

TeleGRAM

Great American Hotel Group Newsletter

Another Year Wiser

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

Gabrielle Smith - September 24

RJ Greene - October 4

Candy Grimbilas - October 22

Around the Block

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

Candace Snelling - 2 years

Suzanne Baele - 21 years

Welcome Aboard

Catrina Stith and Amy Hume have joined the TownePlace Suites in Tallahassee as GM and Sales Manager respectively.

Catrina attended So. NH University with concentration in Business and Project Management. She boasts focused experience in HR, training, client relations and accounting while working at Staybridge Suites Tallahassee.

Amy has previous experience as restaurant supervisor for Four Points by Sheraton, and also served as sales and service coordinator for a local Marriott cluster.

A Laugh A Day ...

"The hotel is full, but I'll see if I can work out a spooning arrangement for you."



A Tradition of Innovation

On November 12th, 2015 the Homewood Suites by Hilton® Gateway Hills in Nashua, NH will celebrate its grand opening event. Our grand opening theme, "A Tradition of Innovation" combines our three company's realities into one and emphasizes that the tradition of hospitality can be readily combined with modern-day, innovative design and technology, resulting in a successful hotel.

John Flatley Company, hotel owner, is a prime example of both tradition and innovation. Their yearly Flatley Challenge stimulates early-stage companies in areas of innovation and technology. Winners of the Challenge are awarded free incubation space in Gateway Hills for one year, plus the opportunity to interact with other resident world class companies. A family of hoteliers, John Flatley continues in the hospitality tradition with the opening of its newest venture.

The Hilton brand, known world-wide as an innovative leader in hotels, integrates modern day technologies with traditional hospitality tenets. The Homewood Suites Gateway Hills provides home-like comfort surrounded by innovative design, right in the heart of Gateway Hills.

Providing innovative leadership, Great American Hotel Group embraces both the Hilton "be at home culture" and the technological advances in hotel operations, recruiting, sales & marketing, and human resources.

By the Numbers

Gabrielle Smith, Corporate
Controller

"What Scary Information is Lurking In Your Guest Ledger?"

Remember the good old days, when we tied a towel around our neck and put on a blue shirt and were instantly transformed into Superman.... or donned an old sheet and became the scariest ghost? Remember when the Guest Ledger listed all the guests in the hotel and what balances they owed?

Not anymore. Not for a long time now.

Like a good costume at Halloween, things are often disguised and when the masks are lifted, you just might find old balances in the Guest Ledger that had been ignored. Sometimes for years.

Take a look at your Guest Ledger, it's not just Guests that are still checked in. Depending on your PMS, your Guest Ledger may contain House Accounts, Group Masters, and Checked Out Guests with balances.

In some cases, you may see Group Masters that are being reused and have Advance Deposits on them, which of course should be recorded as liabilities in Advance Deposits.

Sometimes you will find old House Accounts with balances that no one has questioned for a very long time.

If you don't regularly review your Guest Ledger, please take a look now. It might scare you, but at least you won't have to explain old, uncollectible balances during an audit.

If spirits smiles upon you, you might find an old Advance Deposit and be able to record it as a Cancellation Fee or Guaranteed No Show.

Wouldn't that be nice Halloween treat?



New Photography Will Improve Your Hotel's Image

If your photography is more than 5 years old, it's time to think about updating your images. In the digital world of selling through photography, it is paramount that your existing and potential customers can see themselves at your hotel and enjoying your amenities. Dated, dark or poorly composed photos will chase guests away not lure them to your doors!

Finding the right photographer is important. A professional who specializes in architectural photography is necessary to keep horizons and vertical elements in tact. Don't settle for a non-professional. It might cost you more, but your images will have a much broader range of usefulness.

The Lakeside Inn, located in Wakefield, MA recently had photos retaken of their hotel after renovation. Check out the differences and ask yourself.... is it time we invested in new photography?



Older photography is dark and taken at the wrong time of the day. New photography is bright and shows the hotel in the best light.



Older photography does not show off the spaciousness of the room nor the view. New photography is bright and cheery.



Older photography is not well-composed. New photography shows off the incredible view of the lake and grounds of the hotel.



Selling the Sizzle

Linda Komornik, Corporate Director
of Sales & Marketing

Oftentimes, I call or email our sales teams about events, activities or creative ideas that they might want to build on or develop for their hotel sales/marketing efforts. My goal is always to have our local sales teams "stand out from the crowd" and help our hotels be noticed.

Recently I read an article entitled "Three Quotes To Inspire Hotel Marketing". The gist of the article was so important and so critical, that I was inspired to think about how the thought premise from the article could apply and/or relate to what we do everyday....and to what I keep hounding out to our sales teams....DON'T BE A BEIGE BORING BOX.

It's not creative unless it sells!

The three quotes referenced in the article were:

1. "In the factory, we make cosmetics. In the store, we sell hope." ~ Charles Revson, Founder of Revlon Cosmetics. Too often we get caught up in selling room nights and our hotel's ancillary offerings, that we end up seeing our hotels as a product - as a commodity that has a check-in and check-out date. Our product is not the same as a tangible item and we need to focus on the emotional benefit a stay at your hotel can bring. Remember, you can't sell yesterday's room today!
2. "It's not creative unless it sells." ~ David Ogilvy. If your idea doesn't strike a cord with your audience then your campaign becomes self-indulgent and only serves to satiate our own creative egos. Better to address your customer's needs and not over-compensate with unnecessary creative detail when just a bit of creativity will do!
3. "We need to stop interrupting what people are interested in and BE what people are interested in." ~ Craig Davis, Former CCO of J. Walter Thompson. Customers tend to dislike ads that are disruptive to their online experience. I know I hate when popups appear on my screen or when you get caught in a seemingly endless loop of advertising or click-bait. The secret to building intimacy with potential guests is to entice them with entertaining, engaging and interesting content that also imparts a relevant message about your brand.

Creating compelling marketing should delight your guests. Put on your creative hat and let's start brainstorming!

Happy Creating! Linda



Fun With Autumn Puzzles!

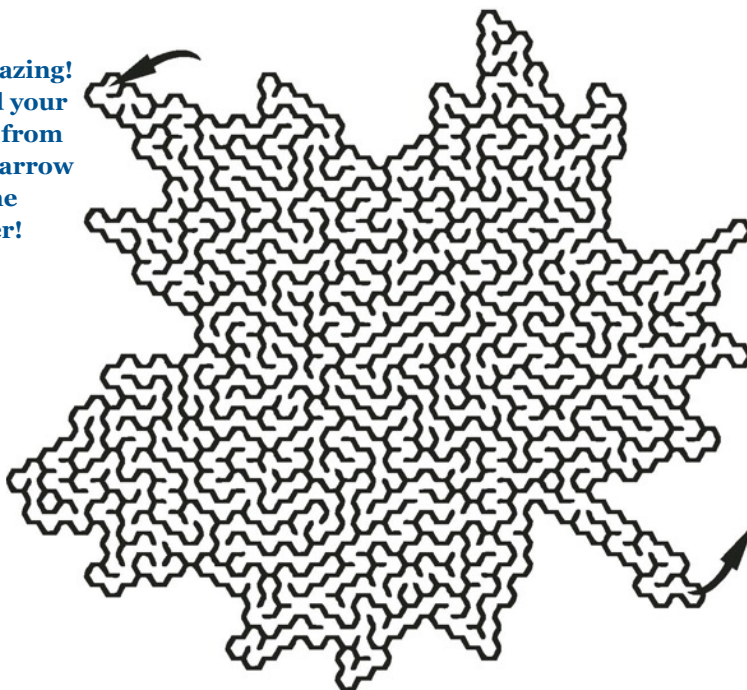


See how many of these autumn related words you can find in the puzzle.
The words can be forward, backward or diagonal.

Created by Sue Lindlauf
Grand Forks Herald 2013

- | | | | |
|-----------|-------------|---------------|------------|
| 1. Autumn | 5. Raking | 9. Gourds | 13. Corn |
| 2. Fall | 6. Harvest | 10. Football | 14. Maize |
| 3. Leaves | 7. Pumpkins | 11. Season | 15. Yellow |
| 4. Colors | 8. Apples | 12. Scarecrow | 16. Orange |

A-mazing!
Find your
way from
one arrow
to the
other!



I Am Human, I Am A Resource Suzanne Baele, Corporate Director of Human Resources

Contributing information from the article "The Training Manuals of the Twenty-First Century - Mobile Phones" by David Topolewski

"As anyone who has travelled will attest, technology has permeated itself through every facet of a modern hotel, from the hotel restaurant to the way we book our rooms. But mobile will lead the next wave of progress in hospitality, improving everything from staff retention to customer service to RevPAR.

Over the years, hotels have had to face many different technological challenges and opportunities. Traditional, paper-based PMS systems have been replaced by digital systems, which are then integrated into multiple POS systems dotted throughout the hotel, making payment and other processes easier and quicker. Yet the rise of Online Travel Agents (OTAs) has forced many hotels to compete on price, affecting the bottom line and handing more power to the consumer.

The average guest profile has changed too. Younger and more technologically savvy, today's guest will compare multiple properties before booking online (most likely via one of the many mobile or tablet devices he or she possesses), prioritizing experience and value for money over amenities.



Yet despite all this, the way in which a hotel's performance is measured remains the same, with pressure to improve RevPAR ever-present. Hotels are expected to increase guest satisfaction and their own operating performance, while at the same time improve employee engagement and loyalty.

It is this last part, employee engagement and loyalty, which many hotels struggle with. Hospitality has become synonymous

with high turnover, a rate that ranges anywhere from 60-300%, three times most other industries. This is mainly due to low wages, long working hours and often-poor career development and opportunities. The cost of high employee turnover is less guest recognition, less stability and poorer customer service – directly affecting a hotel's bottom line.

It is here that mobile can prove transformational. It is well known that the average hospitality employee is young, and that young people are highly likely to not only own a smartphone, but be much more comfortable reading and learning from one. Therefore it is natural that mobile learning has much more potential to benefit this band of employees.

Mobile learning is also perfectly suited to the hospitality industry. It is cheaper than traditional, classroom-based training methods, it is more effective, and more able to fit into the busy schedules of the average hotel employee (they can learn on the way to work, or during a lunch break), and it is scalable, able to be replicated across multiple departments and properties.

Furthermore, technological and pedagogical progress has resulted in mobile learning software that is unrecognizable from only a few years ago. Now, mobile apps are able to pick up even the slightest change in sound and tone, and can provide instant feedback to the student – for learning tone-heavy languages such as Mandarin, this is a game changer. Programs can be made that reflect hotel scenarios. For instance, there are programs that place students in an F&B or Front Desk setting to teach them up-selling techniques.

Whether it is learning a new language, training in service etiquette or the techniques on how to up-sell, mobile has the power to improve the hotel's bottom line, increase guest satisfaction and reduce staff turnover. With rising competition for quality staff around the world, the hotels that break from the past, and embrace mobile will be much better placed to weather future technological storms."

HR CORNER

Please don't forget that General Managers are required to submit a bi-weekly report that includes the HR happenings at their property (good/bad), operations that affect HR issues, hiring/dismissals, training overview and general overview.

The next report is due Monday, October 26, then Monday, November 9th etc.

Please contact Suzanne if you need further info.

Grey is the New Green ~ Social Media Differences *by Larry Mogelonsky*

"Young people and old people use different social media platforms and behave differently online. Everyone knows this...or at least they should. And it has powerful implications for your digital marketing strategies.

It all started from the very onset of social networks which were peer-to-peer outlets for early millennials while boomers were still completely in the dark. Facebook played a big role in changing this dynamic. What started as an interface for university students soon took on high school pupils, college alumni and then everyone could sign up. As Mark Zuckerberg's character in *The Social Network* repeatedly drives home, Facebook was designed to be a 'cool' app. But what's cool about sharing a digital platform with your parents or grandparents for that matter? And so it came to pass that once us 'old farts' latched on to Facebook, the teenagers and twenty-somethings migrated to newer, cooler social media like Instagram, Snapchat, Vine and, most recently, Periscope.

The moral of the story is that the advent of social media is still in its relative infancy, meaning that each platform's functions are ever-shifting and their user bases equally as mercurial. If you want to effectively target younger millennials with a promotion, would you have more success using Facebook Ads and the site's promoted posts functionality? Or would you be better off starting an Instagram or Snapchat channel with frequent updates, rich visual content and adeptly positioned captions?

As the title of this running blog series is "Gray is the New Green," it's safe to assume that we are discussing best practices to reach boomers and Gen Xers on social media. Even though there is quite a lot of excitement surrounding the burgeoning, "younger" channels like Snapchat or Meerkat and their marketing potential, such apps aren't accessible or widely adopted by crowds over the age of 30. Yes, millennials are the future when it comes to purchasing power and you must patiently work to build a fan base in these demographics so that you can generate brand recognition and loyalty in the coming decades. But for the time being, boomers have the thickest wallets and they want to live large.

An incongruity in social network usage does not presuppose that boomers are luddites either. Many are tech laggards, but they've woken up to the imperative for adapting quickly to new apps or devices with universal relevance. My thought is that the 2008-2009 crash and the resultant focus on efficiencies ended with many boomers losing their jobs and unable to find new ones as their skill sets were replaced by robust new software and young workers fluent in its use. Undoubtedly this was also a stern wakeup call to all the quadragenarians and older that they better accept this new reality or find themselves displaced.

If you are hoping to gain social influence amongst an older population set, your first stop should indeed be Facebook. It's a hub for news and events with the opportunity for direct communications via comments or private messages. More importantly, while the young 'ins have drifted over to the visual-centric platforms, this billion-user-plus social network has been wholly embraced by boomers. For those of you who can only allocate minimal resources to social media, it is acceptable to treat your Facebook fan page as a copy of your hotel website's blog, events and promotions sections. This works because the average consumer is more likely to regularly log in to this social network than he or she is to check out any recent updates to your website. Furthermore, once users are logged on, they prefer to stay within that portal to get a snapshot of daily happenings, newsfeeds and pertinent information.

Key here, is to limit your frequency to only the most titillating stories – the ones that are actually going to generate click-throughs back to your website. Facebook should only average around once (or twice maximum) per week.

All this, though, presupposes a rather naïve question: is social media even worth the trouble to reach people in elder demographics? The online channels are evolving so quickly, who is to say that Instagram and Snapchat won't also have widespread boomer adoption in five years time? My bet, however, is that we have reached some sense of normalcy in social media. So, in a word: yes – social media is a viable path to reach the elder eyeballs, no matter how much macular degeneration or cataracts have set in."



Operationally Speaking Rob Greene, Regional Director of Operations

Contributing information from the blog "What Motivates You" by Bryan K. Williams

"What motivates you? What moves you? What inspires you to be more than you usually are? People oftentimes ask me questions like that. The truth is, several things motivate me. For the purpose of this article, I will only focus on two.

#1: I am motivated by seeing people treated well. I mean exceptionally well. It particularly excites me when the recipient of the kindness and the giver of the kindness don't know each other. I love that!

#2: I am also motivated by seeing people who work with pride, passion, and professionalism. You know the ones. The men and women who work with a purpose. You can feel that they didn't wake up to be mediocre, and they are not going to sleep mediocre. These are the ones who always look for ways to do more than is expected of them.

The High-Chair: On a recent trip to a restaurant with my family, I asked our server to bring a high chair for our toddler. She responded with, "Of course! I will get one right away. But first, let me wipe it down and make sure it's clean for you". That may not sound like much, but that is the first time anyone has ever offered to clean a high-chair for us. And we have two children, and have dined in several restaurants over the years. When I mentioned how much I appreciated her gesture, she told me that seeing people happy motivates her. The server went on to say that her personal mission is to make each of her guests smile before they leave the restaurant.

Here is the key. As awesome as motivation is, no one can truly give it to you. You have to find it for yourself. Only you know what truly touches you. Is it your faith? Is it music? Is it a story? Is it a person? Find it. Hold it. Cherish it.

Unstoppable: A motivated version of you is unstoppable. The problem is that a lot of people don't know that they were made to be unstoppable. You were built to leave a mark. Evidence. Legacy that you were here.

When it comes to your role at work, please know that you are either adding to, or taking away from the work environment. Make no mistake, SOMETHING is different because YOU are at work. It is up to you to determine if that "something" is positive or negative. It's never neutral. When you are passive, it's a negative impact. When you take initiative, it's a positive impact. When you consistently agree with everything everyone says, it's a negative impact. When you search for ways to add value to discussions, it's a positive impact.

Keys to Remember: So, make suggestions and search for opportunities for improvement. Be someone who is known for multiplying the value of wherever you are. One of the best ways to add value is by motivating others. Interestingly, that is also one of the best ways to motivate yourself. Yes, by motivating others, you motivate yourself. By helping others, you help yourself. By loving others, you love yourself. All are needed, and you capable of doing them all. As you go through your day, the key question is not, "Am I motivated?" The real question is...Who will I motivate today?"

Roomer Has It

ATLANTIC HOUSE INN

Our beautiful inn in York Beach, ME is winding down it's 2015 season. This 15 unit, seasonal, condo-hotel operates each year from May 1 through November 1.

NORFOLK COUNTRY INN

There's a new property in GRAM's portfolio. The Norfolk Country Inn is located in Norfolk, Nebraska and boasts 125 guest rooms. Dan Hays, bench GM for our company, will be taking over the helm when the Atlantic House Inn closes for the season.



SPRINGHILLS SUITES QUAKERTOWN

The hotel has introduced their annual Holiday Rates Promotion to the community and area businesses and visitors are responding positively to the promotion. Pace and ADR are both up during this typically slower season.

HAMPTON INN EAST HARTFORD

To tempt meeting planners and social groups, the hotel is offering a special to anyone who books their meeting room for dates between now and March 31, 2016. Promotion included 10% off meeting room rental charges, free audio visual equipment rental, complimentary coffee and hot chocolate, and a free gift for the planner. Groups are able to book their own catering and do their own decorating.

A Spot of Tea

"Early autumn days and crisp fall afternoons are the perfect time for a bit of tea," notes Diana Fowler, GRAM Accounts Payable.

Note she is sporting her GRAM mug!

