

# TeleGRAM

## Great American Hotel Group Newsletter

### A Little Bit Wiser

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

*Sheri Kresky - September 20*  
*Gabrielle Smith - September 24*  
*Jim Davis - October 1*  
*Candy Grimbilas - October 22*

### Around the Block

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

*Suzanne Baele - 22 years*

### Giddy Up

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

*Dan Hays - GM WoodSpring Suites Bakersfield*  
*Jordan Figueroa - GM Fairfield Inn Millville*

### A Laugh A Day



## #13 Makes A Baker's Dozen GRAM Adds Bakersfield, CA Hotel to Portfolio

Great American Hotel Group has been hired to provide management services for a new-build, 124-unit, four-story hotel WoodSpring Suites in Bakersfield, California. Projected opening of the project is the end of October, 2016. GRAM alum Dan Hays will assume the General Manager position.

The ownership group, Bhattal Enterprises entered into an agreement with Value Place in December of 2014 to construct the second Value Place location in California. The hotel broke ground this past spring. WoodSpring Suites (Value Place) is the nation's fastest-growing extended-stay hotel brand.

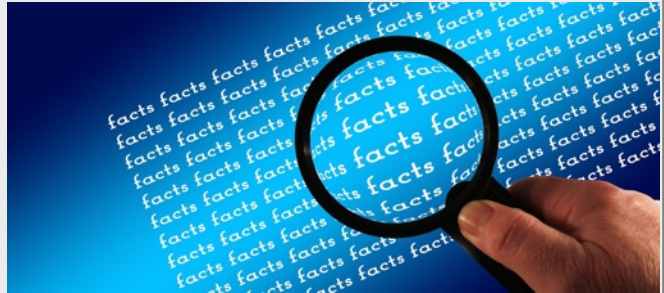
"The brand has a simple operating model that is attractive to me as a first-time hotelier," says Ajit Bhattal, the principle developer. Ajit also owns and operates franchised quick-serve restaurants and service stations in the immediate area of the hotel site.

Great American Hotel Group, an approved management company for both Value Place and WoodSpring Suites, is excited to be part of this venture with Mr. Bhattal and looks forward to the new partnership. The Bakersfield project is the thirteenth hotel in the GRAM portfolio.

## **Guest Incident Reporting**

We are responsible for providing a safe environment for our guests. It is important to know how to care for an injured guest while, at the same time, ensuring that all necessary actions are taken to minimize company losses. We all know it is important to promptly report a guest accident or incident that happens at our hotel, but the primary reason is not to find fault or place blame, more importantly it is to analyze the event to help prevent it from happening again. A proper investigation can help determine the cause of the problem so it can be controlled or even eliminated.

The other reason it is essential that GMs, MODs, supervisors, or attending employees fill out incident reports, is to help defend ourselves if a guest claims they were injured or perhaps alleges theft of their property or even mistreatment by a staff member. There are two issues here: hospitality and liability.



All employees need to be aware of this policy and know where they can easily find a blank incident report. Even if a guest indicates they are not injured a report still needs to be completed. Often the guest is embarrassed, especially if it involves a trip and fall in a public area of the hotel. Sometimes it can take a day or two for them to experience any signs of trouble. It can be weeks, months or even years after the event when the hotel receives a demand letter from an attorney. Without proper documentation it can be very difficult to try to piece together what happened after the fact.

Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Always be courteous and helpful. Make sure the guest is comfortable and safe. Record what actions you took in your report. Reports should be completed by a staff member, not the guest. If the guest wishes to include a statement, provide them the means to do so.
- Offer to obtain medical assistance for the sick or injured guest but let the guest decide whether or not they want that assistance. If possible have another employee witness that decision.
- Inspect the area where the event took place. Note anything out of the ordinary. Note any comments the guest might make. For example "It was my bifocals, they caused me to trip" or "I fell because there is a rip in the carpet".
- Be sure to get names, addresses and statements from any witnesses. Try not to use the term "witness" but simply ask if anyone saw what happened.
- If you did not witness the incident yourself, be sure to preface comments made by the guest with "according to the guest" or the "the guest alleges" thus and such.
- Never assume situations are as they appear. Be investigative.
- Never admit liability. Liability will be determined by insurance investigators and attorneys. Never argue with the guest or act defensive. Never offer to pay for medical expenses. Never reprimand any employees at the scene.
- Take pictures (digital if possible) of the area and send those with your report.
- If you have security cameras make sure they are maintained and are in working order. If those tapes recorded the incident be sure to safeguard that recording.
- VERY IMPORTANT – Make sure your employees are aware of this policy and they know where to find this information and who should be copied on your incident reports. Place this information where all potential report writers can access it quickly. Make sure you follow through and send each and every incident report to the appropriate recipients. It is better to provide more information than less.
- Request copies of police reports if applicable.

Remember, accurate detail and prompt reporting can be our best defense. It can help us prevent similar occurrences in the future.



## Is The Customer Always Right?

By Dennis Rosen, eHotelier

"The customer is always right!" Many businesses live by and preach this phrase. But is it true? No, and everyone knows it. What the phrase really means is that it is best to assume customers are always right and give them what they want rather than lose good customers.

But is this a good strategy to follow? Many industry writers point out that there is a minority of bad customers out there that will take advantage of businesses, cost them money and should be "fired." I agree. Not all customers are worth keeping.

So now, what do you tell your employees? "Some customers are good; some are bad – use your judgment"? The answer becomes clear if we ask the proper question. Asking whether the customer is always right is a waste of time. The real question we should ask is: Does the customer honestly believe he/she is right? If you keep this phrase in mind and preach it to your employees, proper actions will become apparent.

When customers honestly believe they are right, you should treat them as if they are right by honoring their requests and handling their problems. Customers may be making honest mistakes due to misunderstandings or confusion. Correcting them and rejecting their requests will simply create hard feelings and may lose them as customers. Employees must be trained to understand that saving a few dollars is not worth the loss of a good customer and that customer's potential contribution to the bottom line of the business for years to come. If more than a few dollars are involved in meeting the customer's request, a manager can be called in to aid in the situation.

If there is a need to correct the customer to avoid future misunderstandings, do it after you have handled the complaint. If you do it before, you will be viewed as lecturing by the customer. If you do it after, you will likely be viewed as having provided additional useful information.

If you think the customer is not honest in his/her request or complaint, you should, in my view, politely refuse with justification. You may make some customers upset and they may not come back, but so what? Why would you want to keep them if they are trying to rip you off?

(Continued on Page 4 - Right?)

## Fun Facts About Fall

Happy fall! It's finally time to pull those sweaters out of hibernation (unless you live on the equator) and watch the leaves morph into various shades of yellow and orange. Fall can be a gorgeous time of year but do you know the history behind it?

**Fact #1:** Americans typically refer to this time of year as "fall," while the British use the word "autumn." Both terms date back to the 16th century but before that it was called "harvest."

**Fact #2:** Fall was called "harvest" because of the "harvest moon" that occurs when the full moon is closest to the autumn equinox. Before man-made lighting, this moonlight was essential to a prosperous harvest.

**Fact #3:** Weight gain around this time of year may not only be due to comforting fall foods like pumpkin pie and cider, researchers have found that lack of vitamin D reduces fat breakdown and triggers fat storage.

**Fact #4:** According to The Weather Channel, pumpkins are the most craved food during the fall. Although, if you've left the house anytime recently, this may not come as a surprise to you.

**Fact #5:** The yellow and orange colors you see actually always exist in leaves but they are overpowered by the abundance of green from chlorophyll. The amount of chlorophyll starts to decrease as the sun weakens and the days grow shorter.

**Fact #6:** Red and purple leaves are only that color because of the presence of sugars and sap that are trapped within the leaves. These sugars provide plants with the energy they need to survive.

**Fact #7:** Many birds will prepare for their winter migration during the fall. The distance they can travel is impressive; the Arctic Tern travels 11,000 miles each way for its annual migration. That's no small feat.

**Fact #8:** Evergreen trees such as pines, cedars, and spruces stay green because their leaves (needles) are covered with thick wax and they contain materials that prevent freezing when it gets cold.

**Fact #9:** Men and women experience high levels of testosterone during the fall. This makes sense because more babies are conceived during the fall and winter. The cause is unknown but it could be due to lack of sunlight or even go back to ancient mating rituals.

**Fact #10:** We can't forget Halloween! Halloween takes place in the fall and comes from ancient Celtic tradition. They believed that ghosts roamed on Halloween and people would wear disguises in order to hide from these spirits.

***O' pumpkin pie, your time has come 'round again  
and I am autumnrifically happy! ~ Terri Guillemets***

## Business To Business Exchange

On Thursday, September 15th, the SpringHill Suites by Marriott Quakertown PA co-hosted the Upper Buck's County Chamber of Commerce Business Card Exchange. Festivities included music by a local guitarist Dillon Taylor, and featured tours of the hotel, door prizes, light hors d'oeuvres and refreshments.

The attendance was robust and the hotel was delighted by all of the kudos from local businesses who had not yet visited the hotel.

Hotel staff was pleased as business has already benefited from this event with bookings made by several attendees.



## The Business of Doing Business

At Homewood Suites Gateway Hills Nashua NH it is all about the guest experience.



Every month, the hotel and staff host a "specialty" gathering in the Lodge. This month Homewood Suites treated everyone at the hotel to Kona ice! They also hosted an adult coloring contest and a local craft beer tasting at social hour. Guests really enjoyed bringing out their inner child and staff chose

themed awards for some of our top contestants. More than 60 entries were received in one evening! Prizes included "Most Likely to Think Outside the Lines", "Office Picasso", "Most Colorful", and "Most Worthy of a Spot on the Refrigerator".



*(Continued from Page 3 - Right?)*

My daughter was a part-time employee for several years for a major department store. Occasionally customers would come in with clothes to return that had clearly been worn and washed or were stained, etc. Taking the clothing back was demoralizing to the employees and made them angry. They knew that doing so just raised costs for the business and prices for good customers. I believe that politely refusing these customers with appropriate explanation is called for in such situations. If you lose these customers, they simply become a problem for your competition.

So, what if you don't know whether or not customers are being

honest in their complaints or demands? Then treat them as if they are correct, handle these situations to their satisfaction, but get necessary information so they can be tracked over time to determine whether such problems continue with them in the future. If problems continue, you may change your evaluation and actions toward particular customers.

Yes, you can, and should at times, "fire" customers, but pick your battles carefully. When customers honestly believe they are right, make them happy. You'll hopefully turn them into devoted customers. If they clearly are not being honest in their complaints, refuse them and let them go. They weren't going to build your business anyway.



Oftentimes sales people (and telemarketers) work from elaborate infographics, charts and notes that helps guide them through the maze of client needs.

Being prepared for a sales call or to sell face-to-face means doing your homework, knowing your product and being prepared for resistance. This is paramount to the success of every sales person in any industry. Are you prepared? Do you have your infographic posted near your phone or in your notebook?

In the article "6 Negotiation Strategies Every Marketer Should Know" by Amanda Zantal-Wiener, the author notes several valuable ideas on the art of negotiation. I particularly liked (and have touted this in many of my blogs) the point that every salesperson should have an "If-Then Matrix" in their back pocket. Think back on conversations we might have had, and where I suggested you create a bullet point list to answer resistance. I asked you to prepare for every resistance point for your hotel, write down the issue and list possible solutions.

In her article, Zantal-Wiener notes, "When you enter a negotiation, it's valuable to have different scenarios and alternatives in mind. In business school, we were taught to frame these with an "If-Then Matrix": A table with rows of "if"s -- the things we wanted, but the opponent might say no to. Those were followed by columns of "then"s -- the items that would become non-negotiable if the client refused the "if." Having options in mind can help to mitigate some of the fear that comes with negotiating."

The author further explained that when negotiations stymie, that you "need to consider the BATNA -- or, best alternative to a negotiated agreement. Sometimes, no matter how prepared you are for a negotiation, you might not reach an agreement. Then what?"

You'll need to know the answer to questions before you even enter the conversation -- that's your BATNA. In fact, have multiple alternatives in mind -- the more options you have, the less likely you are to feel completely helpless if your negotiation results in a stalemate.

An "If-Then" matrix can be helpful here, too. Know which factors will be at play if you don't reach an agreement, and what the implications will be for your customers, your company, your team, and yourself. Don't focus on defeat -- focus on what you can do, and the actionable items that come with it.

If	Then	Then	Then
Client needs airport transportation for her attendees.	Regrettably, the hotel does not provide shuttle transportation to and from the airport.	We have an association with ABC Transportation Company and they will provide private transportation for individuals or groups to and from the airport. We have negotiated a set fee of \$20 per person each way and we can add this to your existing hotel folio for easier reconciliation. We will also contact ABC to arrange the pick-up.	If your guests would prefer other transportation options, the Super Shuttle is available for \$10 per person. This is a shared shuttle between our hotel and others in the area and while efficient, makes multiple stops. If your guests have time flexibility, this is an economical alternative. Travelers must reserve and pay for this service on their own.
Our meeting requires multiple break-out rooms and you only have one large meeting room.	We would be happy to open up our breakfast area for semi-private breakout sessions. The use of the breakfast area during non-breakfast timeframes is complimentary providing you use the existing set-up.	Additionally, we have several one-bedroom suites that might be suitable for breakout sessions. We'd be happy to offer these rooms for only \$50 per day.	If you need formal meeting rooms for breakouts, we have a relationship with the office complex next to our hotel and they have several small meeting rooms. We'd be happy to secure space for you and add the charges to your master folio. Cost per room, per day is \$150.
Not enough double/double rooms	While we know that your group needs		

Keep track of things that your clients object to and create your own If-Then matrix similar to the one pictured here. Having these objections/possible solutions written out makes it easier to talk to the customer. Oftentimes, when meeting resistance, you become flustered. Using a written guide will keep you on your toes and keep the conversation moving without a bunch of "ahs or ums" while you talk. It also will demonstrate to the client that you know your hotel, it's limitations, and have make their shopping experience seamless.

Remember: Negotiation isn't an all-or-nothing process. Think about your interests, then determine your options based on the ones that are most important to you.

Happy negotiating!

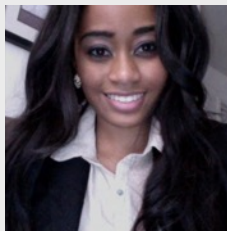
## Roomer Has It

### GRAM CORPORATE OFFICE

Congratulations to Diana Fowler who has rejoined the GRAM accounting staff full-time. It's great to have her back and we look forward to her contributions.

### TOWNEPLACE SUITES TALLAHASSEE

We welcome our new Sales Manager Brenda Hilson to the staff at the TownePlace Suites by Marriott in Tallahassee, FL. Brenda brings Marriott brand experience to the table after holding various sales positions in Virginia and Florida. She specializes in building new accounts and renewing existing business commitments. A



graduate of Florida State University College of Business, we congratulate Brenda on her accomplishments and look forward to her contributions at the hotel.

### WYNDHAM GARDEN ROCHESTER MN

GRAM has recently assumed the management of the Wyndham Garden Hotel located in Rochester, MN. Please welcome our General Manager Jarod Endersbe and Sales Manager Jacqueline Tummons.

### SHRIMP BOAT RESTAURANTS

New menus, Sunday Brunch, Early Bird Specials and Football Weekend Promotions are all happening in Panama City, FL at The Shrimp Boat, Gracie Rae's and Salty Hawg. Guests are enjoying the new and refined fare, lower pricing and specials.

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

*Excerpted from Career Builder*

Searching for a job and landing a job is a very competitive process. Recently, Career Builder published the following "Doing Whatever It Takes" list of unusual tactics job seekers used to stand out. While we applaud candidates trying to stand out from the crowd - be cautious of weird, outlandish, or unprofessional tactics.

- Candidate had a priest contact the hiring manager and ask for candidate to be hired.
- Candidate bought a first class upgrade to sit next to hiring manager on a transatlantic flight.
- During the month of October, candidate came dressed in a costume for Halloween.
- Candidate's wife made homemade lavender soap bars for the hiring manager as a thank you for taking the time to interview the candidate.

## HR CORNER

- Candidate asked hiring manager to share an ice cream cone.
- Candidate sent a pair of embroidered socks with a note saying he would knock the company's socks off if hired.
- Candidate showed up in his camp counselor attire with some of the children from the camp he worked for to show his leadership capabilities.
- Candidate sent a shoe with a flower in it as a thank you after the interview. The note said: "Trying to get my foot in the door."
- Candidate mailed hiring manager money in an envelope.
- Candidate arrived to interview in a white limousine, an hour early, dressed in a three-piece suit. The open position was middle-wage and had a required dress code of khakis, company button-down and black shoes.
- Candidate kissed hiring manager.
- Candidate gave hiring manager a book on a subject he knew candidate manager enjoyed.
- Candidate wore a tie that had the name of the company he was interviewing with on it.



## Dover Children's Home Community Partnership

Great American Hotel Group is pleased to partner with EcoLab to support the Dover Children's Home. GRAM made a \$600 donation.