

# TeleGRAM

## Great American Hotel Group Newsletter

### Around the Block

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

Suzanne Baele - 24 years  
Jon Kozma - 2 years

### A Little Bit Wiser

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

Jerry Ianella - September 14  
Sheri Kresky - September 20  
Gabrielle Smith - September 24  
Garrett Moylan - October 20

### Celebration Station

In case you want to celebrate, here is a list of National and "other" holidays:

National Kale Day (10/3), National Golf Day (10/4), Physician Assistant Day (10/6), Emergency Nurses Day (10/10), Bosses Day (10/16), Navy Day (10/27), Halloween (10/31), Men Make Dinner Day (11/1), Sandwich Day (11/3), Forget-Me-Not Day (11/10), World Kindness Day (11/13), Thanksgiving (11/22), Black Friday (11/23). Remember salesmanship means being unique and standing out from the crowd. Some of these "days" will allow you to get your customer's attention in a positive and unique manner.

### Food For Thought



### Catch Me at My Best®

Catch Me at My Best® (Catch Me) is a seasonal employee recognition program developed for Hilton Worldwide North American properties. From June through August, guests, managers and peers are encouraged to recognize employees for acts of hospitality that align with Hilton Worldwide's vision "to fill the earth with the light and warmth of hospitality." The focus of the program is a comment card, or "catch." Once filled out and turned in, managers are prompted to tally the results and recognize employees that have been "caught."

Employee recognition saw a tremendous boost. In the first year, over 85% of Hilton Worldwide properties from 80 countries participated in the program. In three months, 100,000 employees were "caught" online 1,000,000 times. And because hotels were allowed to customize card quantities, 2.5 million fewer cards were printed.

The Hampton Inn & Suites East Hartford top three vote getters were: First place Shantae Dobson, Second place Nicole Walker, and Third Place Sophia Shirley. Congrats to these 3 outstanding associates!



**We Are HILTON We Are HOSPITALITY**

## **5 Ways To Avoid Wage Claim Violations**

*By Michaelene Cody, Esq. - Hub International*

Wage and hour disputes happen 9 times more often in hospitality than any other industry, according to government data. In 2017 alone, the U.S. Department of Labor took over 7,000 hospitality wage and hour claims, recovering more than \$483 million in back wages for employees. Workers can file a lawsuit if they're a minute late for a meal or rest break, or if their overtime was miscalculated by a dollar. To further exacerbate the problem, proprietors and restaurateurs aren't likely covered for these infractions. It's a common misconception that wage and hour disputes fall under employment practices liability insurance (EPLI). Instead, EPLI covers employment torts, including claims of wrongful termination discrimination, harassment and retaliation – not wage and hour claims. Review your wage and hour strategy with front-line management and staff if you're doing any of the following – even unknowingly:

**Miscalculating overtime is easy.** Overtime is calculated incorrectly when organizations fail to properly compute the employee's regular rate of pay when non-discretionary bonuses are earned in a particular pay period. While this error may only amount to a couple of dollars, it could expose businesses to various statutory penalties.

**"Suit up" time may be compensable.** Depending on the situation, an employee may be entitled to pay for their time changing in and out of uniforms or special apparel, regardless of how long it takes.

**Exercise caution when rounding hours.** The courts have explicitly stated that rounding must be fair to both the employee and employer, and consistent "up and down." Rounding when utilizing fair and consistent practices is permissible, but doing so may expose employers to legal challenges and the expense of defending the fairness of the practice.

**Taking additional, "excused" breaks may not be OK.** Additional breaks may be required due to an employee illness or injury. Are they compensable? The U.S. Department of Justice recently sided with the employer in a case where chronic back pain necessitated an employee to take more breaks than are typically provided by the employer during an 8-hour day. The court said that "accommodation breaks," beyond what is common, are not compensable.

In order to minimize wage and hour claims it is within every hotel's ability to change their policies at any time. Use these tips to stay clear of potential wage and hour lawsuits:

**Commit policies and procedures to paper.** Write detailed wage- and hour-related rules and procedures, including meal and rest break policies, so that employees understand they are relieved of all their duties during their break time.

**Know when to waive the meal break.** In some situations, employees can waive their meal break, but in some states employees can only do so in writing. If you are in a state that allows this, make sure it is signed by the employee each time he/she waives a break to avoid potential penalties or claims of missed meal periods down the road.

**Train supervisors to comply.** You cannot turn your back to meal period violations. Train supervisors and managers on the letter of the law, and what they can do to ensure compliance in different scenarios.

**Keep an eye on time cards.** Review worker time cards regularly, even if you rely on an outside agency or payroll company. Make sure employees took their break and did so in a timely manner.

**Always pay for missed meal periods.** Let go of your instinct to not pay an employee when he or she intentionally misses a meal period. Always discipline, document and pay. If not, you could face legal action.

While EPLI coverage generally doesn't apply to wage and hour claims, there is a new class of stand-alone wage-and-hour policies and EPLI endorsements that are gaining traction. These policies offer both defense and indemnity for certain wage and hour claims. Consider how you can transfer your hotel's risk to a stand-alone policy or by adding a wage and hour endorsement to your EPLI policy.



**All complaints of harassment must be taken seriously and communicated to Suzanne Baele, Corporate Director of Human Resources at 603-978-3201.**

## Making Employees More Cyber-Aware

By Dan Fox, Excerpt from Risk Management Magazine

An organization is only as strong as its weakest link and when it comes to cybersecurity, employees are that weak link—and, in turn, a prime target. While technology plays an essential role in any organization's defense, it does not stop employees from making basic security mistakes. In its Cost of Cyber Crime Study, Accenture found the average cost of cybercrime in the United States reached \$21.22 million per organization last year, compared to \$17.26 million the year before. What's more, according to the most recent Verizon Data Breach Investigations Report, 90% of successful breaches start with user errors.

Not only can cyberattacks cost a lot, they also take a lot of IT manpower to resolve and restore systems. To minimize financial and productivity losses and improve the overall security of the enterprise, many organizations increasingly recognize employees as their first line of defense and seek opportunities to continuously strengthen their security savvy—their human firewall.

Unfortunately, many employees simply do not know their role in helping to keep their cyber organization secure and the impact they can have, both positive and negative. Many organizations also do not have the proper measures in place to provide employees with comprehensive and continuous awareness education.

Cyber-awareness may be ingrained in your IT team, but it is not something the average person is usually focused on. However, an employee's online behavior directly impacts their employer's business. For example: What employees say and do on social media can easily be tracked by cybercriminals for spear-phishing attacks.

Working remotely using an unsecure Wi-Fi connection leaves computers vulnerable to man-in-the-middle interception of credentials and data, among other attacks. Using personal, unsecured devices to do work can easily facilitate compromising an organization's network.

While cautions about the risks of insecure Wi-Fi or devices are common, many do not recognize other problematic employee behavior, such as risky personal social media practices, and their potentially negative impact on a business.

To read the entire article, go to: <http://www.rmmagazine.com/2018/06/01/making-employees-more-cyber-aware/>

## Halloween Origin & Facts Trivia

1. What vegetable was traditionally carved before the pumpkin?  
a. Beetroot   b. Melon   c. Turnip   d. Swede
2. What is the day after Halloween called?  
a. All Sinners' Day   b. All Saints' Day   c. After Hallow's Day  
d. Hallowmass
3. What does the Halloween color orange represent?  
a. Harvest   b. Twilight   c. Burning Spirits   d. Spirit Voices
4. Apart from eating, how else are apples used on Halloween?  
a. Bobbing Game   b. Good Luck Charms Hanging on Doors  
c. Miniature Jack O'Lanterns   d. Protective Potions
5. Why do you wear masks on Halloween?  
a. Protect faces in case the dead attack us  
b. Keep dead from recognizing the living  
c. Protect dead from seeing us happy  
d. Stop dead from touching our faces
6. How long does it take a pumpkin to grow?  
a. 30-60 days   b. 40-80 days   c. 60-90 days   d. 90-120 days
7. Halloween is the third largest US party day of the year. Which is second?  
a. Christmas Day   b. Super Bowl Sunday   c. Thanksgiving  
d. New Year's Eve
8. Barnbrack is a traditional Halloween food. What is it?  
a. Fruit Cake   b. Meat Dish   c. Pumpkin Punch  
d. Special Bread
9. How do you spell 'Sow-en', the Celtic harvest festival where Halloween originated?  
a. S-o-w-h-u-a-n   b. S-a-h-m-h-e-n   c. S-a-m-h-a-i-n  
d. S-a-r-h-a-r-n
10. In England, white cats are believed to be....  
a. Bad Luck   b. Good Luck   c. Devil's Protection  
d. Spirit Protection
11. What was the trick originally in 'trick or treat'?  
a. Knock on door then run away  
b. Throw water on person opening door  
c. Sing a song to the person giving you the candy  
d. Recite a good luck protection spell
12. What does the color black signify in Halloween?  
a. Death   b. The Future   c. Uncertainty   d. Protection
13. Who was Jack O'Lantern?  
a. A banished demon   b. A mischievous elf  
c. A guardian angel   d. A shifty villain



Answers on Page 6



## Property Happenings

### ATLANTIC HOUSE INN

Congratulations to General Manager Dan Mitchell who welcomed his first grandchild the end of September. Olin Paul Ashey is already the apple of his eye. "Having a grandchild opens up the opportunities for all new adventures!"



### HAMPTON INN EAST HARTFORD

The entire hotel was treated to a beautiful, multi-cultural wedding party recently.

Additionally, the hotel recently hosted the staff and production crew for the Farm Aid Benefit Concert at the Xfinity Theatre



### HOMEWOOD SUITES GATEWAY HILLS

Homewood Suites by Hilton Reading Library and Lewis the Duck Book Reaffirm Commitment to Children's Literacy Causes

The extended stay hotel brand has donated more than 13,000 books and volunteered 2,725 service hours to literacy causes over the past 5 years. Hotel employees are encouraged to promote reading in their local communities by volunteering to read to children. Trish Elliott, Sales Manager in Nashua is pictured with her class of listeners.



## GRAM Team Unites

On September 25-26, the GRAM team met in Dover to celebrate milestones and team-build. The group shared a very special celebratory dinner at The Library in Portsmouth, NH, overnight accommodates at the Atlantic House Inn, and met for our annual conference at the home offices in Dover.

On the agenda during our meetings were to get to know the new staff at the office (Jeff, Garrett and Jason), review our guiding principles and communication guidelines and discuss future projects and operations.

A special thank you to Dave Akridge for hosting the weekend, dinner, and a few gifts. The corporate managers presented Dave with 15 lbs. of catfish (his favorite), fresh from Tennessee waters. Thank you to Joe LaFico, long-time friend to GRAM, for assisting us with the transaction and transportation of this precious cargo.



Front Row from Left to Right: Linda Komornik, Corporate Director of Sales & Marketing, Gabrielle Smith, Corporate Controller, Suzanne Baele, Corporate Director of Human Resources, Dave Akridge, President. Back Row from Left to Right: Garrett Moylan, Executive Assistant, Rob Greene, Regional Director of Operations, Jeff Karl, Accounts Payable/Receivable, Jason Rickett, Staff Accountant.

## Making New Memories

The Atlantic House Inn in York Beach, Maine is a popular vacation spot for many New Englanders. It is also a great place for celebrating anniversaries and reunions due the fact that many families have been going to the destination for years and spent many childhood times on the beach.



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

Summer vacations are over and the kids are back in school. It's time for us to get refocused on work and accomplishing our goals. So how do we do it? How do we change our mindset when it is still warm outside, the Red Sox are still playing baseball, and the beach is still full of sunbathers?

I recently read a few blogs by one of my favorite bloggers (Anthony Iannarino) and he got me to thinking. In his blog "Old School Tools Deserving A Comeback" he mentioned a few tried and true sales techniques that many of us have pushed to the wayside as too "old school" or "too time consuming". I've had a chance to think about it and wonder if he isn't right – is it time to resurrect a few of the manual techniques we used in the olden days, by modernizing them using today's technology?

**Trace Cards** - Many of us (okay maybe not many of us) used to use a trace system that involved 3" x 5" index cards and a card box. The card box had dividers 1-31 and months January – December. Each time you created a sales file you also created an index card. Before you put the file back in the cabinet, you took the index card, put a trace date on it and filed in the card box in the appropriate month or date. Every morning we opened our card box and pulled out the cards for that date, found the file in the cabinet and then added it to our daily contact (prospecting/follow-up) tasks. This method kept us on top of our accounts (and the index card companies in business). So how do we use this old school method with today's tools?

I have advised many of you to use a digital calendar (such as Google Calendar) to update and replace the trace card system. Treat "event creation" like you would the "index card". Before you put the file back into the cabinet, go to your calendar and put the date you want to re-contact the customer on your calendar. You can also put contract due dates, resume due dates, BEO due dates, follow up and thank you call due dates.... anything you need to remember on the calendar.



**Mirrors and Scripts for Prospecting and Cold Calls** - Back in the olden days, our managers hung mirrors on the wall behind each sales person's desk/phone so that we could watch ourselves talk on the phone. The intention was for us to make sure we were smiling because smiling faces equaled smiling voices. It helped us keep our enthusiasm throughout the call. I still think this is a great idea and know that it works.

As far as scripts – you know that I am an advocate for being prepared for every call or appointment. I've always asked each of you to prepare for every call by doing research on clients, reading the articles in the news, and setting Google Alerts. I have also asked all of you to prepare a couple of different tools to help guide you along the sales call trail: List of Pros/Cons for your hotel, a list of Problems/Solutions for your hotel, and an If This/Then That sheet. Make sure all of these are in bullet format and always near you when making calls. (Please no reading scripts to our customers!) Having these guides will, first of all, keep you on track – second of all, it helps if you lose your way or get tongue tied!

**Role Play** - In the olden days we used movie or video cameras to record ourselves making calls. We then sat down with our supervisors, watched the calls and critiqued the process. It gave us good opportunities to stop the recording and talk about what techniques might have improved the outcome of the call.

Now, we all hold video cameras in our pockets. How many times do you turn the camera on "selfie" and record yourself making a phone call? Watch your own "selfie" movies and do your own self critique.

So what will you do to get back on target and finish the year with a bang?

Happy School Days - Golden Rule Days!

Linda



### Halloween Trivia Answers

1. c 2. b 3. a 4. a 5. b 6. d 7. b 8. a 9. c  
10. a 11. c 12. a 13. d

## Roomer Has It



### GREAT AMERICAN HOTEL GROUP

Meet new Staff Accountant Jason Rickett. Jason joined the GRAM staff in September. A 2007 graduate from Southern New Hampshire University with a BS in business and concentration in Accounting. Jason has more than 17 years of accounting experience. He also served in the US Navy from 1991-1993 active duty receiving the Navy Defense medal and Southwest Asia service medal.

Jason is an avid outdoorsman and enjoys watching all of the NE sports teams. He has spent his entire life living on the seacoast.

Welcome Jason.

## TeleGRAM Staff

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## Ruling the Roost

The staff in Fresh Meadows/Queens, NY recently held a party for all staff to celebrate summer birthdays and the success the property had in it's first quarter of operations.



Management team and Supervisors. From left to right, Mustafa Naseer (FF FD Supervisor), Muhammad Cheema (CY FD Supervisor), David Jian (Owner), Jon Kozma (GM), Joseph Slane (DOS), Alexa Silver (AGM), Leidy Perez (Operation Manager), Brian Stokes (Director of Services), Noemi Hernandez-Cordero (CY FD Supervisor), Jhiette Vega (Sales Manager), and Emily Guzman (FF FD Supervisor)



Additionally, the team held its first annual staff Courtyard vs. Fairfield kickball game last month! It was a great match up and a beautiful day, but in the end Courtyard has become the first defending champions! Well done everyone!

*"A man without a smiling face must not open a shop."*

*Chinese Proverb*

