

TeleGRAM

Great American Hotel Group Newsletter



Around the Block

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

Diana Fowler - 13 years
Rob Greene - 18 years
Dan Hays - 14 years

A Laugh A Day ...

TeleGRAM Staff

President - Dave Akridge

Dave.Akridge@GreatAmericanHG.com

Editor/Corporate Sales & Marketing-Linda Komornik

Linda.Komornik@GreatAmericanHG.com

Corporate Human Resources - Suzanne Baele

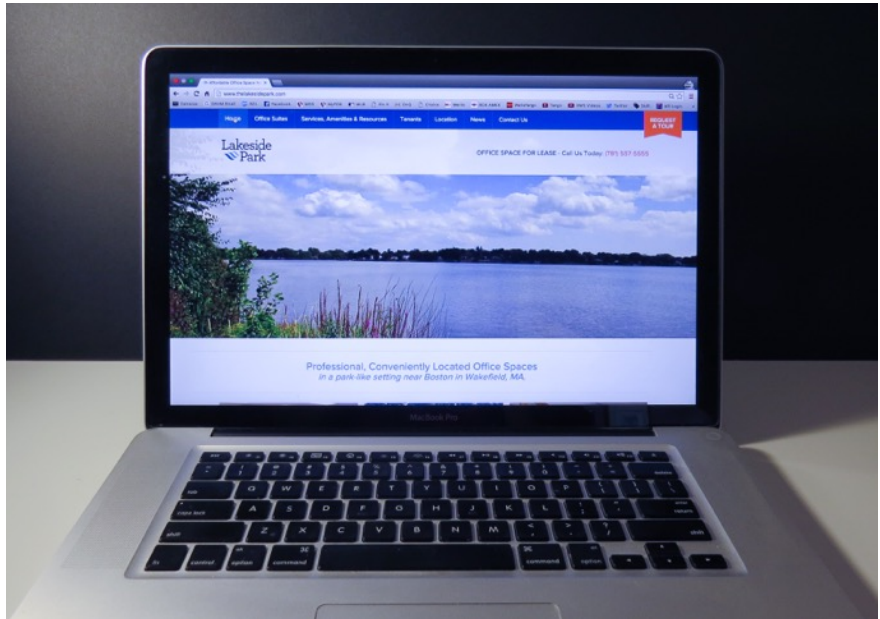
Suzanne.Baele@GreatAmericanHG.com

Corporate Controller - Gabrielle Smith

Gabrielle.Smith@GreatAmericanHG.com

Regional Director of Operations - Rob Greene

Rob.Greene@GreatAmericanHG.com



The IT Factor

One of the services GRAM provides for its portfolio of hotels is Sales & Marketing support, guidance, mentorship, and strategy coaching. Recently, the team embarked on developing new digital positioning for The Lakeside Park, an office complex in Wakefield, MA, managed by Great American Hotel Group. The office park is the cornerstone of the property that houses the Lakeside Inn (also in the GRAM portfolio) and sits along the banks of Lake Quannapowitt. *(Check out the site at www.TheLakesidePark.com)*

The launch of their new website and social media sites was championed by our vendor partner Mannix Marketing, who worked very closely with our Corporate Director of Sales & Marketing Linda Komornik. Together they crafted the creative foundation and look of the site as well as the copy and photos.

"The process was seamless," noted Ms. Komornik. "Mannix and I have worked together on other projects and that professional chemistry made our project come together in a short period of time. The result was a modern and up-to-date site filled with great SEO and quick performance algorithms."

"Next to develop will be the website for the hotel. We look forward to crafting an equally quality product to reintroduce the newly renovated hotel," added Komornik. *(continued on Page 2 - "The IT Factor")*

Operationally Speaking Rob Greene, Regional Director of Operations

Utilities, on average, are responsible for around 6% of operating costs. As energy costs rise and the world becomes more environmentally conscious, hoteliers must adjust their practices. There are many certifications and government subsidies to make your hotel more environmentally conscious. While most of these services cost money, their long-term effect is positive. However, there are free options as well. Energy Star is a free benchmarking tool to help US businesses gauge their energy efficiency.

There are many popular green certifications. Consult the list of options based on your property size, money available and time. Old thermostats are incredibly wasteful and replacing them can reduce electricity expenses by up to 40%. The Hyatt Century Plaza is a good example of a property updating its facilities to reduce the cost of energy. They will save \$670,000 after installing window films, and produce a positive ROI in just 6 months.

If a hotelier takes action on sustainable business practices, it can dramatically affect energy consumption. The Energy Star benchmark and other green certifications are often vigorous exercises. But, the certifications influence a property's profit, and become a marketing tool.

Energy.gov/savings lists tax credits, rebates, and savings for every state. The site lists all available incentives based on a business' location. The site also lists regulations set forth by states, counties, cities, etc.

The green certifications also address maintenance issues that lead to unsustainable energy use. Routinely checking air filters and cleaning air vents can save hoteliers a lot of money.



By the Numbers Gabrielle Smith, Corporate Controller



All property 2015 W-2's have been sent directly to hotels from Inova for distribution to employees. The W-2's should be distributed directly to current associates and they should sign that they received their copy.

General Managers' should mail out W-2's to associates who no longer work at the property. It is the responsibility of the hotel GM to ensure that we have accurate info on all current and previous associates.

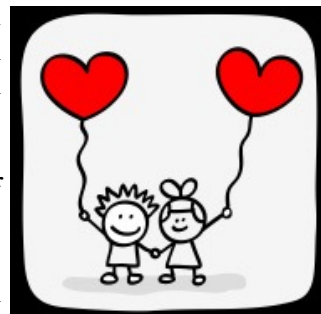
If an associate shows up at the hotel claiming they did not receive their W-2, you must get updated good info and the GM must e-mail that information directly to Gabrielle.Smith@GreatAmericanHG.com. We are trying to reduce the number of telephone calls from associates and former associates, that typically come to the corporate office in April of each year, stating they did not receive their W-2. We appreciate your assistance in this matter.

As a reminder: Paychecks may never be given out to anyone except the person named on the check. Exception to this corporate policy is if there is a verifiable hand written letter from the associate authorizing us to give their paycheck to "whomever". This includes parents, siblings, children, etc. The person authorized to collect the paycheck on behalf of the associate must also be able to prove they are who they say they are (i.e. State ID, Passport, Current School ID with photo). That person must also sign for the check.

(continued from Page 1 - "The IT Factor")

Other IT items that GRAM can work on with your property team, include social media (both pre- and post-opening). We will develop a Social Media Action plan that first outlines the goals of the site, content, frequency of post, ad budget and ratio of sales to marketing and then work with the media company to make sure that the strategy is working. Sometimes, small tweaks will need to be made depending on your geographic location and type of property... no two are really alike. It then becomes everyone's responsibility to get the word out so that our messages are reaching our target markets.

Marketing for hotels is ever changing, and GRAM works very hard to stay abreast on the dynamics of the industry. Would your hotel benefit from a new website or social media? If so, let us know so we can work with you to make it happen.



Close More Sales By Doing This?

Excerpted from a blog written by Jill Konrath

"Sometimes it's hard to look at yourself in the mirror. You might not like what you see. But usually we don't do that when it comes to our skills and abilities.



Instead, as psychology research points out, we all have a cognitive bias to overestimate our own qualities and abilities relative to other people.

In fact, in Minnesota where I live, we have the "Lake Wobegon effect" which was named after Garrison Keillor's fictional town where "all the women are strong, all the men are good looking and all the children are above average."

So what does this have to do with sales?

Basically most of us think we're better than we are. We're not brutally honest with ourselves – and, because of that, we don't do things that could actually help us improve.

Let's just look at one little example. In my book, Agile Selling, I cite a study by SBI that found that 60% of forecast deals fail to close. That's awful. Forecast deals are ones that you're sure are going to close by the end of the month.

What happened to them? Why didn't they close?

Most sellers blame pricing, products or clueless decision makers. But what if you were brutally honest with yourself?

Truth be told, I've lost business because my follow-up sucked.

Other times, I've failed to build a strong enough business case. I've also missed a vital piece of information that cost me the sale.

And, more than once, when I was trying to be impressive about my methodology, I've overcomplicated the decision process – and scared my hot prospect away.

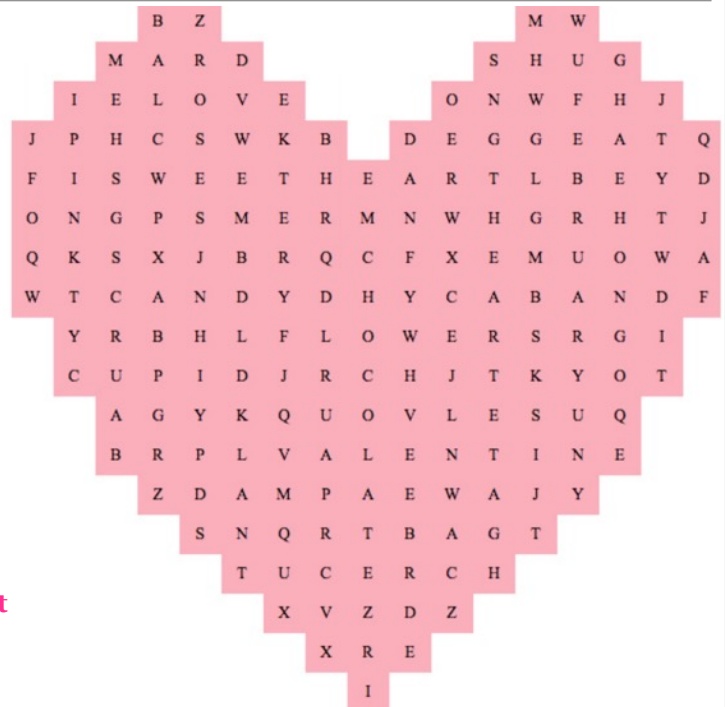
I hate when I screw up. And, I still do. But, by being brutally honest with myself, I discover areas I need to get smarter in. And I grow in my skills. It's painful, yes. But this sales approach is the fastest route to success. Give it a shot!"

OK Cupid, Let's Have Fun!

- What fruit is also known as the love apple?
a. Apricot b. Tomato c. Apple d. Cherry
- Between girlfriends, wives, mothers and teachers, who receives the most cards?
a. Mothers b. Wives c. Teachers d. Girlfriends
- If a woman sees a robin on Valentine's Day, what kind of a man will she marry?
a. Sailor b. Accountant c. Arborist d. Veterinarian
- "Ie Ovele Ouye" is I Love You in what language?
a. French b. Spanish c. Pig Latin d. Flemish
- What color M&M is thought to be an aphrodisiac?
a. red b. orange c. green d. yellow
- What does the word Valentine stand for or mean?
a. Victory b. Valor c. Virility d. Vanity e. Venus
- How much does the average American spend on Valentine's Day?
a. \$10 b. \$75 c. \$20 d. \$50 e. \$8
- What percent of women send themselves flowers on Valentine's Day?
a. 7% b. 15% c. 20% d. 65%
- What percent of pet owners give their pets a gift on Valentine's Day?
a. 1% b. 3% c. 7% d. 15%
- Cupid was the son of what Roman God?
a. Aphrodite b. Zeus c. Venus d. Thor

Word Search

Love
Chocolate
Pink
Valentine
Roses
Cupid
February
Red
Hug
Flowers
Candy
Heart
Sweetheart
Card
Sweet



1.b 2.c 3.a 4.c 5.c 6.b 7.b 8.b 9.b 10.c

OK Cupid Trivia Answers:

Excerpted from a blog written by Paul Petrone, LinkedIn Talent Blog

Often, one of the most telling moments in a job interview is the end, when the tables are turned. Generally, that's the time where candidates get to ask you questions, and you gain valuable insight into how prepared they are and where their priorities lie. What are the best questions a candidate can ask you? What should you look for? Here are several great examples of questions a candidate might ask you during an interview:

Why did you join this company, and what keeps you here? The goal of any interview shouldn't be to just find someone who has the right qualifications, you should also be looking for someone who is going to love working at your company and wants to build a career there. This question gives the candidate a good insight into your company values. Perhaps it matches what they value, perhaps not; but it is great for both parties to get that information out upfront.

The best way to answer it: Be honest – talk about what keeps you there. Maybe it is the people or because you believe in the company's mission. Or because there's plenty of room at the company for advancement. Something to avoid though is focusing only on a great party your company had or a fancy perk. Sure, those things might make for a good Instagram photo, but chances are it isn't something that motivates you every day. Instead, talk about what really gets you excited to come to work each morning.

What does success look like in this position? What makes this question so strong is it shows the candidate is putting in due diligence to finding the right position for them. Again, the goal of any hiring process is to find a great fit for both sides, and this question shows that person is interested in not just securing a job at your company, but thriving there.

The best way to answer it: The more accurate of a picture you can paint, the better, as you really want to give the candidate as much insight as possible. Sometimes, for new roles, there is no clear path for success. Sometimes, the new hire is going to have to figure that out along the way. That's okay – some candidates will be drawn to that, some won't. Be on the same page with your company's philosophy and culture when answering!

A relevant question about a challenge your company is going through. You want someone who has researched the challenges your company has faced and has begun to think how they can solve them. For example, if you in a crowded market, perhaps a question about how you plan to overcome it. Best case scenario – they even have their own ideas, which show they've put some real thought into the job.

The best way to answer it: Obviously, you are not going to share every detail of your company's strategy to someone who doesn't even work for your company yet. A better solution is to turn the question around and ask them what they think needs to happen, which will give you further insight to their thought process.

A question that shows the interviewee has been actively listening to you. It is a good thing when a candidate comes in with a list of questions about the position, as it shows they did some real research and have put real thought into joining your company. That said, it's also nice if they throw in a question or two that shows they've been truly listening to the conversation, as opposed to just reciting questions from memory.

The best way to answer it: Conversationally. Here, the question and the answer aren't as important as the fact the candidate has the ability to listen to what someone else said (a shockingly rare skill).

The last few people who've held this position – where are they now? This is a great question for the candidate to ask because it reveals where the job leads. Our research shows the biggest motivator in the talent market is career development, so it makes good sense why they'd ask it, as they want to build a career at your company. Hopefully, for your sake, the answer is that the last few people are off to bigger-and-better things.

The best way to answer it: Obviously, you have to answer it honestly. Truth is, if the answer is something you are embarrassed about, you should seriously reconsider the way you are approaching the job.

Takeaway: Really, the questions at the end of the interview should convey two things: the candidate has done some actual research into your company and they're taking their job search seriously. After all, a new job is big decision for anyone, and if you have someone who doesn't appear overly interested in learning more about your company, it's reasonable to question their commitment to the new job.

HR CORNER

GRAM has issued a new Social Media Policy directive to be instituted at every hotel for every employee. Please see the policy that was distributed on 1/25/16 and if you have any questions, please contact Suzanne.Baele@GreatAmericanHG.com

Selling the Sizzle *Linda Komornik, Corporate Director of Sales & Marketing*

Some days my brain actually hurts from data overload. I stare at my computer waiting for a brilliant idea to surface, or trying to come up with a solution for a sales challenge. The more I try to focus on the issues at hand, the more my eyes cross and the more my head hurts. And then, da da da (spoken in an ominous voice), my office starts to darken as the walls move in on me.

So what's a girl to do when the "cave effect" starts to take hold? Oftentimes I'll just sit back and try to imagine warm sunshine, and breezes blowing through the windows. I'll turn on some music to try to soothe my tired mind. Some days it works, but days like today... well, not so much.

It's time for a movement break – one that reignites my brain. I'll stand up, move away from the desk and get my body in motion. If it's a nice day, I'll just walk around the yard for 5-10 minutes. I don't even think about the work... I just need to focus on the elements. If it's a lousy day – like today – I'll walk around the house. Or put on a jacket and get outside. The key is to step away and breathe. Change your environment, even for a few minutes.



So why does this brain coma happen some days and not others? Science has shown that we can't perform at our optimal level all day, every day in a stagnant environment. Various research studies show that an hour or hour-and-a-half is the max it can handle focusing on one thing. Brain freeze is most likely to settle in at this point. Your inner self is screaming "take a break" – and the best break is movement...especially the kind that allows your mind to wander. When your mind wanders, it doesn't stop working - it's like the apps on your smart phone - thoughts and ideas are still processing in the background, even when you are not focusing on the issues at hand. Your brain is still searching for possible answers, options or ideas. It's important to "double-tap and swipe those apps closed" - even if it's just for a few minutes.

As a sales person, you are lucky! Our expectation is that you push back from your desk and get out of the hotel. Who knew that making sales calls was good for you? Physical activity increases the blood flow to the brain – which triggers a flood of good brain activity. Your problem-solving capacity improves, your ability to think on your feet gets better, your long-term memory is exercised, your ability to concentrate is enhanced, and so is your reasoning ability. Just move! Just get out of the hotel and do your job!

Happy de-cluttering your brain!

Linda

Roomer Has It

HAMPTON INN, EAST HARTFORD

Kattie Bonilla, Sales Manager at the hotel noted a few “cool facts” about the hotel and 2015 production: The hotel grossed over \$4 million (annually) in 2015 and it is the highest revenue documented by the hotel since it opened. October was the best producing month ever at over \$400,000. Way to go team!

GREAT AMERICAN HOTEL GROUP





GRAM's commitment to sustainability is reflected in the company's 2015 Waste Stream Summary provided by Waste Management. Overall, as a company and hotel portfolio, we are projected to recycle 2.74 tons of materials:

Recycling material includes:

Paper	0.27 tons
Plastic	0.41 tons
Aluminum	0.27 tons
Glass	0.14 tons
Cardboard	1.64 tons

This translates into the following:

These recycling efforts conserved the following resources:

-  14,412 kW-hrs of electricity
Enough to power 1 homes for a full year
-  195 gallons of oil
Enough energy to heat and cool 1 homes for a full year
-  46 gallons of gasoline
Enough gasoline to drive 1,289 miles
-  26 mature trees
Enough to produce 325,835 sheets of newspaper
-  13,423 gallons of water
Enough to meet the fresh water needs of 715 people for a year
-  11 cubic yards of landfill airspace
Enough airspace to meet the disposal needs of a community of 173 people

End 68 Hours of Hunger

Over 175 bags with the Homewood Suites logo were scattered in the most unusual place this holiday season—The Crowne Plaza. Homewood Suites by Hilton® Gateway Hills Nashua donated the bags to the End 68 Hours of Hunger program in cooperation with Nashua Rotary and Nashua Rotary West. The two organizations gave generous donations to purchase food for Nashua children who might otherwise dread Christmas break due to food insecurity at home.



Over 200 business leaders from the Nashua Rotary filled bags of food to send home to children at 4 Nashua elementary schools who often rely on free school lunch as their only daily source of nutrition. Rotary member and Sales Manager Jayme Putnam noted that during past food drive efforts, the Rotary had to purchase bags with their hard earned donations to fill with food, and offered to donate the bags. Homewood Suites' small contribution had a big impact because it allowed the team to buy extra food. In turn, the hotel's small act of goodwill was felt ten-

fold as a sea of their hotel logos filled the ballroom of the Crowne Plaza (who graciously donated the space for assembly) and were really great sports about sharing this project.

Teachers from each school graciously picked up the bags and were visibly moved and thankful that “their children” did not have to worry about facing a full week of food insecurity. One teacher noted that many children are given the opportunity to receive gifts from a variety of programs during the holidays, but End 68 Hours of Hunger is the only local program that focuses on the rest of the week. ♥



The hotel also gave guests the option on Christmas Day and Thanksgiving Day to either take advantage of housekeeping services or bypass services on these days. In return, the hotel offered to pay it forward to those opting out of housekeeping, by donating 2 non-perishable items for every room that chose an amenity bag with clean towels (etc.) delivered in lieu of housekeeping. This resulted in the housekeeping team getting home early to spend Christmas with their family AND a donation of 150 jars of peanut butter and jelly to End 68 Hours of Hunger. Praise abounded from guests and the hotel received no complaints!



This local program was so successful at our Homewood Suites Nashua that 3 other Homewood Suites nationally adopted the same program, and more plan to adopt the program next year. Congratulations to the HWS team!