

TeleGRAM

Great American Hotel Group Newsletter

Another Year Wiser

Wishing a very happy birthday to our Great American Hotel Group office and property associates:

Linda Komornik - March 1
Teresa Maynard - March 22
Diana Fowler - April 14

Around the Block

Wishing a "Happy Anniversary" to our Great American Hotel Group office and property associates:

Teresa Maynard - 6 years
Kathy Chalue - 2 years

Giddy Up

Congratulations to the following office and property associates on moving on up the corporate ladder:

Jerry Ianella - GM Garretts Desert Inn

A Laugh A Day ...



"Value is in the eye of the beholder.

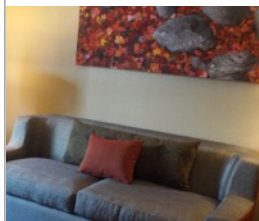
It's something people feel,

**Not something we tell
people we offer."**

"David Mead"

30 Days To Fabulous

The Courtyard Lake Placid is counting the days and watching their hotel blossom like spring flowers. It is the perfect time of year for the hotel to complete their property renovation and finish the overhaul of the guest rooms. Last year, at this same time, the property underwent renovation of all their public spaces and added the Bistro to their lobby.



Beginning on March 30th, the Courtyard Lake Placid renovation crew systematically started on the 4th floor replacing carpet, wall vinyl, draperies, furniture, decor, lighting, and bedding. Following the new brand decor package "Cynergy," which features the cool grey tones, warm woods, and rich fabrics, the hotel has taken on a new persona.

"It takes the crew about one week per floor," said GM Melissa Oliver, "and overall it has been a very smooth process." Oliver continued, "we've had guests stay in the new rooms and the positive comments are overwhelming."

Target date for completion is May.



*Photos: Accessories, Seating and Artwork
"Cynergy" Design*

Welcome Aboard

Homewood Suites by Hilton™ Gateway Hills Nashua NH announced the opening of their temporary offices and the hiring of two key property leaders.

Located at 1 Tara Boulevard in Nashua, NH, the pre-opening office will be the hotel's base of operations and sales until the hotel moves into their permanent facility. The hotel is currently under construction at 15 Tara Boulevard, Nashua, NH, in the heart of Gateway Hills, a smart, new 400-acre campus along Spit Brook Road, just over the Massachusetts' border off Route 3/Everett Turnpike.

Adam Robitaille has joined the company as General Manager. In his role, Robitaille will be responsible for all hotel operations, will focus on hiring and training, and developing strategies vital to maintaining Homewood Suites distinctive competitive edge.



Robitaille joins Homewood Suites Gateway Hills Nashua from other in-market Hilton hotel products, where he held positions of General Manager, Director of Sales & Marketing, Director of Food & Beverage and Director of Catering. In his most recent position, he was awarded Manager of the Year honors for successes in revenue generation, performance, and cost controls.

A 15-year hotel veteran, Robitaille is a graduate of Daniel Webster College with a degree in organizational management, and further holds a Masters' Degree in business administration, also from Daniel Webster College.



Jayme Putnam has been appointed Sales Manager. She joins the hotel as a seasoned sales veteran with more than 10 years experience, previously serving in a variety of sales, marketing and regional roles for various branded in-market hotels.

Putnam has a distinct reputation of producing high occupancy levels, exceeding budgeted revenues, and maintaining great customer relations. She is an Access Edge certified sales coach, and a former Manager of the Quarter.

Putnam will be responsible for coordinating and developing sales strategies for the Homewood Suites Gateway Hills Nashua. She will spearhead the development of the company's sales and marketing efforts, develop and maintain corporate relationships, and create and implement leisure and social group travel.

Spirit To Serve

It's all about the guest! Congratulations to Front Office Manager Jason Beatty for receiving a "Spirit to Serve" recognition award from Marriott.

A recent guest was so overwhelmed by the quality and extent of service received at the Courtyard Lake Placid, she was prompted to write the General Manager Melissa Oliver to single him out. Melissa forwarded the letter on to Marriott, and subsequently Jason received this award.



"We never know how our actions, however great or small, may make a difference in the lives of others." noted Bill Marriott, Executive Chairman & Chairman of the Board, and Arne Sorenson, President & Chief Executive Officer for Marriott International in their congratulatory letter. "This pursuit of excellence lies at the heart of Marriott's 'spirit to serve' culture. We take great pride in knowing that our success has been driven by this enduring culture and our core values that are demonstrated in the efforts of outstanding people like you" the message went on to state.

We join Mr. Marriott in extending our congratulations to Jason and the team at Courtyard Lake Placid!

Honey "Do" List



It was "all hands on deck" at the recent takeover of the Garrett's Desert Inn in Santa Fe last month. The takeover team was busy getting associates on board, making sure all our policies and procedures are in place, and a little vacuuming for good measure.

Suzanne Baele demonstrates her driving skills in the meeting room.

1. b 2. b 3. b 4. d 5. d 6. b 7. a 8. c 9. d 10. c 11. a 12. c 13. c 14. b

Trivia Questions Answers:

Selling the Sizzle

Linda Komornik, Corporate Director
of Sales & Marketing

Slow is the New Fast

Ever wondered why some sales people are successful and others not so? What are they doing differently and why are they more effective? I read an article recently about 2 sales people from the same company.... one immensely successful and one struggling to convert sales.

Less Successful Sales Person Strategies:

- Calling on the wrong companies and contacting the wrong people
- Saying or writing the wrong things in your messaging
- You are deleted or brushed off immediately
- You repeat the cycle over-and-over

This formula might be sales, but it is bad sales - it is insanity and you are not only wasting your time and opportunities, but you are damaging your credibility.

More Successful Sales Person Strategies:

- FOCUS
- *Strive for Maximum Impact* by making sure every single interaction with prospects and clients yields the best possible outcome.
- *Prepare for Sales Interactions* by analyzing which companies are most likely to do business with you. Look up people on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and other industry groups. Find out what they say about themselves and look for commonalities. Research the company (and industry) and find out about their challenges, goals, issues, objectives, etc.
- *Take Time to Craft Custom Messages* by referring to trigger events you have found about about your client. Don't waste any opportunities to make a connection. This will speed up sales cycles
- *Don't "Sell" - Help.* Review your client base and search for OTHER ways to help them. Focus on helping the prospects and clients achieve their objectives.

Sales is more about conversation and camaraderie than it is about the pitch. Good, relevant conversation gets the business. People buy from people they know and like. Too many sales people are focused on the wrong things (like activities, pitches, demos). Force yourself to experiment with different sales techniques until "Normal" sets in.

Happy Slowing Down!

Are You Smarter than a 5th Grader?

Here's a chance to test your knowledge about Spring! Answers to the quiz can be found on page 2 of this newsletter. Enjoy!

1. The beginning of Spring is marked by which event in the Northern Hemisphere?
a. Groundhog Day b. Vernal Equinox c. Easter
d. Cherry Blossoms e. Fat Tuesday
2. Daylight savings time officially begins at ____ (time)?
a. Midnight b. 2:00 am c. 6:00 am
3. Mother's Day is celebrated on which day??
a. First Sunday in May b. Second Sunday in May
c. First Day of May d. Palm Sunday
4. What is the first fruit to ripen in Spring?
a. Blueberries b. Peaches c. Apples
d. Strawberries e. Cantaloupe
5. What is Spring Fever?
a. Allergies b. The last strain of the flu virus
c. Falling in Love d. Restlessness and Excitement
6. Complete this saying: "mad as a March ____"
a. Madness b. Hare c. Wet Dog
d. Muskrat e. Hyena
7. Which of the Roman god/goddess is March named for?
a. Mars - god of war b. Mercury - messenger of the gods
c. Matres - goddess of the fields d. Aurora - goddess of dawn
8. Which of these flowers are considered the flower for April?"
a. Hyacinth b. Iris c. Daisy
d. Crocus e. Daffodil
9. April 1st is called April Fool's Day. What do the French call a person who is tricked on this day?
a. April Buffon b. April Imbecile c. April Fish
10. Caesar was gold "Beware the Ides of March". What date is this?
a. 17th b. 13th c. 15th
d. 1st e. 30th
11. What does the word April mean?
a. Open b. Rain c. Live animal
12. What is considered the March flower?
a. Jonquil b. Violet c. Both A&B
d. Sun flower e. Pansy d. Tulip
13. What is the April gem?
a. Opal b. Citrine c. Diamond
d. Garnet e. Both B & C
14. There are several sayings about March. The best known is "March comes in like a _____ and out like a _____?"
a. lamb/lion b. lion/lamb c. lion/calf
d. tiger/lamb d. snow storm/spring shower

According to an excerpt from this month's Human Resource Executive, Gallup cited that more than 70% of all US employees are disengaged, which in turn translates into a loss of over \$550 Billion in productivity per year. Imagine. Consider that we are asking our associates do more with less, it is incumbent upon us, as their employers to find meaningful ways to re-engage our associates. Unfortunately many of us have either embraced the notion of immediate accessibility, or created an environment within our hotels that drives home this point, all at the expense of balance in our lives. So what can we do? We need to find ways that support our associates in their overall well being and their work/life balancing. Not an easy task.



First we need to ensure we are hiring the right people for the right position. They must have a basic spirit of hospitality at their root, ensuring then that they 'get it' when it comes to providing guest service. You can train anyone in a particular skill set, what you can not train for is their nature to serve.

Secondly, we must be sure that our employees know that we appreciate them, that they are wanted, and that they are a needed part of the whole. People whom are engaged

know that what they do and who they are matters. If they know their employer appreciates them, what they do, and how well they do it, that employee is likely engaged.

Third, help them grow, not only in their current position but in their future. Training, mentoring, job shadowing, all support that you believe in them and their success within the hotel. Your investment in them now will pay huge dividends in the future.

Mean Your Marketing And Be Your Brand

By David Mead (Reprinted from Re:Focus)

A few months ago, a new, fancy auto service center opened up near my house. Let's call it Fantastic Flynn's. This place is over the top – gas station, car wash, detail shop, lube service, frozen yogurt – you could spend an entire Saturday afternoon there. Sounds great, right?

Well, the only pock mark on Fantastic Flynn's beautiful facade that I can see is that every employee has been...strongly encouraged...to use the word 'fantastic' as often as possible. If I ask the poor kid who's drying off my car in 100 degree weather how he's doing, he responds "I'm fantastic." Notice I didn't use an exclamation mark. Every time I leave, I'm wished a fantastic day. But something's missing. Something doesn't feel right. They've obviously put a lot of money and effort into creating a place that should be and could be pretty fantastic. Where they fell short was trying to mandate a culture based on a brand name rather than becoming a brand based on a culture.



The result is that it feels fake and contrived. I know for a fact that those young people don't feel fantastic when they come to work or when they go home. One of them actually broke the rules and told me he was just 'doing OK' when I asked how he was. The look on his face told me that he knew that's not the response he was supposed to give, but that was the real answer. And I loved it. We are hard wired to be able to tell when people are being authentic and when they're not. We can feel it. And we'd rather hear the truth, even if it's not as pleasant than be pleased with a lie.

I'm no expert in marketing and even so, I've learned one important thing. An authentic brand is not something you create. That's a logo (and no, a logo is not the same thing as a brand). A brand is something that should emerge from the real, genuine interaction among people, something we call culture. Your culture is the result of shared experience, shared learning and, at its best, a commitment to a higher purpose – a cause you all feel is worth contributing to.

The wonderful thing is, when connected by a commitment to a higher purpose even college kids who are working part time at a car service place can feel and truly think their job, their customers and their peers are genuinely fantastic. And when that happens, it becomes infectious, drawing their customers back for more.

This is a great article written by Doug Kennedy. Please read and work with your staffs.

What is the most important question your reservations agents should ask."

If you're like most hoteliers these days chances are you are looking to reduce distribution costs by increasing direct bookings. If so, perhaps it's time to update your reservations sales processes. Based on my experience running a hotel reservations mystery shopping business, I can definitively say that these days the majority of front desk and reservations agents offer little more than what I call "website search support." In other words, they do nothing more than what the caller could have done themselves by visiting the website; find out the dates, the number in the party, click enter, and then read off a list of the room types and rates that come up. Perhaps this reflects that their leadership has lost its focus on the voice reservations channel.

RESERVATIONS

Most of those that do attempt to sell the guest are stuck using outdated sales models and processes that were designed from the era when guests had very little information prior to calling. Back then most were looking at a few bullets of features in an ad from resources such as the Hotel & Travel Index or the AAA Auto Tourbook, so it was important to offer what we would now call a "30 second commercial" overview of the hotel's main features and

benefits. Today's reservations callers are indifferent or even annoyed at hearing these scripted details. Most have been online prior to calling; others are online while they are on the phone. What they don't want to hear is feature-dumping or a generic sales pitch; there is always a specific reason why they have called versus clicked.

Therefore, rather than starting off by talking, today's hotel reservations sales agents are more successful when they begin by asking the most important investigative question circa 2015: "As I'm checking those dates, are there any questions I can answer for you such as about our location or our amenities and services?"

If asked, they will then quickly identify the caller's reason for calling and find out what the caller needs to hear to move forward with a buying decision. Many callers have specific questions, having read online guest reviews at TripAdvisor or at an OTA website. Others are overwhelmed by the number of choices in room types, rate options and packages they have seen online. Still others have no questions at all about the "product," they only want to talk about the rates they have seen online and to ensure they are getting the best deal. Some callers have no questions whatsoever and have simply clicked to call-in a booking after doing a mobile search on their smartphone and not wanting to book with their thumbs.

This question helps agents save talk time for the last to types of callers; time that can be used for the first two profiles. It also opens the door for an engaging, caller-focused conversation that is all about the caller's specific concerns and preferences. Agents who only find out the caller's dates can essentially only sell "price." Those who ask this key question are able to "un-mask the caller's story" so that they can then provide details about what really sets their hotel apart from all of the others.

When you think about it, the rooms and suites themselves are generally very similar from one hotel to the next. What really distinguishes a hotel has more to do with its location, its amenities, services and the retail, dining and entertainment options located in-house or nearby. By training your staff to ask this key question, you will help your agents convince more of today's channel-surfing callers to stop clicking and start booking right here, right now!

Social Media - Think Before You Send

Each of us knows about someone who, in a single careless tweet, status update, or selfie . . . lost their job. A little over a year ago, a former PR Executive from a media company, who just before boarding a flight to South Africa, tweeted: "Going to Africa. Hope I don't get AIDS. Just kidding. I'm white." During her flight, the insensitive tweet was retweeted over 3,000 times and picked up by several media outlets around the world. It even spawned the hashtag #Has"Name"LandedYet, which trended on Twitter during her flight. She had only 170 followers on Twitter.

As you can imagine, that tweet earned her a pink slip and to this day, that single tweet and all of the notoriety that followed, still haunts her. Social media is an on-the-clock, off-the-clock, 24/7 reality that can and will permeate your workplace. Fortunately, the benefits generally outweigh the risks. I highly recommend that you forward it to others in your workplace and use it as part of your next social media training session. Think before you hit send.

- Excerpt from article written by Eric B. Meyer/Social Media In The Workplace

St. Pat's Day Celebrations

Many of our hotels took time to celebrate the "wearing o' the green this year. Here are samplings of their celebrations!

"Remember when going to a hotel had an element of romance to it?" "Yeah, it seems we've made the transition to action-adventure."

Roomer Has It

COURTYARD LAKE PLACID

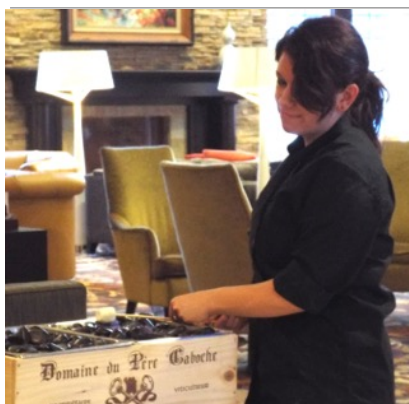


Celebrating the 35th anniversary of the "Miracle on Ice", the Courtyard Lake Placid staff wore USA hockey jerseys during the week-long reunion events. From left to right: Melissa Oliver (GM), Carolyn Bordonaro (Sales Manager) and Jason Beatty (Front Desk Manager). Hockey legends and players gathered to celebrate this momentous occasion.

HAMPTON INN BENNINGTON



It might be "spring" but tell it to our northern hotels who are still spending quality time with snow removal. The Hampton Inn Bennington sent this photo after a March snowstorm.



Courtyard Lake Placid planned a Family Friendly event by their fire pit in the back common area (unfortunately weather didn't cooperate). They had a "cook your own s'mores" and white hot chocolate with a touch of green.

SpringHill Suites Quakertown also planned a promotion and package to celebrate the day (and the

month). They ran a special rooms promotion for just \$117.17 per night, and served "green" treats and "pot of gold" treats to all their guests.



1,000 Down, Raring To Go!



On March 31, Courtyard by Marriott opened its 1,000th hotel in Walla Walla, Washington.

Courtyard Lake Placid joined the brand celebration by offering guests a complimentary "Sparkler" beverage from the Bistro, and members of Marriott Rewards program received an additional 1,000 points!

Congrats Courtyard!