do
- ◆ Has a moderate track record
- ◆ Rarely, if ever, goes above and beyond
- ◆ Needs a moderate to high level of hand-holding
- ◆ Has the potential to step up to be a “B” player
- ◆ Sometimes wins

In general, “A” players work within a culture that allows these behaviors. They excel at cross-functional dialogue, hunting for opportunity, and take the initiative. These behaviors influence your business’s competitive advantage.

Take time at a future staff meeting to set your “A” player benchmark. How your employees respond to this exercise is important and speaks volumes about your culture. Which behaviors will you expect? Which will you tolerate? Will you:

- ◆ Tolerate candor?

- ◆ Allow cross-functional access?
- ◆ Reward risk?
- ◆ Promote innovation?
- ◆ Accept “A” player self-interest?

How you respond to this exercise and the decisions you make sets the bar. It will take more than one meeting to address these issues, but in these challenging times, there may not be a more important exercise to do.

Finally, let’s answer the question we started with: What does it take to be an “A” player? Some suggestions:

- ◆ Be a businessperson first
- ◆ Know the finances of your business (how do you make money, who are the top 10% of your customers, and what causes their pain, as well as your labor costs per employee)
- ◆ Be outcome driven
- ◆ Focus on hiring the best talent
- ◆ Do what you promise – and do it right the first time
- ◆ Stay relevant

Challenge all employees to be their best! Deliver on being your best and you will make the grade!

¹<http://www.mcdonaldland.info/2009/04/24/culture-for-the-a-players>
Source: *HR Digest*, MRA–
The Management Association, Inc., July 2010



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

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

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

2010-2011 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.

Vacation Ownership Investment Conference

Oct. 4 - 6; Orlando, FL; www.vacationownershipinvestment.com

Green Festival

October 23 - 24; Washington, DC; www.greenfestivals.org

U.S. Travel Association Marketing Outlook Forum

October 26 - 27; Las Vegas, NV; www.ustravel.org

AH&LA Fall Conference

November 12 - 16; New York, NY; www.ahla.com

International Hotel, Motel & Restaurant Show

November 13 - 16; New York, NY; www.ihmrs.com

National Tour Association (NTA) Annual Convention

November 13 - 17; Montreal, Quebec; www.ntaonline.com

International Spa Association (ISPA) Conference & Expo

Nov. 15 - 18; National Harbor, MD; www.experienceispa.com

The Americas Lodging Investment Summit

January 24 - 26; San Diego, CA; www.alisconference.com

Quick Quotes

***Good company in a journey makes
the way seem shorter.***

— Izaak Walton

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,

One of the greatest gifts we receive from working in a hotel is our personal growth. I find growth occurring in me most often when others look up to me as someone they expect me to be, but which I know in my heart I am not.

In these moments we are called to rise above the person we've defined ourselves as. We're called to use extra patience, maybe tact, to get out of our comfort zone. We may be called to listen to another person in a way that we haven't listened before.

In the course of our work we meet a vast cross section of humanity from many backgrounds. There will be people with handicaps, with prejudices, with very different beliefs than ours. They will all expect comfort and safety. They will hope for our kindness, understanding and tolerance.

There's a difference between our growing older and our growing up. Growing older is mandatory. Growing up is optional. In expanding the way we view ourselves and our world, we "grow up." In growing our ability to handle others, we "grow up."

Through deeply experiencing life, we truly live. In the course of our work, we all meet people who seem fully alive, aware of life, interested in the world around them, and full of energy. We also meet people who seem to have given up on life. They seem dead, but they don't know it. They go through the motions of living, but seem to have little awareness or interest in the life around them. Perhaps life seems scary or threatening to them.

In the end, we face some difficult and challenging people at work. We may feel pride or regret in the way we handled a situation. We may wish we had said or tried something else. But we're now a little bigger, a little more alive. We can look back on the moment and know we're "growing up," not just growing older.

Our lives are a wonderful gift! Be truly alive! Be grateful for becoming the person you're becoming. You are special!

Love,

Thanks for your letters, Jim!

*When I look through the mail, I usually put everything that's not first class to the side, but one day I had a little time and decided to go through all of it. To my surprise, I came across **Check-In** and couldn't believe I had missed so much in this small publication. It's very informative, but even better is the positive outlook I have after reading Jim Leahy's letter. The first one I read starts out with the quote: "How we spend our days is (of course) how we spend our lives." I cut it out and it's under a clear mat on my desk. I have shared it with my employees and friends. I also received the July 2010 edition and it is wonderful! Thanks, Jim Leahy, for making my day!*

— Joanie Hulsey, Manager, Union Square Guest Quarters,
El Dorado, AR

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