

TeleGRAM

Great American Hotel Group Newsletter

Around the Block

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

Gabrielle Smith- 21 years
Dave Akridge- 28 years

A Little Bit Wiser

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

Suzanne Baele - November 18

Celebration Station

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

Letter Writing Day (12/7), Gingerbread House Day (12/12), Ugly Sweater Day (12/21), Eggnog Day (12/24), Thank You Note Day (12/26), Fruitcake Toss Day (1/3), Clean Off Your Desk Day (1/8), Popcorn Day (1/19), Spouse's Day (1/26), Croissant Day (1/30). 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

*"Sometimes it takes only
one act of kindness and
caring to change a
person's life"*
Jackie Chan


'Tis the Season for Hospitality and Giving

As the end of the year comes to a close, we are reminded that these last two months embody the spirit of our industry and include the two greatest acts of kindness: Thanks and Giving.

Giving thanks for all of our clients and associates is celebrated during the holidays and consists of more than presents and food. It is the true words spoken by us, colleague-to-colleague and friend-to-friend, that puts the meaning in the season. "We thank each and every one of our associates, from the line level worker, to the manager, to the above property personnel, for their hard work and dedication to our mutual goal: taking care of our customers with respect and kindness," noted GRAM President Dave Akridge. He added, "you demonstrate the spirit of hospitality in every action and deed, and I know I join all of our ownership groups in thanking you."




DeVan Akridge, Benita DeVan Parnell, Dave Akridge



AKRIDGE-DEVAN FAMILY ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP IN EDUCATION

This scholarship is created in honor of Benita DeVan Parnell who taught English in secondary school on the occasion of her 80th birthday. As this is a gift from her living children, Dave and DeVan, this scholarship is also dedicated to the memory of Christopher L. Akridge. Christopher was also in the hospitality field and while not present is nevertheless very much a part of this gift.

Margaret Sullivan
Vice President, Development and Alumni Relations



Gifts come in all shapes and sizes. We are especially excited to announce the establishment of the Akridge-DeVan Family Endowed Scholarship, established by DeVan and Dave Akridge, that was unveiled during their mother's, recent 80th birthday celebration. The scholarship is in honor of Benita DeVan Parnell and

dedicated to the memory of Christopher L. Akridge (DeVan and Dave's brother who was in the hospitality industry). The scholarship will rotate between HTM and Secondary Education students in the College of Education and Professional Studies at The University of South Alabama. It is significant as USA has recently added a hospitality school to its curriculum and to which Dave has contributed his knowledge and expertise as a speaker.

Timing of retaliation is key factor in reinstatement of employee's lawsuit

Excerpted from an article written by Jon Hyman, a partner in the Labor & Employment group of Meyers Roman Friedberg & Lewis and published in the Ohio Law Blog. For more information, contact the author at jhyman@meyersroman.com.

"See something, say something" is one of the most important elements of any workplace intent on stopping harassment. Employers are supposed to empower employees to report any harassment they witness, whether or not they are the target. Key to this idea is ensuring that employees who report harassment do not suffer retaliation as result. Retaliation of any kind will chill efforts of employees to say what they see.

With this background in mind, consider *Donley v. Stryker Sales Corp.* (7th Cir. 10/15/18).

Kelley Donley, a manager for a medical technology firm, learned from co-workers that a manager had sexually harassed a subordinate. She exercised her right to file a harassment complaint against the manager with Stryker's human resources director. That complaint triggered an investigation, which resulted in the manager's termination.

Approximately one day after the manager's firing, Stryker launched an investigation into Donley. The investigation focused on an incident six weeks earlier at a team meeting in Colorado, in which it was alleged that Donley had photographed the intoxicated CEO of one of Stryker's vendors, and shared the photos with co-workers. The company fired Donley because "taking photographs of a valued partner while intoxicated was unacceptable."

The 7th Circuit ruled that the trial court had improperly dismissed Donley's retaliation lawsuit.

Donley's timeline ... exposes inconsistencies and contradictions ... of why Stryker began the investigation that ended with Donley's discharge. If the disputed facts are resolved in Donley's favor, a reasonable jury could interpret the suspicious timing as evidence (a) that one or both decision-makers initially found Donley's actions in the Vail incident to be tolerable, and (b) that they decided only later, after she had filed her internal complaint, to use that incident as a pretext to fire her for retaliatory reasons. What lessons can we learn from this case?

Do not sit on allegations of workplace misconduct. If something is inappropriate today, the passage of time will not make it more inappropriate tomorrow. Indeed, waiting to take disciplinary action raises questions as to why you did not take action sooner. If protected conduct intervenes, the inference will be (as it was in this case), that retaliation motivated your ultimate (and untimely) decision to act.

Adverse actions taken on the heels of protected activity is very dangerous. This is not to say that you can never discipline or fire an employee shortly after they engage in protected activity. Yet, if you are going to terminate an employee on the heels of any protected activity, you best have all of your ducks in a row. Employees who engage in protected activity aren't bulletproof from termination. But, you better be sure you're using the right ammo. If there can be any doubt about your motivation, you take a huge risk in firing an employee on this timeline.

By the Numbers Gabrielle Smith, Corporate Controller

BEFORE YOU CLOSE 2018 BOOKS: 1. Please be sure that all your employee address are accurate in the payroll system so that their W-2s will reach them. 2. All manual payroll checks should be processed in the payroll system before your last pay check date in 2018. 3. Please review your chargeback account in the general ledger and reverse all those that are not collectable. 4. If you have any Accounts Receivable accounts that may be considered bad debt, please forward all the documentation to the Corporate Office for write-off approval. Please include the folios and your collection efforts.



Property Happenings

FAIRFIELD INN & SUITES MILLVILLE



Mike Trout was "in the house" today signing autographs and meeting with fans. A native of the Millville/Vineland area, he is a center fielder for the Los Angeles Angels of Major League Baseball.

Trout is a seven-time MLB All-Star, and received the American League Most Valuable Player award in 2014 and 2016. Mike visits the hotel often and he always takes time to talk to the staff and pose for pictures. He is posed here with GM Jeff Webb.

ELITE INN

GM Gerald Law and his staff at the Elite Inn in St. George takes caring for guests seriously. Case in point: Mrs. Rita Hartzog. "Mrs. Rita" as the staff affectionally calls her, came to the hotel over a month ago after a fire destroyed her home. She lost everything and the only family she has is an adopted daughter and niece who are not able to directly care for her (they are in contact though). The staff is filling the void and treats her like family. They take turns checking in on Mrs. Rita three times per day. She is fortunate to have Meals on Wheels to bring her food.

Mrs. Rita, a retired nurse, may be in her "golden years", but she is full of life and has a great deal of spunk. Gerald recently called the Colleton Humane Society and made arrangements



to take her to find a furry companion after her long-time dog "Dolly" crossed the rainbow bridge. She was able to find a new friend and adopt "Bow" and is again loving life!

At all times, but especially the holidays, seniors often feel forgotten and lonely. If it is only to make one person happy, we have achieved our hospitality goals. Happy holidays Mrs. Rita!

Happy New Year Trivia!

- The Jewish New Year is called?
a. Passover b. Yom Kipper c. Rosh Hashanah d. Hanukah
- What does Auld Lang Syne mean?
a. Times Gone By b. Old Days Past
c. Olden Days d. Old Long Ago
- Name the #1 New Year's Eve resolution.
a. Stop Smoking b. Be Better Person
c. Save Money d. Lose Weight
- In the ancient Roman calendar, when did the new year begin?
a. July 1 b. December 1 c. January 1 d. March 1
- The first New Year's Eve ball drop in Times Square happened in?
a. 1907 b. 1920 c. 1943 d. 1960
- January is named after what Roman god who had two faces: one to look ahead to future and one to look back at the past?
a. Jupiter b. Janus c. Jason d. Janarius
- The lyrics to the traditional song "Auld Lang Syne" began as a poem set to the tune of a much older Scot folk ballad. Who wrote the poem?
a. John Keats b. Robert Burns c. Lord Byron d. Dr. Seuss
- From 1929 to 1976, what band leader led his Royal Canadians from the Waldorf-Astoria ballroom?
a. Les Brown b. Count Basie c. Guy Lombardo d. Dizzy Gillespie
- The tradition of eating black eyed peas on New Year's Day is believed to do what?
a. Return loved ones from war b. Bring peace to your household
c. Bring prosperity for the next year d. Relieve constipation
- "Toasting" began in what country?
a. England b. France c. Italy d. Egypt



Answers on Page 6

Operationally Speaking Rob Greene, Regional Director of Operations

It is a common misconception that frozen pipes are an issue only for homes in typically cold climates. However, the homes that are actually more vulnerable to frozen pipes are those in typically warmer climates because the pipes may not be properly insulated against frigid temperatures, or they may be located in unprotected areas (or even outdoors). Abnormally cold weather puts these pipes at risk. Wherever you live, you need to worry only about the water supply lines, not the drain pipes. Water pipes are small, only about 1" in diameter or smaller. Drain pipes 1.5" and larger and usually made of plastic. Drain pipes carry waste water, but they do not hold water and are not pressurized like water pipes, so freezing inside drains is not a concern.

How Much Is That Doggie In the Window?

Our corporate team and hotel managers have a lot of love to share with their furry friends. Check out our “holiday” pet pals!



From left to right, top row to bottom row:

Bear and Suzanne Baele (GRAM); King Tut and Sheela Patel (GM Pan American Inn & Suites); Bandit and Rob Greene (GRAM); Bacchus & LouLou (Linda Komornik - GRAM); Aspen, Muffin & Ava (GM Dan Hays - Hotel Broadway); Angus, Diesel and Adam Robitaille (GM Homewood Suites Gateway Hills); and Hunter (GM Gerald Law Elite Inn).



Typically I am an advocate of "working smarter not harder," but today I am suggesting that the salesperson who works harder for the business is the one who ultimately wins the business.



If you expect an account to drop in your lap because you are the customer's buddy, are charming, and have a winning personality, you may be in for a surprise. Do I think that customers book solely based on relationships and likability? Of course I think these two factors are very important - but frankly, I think it is probably more about being knowledgeable about your customers needs and being able to match your hotel's attributes to their needs, that truly makes the difference. Getting this combination right is the key to your success

So, how do you accomplish this feat? You must use all the tools in your sales toolbox (building relationships, knowing your competition, knowing your product, and being unique) to win! Think about the sales process and make sure you are following all the steps of sales (for sure). Going the extra mile and working a little harder than your competitors is what will make the difference.

Here are a few examples:

- Know the target company and what makes them tick. What is in the news about the company and/or your contact? Has there been a sale, or maybe they have won an award, prize or made a discovery. Setting Google Alerts, reading industry news and journals, or simply reading the newspaper will help you discover what is going on.
- Attend local events like Business After Hours with your local Chamber of Commerce. These meet-and-greets are not time wasters. They actually give you a chance to network with customers without setting appointments. Don't forget nearby city Chambers! If there are nearby cities or county organizations, make sure you are attending these events for your areas.
- Really get to know your customer. Are they a fan of Golden Retrievers? If you see news about national events like the Westminster or National Dog Shows, and if a Golden Retriever places well - here is a chance to reach out and open up conversation. The same goes for any topic such as sports, crafts, hobbies, etc. (By the way, you'll get these hints from items in their offices, pictures on their social media, ties, socks, scarves, hats, pins or charms they wear, or by simply paying attention to conversation.)

Going that extra mile to improve your relationship with your customer will make you stand out from the crowd. If there are 4 hotels on your block, then there are 4 sales managers out there trying to win business (and share shift business hotel-to-hotel). A proactive and hard working sales manager will be looking at every way, and every angle to win new business and keep existing business.

You need a plan and you need a strategy. Have you developed a sales and marketing plan for your hotel for 2019? Writing down your plan and then following the steps you have identified will keep you on track and focused. Give me a call if you want to discuss your strategies - together we will work harder to make it happen!

As we come to the end of another year, it is a good time for us to refocus our sales efforts and look for new ways to do business. If you are content to be right where you are, then perhaps you need to rethink your sales goals.

Happy Working Harder (And Smarter)!

Linda



Roomer Has It

GRAM OFFICE

Santa's elves were busy making merry and creating a festive atmosphere at the Great American Hotel Group office. Jason Rickett, Jeff Karl and Garrett Moylan are pictured here putting the tree trimmings in place. Santa has yet to determine if they have been "naughty or nice".



Happy New Year Trivia Answers

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



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

What is something all of us affiliated with Great American Hotel Group have in common as employers? Millennials in our work places! That's right...and we all face the statistics that this group typically stays on the job an average of two to three years; that the average turnover cost to replace is approximately \$15K to \$25K per position, and that our working Baby Boomers are retiring in the next three to five years. Do I have your attention?

As hoteliers with recruiting difficulties right out of the gate, this topic should be considered. If your associate was born between 1982 and 1995 pay attention. These individuals are considered social media crazed; they are socially conscious and responsible; they are born to helicopter parents; they are the least trusting and yet desire more meaningful feedback, in the workplace, at home, with friends...AND they have totally different attitudes about work and working...you get the picture.

Our Millennials have been described as having five key 'triggers' related to working and the workplace. First they are serious about Work/Life balance. They expect companies to walk-the-walk here as well, lip service will fail miserably. It has been suggested that Millennials would rather quit a job if this balance is not integrated; they do not value financial compensation like other generations: it's important, but not the be all to end all. Given they are so technologically savvy, they expect to have flexible working hours, with teleworking/commuting opportunities. Second, workplace flexibility. This is the group that recognizes that as long as the work is done well, timely, accurately etc., without job performance issues, they should be able to work when and where they want. Period end. If we don't trust them to do their work/job, then we have the wrong associate for the job, or 'we' are stuck in the old ways of managing people. You don't have to see them, you know they are doing what is required of them. Third and Fourth, Millennials love Growth and Professional Development opportunities. According to many HR publications one of the top reasons they will come to work for us is that they see plenty of opportunity to grow and develop further in their hotel careers. It is one career path that learning from the ground up, pays off quickly in terms of future growth, promotion etc. Fifth, being a part of the "Why?" intrigues our Millennials. Why do we do what we do; why does my company do what it does, who or what is the beneficiary and how does my piece of that matter in the scheme of things. This drives them.

As managers it would serve us well to retain rather than to constantly be recruiting, we all get that. Some food for thought. Are you able to collaborate with your associate so that their wants/needs meld well with hotel's objectives? Are you able to offer options; perhaps different benefits over compensation? (i.e. PTO available immediately rather than after the customary 90-day waiting period; different working schedules rather than the typical 7/3; 3/11; 11/7; working from home once a week or month. Consider Mentorships. Assign a tenured associate to mentor the newly hired. It bridges the knowledge gap, it may diminish stereotypes, it will foster team building and likely remove the 'us-v-them' mentalities we often see.

As we move into 2019, let's be more open minded about our Millennials whom will be the largest pool of talent in the very near future. Let's be more accommodating of the mindset of these folks and find mutually agreeable ways to keep everyone engaged, balanced and happy.

"Most people think 'selling' is the same as 'talking'. But the most effective salespeople know that listening is the most important part of their job." Roy Bartell

