



TELEGRAM

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

March Madness - Making Sense During A Month of Mayham

By Linda Komornik, TeleGRAM Editor

March is full of exciting special days. From "in like a lion" to "out like a lamb", to the exciting world of NCAA basketball for both men and women athletes, to the "luck of the Irish" and celebrating on St. Patty's Day, to the first day of Spring, to the somber and critical commitment to Earth Day - marketers and sales people have plenty of touch point opportunities with clients and guests.

So, how do you decide what to do and which days to celebrate?

As a seasoned marketing and sales leader, I highly encourage you to go back to your Sales & Marketing Plans and Brand Identity Statements and choose a theme that makes sense to your hotel, your location, and your community. Doing what is appropriate for your market is critical and not just a frivolous way to burn time.

For example,

- If you are in a temperate climate - celebrating the weather (especially during the 'out like a lamb' timeframe) with clients can be a welcome occasion and a great way to get your client out of the office for an impromptu walk appointment or even a picnic lunch!
- Spring is springing and nice weather makes people want to get out - set up tours or breakfast appointments at the hotel. Does your hotel have bikes? Take a meeting planner or client on a bike ride around the neighborhood. It's good exercise and will certainly make you stand out from the crowd.
- Is your community gaga for sports or do you have local a local team connection with a client competing in the NCAA tournament? Tie in a clever promo and flyer to get the conversation started with them around basketball. Be competitive.
- Are you Irish? Do you have Irish clients? Do you have clients/guests who want to be Irish? Then maybe you can feature special treats on St. Pat's Day at check-in, do a themed manager's reception, or simply invite a client out for a corned beef sandwich!
- Lastly, if your hotel is Earth conscious then start bragging! Talk about your carbon footprint, your recycling efforts, and other ways your hotel is protecting our Earth! Many companies are now requiring this information in their RFPs so having that info at your fingertips is important and pertinent to climate change and environmental programs.

Whatever the event - turn 'madness' and 'mayhem' into opportunity! Put on your marketing hat and get going..... there is only half a month left in March!

WHAT'S COMING UP?

St. Patrick's Day, Easter, Earth Day, Spring Break, and other Spring holidays!
 Are you ready?



I AM HUMAN, I AM A RESOURCE

SUZANNE BAELE, CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

"When you think things are bad, when you feel sour and blue, when you start to get bad, you should do what I do. Just tell yourself Ducky, you're really quite lucky. Some people are much more, oh ever so much more, oh, muchly, much, much more, unlucky than you."

Dr. Seuss

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BY THE NUMBERS

GABRIELLE SMITH, CORPORATE CONTROLLER

"Being successful in business requires a combination of human capital, financial resources, marketing opportunity, persistency, community support, and even luck."

Andrew Yang ~ Businessman

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SELLING THE SIZZLE

LINDA KOMORNIK, CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF SALES & MARKETING

"I've found that luck is quite predictable. If you want more luck, take more chances. Be more active. Show up more often."

Brian Tracy - Motivational Speaker

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OPERATIONALLY SPEAKING

DAVE AKRIDGE, PRESIDENT & REGIONAL OPERATIONS

"I believe luck is preparation meeting opportunity. If you hadn't been prepared when opportunity came along, you wouldn't be lucky."

Oprah Winfrey - Entrepreneur

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I AM HUMAN, I AM A RESOURCE

SUZANNE BAELE, CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES



In today's world of 'quiet quitting' our front line managers are in a position to radically affect an associate's decision to stay or go.

People everywhere want assurances that the work they are performing is meaningful, not just to themselves but to their employer as well. They are looking at the bigger picture of what they are doing, contributing, and evaluating what the long term looks like for them in this place with this employer. We have ample opportunities in our industry to engage our associates every single day and meet their needs.

For example let's start with what some of you may think is a novelty, but is truly a part of the 'building block'. Our associates want and are demanding the opportunity for further development and career growth or advancement. Who has the best seat at the table to execute this on our associates behalf? Our front line managers naturally. So what we really need our managers to consider is that every encounter with their associates is a golden opportunity to offer them personalized job coaching/development. The win for us as the employer is that we are demonstrating the importance this associate has to the whole, and that we value them and their contributions. Most importantly though is that we are showing our commitment to them and their goals.

I believe that if you have an associate that is considering the route of quiet quitting, but you are willing to invest the time and attention to their career goals and are willing to assist them with the training, they will choose to stay. You've proven you are vested in them and their future success.

Win win.



LET'S CELEBRATE

In case you want to celebrate, here is a list of National and "other" holidays: 3/14 - Pi Day; 3/17 - St. Patrick's Day; 3/20 - Earth Day; 3/21 - World Poetry Day; 3/30 - National Doctor's Day and Virtual Vacation Day; 4/5 - Passover begins; 4/6 - New Beer's Eve; 4/9 - Easter; 4/10 - National Siblings Day; 4/11 - National Pet Day; 4/15 - World Art Day; 4/19 - Bicycle Day; and 4/27 - Tell A Story 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.

March 14th - Pi Day - Numerologists will appreciate the clever celebration of 3:14. Test their knowledge by changing your rates to \$103.14 or something resembling that amount.

March 20th - Earth Day

Create a flyer touting what your hotel does to celebrate our planet. Everything from recycling to reducing carbon footprints to energy efficiency should be promoted. Here's an example of a flyer one hotel did in the past:



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April 11th - National Pet Day - If your hotel accepts pets - then flaunt that fact with specials for Fido and Fluffy!

April 19th - National Bicycle Day - Put together a snack and visit a customer. Pick a day where the weather is beautiful and ask your customer to take a quick bike ride while discussing business. If your hotel has bike rentals - then promote that amenity!

BY THE NUMBERS

GABRIELLE SMITH, CORPORATE CONTROLLER

TIPS, TRICKS, AND BEST PRACTICES - REDUCING THE RISK OF FRAUD

By Scott Watson - Partner | Chief Sales and Marketing Officer | M3

Mail-related check fraud has been rising since last August, according to the Evidence-Based Cybersecurity Research Group at Georgia State University, which has been tracking the trend. It warns that criminals have a pretty easy time when it comes to getting their hands on your checks. In KPMG's survey of senior risk executives, 67% say their companies have experienced external fraud in the past 12 months, and 38% expect the risk of fraud committed by external perpetrators to somewhat increase in the next year.

M3 is hearing from more and more customers that are experiencing check fraud that ranges from checks being replicated or physically altered somewhere between when the check is issued, mailed, received, or redirected.

The company's goal is to minimize potential of hospitality companies becoming a victim of check fraud and has recommended these steps to be taken in order to mitigate the risk of check fraud.

"Some of them simply go to your home mailbox and take the mail you left for the post office to pick up," said David Maimon, an Associate Professor of Criminal Justice and Criminology at Georgia State University and Director of the Evidence-Based Cybersecurity Research Group.

"Others simply go to the blue boxes with the keys that they were able to steal from some of the mailmen out there, empty the boxes, and get the checks that some of us send. That's how easy it is."

The cybersecurity group found an average of 1,325 stolen checks up for sale every week during October 2021. This was more than double what it saw in September when the average was 534 a week and triple the 409 average in August 2021. More recent numbers indicate an even greater rate of incidents.

We are living in a world where, unfortunately, fraud is common and increasing at an alarming rate. Be sure you protect yourself and your company.



Implement Positive Pay with Name Verification

Positive Pay is a banking feature designed to help business owners protect themselves against fraudulent checks being written on their account. Once you give your bank details for each check you write, the bank verifies that your information matches the information on checks presented to the bank before it processes the payment. If any items don't match up, your bank flags them and sends them to you for review. You can then decide if you want to accept or decline the payment.

Implement an ePay system, which incorporates ACH and Virtual Credit Card (VCC) technology

ePay systems provide added security against fraudulent activities; especially when checks are eliminated and is easy to set-up and easy to use. It also adds efficiencies to your reconciliation process. In addition, ePay improves overall employee accountability.

Complete Your Bank Reconciliations DAILY

Merely checking for similar numbers on the general ledger and bank statements is not good enough and is not offering the most protection against fraud. If you are only reconciling weekly or monthly, the horse may be out of the barn by the time irregularities or fraud is identified. Daily bank reconciliation allows you to nip bank errors in the bud as early as possible, leads to fewer issues and fewer errors, avoids working with outdated information, and helps track daily cash flow providing you the insight you need into the cash flow and spending habits of the property or corporate entity. If you are not reconciling daily, your books may not always equal reality.



SERVICE WITH SMILES - GOING THE EXTRA MILE

SPRINGHILL SUITES ALTAMONTE SPRINGS

"Best Marriott!! I have stayed in different Marriotts in different places for many years and this is without a doubt my favorite. Will be staying here every time I travel to Orlando. You feel welcome from the minute you walk in to the very last minute you step out. Amazing, friendly, professional personnel that make a difference making sure everything is ok and asking you if there is anything they can do to make your stay more comfortable. Suites are beautiful, clean, comfortable & big."

SPRINGHILL SUITES QUAKERTOWN

"Great spot right off the freeway. We got in late on a Friday and the staff had the keys ready and all my requests were met. Staff was attentive. Rooms were very clean and nice. I love that the shower area was separate from the bathroom. Great TV and channels available. Nice cafe across the street."



THIS SECTION OF OUR NEWSLETTER IS DESIGNED FOR PROPERTY LEADERS TO SHARE STORIES FROM OUR CUSTOMERS ABOUT OUR MOST VALUABLE ASSETS OUR ASSOCIATES.

SEND YOUR SUBMISSIONS LINDA.KOMORNIK@GREATAMERICANHG.COM FOR INCLUSION IN FUTURE EDITIONS OF THE TELEGRAM.



SELLING THE SIZZLE

LINDA KOMORNIK, CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF SALES & MARKETING

GET LUCKY THIS MONTH

I'm lucky. I'm a little bit Irish in a Heinz 57ish kinda way. My Mom's grandmother was a McNamara. But even with this little sliver of Irish heritage in my DNA, I am sure that with my hotel and sales experience, I am not only entitled to write about "luck" but how one can "get lucky" in sales.

Whether you're Irish or not, the month of March makes one think about the luck – how it happens and how you can make your own luck. From four-leaf clovers to pots of gold at the end of rainbows, we are surrounded by references to being lucky every March.

So what is it about the concept...what exactly is luck? Where does the concept of luck come from? What springs to mind for you when I mention the word luck?

Google the word "luck" and you will find all kinds of references from movies, to songs, to quotes. People in the news talk about being lucky, business experts talk about the correlation between luck and hard work, and starry-eyed lovers speak of being lucky in love and lucky to find their soulmates.

By definition, the Oxford dictionary say,

luck /lək/noun

Success or failure apparently brought by chance rather than through one's own actions.

No matter how you perceive luck, someone always has something to say about the difference between luck and hard work. Personally, I think luck is being in the right place at the right time. And further, to be in the right place at the right time means that you must put yourself in that position.

And yes, I think sales is all about luck too! Samuel Goldwyn notes that *"The harder I work, the luckier I get"* and Maria Sharapova echoes this sentiment by saying *"I have had lots of luck in my career but there has also been a lot of hard work."*

Many professionals firmly believe that hard work is often rewarded with a stroke of luck. How many times have you been in competition for a contract and won? Was it because you had done your research, created a good relationship with the client, then put forth a contract with good pricing and fair criteria? Doing your homework and working for your clients is hard work! When more than one business competes for a piece of business, every hard-working salespersons cannot win. That is where luck happens.

On the other side of the coin, the Dalai Lama XIV reminds us to *"Remember that sometimes not getting what you want is a wonderful stroke of luck."* Lucille Ball suggests that there is no such thing as luck – she chalks up all her success to hard work - *"Luck? I don't know anything about luck. I've never banked on it and I'm afraid of people who do. Luck to me is something else: Hard work - and realizing what is opportunity and what isn't."*

I believe in luck. Roman philosopher Seneca once said, *"Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity."* And while many people agree that luck does create some level of opportunity – a chance meeting that leads to a group contract or a new local account – nothing enables greater success than working harder and caring more.

Happy creating luck by working hard,

Linda

ROOMER HAS IT

SPRINGHILL SUITES ALTAMONTE SPRINGS



With a good steady supply of Red Bull...Super Star AGM Cristina Regis is constantly breaking the budget!!! Book book book...and book some more!



HOTELIERS ADAPT TECH, DESIGN TO REVERSE DOWNWARD TREND IN GUEST SATISFACTION

By Trevor Simpson. The following is an excerpt from an article published in HotelNewsNow on March 9th, 2023. To read the article in its entirety, follow this [link](#).

Decreasing guest satisfaction in the hospitality industry is one of the symptoms of hotels not having the staff to keep up with consumers' shifting demands. To alleviate both, hoteliers are leaning on new technology and unique designs to appeal to guests.

In a roundtable of U.S. hotel industry executives it was noted that hoteliers will need to evaluate the spaces in their hotels and find a way to make revenue and boost the guest experience.

Hilton has been looking at ways to maximize sales while giving guests more options to choose from. But there's a line to toe when weighing profits against customer satisfaction.

One member of the panel noted that "We have to be careful about how we look at [monetization] because there is that constant tension of how much money can we take per square foot?"

Another example of innovation that has affected the hotel guest experience is the digital key. In some cases, guests no longer need to check in at the hotel's front desk since they already have their key prior to arriving. The widespread introduction of digital keys was a major shift since it took away a main touch point in hotel service. Although it potentially takes away an interaction between the consumer and staff, it also allows guests to choose whether or not they want that experience. When there's the option to choose, guests who prefer to check in with the front desk will have less time to wait since those with mobile keys will skip that step.

In that case, it's a win-win for both parties and also helps with staffing since less labor is required to satisfy the demand for check-in. "There's room for both if it's messaged the right way," Panel members noted that the technological advancements shift the main touch points of hotel service. For example, if more guests are now interacting with the breakfast attendant than the front-desk employee due to digital keys, it may be prudent to put the best employees in that position instead. "You have to look at the people that you're putting in the roles because those roles are shifting, in my opinion, in importance of that guest touch point and experience."

In J.D. Power's most recent North America Hotel Guest Satisfaction Index Study, overall hotel guest satisfaction dipped eight points on a 1,000-point scale from June 2021 through May 2022. The main issues were with high rates and the quality of guest rooms.

Other Design Trends in the Industry

It was also mentioned that an increase in hotel clients pushing to convert old office buildings in second- and third-tier cities into a combination of hotel and residential space. "To me, that's kind of exciting to see [these buildings] get a second life. I think it's great because it repurposes these buildings, and usually these older buildings are in a neighborhood where there's a lot of new stuff around it or things are happening in the downtown core."

Additionally, the panel member said that he's also seen an increase in extended rooms, which are built with a wider separation of bathrooms and a longer bay geared toward family-centric stays. This room design is more common for hotels on the coast in states such as Florida, but he said there's been an increase in demand in the central part of states.

OPERATIONAL SPEAKING

DAVE AKRIDGE PRESIDENT AND
REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS



HOW TO CREATE AN EMERGENCY PLAN FOR YOUR HOTEL

By Indiana Lee, a freelance technical writer. Article published in eHotelier on 2/28/23.



The hotel industry has begun to see a return to something approaching normality following the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this challenging period has played an important role in demonstrating how vulnerable the industry can be. As such, managers and owners should commit to preparing for potential issues in the future.

A key tool in this regard is an emergency plan. This serves as a guideline for all staff members in the event of various types of urgent situations. The thoroughness of your planning can have a serious impact on your hotel's response and recovery rates. Let's take a look at a handful of elements involved with creating and implementing your hotel's emergency plan.

Understand the range of risks - The first step in making an emergency plan for your hotel is to gain a better understanding of the risks you face. Each business has unique elements and therefore each tends to have its own set of risks. By identifying these, you can best identify solutions to fit the risks.

Perform a thorough risk assessment of your hotel. Look at the physical, financial, and security hazards your business is likely to be vulnerable to. Consider how your location may put you at risk of natural disasters or perhaps make you a target for civil unrest. Remember that some of the most prevalent risks in the current climate may be digital. Therefore, cybercrime and digital disruption must form part of your assessment.

Your assessment also needs to include associated risks as a result of other emergencies. For instance, could the positioning of the hotel limit the ability of emergency responders to reach you? Are there design aspects of your property that create hurdles for evacuations? It can be wise to also partner with an external risk assessment contractor so you can be confident you haven't overlooked aspects.

Work with all departments - Creating an emergency plan for your hotel isn't something it's wise for upper management to arrange alone. This approach tends to mean you only gain limited perspectives on the challenges you face. Staff from all areas of your hotel have talents and knowledge you should capitalize on.

Arrange a meeting with key members of staff from each department. This may include the restaurant and kitchen, reception, marketing, administration, and concierge services, among others. Wherever possible, involve not just heads of these departments, but also entry-level workers. Each of these employees will have an understanding of how different types of emergencies are likely to impact their departments. They'll also have insights into how different emergency response tools and protocols can be practically adopted in their areas.

Carefully go through each of the identified types of risk from your assessment and invite staff to offer their thoughts on how to address these. Ensure that everybody has the chance to contribute meaningfully to the ideation process. When initial plans have been determined, arrange another meeting for a week or so later. This gives attendees time to consider additional issues or suggestions.

Communicate measures and train staff - The next step is to formalize the emergency planning so it can be effectively communicated to all members of staff. All your emergency planning materials should be easy to understand. This means writing all instructions in plain language and providing simple diagrams wherever necessary. It can be wise to create different documents for each department of your business so that each has the most relevant plans for their section. If possible, provide these plans both in physical format and digitally on an accessible cloud platform.

From here, your priority should be to provide your staff with training on all aspects of the plan. You can't just rely on their being able to comprehend their tasks and roles based on the document. This is particularly relevant for ambiguous situations.

For instance, when a guest is injured or ill, it's not always clear whether the correct response is to go to an urgent care clinic or the emergency room. As such, managers need to clarify that many sudden illnesses can be adequately handled by urgent care physicians. Where cuts and burns are concerned, outline their need to head to the emergency room alongside the steps they should take to provide first aid to the injured party.

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The emergency plan itself is a good start. However, it's also important to pair this with effective resources that bolster the plan's efficacy. This can require some investment, but it helps to ensure your hotel can respond to and recover from emergencies.

One of the primary tools here is transportation. Investing in a vehicle for business purposes can have a range of practical benefits for your hotel. Alongside the ability to collect special guests or advertise your hotel on the side of the car, this can be useful in emergency situations. It means that you don't always need to arrange external transport to urgent care centers or hospitals. You can also find that a small and fuel-efficient car can be used to gain urgent supplies when needed.

Whatever resources you invest in, it's important to catalog these in your emergency plan documents. Make sure key staff understand what these are used for and where they are stored. Part of your planning should include appointing members of staff to attend to the upkeep and testing of these items.

Conclusion - While the potential for emergencies to arise may be outside of your hotel's control, your ability to respond is not. Your emergency plan should be led by a thorough risk assessment process, followed by input from staff from all departments. How clearly you communicate and train your staff in relation to these plans can also impact how effective the measures are. Wherever possible, seek appropriate resources to support your plans. By placing focus on planning for emergencies, your hotel is likely to be able to recover from them more positively.



HOW TO KEEP THE PERSONAL TOUCH WHEN IMPLEMENTING AUTOMATION

By Daan De Bruijn. Published on eHotelier on 3/7/23.



Hospitality can be known as the business of people, relationships, smiles and service. Hotels have always been characterized by kind people with big smiles helping you and ensuring you have a great experience. But does that mean that automation has no place in a hotel?

We must first remember that technology has already claimed a place in the industry. Many accommodation businesses have implemented a cashless experience and a mobile-first approach and have seen a positive response to it. However, when we start talking about automation, we can still see some doubts and people in the industry thinking that it might go too far and could imply losing control of the human element and interaction. Especially if we talk about traditional hotels that want to maintain the essence of being a family business, it is common to have the misconception that automation will end that familiarity and what makes them special. But will it?

Automation might sound like a big word, but it means using technology to make some processes independent, with less manual interaction. This leads to saving time and makes things less complicated. Does implementing automation in a hotel mean losing the personal touch? The answer is: depends on how you do it.

Have you heard that balance is the key? Well, it applies to your hotel as well. As a hotelier, you must recognize areas where technology is necessary and can help you get better results. However, you should also be able to recognize the non-negotiable tasks that are better with your staff in charge and personally taking care of. There are things you can replace and some others you can't. Knowing the difference between those will allow you to implement a strategy that boosts your results without losing your business' essence.

In other words, if you implement automation in the right way, you will: Create a better guest experience; Have more guest engagement; Increase guest loyalty; Increase guest satisfaction; Get more and better reviews; Motivate your staff; Become more efficient; and Free up time for tasks that can't be automated.

You may notice that none of the above lines mentions losing the personal touch or losing the relationship with your guests. On the contrary, you can eliminate the issues and bottlenecks stopping you from getting to know your guests.

From independent to multi-property hotels with traditional or highly innovative concepts, using technology in your favor and the right areas will only help you to achieve better results, put your attention in the right place, avoid crises and grow your brand.

For more details and to read the rest of this article, please follow this [link](#).