

TeleGRAM

Great American Hotel Group Newsletter



A Little Bit Wiser

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

Linda Komornik - March 1
Diana Fowler - April 14

A Laugh A Day ...

"Would you like a wake up call in the morning sir?"

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Present Day Photo



1950's Photo

March Comes In Like A Lion: Out Like A Shrimp

The Shrimp Boat Restaurant has been a staple seafood restaurant in the historic area of St. Andrews in Panama City, FL since 1950. Starting out as a small 50 seat diner, the Shrimp Boat has evolved over the years into a 500 seat restaurant with banquet rooms.

GRAM proudly assumed the management duties for this grand dame restaurant on March 18, 2016 and is looking forward to continuing the tradition established by the founder family. Dave Akridge will be the regional director of operations for this property.

Originally founded more than 60 years ago by Lowe Smith, the Shrimp Boat was known for being one of the only air conditioned diners in the area, and quickly gained a reputation for serving up the best seafood straight from the local waters. In October, 2008, the new Shrimp Boat re-opened after the old facility had fallen on disrepair. The new re-imagined building is filled with amazing pictures and memorabilia collected over some sixty years and houses 4 separate restaurant concepts: The Shrimp Boat Restaurant and Bar featuring fresh seafood and steaks, tapas, and sushi; Salty Hawg Oyster Bar; Gracie Rae's Bar & Grill; and Lowe's House of Bourbon.

Today, of the many Panama City restaurants, the Shrimp Boat Restaurant stands out as one of the very best!



Operationally Speaking Rob Greene, Regional Director of Operations

Excerpted from an article written by Diane Cardwell and published in the NY Times

Just a few years ago, the compact fluorescent light was the go-to choice for customers seeking an inexpensive, energy-efficient replacement for the standard incandescent bulb. But as the light quality of LEDs improved and their cost plummeted, manufacturers and retailers began shifting their efforts in that direction.



The GE Helical 13-watt compact fluorescent light bulb.
Credit Tony Cenicola/The New York Times

Now, the industrial giant General Electric is saying farewell to the compact fluorescent light, or CFL. The company said that it would stop making and selling the bulbs in the United States by the end of 2016.

"Now is the right time to transition from CFL to LED," said John Strainic, chief operating officer of consumer and conventional lighting at GE Lighting. "There are so many choices that a consumer has for one socket in their home that it's overwhelming. This will help simplify that."

Compact fluorescents were the first big energy-saving alternative to standard incandescents, which no longer meet government standards for energy efficiency in the United States and many places abroad. But consumers complained about the harsh quality of light of the early models. They can also be slow to warm up and difficult to dim, and they contain trace amounts of mercury.

LEDs were more expensive, with bulbs often running \$30, but the technology found fans who said they offered better light quality. Prices dropped steadily, falling well below \$5 for a basic bulb last year, in part because of government regulations making it easier for them to qualify for generous discounts

By the Numbers Gabrielle Smith, Corporate Controller



Accounting operations in today's hotels and restaurants require specialized knowledge and skills and an understanding of the interrelationship of business principles and accounting.

Revenue management tactics and strategies need to be developed for the relationship between accurate forecasting and sound financial decision making.

Therefore it is essential that one select a management company like Great American Hotel Group. Our accounting services parallel the Uniform System of Accounts for the Lodging Industry (USALI) and Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).

An important factor to look for in selecting the right management company is one that enhances their services by providing Virtual Accounting/Cloud Based Accounting. The benefit will be that client can access their financial statements anywhere on any computer.

A proper accounting system is essential to any business whether big or small in order to manage its daily functions and keep the businesses running successfully.

For any successful business, the main obligation is to maximize profits, minimize any loss and at the same time maintain its position as a responsible entity within the society

Behind every successful business is a sound financial model. This simple theory holds true in any business, whether it is retail, manufacturing, or high tech. It most certainly is true in the hospitality business.

By employing basic accounting principles, hotel owners and managers have the information they need to optimize performance in every operational area, from inventory and payroll to sales and marketing. They can reduce expenses, be prepared to accommodate guests during peak business times, and scale back operations during slow periods. Rather than relying on intuition and reacting to events, successful owners have the financial facts readily available to proactively make the right decisions at the right time.

New Kid On The Block



Congratulations and welcome to the new general manager of the SpringHill Suites in Quakertown, PA. Sheri Kresky has taken over the helm of the hotel after having relocated back to the east coast from the Santa Barbara, CA area. Sheri has served for the past 20 years as general manager for both limited service and boutique hotels and brings a wealth of operations and sales knowledge to the project.

Sheri is also an animal lover who fosters homeless pets, raises funds for humane shelters and visits local nursing homes with her beloved Westie "Nadia" to cheer up residents.

This Brand is Your Brand

Excerpted from a blog written by Larry Mogelonsky

The hospitality industry is presently witnessing a seemingly exponential growth in brands - branded houses, soft brands, hotel collections, and so on.

I've long espoused my thoughts on the value of a brand with a crystal clear voice and the willingness to disseminate this message in a precise, transparent manner. From my standpoint, a brand without marketing support is merely an interesting logo or creative diddle. But building a support plan for a brand can be costly. Advertising has traditionally been the way to create the connection between with customers. But most businesses have neither the inclination nor the funding to undertake programs in the traditional, physical realm.

Digital media, in particular social media, provides a cost-effective way to support a new brand or one without a preformed awareness in the average consumer's mind. Having an available media channel, though, does not mean that success will be immediately forthcoming. An innovative idea is still required.

This past Christmas, the Cineplex Entertainment launched a promotional video to support their business. With a strategically sound tagline and video tugs at viewers' heartstrings they produced advertising that never once said "buy" (or, in our hotel language "book now"). The video went viral and at the time of writing had over ten million views.

Second, they did not use traditional media. Sure, they own the theaters and therefore could afford to run a two-minute trailer on every screen. But advertising in movie theaters is commonplace now and can be purchased on a local, regional or national basis. It is affordable even for an individual property.

Third, once the campaign was successful, they kept it going in other media such as print and lobby posters, showing that great creative is key.

Fourth, you will see that their character (a snowman) transcends all age groups, races and genders. How many times have you been told by your team that their proposed idea only appeals to one or another part of your target audience. The lesson here is that great ideas can have core appeal which also extending out to many other demographics and psychographics.

Lastly, like you, Cineplex sells a fragile product - movie seats - and one that has seen turbulent disruption in the past decade. Once the lights go dark, the movie runs whether the theatre is empty or sold out (much like guest rooms) and where we have to contend with Airbnb, they have Netflix and illegal torrent downloading sites.

So, if Cineplex can do it, why can't you? All it takes is one great idea.

April Showers Bring May Flowers

- Which of these flowers is the favorite of over 80% of Americans?
a. Daffodil b. Rose c. Tulip d. Carnation
- Which of these flowers can be used instead of onions in cooking?
a. Iris b. Rose c. Tulip d. Lily
- Which flower's name means "day's eye"?
a. Daisy b. Lilac c. Dandelion d. Sunflower
- Saffron, the spice, comes from a type of which flower?
a. Gardenia b. Magnolia c. Crocus c. Iris
- Which of these flowers does not need soil to grow?
a. Lily b. Lavender c. Orchid d. Petunia
- What flower was poisoned by the Wicked Witch in the Wizard of Oz?
a. Gladiola b. Poppy c. Sunflower d. Black Eyed Susan
- Magnolias were named after which botanist?
a. Magnoi b. Mangolian c. Magpy d. Mags
- How many species of violets are there?
a. 200-300 b. 400-500 c. 700-800 d. 1,000+
- Which flower's juices were previously used to make glue?
a. Xenia b. Bluebell c. Foxglove d. Camellia
- Which of these plants is related to a banana plant?
a. Gladiola b. Snap Dragon c. Bird of Paradise d. Hydrangea



Filing Tips and Information

April 18, 2016	*Tax Day* Last day for filing federal income tax returns and extension requests. This is a few days later than the normal mid-April date since Washington, D.C., will celebrate Emancipation Day on the 15th
April 18, 2016	Deadline for filing state income tax returns (for most states) and extension requests. Last day to make a contribution to a Traditional or Roth IRA, Health Savings Account (HSA), SEP-IRA or 401(k)
June 15, 2016	U.S. citizens or resident aliens living abroad must file tax returns and pay any taxes due by this date (or file for a four-month extension)
June 30, 2016	FACTA (Foreign Bank Account Report) forms due for taxpayers who have over \$10,000 in total in foreign bank accounts in the prior year. No extensions aren't allowed and forms must be filed electronically
October 15, 2016	Filing extended 2015 federal and state income returns. Note: you still need to file for an extension request by April 18th
April 15, 2019	Filing a 2015 tax amendment. You can file an amended or previous year return anytime, but you have a deadline of 3 years from the original due date to claim any tax refund.

April Showers Trivia Answers:
1. b 2. c 3. a 4. c 5. c 6. b 7. a 8. b 9. b 10. c

Bad Service Is Biggest Bugaboo For Hotel Guests

By Christopher Elliott as published in USA Today

They're apathetic. They're never around when you need them. And they lie.

I asked what annoyed guests most about hotels, and that's what readers told me. Properties whose employees are indifferent to your comfort, turn their backs on you or bend the facts nettle you the most.

You've probably read about bothersome hotel guests lately. A few weeks ago, an online travel agency even published a survey on problem travelers, and it named "inattentive parents" as the most annoying hotel guests. But is that what really grates on your nerves?

No, travelers tell me. It's inattentive hotel employees.

"It's the bellmen who talk with one another rather than helping their guests carry luggage and open doors," says Doug Devitre, an educational consultant based in St. Louis. "It's the buffet service that seats you and leaves the bill without doing anything else."

Turns out there are a lot of things that tick us off about hotels. And fortunately, there are ways to un-tick us, too.

The most-cited aggravation, by far, is the hotel employee who doesn't offer all the facts. Adam Dailey, an entrepreneur from San Diego, recalls checking into a hotel recently at 9 a.m. after arriving on a red-eye flight from California.

"They told me that no rooms were available," he remembers. "Then I heard them say to each other a few minutes later that they were not full."

Hotel insiders could offer any of a number of explanations for why they wouldn't be able to offer Dailey one of the apparently free rooms. But that's not the problem — the issue is that the front desk employees, with their careless banter, led him to believe they were not being entirely truthful.

Here's something else that drives guests crazy: "Getting an old room when there's a newly renovated room on another floor that is the same rate," says Emmy Trinh, a jewelry designer from Vancouver. No one knows why some guests are sent to the good rooms and some are relegated to the ones in dire need of an update. Is it loyalty status? Luck of the draw?

It matters not. It vexes guests.

Furniture can bother visitors, too. Patrick Smith, an airline pilot whose book called *Cockpit Confidential* includes a section about hotel rooms, says anything from a toe-breaking doorjamb to an ergonomically hellish work space can drive a guest crazy.

But the most annoying thing of all are the little cardboard brochures that litter even the most upscale hotel rooms, Smith says. The ones that advertise everything from room service to Wi-Fi. They're everywhere, silently ordering you to eat more, watch pay-per-view or save the environment.

"It'd be one thing if this laminated litter was placed unobtrusively," he says, "but it tends to be exactly in the way."

Why don't you see more guest surveys about these obvious irritants? Maybe hotels don't want to know. Cardboard ads are an opportunity to upsell their guests, so perhaps they're indifferent if they annoy you.

Got a problem with a run-down room? Come back after the renovation, and you'll be happier. And I'm sure I can find a revenue manager to explain the one about hotels that are booked solid, yet have empty rooms. I won't bother.

Don't get distracted by surveys that suggest we're upset with other guests. We know who's putting these bees in our bonnets, and it's not other travelers.

How to respond to poor service

- Speak up. Complain in the moment when something happens. Don't wait until you get home to fire off a letter to the general manager. The only way your hotel can fix your problem is if they know about it.
- Keep your party smile ready. Be nice and friendly, especially when you're inconvenienced. Employees are more likely to react defensively when faced with anger. And don't forget to say "thank you." "Hotel staff are always willing to help guests who are appreciative," Trinh says.
- Don't come back. The best way to show your displeasure with an inconsiderate employee or a room that's not to your liking is to stop giving the hotel your business. Don't forget to fill out the guest comment card and let them know why. For the most egregious cases, talk to your corporate travel manager about the hotel's contract.

EDITOR'S NOTE/TRAINING TIP: Review articles (similar to the one above) with your staff during morning and change-of-shift huddles. Ask associates about opportunities they have witnessed when they are the "guest or customer" at other business establishments and notice a lack or poor customer service. Keep a log of their comments and utilize them when reviewing GSS and guest comments. You'll have better buy in if associates come up with solutions rather than always laying down the law and invoking your authority. Of course, if they cannot identify solutions to customer service issues, it is your job as their leader to guide them in the right direction!

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

I know I typically focus on sales in this section of the newsletter, however, this issue, I did want to make sure the all of our hotels have read the article about the Erin Andrews lawsuit and what it means for hoteliers. If you haven't read it, please follow the link and make sure that your hotel is constantly reviewing safety and security procedures with your staff. Double, triple and quadruple check your employee manuals and training materials. Hang up reminders on employee bulletin boards and in employee break rooms. GSRs and those answering our phones (and ALL associates) especially need to be well versed in our guest privacy standards and follow them to a tee. Practice in your daily huddles on how to handle these types of guest requests and more importantly - emphasize the possible result of a breach in hotel service and guest privacy. For any question on these procedures call Dave Akridge, Suzanne Baele, Rob Greene, Gabrielle Smith, Candy Grimbilas or myself immediately.

Now, on to sales....

I am a list-making, pre-planning, arrive-early kind of girl. There is nothing more annoying than rushing around at the last minute and trying to make something happen when it was entirely avoidable. When you rush and react, oftentimes your performance suffers. Sales and marketing is all about preparing for the call, knowing the facts, and assuring your customers that you have all the tools at your disposal to make their stay/meeting flawless. But do you?

With the above in mind, let's talk about what we are going to do now that spring is upon us and several key merry-making days are approaching! April is National Humor Month, National Poetry Month (amongst other obscure "National xxxx Month" events that may tickle your fancy - look them up on the obscure calendar website). Special days in April celebrate Administrative Assistants Week, April Fool's Day, National Peanut Butter and Jelly Day, National Walk to Work Day, Golfer's Day, International Juggler's day, National Garlic Day, and National Jelly Bean Day (some of my favorites).

I AM NOT SUGGESTING THAT WE DO SPECIALS OR PROMOTIONS FOR ANY OF THESE DAYS!!!

What I am suggesting is that you use these events to your advantage when making sales calls and in social media. Wouldn't your customers smile if you arrived at your pre-arranged appointment on April 4th with a healthy snack and a bottle of water and you suggested that instead of sitting at a table and conducting your appointment inside, that you take a walk while discussing business? Celebrating National Walk to Work Day might especially be appreciated if that person needed a break, worked in a windowless office and was stressed to the max. Taking 15 minutes to breathe fresh air and enjoy Mother Nature would certainly make me remember you and your hotel if I were that planner.



Don't forget recognizable holidays too! Mother's Day is May 8th. That seems like a long time from now to worry about what you are going to do to celebrate or promote the day. But wouldn't it be nice to have a special weekend get-away for Mom's to sell and promote honoring Mothers? If you are going to offer it, then you need to plan and promote it NOW. 30 days away doesn't give you much time to do something right and do it perfect. Just like your Sales & Marketing Plan, you need to schedule tasks for yourself in advance. Make a list, discuss with your GM and myself and let's come up with a plan that is complete and represents your hotel culture and brand.

Happy International Tatting Day (April 1, 2016 - and that's no fooling)!

Linda

He called "room service" and asked where the pool was located. I'll have to remind him this is a hospital not a hotel.

Roomer Has It

TOWNEPLACE SUITES TALLAHASSEE

GM Catrina Stith notes that it's the little things that count. Her team knows that Florida weather is both unpredictable and uncomfortable. This month for example, has seen very cold days, a severe thunder and lightning storm and very warm temperatures; all within mere weeks.

The hotel has implemented a guest courtesy of providing mini bottles of water at check in to quench the thirst and relieve the arriving guests of some of the burden of the heat that they may not be used to. In addition, they has umbrellas available for the guests for rainy days.

These two simple and minimal cost-courtesies have been well received and appreciated by guests who do not expect that kind of consideration from hotels when they travel.

NORFOLK COUNTRY INN & SUITES

The hotel is gearing up for Mother's Day and are promoting their restaurant. Dan Hays, GM noted that all "Moms" will eat free with another paying adult! Sounds like there will be a lot of happy ladies in Nebraska.

SPRINGHILL SUITES QUAKERTOWN

Front Desk Associate Laura Bieber, who has been with SHS since July 2015 has received Marriott's Spirit to Serve Award.



This is Laura's first job in a hotel and says she now has "passion for hospitality." "I love guest service and making people feel good, the smallest things can make or break a guest stay" Laura explains... I love all of the different people I meet and I get a chance to learn about where they are from and their businesses." Laura is a sketch artist and writes poetry.

SomeBunny Loves You In NH

The team at the Homewood Suites enjoyed thanking some special guests for staying with special bunny towels over Easter week.

Adam Robitaille, Homewood General Manager loves to keep the team engaged during quieter times at the front desk. Each staff member takes on side projects that are unique to their personality and skills. Staff member Sandra Saunders loves to be creative and crafty. Sandra has learned how to fold towel ducks, bunnies, swans and has also mastered some fun custom origami. She takes simple materials around the hotel and creates Star Wars characters, frogs and more. These little touches make guests smile and cost almost nothing but down time.



The Lake House Effect



Flanking Anthia Graham (GM and Senior Event Designer at The Lake House Inn) are SHS GM Sheri Kresky (left) and SHS Sales Coordinator Gail DeHelian (right)

Working in tandem with local venues, especially as it relates to social events that cannot take place in your own hotel due to space restrictions, is paramount to your group sales effort.

Recently, the team at the SpringHill Suites Quakertown PA made a key account saturation call on a great vendor performer for their hotel, The Lake House Inn. This banquet facility houses the premiere wedding and social events in the local area. The hotel is an exclusive partner with the Lake House Inn and houses all group rooms needs for brides and party planners.

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

HR CORNER

Ladies and Gentlemen, as we go along our merry way, please review and update the overtime policy with all associates. The tried and true bullet points below should get you thinking, moving on the right direction. As always call with questions or concerns.

- Remind non-exempt employees that they need to record all of their time worked.
- Have a system for non-exempt employees to record time.
- If you don't want employees to work unauthorized overtime, have a policy that says as much.
- If employees violate that policy, pay them and discipline them.

For information on this or other HR Topics, please contact Suzanne.Baele@GreatAmericanHG.com