

TELEGRAM

AROUND THE BLOCK

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

Linda Komornik - 27 years (July)

A LITTLE BIT WISER

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

Dave Akridge - August 14

WHAT'S COMING UP?

Don't let the "dog days of summer" take the air out of your sales balloon! Celebrate summer by coming up with great reasons to visit customers!



10 Ideas To Use Today on Your Business Social Media

By Maiya Wall, Pipeline Social Media. Reprinted with permission.

Creating engaging content on social media can be a daunting task, especially if you don't have a lot of time or resources. But, the good news is that there are many simple and effective ideas that can help you create content that your audience will love. In this article, we'll share ten easy-to-execute ideas that can help you increase engagement and grow your social media presence without breaking the bank or taking up too much of your time.

1. Highlight Your Team Members

Your team is the backbone of your business. They are the ones who make it all happen. So, it is important to show them some love! There are plenty of ways to go about making this kind of content, but one easy idea is just snapping a nice photo of a team member to use on social media and including a quote from them. The quote can be about why they love working at their job, what their favorite product or service is, or something non-work related! It's all about letting fans get to know your team members just a little better to prevent a one-sided online relationship between your business and your audience.

2. Give a Behind-the-Scenes Look

Share photos or videos of your team members working on projects, or even just hanging out in the office. This is a great way to give your followers a sense of what it's like to work at your company and to show them the human side of your business.

3. Share an industry tip or how-to

If you're an expert in your field, sharing tips and how-tos will position you as a leader. You can create videos, infographics, or blog posts that share your knowledge. By sharing your expertise, you can help your audience solve problems and provide valuable or interesting content.

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I AM HUMAN, I AM A RESOURCE

SUZANNE BAELE, CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

"Don't pick a job with great vacation time, pick one that doesn't need escaping."

Dave's Travel Pages

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BY THE NUMBERS

GABRIELLE SMITH, CORPORATE CONTROLLER

"Potential is like a summer crop. If it don't rain, it don't grow."

Charles Oakley ~ Former Pro Basketball Player

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SELLING THE SIZZLE

LINDA KOMORNIK-HARTMAN, CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF SALES & MARKETING

"Work until your idols become your rivals."

Drake ~ Musician

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OPERATIONALLY SPEAKING

DAVE AKRIDGE, PRESIDENT & REGIONAL OPERATIONS

"A perfect summer day is when the sun is shining, the breeze is blowing, the birds are singing, and the lawnmower is broken."

James Dent ~ Author

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I AM HUMAN, I AM A RESOURCE

SUZANNE BAELE, CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES



Secret Shopping is not just a task to evaluate sales people. "Shopping" your front desk and other departments assures management is confident that associates are on top of all your service standards.

Are your phones being answered in a timely manner and per your brand spec and the season? Are questions answered accurately by GSRs? Do associates know answers to simple guest queries? Knowing what our people are saying to guests will not only do wonders for "intent to recommend scores," it will make sure that GMs and department heads know where there are opportunities to improve training.

Shopping services are traditionally expensive so most hotels choose to do these shopping calls in-house. But how do you overcome voice recognition when a manager tries to shop their own hotel in a world where phone numbers (and/or names) populate in the caller ID?

How about working with other GRAM properties to shop each other? I am sure if you reach out to another GM, AGM, or Sales Person at one of our portfolio properties that they would take a few minutes each month to reach out to your hotel and query the front desk, or night audit on a question or two. They'd probably be interested in you doing the same for their hotel! How about a relative or friend? Would they be willing to do a bit of covert shopping with some coaching from you? The goal is not to trap your associate, but to train your associates!

Lastly, try asking a guests if they would be willing to shop a GSR, housekeeper, breakfast attendant, or maintenance person. They could ask about the hotel, one of your amenities, or something about the local community then let you know how they did. Let them know that they are helping you to make sure that each of our guests has the best experience. Reward them with points, a gift, or an upgrade for helping you out!

LET'S CELEBRATE

In case you want to celebrate, here is a list of National and "other" holidays: 7/17 - World Emoji Day; 7/19 - Hot Dog Day; 7/20 - Lollipop Day; 7/24 - Cousin's Day; 7/26 - Aunt and Uncle Day; 8/2 - Ice Cream Sandwich Day; 8/3 - Watermelon Day; 8/8 - International Cat Day; 8/10 - S'mores Day; 8/14 - Creamsicle Day; 8/17 - Neighbor Night; 8/21 - Senior Citizens Day; and 8/24 - National Waffle 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.

STANDING OUT FROM THE CROWD

Weird and wacky sales suggestions from Linda.

July 19th - Hot Dog Day - Host a hot dog roast day and invite clients for summer tours of the hotel.

July 24th - Cousin's Day and July 26th - Aunt and Uncle Day - This might be the perfect couple of wacky holidays to solicit family reunions or vacations!

August 2nd - Ice Cream Sandwich Day - I wrote a blog several years ago about making sales calls on this day. Re-read it here! [Summer Doldrums: Who Says So?](#)

August 10th - S'mores Day - Invest in the fixings for s'mores (chocolate, graham crackers, marshmallows, and roasting sticks) and host a party by the fire pit. Have fun making this classic summer time treat. Don't want to stand by a fire: get the fixings together, bag it up and make a sales call. Your customer might really appreciate the treats!

August 17th - Neighbor Night - Here is an opportunity to invite your local negotiated accounts in for a gathering/tour of the hotel. Use your "Love Thy Neighbor" flyers. Don't know what I am talking about? Give me a call and I'll show you three ways to be a "good neighbor".

August 24th - National Waffle Day - Again, most all of our hotels have waffles on the breakfast buffet. Invite a client to join you for breakfast and celebrate the day! Add some fun waffle fixings to the buffet. Try raisins, nuts, and flavored syrups!

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BY THE NUMBERS

GABRIELLE SMITH, CORPORATE CONTROLLER



WHY YOU NEED TO RECONCILE YOUR CREDIT CARDS EVERY DAY

Excerpt from an article written by David Lund in eHotelier | July 3, 2023. To read entire article, [follow this link](#).

It's probably not your Accounting Team's favorite topic, but when it comes to determining what funds are available to disburse, reconciling credit cards becomes super important. Whether you are reconciling your credit cards Daily, Weekly, or Monthly, the process can seem daunting. The more often you reconcile, the easier it is, and the quicker you can make any corrections if they are needed.

There are important matches that should be verified to ensure the correct amount ends up in your bank account: First: Verify that your daily batch total ties to your. PMS/POS reports. If they match, you are ready to transmit your credit card batch. If they do not match, then you need to find out why and correct the errors.

Second: Does the positing in the bank account match the total submitted? If not, research is needed to determine why. There may be variances that need to be researched:

- A VISA card might have been posted as Mastercard, AMEX, or Discover creating a variance in the type of deposit.
- At times, more than one end of the day transmission is added together to total one bank deposit.
- There could be an issue with the transmission itself. Not catching it right away might cause a serious cash flow issue.
- Chargebacks may have been deducted, or chargeback returns may increase the bank posting.
- Is your commission gross or net pay? If it is net pay, then you will need to account for the commission when verifying the deposit. Gross pay is easiest to balance. The commission is taken out as one lump sum, typically the 5th day of the following month.

Some people find that they prefer their credit card deposits posting as a net (minus the commission for each posting) while others manage their cash knowing the commission will be deducted in one lump sum.

Whichever method of reconciling the credit cards you prefer, be sure to review them frequently, if not daily, to ensure your deposits are accurate.



HOSPITALITY CRYPTOQUIK

Answer on Page 7

"S V O H Z D R B Z H O Q S O A S P X Q X Q T

X B X F K A O B B X Q T Z S V O A B; S V O

H Z D R B Z H S A R O V Z B K X S P M X S W

X B B O A G X Q T Z S V O A B."

S X F D V O B S O A

Clue: x = i



SELLING THE SIZZLE

LINDA KOMORNIK, CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF SALES & MARKETING



TO USE CHATGPT OR WING IT ON YOUR OWN - THAT IS THE SALES QUESTION OF THE HOUR

Article was written using data from The New York Times article "[Get the Best From ChatGPT With These Golden Prompts](#)" by Brian X Chen, May 25, 2021

People from all walks of life — students, coders, artists and accountants — are experimenting with how to use A.I. tools. Employers are posting jobs seeking people who are adept at using them. Pretty soon, if not already, you'll have the chance to use A.I. to streamline and improve your work and personal life.

There is a lot of talk about A.I. and chatbots like OpenAI's ChatGPT, Microsoft's Bing and Google's Bard. My first inclination is no - not a good thing because A.I. doesn't know me, my product, my hotel, or my style. And, if teachers and schools are pooh-pooing these tools because it isn't personal, and students aren't learning - then is it right for hotel sales? Let's explore....

A few common-sense warnings to start:

- Privacy: leave out personal details like your name and specifics about yourself.
- Confidential Data: Companies may have specific guidelines or restrictions, but in general, entering confidential data, trade secrets or sensitive information is a very bad idea.
- Hallucinations: Chatbots are powered by a technology called a large language model, or L.L.M., which gets its abilities by analyzing enormous amounts of digital text culled from the internet. Plenty of stuff on the web is wrong, and chatbots may repeat those untruths. Sometimes, while trying to predict patterns from their vast training data, they can make things up.

Using chatbots, though they look simple to use (type something in a box and get answers), asking questions in the wrong way will produce generic, unhelpful and, sometimes, downright incorrect answers. There's an art to typing in the precise words and framing, to generate the most helpful answers. These prompts are important in order to get the data your customers need and/or want to make sales decisions.

For example:

"Act as if." Beginning your prompt with these magic words will instruct the bot to emulate an expert. For example, typing "Act as if you are a tutor for the SATs" or "Act as if you are a personal trainer" will guide the bots to model themselves around people in those professions.

These prompts provide additional context for the A.I. to generate its response. The A.I. doesn't actually understand what it means to be a tutor or a personal trainer. Instead, the prompt is helping the A.I. to draw on specific statistical patterns in its training data.

A weak prompt with no guidance will generate less helpful results. If all you type is "What should I eat this week?" the chatbot will come up with a generic list of meals for a balanced diet, such as turkey stir fry with a side of colorful veggies for dinner (which, to me, sounds very "meh").

"Tell me what else you need to do this." To get results that are more personalized — for example, health advice for your specific body type or medical conditions — invite the bot to request more information.

In the personal trainer example, a prompt could be: "Act as if you are my personal trainer. Create a weekly workout regimen and meal plan for me. Tell me what else you need to do this." The bot might then ask you for your age, height, weight, dietary restrictions and health goals to tailor a weeklong meal plan and fitness routine for you.

Continued from Page 1 - Social Media

4. Give a Customer Testimonial

Customers will look for reviews on your social profiles before making a purchase, so make sure to turn positive feedback into social media content. When you share a customer testimonial, highlight the most important or impressive aspects of the review. This may mean only sharing a snippet of the best part of the review—no one likes seeing a wall of text, even if the review is amazing. You want to be sure to hook your audience and entice them to want to learn more!

5. Show a Finished Product

If you have been working on something new, update your fans on the progress. This is a great way to build excitement about your new product and to give your followers a first look at what you're working on. If you can do a short video about it, that would be amazing but even a quick photo will do! Sidenote—if your product isn't quite finished, you should still post about it if you can. Getting to see content about something that is in the works is just as fun for audiences.

6. Film a Q&A

Ask your followers to submit questions, and then film yourself answering them. This is one way to get to know your followers and answer any questions they might have about your business. You may think you need a fancy set-up to begin filming, but that is not the case anymore! Audiences no longer fall for "marketing schemes" and are looking for true authenticity. This is great news because that means you can just set your camera up or even just hold your phone wherever you please and start the conversation without worrying too much about aesthetics. Just make sure your fans can hear you loud and clear and keep any obvious distractions to a minimum.

7. Spotlight a Local Business

Social media is all about spreading the word! Use your platform to highlight other local businesses that you think more people should know about. This is an easy way to show your followers that you're involved in your community and support other local businesses. This kind of content is especially important for new small businesses because it can help build connections with the community you are trying to do business in!

8. Promote a Local Event

Align your brand to things happening in your community that matter to you! Promoting a local event is a simple way to show your support for your community. If possible, take this tip a step further by participating in local events and sharing photos and videos of your team at the event. This can mean having a booth or small table and passing out promotional items or just attending the event! It's a great way to get your name out there and build a stronger relationship with your audience & community.

9. Celebrate a Holiday

Celebrate a holiday with your followers by sharing festive content or by offering special discounts or promotions. Show your followers that you're in the holiday spirit and give them a reason to celebrate with you. This kind of content adds legitimacy to your account by providing timely content that others will also be participating in within your online community. If you need help creating holiday content, check out our [Social Media Post Packs](#) for hundreds of complete holiday posts for every season!

10. Share a Product or Service Tutorial

If your company sells a product, consider sharing a tutorial on how to use it. This can be an engaging way to help your customers get the most out of your product and allow them to see your or your team members' faces. This content can also cut down on user error and give your fans an opportunity to ask further questions.

You can start creating these simple social media post ideas right away and see real results. So what are you waiting for? Start implementing these ideas today and watch your social media presence soar!

THE FUTURE IS HUMAN

At a time where the question of AI dominance comes with an ambiguous set of pros and cons, I believe that it is in the harnessing of these human smart skills that we can create AI-proof careers. Genuinely caring for people is the new must-have pre-requisite for today's managers practicing human-centric leadership. Relying solely on digital technologies to create a competitive advantage is not where the magic formula for future business success lies. Digital connection is undeniably a big thing, but – because of it and not in spite of it – human connection ultimately reigns since human capital remains a company's greatest asset.

OPERATIONAL SPEAKING

DAVE AKRIDGE PRESIDENT AND
REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS



THE SECRET FORMULA TO GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE: STOP THINKING OF GUESTS IN THE PLURAL

Excerpt from an article written by Micah Solomon, customer service consultant and trailer at Micah Solomon & Associates. Article published in Hotels on 7/6/2023. Click [here](#) to read the entire article.

SERVICE IN ACTION

There's no set star level at which exceptional guest service begins. Here's an example. A dog bounds up to the reception area at a Hyatt House hotel in suburban Virginia. The front desk agent leans over and tosses a rolled newspaper into the dog's waiting mouth. With this stage of his mission accomplished, the dog walks away with his tail wagging, and the agent goes back to work processing paperwork for the next guest.

Has Hyatt House resorted to employing bell staff of the four-legged variety? Actually, this dog is a guest of sorts. His owner had just sold her home after 40 years of living there and, like many guests at Hyatt House, was in a bit of limbo before moving into her first apartment space as an empty nester. In recognition of this, the Hyatt associate at the front desk was doing what he could to help this guest maintain some semblance of her routine from her previous life. So, each morning, her dog pads down the hall to the front desk, gets the newspaper just like he did when they lived at home, and carries it back to the guest room where his "human" awaits.

Hotel guests are by definition dislocated. They're not eating at home, not sleeping at home—they're away. Though this displacement is no doubt voluntary at a resort location or a trip to a restaurant, at an extended-stay property the dislocation can be the result of life's ups and downs—a divorce, between homes, job flux or a job assignment. These are situations where circumstances can be weighing heavily on the guest's perception of the goods and services a hotel is providing. And it's a situation where true service—hospitality—can shine.

But it can't shine when delivered in an assembly-line fashion. It needs to be focused on one guest at a time. What Hyatt House was doing for its guest was specific to her, and, therefore, meaningful.

This is the crux of the matter—the opportunity and the challenge. Treating a guest as your only guest, focusing on what your guest needs beyond a secure lock on the door, a comfortable bed, a decent meal or meal recommendation and so forth, is where you'll find the opportunity to distinguish yourself in hospitality and build a competitive edge.

The above story is a great example of how simple things will WOW a guest. This article's author talks about service the way our company (Great American Hotel Group) views service and service recovery. Hotel managers and associates who put themselves in their customer's shoes and provide the quality of service expected (and unexpected) will differentiate themselves from the hotel down the street.

Training both our front and back of the house associates on the value of exceptional customer service will not only make our guests happy and improve our Intent to Recommend scores, it will make associates feel empowered and valued. When an associate knows they can think outside the box (within reasonable parameters of course), then they are confident that they make an impact on everything from customer satisfaction to bottom line performance. It is our job as managers to get them "to think".

Continued recognition during monthly department meetings, daily stand-ups, and "employee of the month" programs motivates everyone. If you reward your associates for going above and beyond the basic job description it not only makes everyone look good - but gives the associate a motivation to do better..... thereby increasing their opportunity for advancement and a future in our industry.

Continued from Page 4 - A.I.

Mr Chen notes also that, "if you don't get good answers on your first try, ... treat the chatbot like an intern." When mistakes are made or wrong information given, make sure you point that out so that in the future it learns. Tell the bot to do better. "Be forgiving and patient and you're likely to get better results."

Should A.I. be used when composing sales collateral, ads, and business correspondence. My gut says no - but those who do their homework, research, and can make these tools work for them, may find that it helps them manage their work load more efficiently. Time will tell.

As an "old school" writer and creator - I think I will stick to tried and true. If you are of the mindset to give A.I. a try, make sure you do it responsibly. Let me know. It's true that old dogs can learn new tricks, and I am not ready to roll over yet.

Happy chatbotting,

Tim



Cryptoquik Answer: "The focus of entertaining is impressing others; the focus of true hospitality is serving others." Tim Chester

ROOMER HAS IT

SPRINGHILL SUITES ALTAMONTE SPRINGS

Mark Castrogiovanni, front desk associate at the SpringHill Suites in Altamonte Springs, has been chosen as employee of the month.

Recognized by leadership, and specifically by Front Office Manager Edwin Omar Alvira, "Mark is, a recent hire who began working for the company three months ago, has really developed with remarkable proficiency and consistency."

Alvira continued, "Mark has demonstrated exceptional performance throughout his training, is dependable, and has garnered numerous good reviews praising him for satisfying guests' needs. He earned the title of employee of the month at our facility as a result of these factors."

Congratulations Mark! Keep up the great work.



GREAT AMERICAN HOTEL GROUP



On Friday, July 7th, Linda Komornik tied the knot with her long-time beau Charles Hartman. The wedding was held near their home in Virginia Beach at the Mermaid Winery. The evening was filled with ballroom dancing, and frivolity.

Attended by 76 well-wishers consisting of family and friends, a good time was had by all.

Charles is the owner of a local portrait studio and has been a professional photographer for more than 30 years.

Linda and Charles will honeymoon in Italy next spring.

LEADERSHIP SOFT SKILLS: CULTIVATING A HUMAN-CENTRIC COMPANY CULTURE

Excerpt from an article written by Professor Markus Venzin and published in eHotelier on 7/13/2023. Read the entire article [here](#).

Culture, culture, culture! A few decades ago, hospitality businesses started adopting a catchphrase from the world of real estate: "Location, location, location!" Setting up in the right spot was considered to be one of the main factors in a hospitality firm's success story. Today I would like to re-invent the slogan and change it to quite simply "Culture, culture, culture!"

Why? Because changing the attitudes towards the attractiveness of our industry and its leadership styles is what will incentivize a new generation of workers to join and remain in this sector. Communicating and delivering on a workplace culture that is employee-driven is where the competitive advantage lies.

The post-Covid landscape which we find ourselves in is populated by new employee expectations that are quite rightly asking for a more human-centric approach. As stated by Dr Borzillo, "It is time to extend the raison d'être of hospitality-related organizations beyond mere financial criteria" as traditional leadership models that focus solely on profit margins at the expense of investing in human capital will not be able to attract and keep a talent pool geared for longevity, productivity and success. Developing employee-centric leadership models that promote human values and a positive company culture is the starting block for reinventing the new paradigms that hospitality is so in need of.

Culture that reflects the changes in employee expectations - It could be argued that traditional post-war culture and leadership models had never been threatened until the Covid pandemic came along to question a top-down system whose time was up. By contrast, modern-day working requirements reflect the need for basic human values, and what's more, the ubiquitous digitalization of our society has only reinforced the need for human-centricity, genuine interaction and a sense of belonging.

Business dynamics have changed, and today, I see employee expectations now including:

- *decent working hours with flexible possibilities,*
- *employee training and development programs,*
- *purpose-driven work with clear career pathways,*
- *room for employee voice, ownership and creativity,*
- *openness to new ways of thinking and operating,*
- *human-led, empathetic leadership models,*
- *a supportive and inclusive company culture.*

Building a strong company culture is the foundation upon which these expectations can evolve, consequently, it involves more than a nice CSR statement with a publicity intention. Culture needs to be aligned and communicated clearly among leaders, employees, end consumers - in brief, all stakeholders. But most importantly, it needs to be built with a certain methodology in mind that ensures credibility, workability and measurability. For me, these are the important questions that need to be asked:

- *How is the cultural identity created? (What are the principles that you would like to govern your company culture? These may be employee growth, empowerment, inclusion and diversity, etc.)*
- *How can your leaders be trained in human skills in order to lead by example and disseminate the desired company culture?*
- *How do you measure the success of your company culture? (Defining success, developing tools to measure the gap and the gain and sharing the outcomes.)*

The benefits of creating a strong company culture should be the drivers of this paradigm shift. Employee engagement spurred on by a growth plan, an innovation mindset, fair hours, empowerment and transparency - this is, today, how companies differentiate themselves in the marketplace and position themselves as attractive, forward-thinking places of work where talents want to remain and flourish.

Employee-centric culture impacts the bottom line by creating a virtuous circle where engaged workers deliver better results, leading to satisfied customers and greater business productivity. To quote the ever popular Simon Sinek:

"Happy employees ensure happy customers. And happy customers ensure happy shareholders -in that order."