

TeleGRAM

♥ Great American Hotel Group Newsletter ♥

Celebration Station

In case you want to celebrate, here is a list of National and "other" holidays: 2/7 - Send a card to a friend day; 2/9 - National Pizza Day; 2/14 - Valentine's Day; 2/26 - Ash Wednesday and Carnival Day; 3/6 - Dentist's Day 3/12 - Popcorn Lover's Day; 3/17 - St. Patrick's Day; 3/25 - Waffle Day; 3/30 - Take a Walk in the Park Day.

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.

A Little Bit Wiser

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

Linda Komornik - March 1
Jeff Karl - March 30
Jason Rickett - March 30
Dan Mitchell - April 7

Around the Block

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

Adam Robitaille - 5 years

Food For Thought

"I think when you're doing something you love in the world every day - if you get up and you're excited about what you do, it's good for everyone."

—Lisa Congdon



Executive Excellence: Extraordinary Excellence for Improving Quality

Members of Great American Hotel Group Management Company have been participating in an eight month program through Marriott to assist our portfolio properties navigate the maze of programs, tools, apps, reports and programs surrounding quality improvement...specifically improving results on Brand Standard Audits (BSA).

Marriott's leadership was founded on the philosophy "take care of your associates and the associates will take care of the guests and the guests will return again and again." From Mr. Marriott, through the ranks of regional leaders and GMs, this philosophy is brought to life as leaders set and communicate goals, communicate with associates, discuss and review performance, and interact with their teams. The company believes that a clear leadership philosophy – embodied by executives and managers every day – is the foundation of their success.



From left to right (front row): Rob Greene, Linda Komornik, Suzanne Baele; (back row) Anshu Jain, Dave Akridge, Greg Smith. The team recently traveled to Marriott headquarters to participate in an intensive 1.5 day, hands-on workshop.

Throughout our time in the BSA/GSS Improvement Program thus far, we have spent, and continue to spend time discussing leadership within our company and our role in assisting our property leaders achieve Marriott's accountability requirements. Why is leadership – and our leadership specifically – such an important part of the program? Because our above property staff and General Managers are the strategic, financial and operational leaders of our company and we all contribute to the culture of our entire organization.

.... Continued on Page 2 - Executive Excellence

Spring Forward - Trivia Fun

Test your knowledge on these "spring" fun facts:

- What is the first day of spring called?
A. Easter Equinox B. Spring Solstice
C. Easter Solstice D. Vernal Equinox
- Around what day does Spring typically begin in the Northern Hemisphere?
A. April 21 B. March 21
C. May 21 D. February 21
- Which holiday does not occur during Spring?
A. Mother's Day B. Easter.
C. St. Patrick's Day. D. Father's Day
- In the Spring, where does the sun rise and where does the sun set?
A. Rises in due south and sets in due north
B. Rises in due north and sets in due south
C. Rises in due west and sets in due east
D. Rises in due east and sets in due west
- What myth is associated with the first day of Spring?
A. Body hair does not grow
B. You balance a raw egg on its end
C. You can see Saturn from anywhere in the USA.
D. All of the above
- What does Spring symbolize?
A. Rebirth B. Love
C. Faith D. Death
- On the first day of Spring, it is said that the day and night are exactly what length?
A. 10 hour day and 14 hour night
B. 16 hour day and 8 hour night
C. 12 hour day and 12 hour night
D. 14 hour day and 10 hour night
- Spring is considered the first, second, third or fourth season of the year?
A. First B. Second
C. Third D. Fourth
- Why does daylight increase in Spring?
A. Because the Earth doesn't spin as fast on its axis.
B. Because the Sun moves closer to the Earth.
C. Because the Earth is closest to the sun in its orbit.
D. Because the Earth's axis is increasing its tilt toward the sun.

Spring Trivia Answers found on Page 4



Employment Eligibility Verification Department of Homeland Security U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services		USCIS Form I-9 OMB No. 1615-0047 Expires 10/31/2012	
Section 2. Employer or Authorized Representative Review and Verification (Employers or their authorized representative must complete and sign Section 2 within 3 business days of the employee's first day of employment. You must physically examine one document from List A OR a combination of one document from List B and one document from List C as listed on the "List of Acceptable Documents.")			
Employee Info from Section 1	Last Name (Family Name)	First Name (Given Name)	M.I.
Citizenship/Immigration Status			
List A Identity and Employment Authorization		OR List B Identity	AND List C Employment Authorization
Document Title	Document Title	Document Title	
Issuing Authority	Issuing Authority	Issuing Authority	
Document Number	Document Number	Document Number	
Expiration Date (if any) (mm/dd/yyyy)	Expiration Date (if any) (mm/dd/yyyy)	Expiration Date (if any) (mm/dd/yyyy)	

Since all of the hotels in our portfolio, branded or not are required to participate in the federal government's E-verify program, they will all be utilizing the new I-9 form that was recently issued. The form can be accessed at: www.uscis.gov/I-9. This new version, with the date of 10/21/2019 is to be implemented and placed in the New Hire Packets effective immediately. Suzanne has communicated with every General Manager on this topic. If there are any questions, please contact her via email at Suzanne.Baele@GreatAmericanHG.com.



Continued from Page 1 - Executive Excellence

Recently many of you were asked to participate in an assessment conducted by Zenger Folkman on Great American Hotel Group. We thank you for your honest feedback. We have just been given the results and find them to be incredibly insightful. Some of the key findings we learned from our constituents are:

- That team member involvement and feedback is important to every level of associate from leadership through line-level performers.
- Effective communications and clear direction is important to job performance.
- That growth and development, as well as recognition and rewards, are important to performance management.

While this program has been intensive, it has also been very rewarding to us. Our plan is to not only build on our strengths but to take those assessments of what we have discovered we can improve on, and enhance our level of efficiency. GRAM staff are excited and challenged to implement some of these findings and look forward to taking our company to the next level with you.

When we finally arrive at the end of our formal training, our goal is to use techniques we have learned to better our entire portfolio and to help all our teams be the best they can be.

New Employee W-4 Certificates:

The U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has released the 2020 Form W-4, Employee's Withholding Certificate. The final form has some changes in contrast to a draft that was released earlier in 2019. The 2020 form is intended for new employees; current employees don't have to fill out the new form. The changes include:

- Elimination of the total number of allowances
- Added elements to Federal Income Tax withholding calculations
- Elimination of worksheets
- Added questions to make better, more accurate, withholding choices
- Added tax table for employees opting for a higher withholding. This table should make calculations easier for two-earner households

HR Corner

New Hot Line Phone Number guarantees total anonymity!

All complaints of harassment must be taken seriously and communicated to Suzanne Baele, Corporate Director of Human Resources at 603-828-4212.

GRAM has also launched a few new policies for associates. These new policies include Weapons and Violence in the Workplace and Conflicts of Interest. Please contact Suzanne for more information.



RIDE THE WAVE
RECOGNIZING THE SERVICE HEROES AMONG US

We don't say it enough - but you are AWESOME! We are adding this new section to our newsletter to share stories from our customers about our most valuable assets - YOU. Share your service stories with us and help us shout that our people are GREAT people! Send your submission to Linda.Komornik@GreatAmericanHG.com for inclusion in future editions of the TeleGRAM.

FAIRFIELD INN & SUITES MILLVILLE, NJ

GM Nancy Gasperetti shared this great compliment from a recent bride about her Sales Manager Christian Braico,

"I wanted to reach out and give a minute to truly show appreciation for one of your Vineland employees, Christian Braico.

He was so kind, professional and helpful to us while planning our wedding block for our large, and needy, family! He was patient and always willing to spend a couple extra minutes on the phone or via email with me to calm my nerves over planning a hectic wedding weekend. Christian is a true value to your Fairfield location! I will be recommending your location to any family in our area in the future, and I'll always reference Christian by name. He left a lasting impression on us, and I'm sure he leave a great impression on all he meets.

Again, a huge thank you to Christian and the Fairfield Inn Vineland family!"

Congratulations to you Christian. You are the true definition of a service champion! Thank you.

SPRINGHILL SUITES QUAKERTOWN, PA

We received this compliment from a recent mother-of-the-bride about her Sales Coordinator Gail Dehelian,

"Gail, I just wanted to take a moment to thank you for all your help in planning and the room reservations for our son's wedding. It was a pleasure to work with you over the past months. Thank you very much"

Great job Gail. Thank you for always going the extra mile and making every guest welcome.

HOMEWOOD SUITES GATEWAY HILLS, NH

Compliments regarding the entire front desk staff,

"Super clean and absolutely fabulous! I didn't want to leave. By far the best hotel I have ever stayed at. Stayed in the suite and it felt very homey. The breakfast they provided was delicious. The front desk staff was wonderful. Every single one of them we interacted with was so friendly and helpful always went above and beyond. I definitely would go back. Thank you for such great experience."

Teamwork makes the dream work! Thank you for turning visitors into repeat guests.

Smile and the World Smiles With You—Unless It's Fake

Excerpted from an [article](#) written by Shep Hyken, published on January 9, 2020, Hotel Online. Thank you to our friend Bob Weiser who sent the link!

One of our faithful Shepard Letter subscribers emailed me a story. He was at a store, and the employee was friendly and engaging. But when he saw her later—when she was off duty—she acted indifferent toward him, almost rude. She wouldn't even smile, which made him wonder, "Shouldn't people greet you as warmly outside of their work environment as they do while on the job?"

When you hire someone for a job, you should understand their personality. Do they come to the job with the positive attitude you want your customers to experience? Or do they have to "fake it"? The old cliché of "hire for attitude and train for skill" comes to mind, but I think it's more than that. You do want to have someone with the right attitude, but more importantly, they need to understand and fit in with the culture and personality of your organization.

Just hours after I read this subscriber's story, I was at the airport standing in front of the check-in desk at the gate. The gate agent was busy pecking away at the computer's keyboard. He never once looked up at me. (Was I invisible?) He then left to go down to the plane. He came back a few minutes later and continued to work, never once looking at me or the other passengers that were now lining up behind me. Finally, I asked him, "Are you the gate agent working this flight?" He responded, "Yes, but this gate is closed until one hour before the flight."

Good explanation... but it would have been nice for him to tell me that five minutes earlier. A nice friendly smile along with that explanation would have gone a long way. I walked away and found another agent who was not "officially" on duty or working my flight, but who was almost overzealously willing to help me. She was very friendly, so I complimented her. I then told her the story about the grumpy agent who wouldn't even acknowledge me. I could tell that frustrated her, and she confided in me that he always comes to work with a sour attitude. She even said, "I can't imagine why he keeps this job. He must hate it—having to be friendly to everyone. It's not who he is."

When it comes to hiring people who have to work with others, especially customers, trust me on this. If the job requires friendliness and an outgoing personality, you don't want to hire someone who has to fake it. It's just a matter of time before they flip back to a different personality. They may want to put forth their best effort, but if it really isn't part of their personality, they will eventually revert back to who they really are. People can only adapt for so long.

It's important to remember that customers don't know whether an employee is on-duty or off-duty. But they do know how they are treated. Your best people should have the people-focused gene. It's about who they are all the time, not just when they are at work and on duty. That's who you want working for you—and that's the company reputation you should strive for.



Spring Trivia Answers from Page 2

1. D 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. B 6. A 7. C 8. A 9. D

so·cial me·di·a /sōSHəl 'mēdēə/

noun: **social media**; plural noun: **social medias**

Websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

So, what's all the hype about?

I overheard two people talking on the train recently. They were berating a colleague in their organization who's job it was to create and maintain a social presence for their company on social media. One referred to her job duties as shenanigans and a waste of company funds stating "she should be doing real work". The other person chimed in adding "yeah, like selling instead of just surfing the web". It really was all I could do to not interject into their conversation and bring light to the fact that a presence on social media is an integral sales strategy for most companies and organizations and that it is REAL work.

Why is social media important to sales?

According to Wikipedia "**Social Medias** are interactive computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation or sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks." For the most part, it's basically a free way to market and advertise our product. Networks formed through social media change the way groups of people interact and communicate. They introduce substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organizations, communities, and individuals. Social media outlets operate in a dialogic transmission system (many sources too many receivers). This is in contrast to traditional media which operates under a monologic transmission model (one source to many receivers), such as a newspaper which is delivered to many subscribers, or a radio station which broadcasts the same programs to an entire city.

Some of the most popular social media websites, with over 100 million registered users, include Facebook, YouTube, WeChat, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Pinterest, and more. Observers have noted a wide range of positive and negative impacts of social media use. Social media can help to improve an individual's sense of connectedness with real or online communities and can be an effective communication (or marketing) tool for corporations, entrepreneurs, non-profit organizations, advocacy groups, political parties, and governments. In other words, it is a fast, easy and economical way to reach large groups of buyers.

In order to reap the benefits of social media one must approach it smartly. Make sure you craft a written Social Media Plan that complements your Sales & Marketing Plan and sales strategies. Supporting your sales efforts in a particular focus market and providing social media marketing in the same focus market is just smart... it's like doubling your presence in that focus market. For example, say your focus for the month of March is to target summer weddings (think couples who got engaged on Valentine's Day). Your "sales focus" is to make plans to attend bridal shows and call on wedding planners and venues to try to partner with them to utilize your hotel for the basics: guest room blocks, hospitality suites, welcome receptions, rehearsal dinners, etc. Imagine coupling these sales calls with social media marketing that targets jewelry stores, dress boutiques and tux rental stores, DJ's, equipment rentals stores, and florists that specialize in weddings. You have now broadened your reach and opened the door to finding more business that relates to weddings. Couple this with a few creative, targeted posts that might be visible to people who "like" or "follow" your page. The opportunity for them to call for information about a friend or relative's wedding now exists in a very broad digital audience. Repeat business opportunities also exist. "Spend your anniversary with us and celebrate the first day of your married life where you started".

So don't nix social media as a passing fad. Make sure that you are working hard to use cyberspace to your advantage.

Happy Selling Socially!



Linda

Image by Gerd Altmann from Pixabay

Roomer Has It

FAIRFIELD INN MILLVILLE

Congratulations to Christian Braico and Nancy Gasperetti for landing a huge project for the hotel. Westat is due to stay at the hotel starting in early March through the end of April. Total value of the contract: \$153K - now that's incredible! Nice win team!

Cheyenne, GSR at the hotel, isn't afraid of the bogeymen... especially one like retired WWE wrestler, The Bogeyman, who was a recent guest at the hotel.



HAMPTON INN EAST HARTFORD

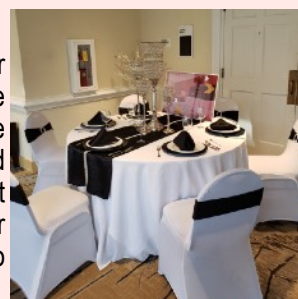
Kitchen staff Diana Gonzalez welcomed her baby girl Amaia Victoria, born January 8th at 3:45 am and weighing in at 7 lbs. 10 oz./20" long. Both Mama and Baby are doing great. Welcome precious little bundle.

Also welcoming a new little bundle of joy is Executive Housekeeper Hazel Delgado. She is now the proud grandma of her second grandchild Santino LeeRay Delgado. Born on January 10th at 8:43am and weight 5 lbs. 5 oz., Santino was born 18 inches long.



CLARION INN SHEFFIELD

The Clarion in Sheffield was pleased to host the inaugural Singing River Bridal Show which is a production of Singing River Media Group. There were more than 20 local vendors and over 60 brides in attendance. The event took place on Sunday January 12 in the Shoals Ballroom and lobby of the hotel. The event was a success and is in the books for next year. Catering Sales Manager Emily Thompson and Sales Manager Chris Aycock met many newly engaged couples and look forward to hosting their wedding festivities at the hotel.



HOMEWOOD SUITES GERMANTOWN

Katie Page, AGM and Derricka Lane, DOS attended the 2020 Leadership Conference - "Future Forward" in Anaheim, CA on behalf of the hotel. Attending this conference will help each property understand the updates the brand is making as well as preview upcoming changes for the brand.

Remember to send in your hotel happenings to be included in future issues of the TeleGRAM. We welcome information and pictures highlighting your team, awards, and other items.



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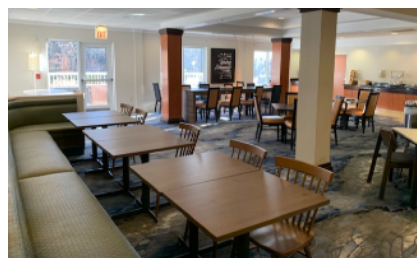
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Renovation Updates:

Several of our GRAM portfolio properties are currently undergoing renovation. The SpringHill Suites Altamonte Springs has been going through a 21-year refresh that includes all spaces - public and guest rooms. The lobby has been completed and the staff is excited to have their front desk back from its temporary location in the meeting room.



Fairfield Inn & Suites is coming to the end of their 7-year refresh to include public spaces and guest rooms. Pictured here is the new breakfast area.