

TeleGRAM

Great American Hotel Group Newsletter



Around the Block

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

*Candy Grimbilas - 20 years
Mercy Breitenbach - 4 years*

A Little Bit Wiser

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

*Dan Hays - May 28
Rob Greene - June 28
Jon Kozma - June 21*

Social Butterflies

GRAM recently opened a Twitter account. While we are newbie tweeters - we'd love you to follow us! @GreatAmerHG. If you haven't already - "Like" us on Facebook too.

A Laugh A Day



QA: Friend or Foe?

Your heart drops. Your GSR has just come in to your office with a business card and announced, "the QA Inspector is here." You know you are ready, but you still have that sense of dread.... what happened last night? Did the Night Auditor follow all the steps of check-in? Did housekeeping inspect all the rooms yesterday? How was breakfast - did we take the stickers off the bananas?

QA is a fact of life for all hotels. It is truly a good thing (once it is over and you passed). But, having a good handle on the how and why of the process takes time, focus and research.

To this end, GRAM is making an investment for our Marriott products and will host a training day for all 5 of our Marriott GMs. On Friday, June 9th - GMs from each of our 7 Marriott portfolio products will gather in Quakertown, PA at the SpringHill Suites to go through a training session with Deloitte - the official audit company for Marriott International.

"Setting ourselves and our teams up for success will pave the way for future inspections," noted Dave Akridge, President of GRAM. "We are making this investment to help our new Marriott team leaders know and understand the nuances of the audit. This training session will give our property leaders the edge in quality control and provide all of the necessary tools as it relates to QA inspections - and passing the first time."

Roomer Has It

ELITE INN & HORSESHOE INN

Welcome to the Elite Inn/St. George, SC GM Gerald Lawton and the Horseshoe Inn, Columbia, SC GM Mary Reese. We look forward to working with you and ownership on these two new assets in the GRAM portfolio.

GREAT AMERICAN HOTEL GROUP

GRAM was pleased to support M3 and the Relay For Life Team Cause and Effect.

**To all those who supported M3
Tampa's Relay for Life Team, Cause
and Effect:**

THANK YOU!

**Because of your generous support we
were able to raise \$5,150. M3 matched
your efforts with a an additional \$5,150
to give us over \$10,000 raised.**

**This is such a great cause and all of
our efforts help move research towards
a cure!**



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

4 Simple Strategies to Make Sure Customer Complaints Don't Become Lawsuits

Excerpted from an article written by Rebecca Hosley, Insureon 5/16/17

Learning how to respond to the most common customer disputes could mean the difference between keeping their business and hiring a lawyer.

A lot can go wrong when you run a small business, but according to a recent survey from Insureon, the most common incident small-business owners experienced last year was a customer complaint or contract dispute.

These incidents likely ranged from minor mishaps to full-blown ordeals. But no matter how small the issue, any customer dispute can escalate if not handled properly. The way you respond could mean the difference between a customer leaving satisfied and filing a lawsuit.

Here are four ways to effectively manage customer disputes.

Address the Issue Immediately

When a customer has a complaint, respond quickly. Even if the incident seems trivial to you, your customer obviously feels differently.

Start by making sure you understand the cause of their dissatisfaction. Ask the customer to explain the problem, then repeat it back to them. This demonstrates that you're:

- ♣ Acknowledging the issue
- ♣ Listening to the customer
- ♣ Able to see the problem from their point of view

Simply recognizing your customer's frustration can help deescalate the situation.

Whatever you do, don't ignore the problem in hope it will go away. If a customer thinks you don't care, they might be more inclined to take legal action.

Establish Policies for Handling Customer Complaints

Create guidelines that you and your staff can follow when a customer says they're unsatisfied with your business. For example, you might offer a:

- ♣ Partial or full refund
- ♣ Discount on a future purchase
- ♣ Replacement item

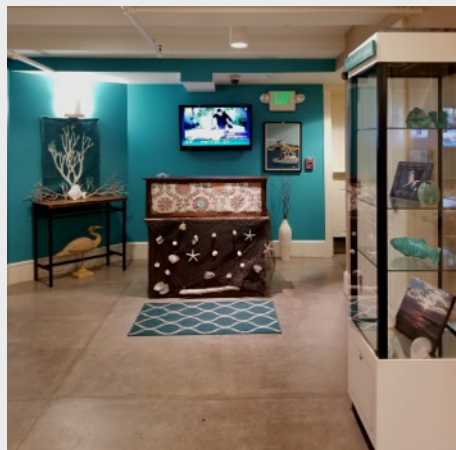
By creating policies in advance, you'll have action steps to take when confronted with an upset customer. This makes it easier to calmly resolve issues at a time when emotions might be running high.

(Continued on Page 4 - Strategies)

Property Happenings

ATLANTIC HOUSE INN

Atlantic House Inn opened for the season and the lobby got a nice facelift over the winter! We are all excited for the upcoming summer season.



ELITE INN

Gerald Lawton joined the hotel as the new General Manager mid-April, 2017. While it has been a challenge, he is enjoying putting the hotel back on the map. Pulling out all of the tools in the toolbox, he has been successful in signing sports groups, working with a local construction company on weekly stays, setting up the Online Travel Agency accounts, and hiring/training the staff. With all of these improvements and new sales strategies, rates have now been stabilized and the hotel is looking forward to their future in the St. George, SC community.

SPRINGHILL SUITES QUAKERTOWN

Front Office Manager Sandy was recently thanked by a guest who complimented her on her extraordinary customer service!



Hiring Veterans & Military Spouses at Hilton Hotels

United States military veterans and their families have made tremendous sacrifices for our country, and Hilton is committed to ensuring they have a great career when they return home from service. It is this mindset that inspired them to launch Operation: Opportunity a program designed to hire more than 10,000 military veterans and their families, a goal they achieved in just three years – two years ahead of schedule. Hilton's new goal is to hire 20,000 additional military Team Members through Operation: Opportunity by the end of 2020.

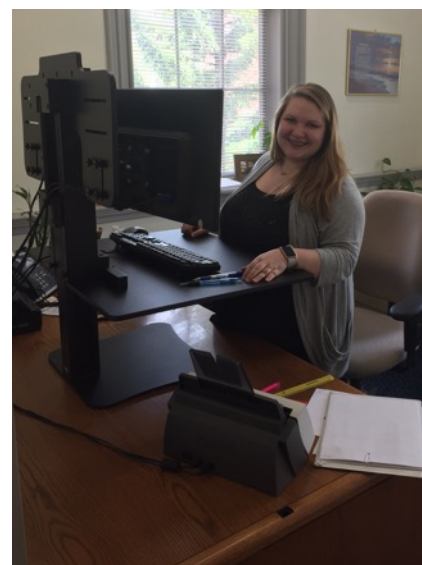
With this renewed commitment, they will expand Operation: Opportunity to better support hotels and enable franchises to participate by providing specialized resources that have been developed specifically for military recruitment and retention, including: Military hires development opportunities, Apprenticeship and internship programs, On-the-job training. Inclusion in hiring fairs. Communications, training and resources for hotel leaders to create a military friendly culture, and Support through the Veterans Team Member Resource Group at our managed properties

In today's challenging recruiting environment, focusing on hiring veterans and their families connects Hilton to an incredibly valuable talent pool. Veterans and military spouses possess unique skills, values and experience that strengthen our business and align well with our culture of serving others.

In the coming months Hilton will share updates, tools and resources with all hotels and property leaders – stay tuned! If you or your hotel leaders have any further questions at this time please reach out to military@hilton.com.

Ergonomics and Productivity

Both Diana Fowler and Teena Nikias are benefiting from new stand up desks at their workstations. Having the ability choose to stand or sit during the day is good for both body and soul!



We All Scream For Ice Cream!

Test your summertime food knowledge!

1. **At the 2005 Annual Big Watermelon Contest in Hope, Arkansas, Lloyd Bright broke the record for the world's heaviest watermelon. How many pounds was the massive melon?**
a. 121.9 b. 268.8 c. 611.2
2. **Where did the name "hot dog" come from?**
a. Cartoonist Tad Dorgan b. Street Vendors c. All of above
3. **How many rows of kernels does the average ear of corn have?**
a. 22 b. 16 c. 12
4. **How many rows of kernels does the average ear of corn have?**
a. Purple Beads b. Round Fruit c. Star Berries
5. **Which U.S. president hosted the first barbecue at the White House?**
a. Lyndon B Johnson b. George W Bush c. John Adams
6. **Our favorite icy treat, the popsicle was invented by:**
a. 11 yr old boy who left out a cup of homemade soda with a stir stick overnight
b. Housewife who wanted to find less expensive alternative to ice cream cone
c. Eskimos who were looking to create an easy-to-carry frozen dessert
7. **Summertime means it's time to hit the grill. What is the most popular food to put on the grill?**
a. Chicken b. Burgers c. Hot Dogs
8. **How much milk does it take to produce one gallon of ice cream?**
a. More than 1 gallon b. Less than 1 gallon c. 0 gallons
9. **Kids name which fruit as their favorite?**
a. Apples b. Grapes c. Strawberries
10. **Which American president is credited for introducing macaroni to the United States?**
a. George Washington b. John Adams c. Thomas Jefferson



(Continued from Page 2 Strategies)

Call Your Insurance Carrier

If you can't resolve a dispute to your customer's satisfaction, call your insurance company and report the incident, even if your customer isn't threatening to sue. This is called a notice-only claim.

For example, let's say a customer is disappointed with your service, but they wave off your attempts to resolve the issue. They seem resigned when they leave, but they may change their tune later.

In this case, it's smart to give your carrier a heads-up that an incident occurred that could turn into a lawsuit. Most carriers require this kind of notice as a condition of your coverage. They may even deny coverage for a lawsuit if the initial incident isn't reported.

Establish a Paper Trail

When faced with a customer dispute, keep a written record of any communication about the issue. For a face-to-face conversation or phone call, follow up with the customer via email to recap what was discussed. If you offer professional services, make sure you keep a copy of the initial contract you and your client signed. If you end up in court, documentation like this may act as evidence that you took steps to mitigate the dispute.

It's also a good idea to carry professional liability insurance (aka errors & omissions insurance) just in case complaints become lawsuits. Professional liability coverage can help pay for legal expenses when you're accused of work mistakes.

These steps can help deescalate a situation, but humans are unpredictable, especially when bad feelings are involved. Be attentive to customer complaints and do what you can to resolve the issue, but cover your bases, too.

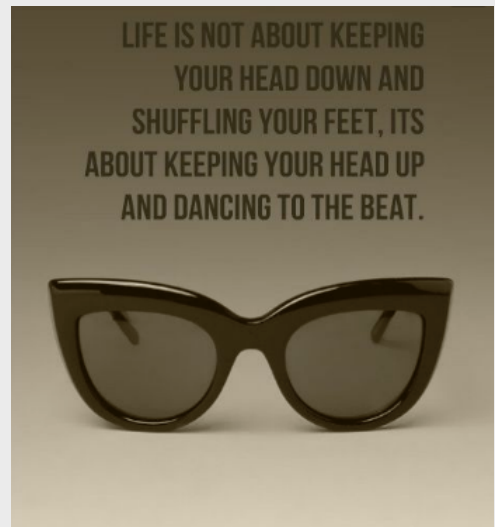
Stay on Beat - Learn the Sales Dance Steps

I am a salesperson by day and a [dancer](#) by night. I have often thought about the connection between the two. Selling requires planning and leadership. Dancing requires technique and leading/following. Both sales and dance require choreography and a good sense of timing. It is no wonder that people refer to it as a "Sales Dance".

As I sit here at my desk on the cusp of the first day of June, I think about our sales plans. The old saying, "today is the tomorrow we thought about yesterday" comes to mind. Salespeople must always be two steps ahead and thinking about what they are going to do when. Without a good plan, you can't execute the steps required to make it happen. You can't just run a promotion or sell a package today.... you have to have think about it, do your research, prepare your materials, and get the word out. Only then will someone buy your product.

So, what are you planning for the end of the summer and the beginning of fall? (To read the rest of this blog, go to [The Roomer Mill - Don't Sell The Steak. Sell The Sizzle.](#))

Happy Dancing By Day!



Nashua Mayor Jim Donchess Caught Holding The Bag - Thread Goes Viral

Homewood Suites Gateway Hills sponsored the bags for End 68 Hours of Hunger Nashua as part of an effort to feed 200 children in need over school vacation. Sales Manager Jayme Putnam helped walk the Mayor through the process as they discussed the fact that Homewood Suites is a 24 hour donation drop off point for the program and her personal volunteer effort. Pictures of the Mayor helping fill the Homewood Suites logo bags were posted on the End 68 Hours Facebook page and shared by the Mayor, The City of Nashua, the Nashua Rotary Club, The Nashua Teacher's Union and several other local pages resulting in 120,000 people seeing our good deeds on their Facebook Page.

It's Official - Bakersfield Celebrates In Style!

While the WoodSpring Suites Bakersfield opened its doors late in 2016, an official Grand Opening Celebration and Ribbon Cutting was held last month. Dan Hays, long-time bench GM for Great American Hotel Group, has spent the last 6 months assisting our local team get on the right track. The party was a great success and well-attended by the local community, its leadership and many businesses and hotel guests. Food, fun and prizes ensured the party will be remembered by this great community.

Representing GRAM, and in attendance were Jim Davis, Regional Director of Operations and Linda Komornik, Corporate Director of Sales & Marketing. While everyone worked hard to ensure that guests learned about WoodSpring Suites and this great product, there was time for a little fun too!



Strike a pose Dan!

Vying for the spotlight are Dan Hays and Jim Davis.

It's Official - Dan and Jim pose for the camera.

Pictured below is the "grand moment" and official ribbon cutting.

Owner Ajit Bhattal is joined by his family and friends, as well as Bakersfield Mayor Karen Goh, Kern County Commissioner Leticia Perez and Kern County Sheriff Donny Youngblood. During the ceremony, many other local officials and representatives presented Mr. Bhattal with ceremonial proclamations and certificates. Food was provided by NV Catering and equipment was supplied by JoRonCo Rentals. Thank you to all who attended!



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