



# CHECK-IN

Focusing on issues important to all members of the Hospitality Industry

## Check This Out

- ✓ **The best excuse you'll find for falling asleep in school!** Stay overnight at the McMenamins' Kennedy School in Portland, Oregon. The classrooms in this 1915 elementary school have been converted to guest rooms, complete with original touches, like chalkboards. Enjoy a drink in the Detention Bar or see a movie in the former auditorium – and be sure to do your away from home work!
- ✓ **Experience the great outdoors at a hotel?** Now you can. More and more hotels are opting to expand their offerings and provide guests with unusual outdoor experiences during their stays. Commune with nature under the stars on a hotel rooftop, camp out in a sleeping bag on your balcony, enjoy room service alfresco and even warm yourself by a firepit. Oh, and don't forget to ask for the marshmallows!
- ✓ **Free Wi-Fi is a must-have!** In a recent survey from *Hotels.com*, travelers were asked which amenity is a must when choosing hotel accommodations. Free Wi-Fi topped the list (38%), followed closely by free breakfast (25%), then free parking (18%). If you're over 60, however, eating is more important than checking your email (34% and 27%, respectively).
- ✓ **Speaking of hot amenities...** hotels are adding more special services and other extras than ever before. Some of the more unique offerings include an art concierge, specialty butlers, workout gear for rent, surfing packages that let you catch a wave with the pros and an interactive video wall, complete with live street action, news and movies.

## 28 Best Practices for Hotel Operators: A Two-Part Series

Good ideas are hard to come by. Twenty-eight good ideas? That's a whole different story. But that's precisely what attendees found during an education seminar at last year's AAHOA Annual Convention, where expert panelists brainstormed the following best practices:

**(1) Raise your rates whenever you can.** Don't wait for the market leader. If there's an opportunity to push rates, do so. **Just make sure it's done (2) incrementally.** Travelers might balk at a \$10 rate hike, whereas subtle bumps of \$2 or \$3 are less likely to quell demand.

**(3) Identifying your property's value proposition is a crucial component of that rate game.** Once you identify what your hotel does best or what amenities it offers that competitors don't, make that your primary selling point and differentiator.

Whatever you do, just **(4) don't be a follower. (5) Develop your own strategy and stick with it.** If you want to be more expensive and provide more value, you need to make sure that you stick to that strategy. If your game plan is constantly changing, guests lose any sense of consistency and have a harder time figuring out what your property is and what it stands for.

**(6) Developing comprehensive budgets is also critical.** Not only do they provide an accurate view of where you are at any given time, but they help set strategies for future success. This is especially crucial for marketing. You should **(7) revisit your marketing plan as often as once a quarter and as infrequently as once a year** to tweak your strategy or make sure you're on the right track.

While budgets are important, it's also critical to track performance

metrics. You must **(8) have aggregate, up-to-date records.** Revenue per available room, occupancy, average daily rate, gross operating profit per available room and more—they are all critical measures to gauge how your property is performing in the market.

As you collect those metrics, you should also **(9) communicate them to your team.** You wouldn't watch a ball game if there wasn't any score. Likewise, your staff will have a hard time evolving if they don't know how your hotel is performing.

The panelists spent much of their time discussing cost cutting. What's difficult is **(10) cutting the right costs.** Use your performance metrics and budget to evaluate important revenue streams. Likewise, **(11) never cut areas that affect guest satisfaction.** Look to cut low-hanging fruit that will show immediate returns, such as: **(12) reassessing property tax; (13) renegotiating insurance; and (14) re-evaluating utility costs.**

The panelists agreed the lowest hanging fruit is labor. Not only can a reduction in force conserve considerable resources, but it might also strengthen the quality of your team. **(15) Move out the weak person, but conversely, always remember to (16) reward your top performers.** Recognition doesn't have to put an undue burden on your P&L. While merit should always be a contributing factor behind any reduction in force, you should also consider new technology. There could be an opportunity to potentially **(17) replace a person or two people's jobs with a technology solution.**

...continued in the next issue

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

### Don't Let the Bedbugs Bite – Part 2 in a series

This list of 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.

- ◆ How can you confirm a room no longer has bedbugs? Bedbug-detecting canines are about 99% accurate and some clients rely on them to help determine if rooms are bedbug-free. Some high-tech electronic bedbug traps also can work. However, you can also build an effective bedbug trap for less than ten dollars. Such traps use dry ice/carbon dioxide to attract bedbugs, but remember – these traps may be only attracting those bedbugs that are seeking a meal.
- ◆ Bedbugs cannot climb smooth surfaces, like clean glass or smooth plastic. Use this to your advantage and at least isolate your bed and furniture from bedbugs by using products designed for this purpose.
- ◆ It may not be necessary to discard mattresses or box springs after finding bedbugs. Those in otherwise good condition may be suitably treated for bedbugs and further protected by suitable encasements produced for this purpose. Use high-quality mattress encasements or covers to seal bedbugs in and take away the hiding places on your mattresses and box springs.
- ◆ Except for the egg, all stages of bedbugs from nymphs to adults feed on blood.
- ◆ Some experts point out that if necessary, bedbugs can get a blood meal from other bedbugs. While rare, it is possible and it underscores the tenacity of this troublesome pest.
- ◆ Generally speaking, bedbugs can survive cold temperatures very well but succumb to heat

rather easily. Recent industry literature cites that 30 minutes in temperatures as low as 113°F is sufficient to kill bedbugs.

- ◆ While bedbugs may be difficult to find, look for the signs of bedbugs, including fecal stains, eggs, shed skins and carcasses.
- ◆ Much like mosquitoes, bedbugs suck blood from their host victims. While a bedbug will consume many times its body weight when taking a blood meal, the majority of this added weight is expelled in a few hours after feeding as liquid fecal matter and creates stains which may be the most prevalent sign of bedbug activity you can observe.



- ◆ Bedbug eggs are tiny. Eggs and first instar nymphs are only about one millimeter long. That's only about 1/32nd of an inch.
- ◆ Female bedbugs glue their eggs to hidden areas, which can make them difficult to find and difficult to remove completely, even using a vacuum.
- ◆ Bedbug eggs are cylindrical-shaped, rounded at one end with a round, flat hatch shape at the opposite end. This end opens when the baby bedbug emerges.
- ◆ Bedbug eggs can be about the same size as one stitch of sewn mattress fabric.
- ◆ A simple \$1.99 magnifying glass found at an office supply store or big-box store will make you a better bedbug finder. Of course, the better the lens quality, the better you will be able to see so, if you can afford it, go for a higher-quality glass lens unit.
- ◆ You need a good flashlight to hunt for bedbugs. An LED flashlight is your best bet.

- ◆ It's been reported that alcohol, such as rubbing alcohol, kills bedbugs on contact.
- ◆ Bedbug eggs hatch in about three to five days depending upon a number of factors, including temperature and resource availability.
- ◆ Bedbugs spend most of their time hiding in undisturbed areas.
- ◆ In a home or apartment, the top hiding places for bedbugs seem to be the mattress, box spring and bed frame. In a hotel room, the top hiding place seems to be the headboard area. This is likely because housekeeping staff changes bedding frequently, and bedbugs prefer to hide in undisturbed places.
- ◆ It seems that bedbugs do not bite where the body is covered by clothing or pajamas. However, it is possible for them to crawl underneath loose-fitting clothes.
- ◆ Adult bedbugs are about 1/4-inch long by about 3/16-inch wide.
- ◆ As a snake does, bedbugs must molt or shed their skin to grow to the next stage of development until they become adults. These shed skins are found where bedbugs have taken up residence, so their presence can be a sign of an active infestation.
- ◆ Bedbugs must have a blood meal to grow to the next stage of development, and they go through five stages before they become adults. This means an adult bedbug in your building may have fed upon you, your guests or your family members at least five times!
- ◆ It's not necessary to completely launder all your clothing, drapes, sheets, blankets and other garments to rid them of bedbugs. If these items are already clean, simply run them through the hot clothes dryer to kill any bedbugs.

... continued in the next issue

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



**Katie Snider**  
HR Editor

## Human Resources News

### Hiring From Within

When you have a position to fill, it is wise to look first at your current workforce to determine whether there are internal candidates for the position. The ideal person for the position may already be employed by your organization. Hiring from within sends a valuable message to employees – the company believes in developing its employees and that there are opportunities to advance in the organization. The opportunity to move up provides an incentive for current employees to stay rather than to look elsewhere for employment. Organizations that are known for developing and promoting employees are often magnets for job applicants.

Hiring from within offers several benefits over recruiting from outside the organization. Internal candidates are known to the organization. They have demonstrated their job performance and capabilities. It is less likely that a bad hiring decision will be made when hiring an internal candidate. The orientation and training process will be much easier than with an external hire since the individual is already familiar with the organization and has developed internal contacts. As a result, the internal hire may be productive in the job more quickly than an external hire.

In a company that has a strong internal recruitment program, management will benefit from identifying employees who are interested in advancement. Paying attention to which employees apply for openings and making an effort to learn more about those individuals pays off. While the employee may not be the best qualified candidate for the current opening, taking the opportunity to learn more about the candidate's interests and capabilities puts the organization in a good position with regard to future openings.

It is important for an organization that intends to hire from within to

establish a formal written policy for using the internal posting system and to communicate the policy to all employees. Generally, employees are notified of openings and provided with specific information about the position, including how to apply for the job. The posting typically remains in place (on a bulletin board, intranet, etc.) for a specified number of days. Interested employees are usually instructed to notify their current manager or supervisor of their interest in the job. The hiring manager reviews the internal applications prior to making any external recruiting efforts. It is important to administer the internal posting system in a fair and consistent manner in order to maintain employee confidence in the system and the organization.

There can be disadvantages to hiring from within and these should be taken into account when setting up and administering the system:

- ◆ Hiring from within creates a ripple effect – moving an employee to another job means the employee's original job now needs to be filled. The effect continues down to the lowest level jobs that will need to be filled through another source.
- ◆ Looking at only internal applicants limits the pool of qualified candidates. Organizations need to be willing

to look at external applicants when there are no well-qualified internal candidates.

- ◆ Sometimes it is good for the organization to bring in someone from outside. Outsiders may bring fresh ideas and energy to the organization. Their experience and expertise may allow them to be agents of change, where needed.
- ◆ Where the organization has a policy of hiring from within, any external hiring can result in employee frustration and distrust. Expectations should be managed by including wording in the internal hiring policy that makes it clear that the organization will, in certain circumstances, fill openings without using the job posting system (such as when a job is created as part of an individual's career path) or externally.

When used appropriately, organizations can benefit from hiring from within. It reduces the likelihood of a bad hire, is efficient, and provides opportunities for employee development and career advancement. In addition, employers that provide opportunities for advancement are more likely to retain employees, so there is lower turnover and fewer openings to fill.

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

## We Love Hearing From You!

**Thelma L. Bridges, Operations Manager of the Clarion Suites in beautiful Anchorage, AK,** provided this response in answer to our

question about rate discounting: "We discount our rooms from September 15 until May 15. We help the Food Bank of Alaska by giving a discounted rate to people that bring two or more cans of food in for our donation bin. This helps a lot of our less fortunate friends who may be



down on their luck or just need a little help especially around the holiday season. The people donating the food get in the holiday spirit and feel that they are doing their part to help someone in need. We have been doing this for over four years now and it has become one of our top promotions during our long winter months. We always have discounted rates for government personnel and our beloved senior citizens. People are our business!"

## 2012-2013 Fall/Winter Calendar

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

### **The Lodging Conference**

10/2 - 10/5; Phoenix, AZ; [lodgingconference.com](http://lodgingconference.com)

### **Cornell Hospitality Research Summit 2012**

10/8 - 10/9; Ithaca, NY; [hotelschool.cornell.edu](http://hotelschool.cornell.edu)

### **IMEX America**

10/9 - 10/11; Las Vegas, NV; [imexamerica.com](http://imexamerica.com)

### **International Spa Association (ISPA) Conference & Expo**

10/15 - 10/17; Kissimmee, FL; [experienceispa.com](http://experienceispa.com)

### **AH&LA Fall Conference**

11/9 - 11/13; New York, NY; [ahla.com](http://ahla.com)

### **International Hotel, Motel & Restaurant Show**

11/10 - 11/13; New York, NY; [ihmrs.com](http://ihmrs.com)

### **Green Festival**

11/10 - 11/11; San Francisco, CA; [greenfestivals.org](http://greenfestivals.org)

### **The Americas Lodging Investment Summit**

1/22/13 - 1/24/13; Los Angeles, CA; [alisconference.com](http://alisconference.com)

### Quick Quotes

**It is not down in any map.  
True places never are.**

— *Herman Melville, American novelist, 1819 - 1891*  
*Author of Moby Dick*

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

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guests have asked for?***

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& include your full name, property  
name, and address.



**Jim Leahy**

### ***Letter from the Chairman***

Dear Friend,

I recently attended a wedding after which I sat at dinner next to a woman I'd never met before. In the course of our conversation, she shared with me the fact that she was raised by her grandmother and became a registered nurse.

Realizing that she would need a master's degree to get ahead, she took a part-time job with Mary Kay Cosmetics. That was over 30 years ago. After working there for a year, she realized she was earning three times as much per hour with Mary Kay as she was in nursing. And she liked selling cosmetics.

She then switched careers, becoming a full-time salesperson, then a manager of others. At the time, Mary Kay was one of the few places where a woman could reach the top. Over the years she has been so successful that she has won 16 cars, including several pink Cadillacs!

I write this not to suggest that you join Mary Kay Cosmetics, but to think about yourself, your talents, interests, and what gives you your greatest satisfaction.

Think about change. Is fear of failure holding you back? Fear of criticism? What do you think you're "wired" to do? Are you doing it? If you always do what you do today, will you be happy?

I often find that it's things in myself that can hold me back. My own attitudes are often my limitations. What might be keeping you from being the person you were born to become? What might keep you from doing that which you were born to do?

In our wonderful hospitality industry, with its rich variety of jobs, experiences, challenges and even locations, there's almost no limit for you!

Ask yourself what might be holding you back: your education? your language skills? or your attitudes about yourself? You can change any of them.

You have my prayers, my encouragement, and my best wishes as you pursue your dream!

Love,

If you want to read any of Jim's previously published letters, go to [www.americanhotel.com](http://www.americanhotel.com) ▶ *Check-In*.

**Read *Check-In* online at [www.americanhotel.com](http://www.americanhotel.com) ▶ *Check-In***