

Human Resources

"Kindness is like snow. It beautifies everything it covers." - Kahlil Gibran

I am Human - Page 2

Accounting

"One kind word can warm three winter months." - Japanese Proverb

By the Numbers - Page 3

Sales

"Some of the most beautiful dances have come from those who have weathered storms." - Precious Moments

Selling the Sizzle - Page 4

Operations

"Winter forms our character and brings out our best." - Tim Allen

Operationally - Page 5



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TELEGRAM

Making it our business to grow your business.

DECORATING FOR THE HOLIDAYS

By Linda Komornik-Hartman, TeleGRAM Editor

Holiday decor makes everyone feel good and sets the tone for the season. We all look forward to turning our homes into winter wonderlands, old time villages, religious reenactments, colorful light displays, cartoon fairylands, and children's fantasies.

Businesses however, need to be more conscious of the fact that not everyone celebrates the same holidays this time of year. We must take this into consideration when we decide how we are going to decorate so as to make sure we don't honor one tradition over another tradition. We walk a fine line with our customer base and our brand standards.



The first thing we must remember is to keep it tasteful and generic. Focusing on winter themes is always a safe bet and choosing to adorn your lobbies with greenery, floral displays in various colors (red, green, blue, silver, gold, etc.) is tasteful and universally acceptable to all. Every branded hotel must also comply with brand standards for holiday decor.

Safety is equally important, so pay attention to the condition of lights and do not overload circuits or create trip hazards. Children are naturally curious so also beware of plants that might be poisonous if ingested. Lastly, Christmas trees are not generic so you may want to skip the tree this year and focus on lights, snowflakes, and other types of holiday decor.

AROUND THE BLOCK

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

Dave Akridge - 33 years (November)
Gabrielle Smith - 26 years (November)

A LITTLE BIT WISER

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

Suzanne Baele - November 18

WHAT'S COMING UP?

Thanksgiving and December holidays are great reasons to visit customers and thank them for their business See Page 2



I AM HUMAN, I AM A RESOURCE

SUZANNE BAELE, CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES



"We need to inspire the next generation of hoteliers."

I read an article this week, written by a former hospitality professional turned professor at a reputable southern university. His take on the qualifications necessary to teach hospitality management classes stems from his experience operating hotels and his unique vantage point observing some of the industry's shifting dynamics and the perceptions of those preparing to step into the hospitality workforce. He noted, *"Who better to lead the industry forward than the generation who values experience over everything else?"*

The second point in the blog was that we're all going to have to do a better job of educating employees/students on the full range of opportunities within our industry and make hospitality appealing to this next generation of professionals. Some of the topics this author addressed include: *Demystifying Sales and Marketing, Leveraging Influencer Culture, Highlighting the Benefits of Hospitality Careers, and Engaging with the Next Generation.*

If you'd like to read a detailed version of his strategies, [click here!](#)

WHAT'S COMING UP?

In case you want to celebrate, here is a list of National and "other" holidays: 11/10 - Forget-Me-Not Day; 11/13 - World Kindness Day; 11/16 - Great American Smokeout; 11/23 - Thanksgiving; 11/24 - Black Friday; 11/27 - Cyber Monday; 12/7 - Letter Writing Day; 12/14 - Roast Chestnuts Day; 12/18 - Bake Cookies Day; 12/21 - Crossword Puzzle Day; 12/25 - Christmas Day and 12/26 - Candy Cane Day.

STANDING OUT FROM THE CROWD

Weird and wacky sales suggestions from Linda.

November 10th - Forget-Me-Not Day - Purchase Forget-Me-Not flower seed packets and create a clever sales letter. Deliver to customers for the obvious reasons!

November 23rd - Great American Smokeout - Remind your customers that all of your rooms are non-smoking. Let them know the procedures your hotel uses to keep rooms clean and odor free.

November 27th - Cyber Monday - Holiday shopping is easier when guests give gift cards! Post how easy it is to purchase gift cards and give them to their friends and family.

December 7th - Letter Writing Day - Get back to basics and write cards and letters thanking customers and guests. Mail them to their homes or offices. Make envelopes stand out from the junk mail that accumulates on their desks with stickers, holiday stamps and/or graphics.

December 14th - Roast Chestnuts Day - Roasting chestnuts are a staple for New Englanders. Treat your clients to an old-time tradition by giving a bag of roasted chestnuts. More points for you if they are delivered warm!

December 26th - Candy Cane Day - So easy and so fun! Put out a bowl of candy canes for guests. Watch them smile!

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.

TELEGRAM STAFF:

EDITOR/CORPORATE SALES & MARKETING
Linda.Komornik@GreatAmericanHG.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

PRESIDENT
Dave.Akridge@GreatAmericanHG.com

CORPORATE HUMAN RESOURCES
Suzanne.Baele@GreatAmericanHG.com

CORPORATE CONTROLLER
Gabrielle.Smith@GreatAmericanHG.com

180 LOCUST STREET | SUITE 2 | DOVER, NH 03820
603.373.1510 | WWW.GREATAMERICANHG.COM

BY THE NUMBERS

GABRIELLE SMITH, CORPORATE CONTROLLER

Lower Hotel Expenses - Music to our Ears



Haven't we all asked the question "How do we lower hotel expenses and increase profitability?"

Most, if not all, are feeling the pinch of higher costs. What can we do about it?

I was listening to a webinar recently by "No Vacancy News" that addressed that topic. The takeaways I felt were important are as follows:

What can be measured and/or monitored?
What do your guests WANT versus what do they NEED?

Returning guests lead to future revenues. Here are a few ideas that may lead to increased profitability and repeat business:

- Labor costs are one of the highest expense line items. Are you experiencing a high employee turnover rate? Why do you suppose that is happening? Happy employees take better care of your guests.
- Can you renegotiate any of your contracts? Internet, Utility Suppliers, Waste Management, Snow Removal, Lawn Care, Insurance -- Look to compare rates and shop the best option without a negative impact to the guest experience.
- Have you checked the pricing on your food or guest supply invoices lately? Are the contracts up for renewal soon?
- Should you hire a consultant to review your property tax assessments?
- Are there any Local, State or Federal grants, incentives, or tax credits that would help offset costs to improve the guest expectations (sustainability/greener/more efficient)? Can you then market your property reflecting your changes considering sustainability by using LED light bulbs, low flow toilets, shower heads, or sinks?

With Revenues remaining consistent, any savings to your expenses will increase your profitability! If you increase your revenues, and keep your expense percentages in line, you will also see profitability.

HOSPITALITY CRYPTOQUIK

"O V B E Y F G M Y F Z Y B Q G C Y R W Z V J U
W J T B F B L T T M G F O V Q T, T X T R Y L
Z V J D Y B O F O T Z D T U T."

-- J R C R V D R --

KEY: Y = I

SELLING THE SIZZLE

LINDA KOMORNIK-HARTMAN, CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF SALES & MARKETING



SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

The following is an excerpt from the [article](#) "A Comprehensive Guide to Hotel Mobile Marketing: Part 2 by Phil Portman in the 11/2/2023 issue of eHotelier.

Social media has become an indispensable tool for hotels seeking to connect with guests, build brand awareness, and drive bookings. [The following] explores how to effectively utilize popular social platforms, develop strategies for engaging and attracting guests, and harness the power of user-generated content.

- Utilize popular social platforms for promotion – Popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly known as Twitter), and more recently, TikTok, provide a dynamic stage for hotel promotion and engage with potential and returning guests. Regularly posting high-quality visual content, including images and videos of your property, rooms, and experiences, will captivate and inspire potential guests. By targeting your audience through demographic and geographic filters, you can maximize the impact of your social media campaigns.
- Strategies to attract guests – Engagement is a key strategy in social media marketing. Responding promptly to comments and messages from followers builds a positive reputation and encourages potential guests to consider your hotel. Engaging content like polls, contests, and user-generated content will foster a sense of community around your brand. Live streaming, stories, and video (such as Reels and Stories) enable real-time connections with your audience, provide a glimpse into your hotel's ambiance and activities. Engaging storytelling and content can evoke emotions, strengthening the connection between your hotel and guests. Use video not only in social media, but embed in your sales letters and on your website.
- Incorporate user-generated content – User-generated content is a powerful tool for building trust and authenticity. Encourage guests to share their experiences, reviews, and photos on social media, using specific hashtags or tags related to your hotel. These genuine testimonials and images can serve as compelling endorsements, influencing others to choose your property for their stay. By re-sharing and celebrating user-generated content, you foster a sense of community and gratitude among your guests. This approach showcases your hotel's dedication to customer satisfaction and the cultivation of meaningful guest relationships.

Incorporating social media into your mobile marketing strategy can significantly impact your hotel's brand recognition, guest engagement, and booking conversions. The key is to consistently produce engaging content, interact with your audience, and leverage the authenticity of user-generated content to build a loyal community around your hotel.

Keeping your website fresh and changing content (even if it is just slightly) every month will also generate organic search optimization. Utilizing key words and tags will draw people into your site. Keep pictures fresh. ADD VIDEO! Use your staff to promote your hotel. Ask customers for reviews and publish them on your website. If a customer will send a video review you are doubling down on the value of the review.

Marketing is a form of selling - and a valuable tool in your Sales toolbox! Use it wisely and often.

Happy social selling!

OPERATIONAL SPEAKING

DAVE AKRIDGE, PRESIDENT AND
REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS



WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIAL SECURITY AND PRIVACY CONSIDERATIONS IN HOTEL MOBILE MARKETING?

By Phil Portman, published in eHotelier on 11/2/23. Link to entire article is [here](#).

Safeguarding guest data and respecting privacy are non-negotiable. When collecting guest data on mobile platforms, prioritize encryption and security measures to protect against unauthorized access. Regular updates to your mobile app and website are crucial to patch vulnerabilities. Educate your staff about data security risks.

Compliance with data privacy regulations is not just a legal requirement but an ethical imperative. Laws like GDPR and CCPA demand transparency, consent, and robust data protection. Appoint data protection officers to oversee compliance and stay informed about evolving regulations. To maintain trust, communicate your commitment to data security through clear privacy policies, seek consent for data collection, and be transparent about data usage. In the event of a breach, notify affected parties promptly and take corrective actions. Building and maintaining trust is fundamental in the age of data sensitivity and scrutiny.

While this does not really affect our branded properties, it is important for independent properties who do not have brand oversight on data security. Make sure that your systems and social medias are monitored and protected to keep customer data secure and prevent compromise.

If you do not employ a professional company to oversee your website and social media platforms, and if you do not have an IT company to protect your systems, we highly suggest that you explore companies who can help you keep your data safe.

GUEST FEEDBACK AND REVIEWS



Guest feedback and reviews are the cornerstones of your hotel's reputation. Encouraging reviews is vital (as long as you do not violate your brand standards for soliciting reviews). You can do this by asking customers at checkout if "there was anything during their stay that would not warrant a positive review". Managing guest comments face-to face effectively and immediately, versus waiting for a written review, whether positive or negative, showcases your commitment to guest satisfaction. Addressing concerns empathetically can even transform negative experiences into positive ones.

Cultivating a positive online reputation is an ongoing effort that involves promoting your online presence, actively engaging with guests on all review platforms, and, most importantly, consistently delivering exceptional guest experiences. Your online reputation is more than just a reflection of your hotel; it's a powerful magnet that draws new guests and retains loyal ones in the fiercely competitive world of hospitality. Training your front desk staff to be able to ask for customer feedback and respond properly is a great skill and shows the customer how much you value their opinion.

WHAT ARE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT EXPECTATIONS OF GUESTS IN A HOTEL?

Happy Thanksgiving

According to a recent [Cvent blog](#),

No matter what group you're catering to, hotel guests young and old will almost always want to see their future hotel stays feature these qualities:

- Cleanliness
- Clear communication
- Peaceful sleeping environments

What Business Travelers want from a hotel: Business travelers want their stay to be easy. They don't have time to deal with the minor inconveniences that some other guests might. They're usually either in a hurry to get somewhere or they're trying to use their precious free time to catch up on work or sleep. So when it comes to giving them what they want, hoteliers need to operate on these two keywords: Fluid and functional.

- Fluid means making every step of the experience — from booking to checkout — an easy journey.
- Functional means dotting the I's and crossing the T's of all given hotel amenities, especially the ones they need for work.

"Looking for ways to improve revenue and create long-term relationships with guests? When it comes to figuring out what guests want from a hotel, hoteliers need to first and foremost know who those guests are, and then use the top priorities of those target markets to drive decision-making."

What Boomers want from a hotel: Although boomers have been known to value possessions over experiences, the hotel industry is seeing a shift towards more active engagement from this segment. From in-person customer service interactions to a craving for more "sight-doing" than sightseeing, boomers' needs are changing with the times. Some examples of what they want are:

- VIP treatment. Whether it's VIP social clubs, lounges, or tickets to a show, this target market appreciates it when hotels make them feel appreciated. Loyalty programs (which are quite popular among this group) offer plenty of opportunities to test and advertise offers.
- Luxurious designs. Beyond unique and authentic local experiences, baby boomers are also notably interested in luxury travel. Considering their increased budget for travel, this should come as no surprise. Only 57% of boomers say that their budget plays a factor in their trip, and many are prone to booking luxury services including upgraded tour and activity packages. Boomers are responsible for 80% of all luxury travel spending.
- Despite this desire for luxury, it's essential to recognize that baby boomers will still actively seek out the best-perceived deal. According to studies, 95% of baby boomers want to know that they have found the best deal possible before booking their trip.

The takeaway? Provide as much value for the price as you can.

Expectations - Continued on Page 7



What Millennials want from a hotel: Millennial travelers are the new hot ticket when it comes to hotel recovery, and a big part of that starts with personalization. This is a vital part of any hotel's marketing plan — in fact, back in 2015, American Express Travel reported that 83% of millennials would allow brands to track their habits in exchange for a more customized experience. But personalization in marketing isn't enough. Hoteliers also need to offer millennials personalized, customized, and unique experiences such as:

- Customizable packages and amenities. Whether it's picking and choosing from a menu of room upgrades or deciding between resort activities packages, giving millennials plenty of things to choose is always a great idea.
- Immersion in culture. Millennial travelers aren't heading to Europe, Southeast Asia and South America to party anymore. Instead, their trips are all about authenticity ... and cultural immersion is the best way to achieve that goal. Recent studies have shown the main goal for millennials when traveling is to experience a new culture. They also ranked sampling the local cuisine as an important part of their travels, too, which is arguably a big part of a country or city's culture."
- Mobile-first touch points. When it comes to shopping, at least half of their shopping occurs online. Take advantage of this fact by adding customer service functions to apps. Features such as check-in alerts and texts that let them know when their room is ready — a welcome relief from having to wait in line at the front desk are very popular.

What GenZers want from a hotel: One of the best ways hoteliers can wow Gen Z is to flex their emotional intelligence. Entrepreneur.com calls it "the future of work" due to cultural shifts from the younger generation plus advancements in both technology and neuroscience. For that reason, it's safe to say that the future of work will also be the future of commerce and the hotel industry as we know it. Examples are:

- Amazing customer service. Quality service is actually a revenue driver. Further, as experience-focused alternative accommodation providers continue to syphon off market share from traditional hotels, the need to understand guest service is more important than ever.
- Authentic emotional connection. Brands should use storytelling, trustworthy information sources, and marketing optimized for both search engines and readers. For hotels, this means swapping high-brow language with straightforward or even laidback copy as well as experiences. Also, consider adding emotional intelligence training to your employee onboarding.
- Trust in the brand. Honesty is big for this segment. In addition to not over-exaggerating what your hotel has to offer, property owners and managers can build trust by creating repeatable workflows so that their entire team can produce consistent experiences over time. Hotels can also offer more background information on their efforts to do social good, such as sourcing their linens from factories that don't exploit workers and detailing how they plan to make hiring even more inclusive for large roles within the company.
- Eco-friendly options. Travelers care about sustainability. In fact, according to a Forbes study, "the majority of Generation Z (54 percent) state that they are willing to spend an incremental 10 percent or more on sustainable products." In other words, making your hotel eco-friendly — from composting and donating food from your kitchen to installing solar panels and Energy Star-rated heating and cooling systems — can make a big difference when it comes to appealing to this group.

ROOMER HAS IT

SPRINGHILL SUITES ALTAMONTE SPRINGS

On 10/17/23 the team held its Employee "Potluck" Celebration. Everyone had a chance to showcase their "inner chef" and brought a special dish to share.



Birthdays for October: Tobias Trevino & Aidan Petrunic



Employee of the Month: Carolina Trinidad from the Housekeeping Department.



They also, surprised Cristina Regis (GM) with a beautiful bouquet and gift in celebration of National Boss Day



GREAT AMERICAN HOTEL GROUP

The GRAM team was recently awarded the opportunity to consult on a property in Ames, Iowa. In September, we responded to an RFP sent out by the Friends of ISU Holdings, LLC asking for expertise and suggestions to turn around their product - the Gateway Hotel and Conference Center - located adjacent to Iowa State University.

The team will travel to Ames December 11-14 to complete an analysis of the product and then return home to compile our report.

"We are delighted to have been selected for this task and look forward to meeting with the shareholders and boots-on-the-ground team next month," noted Dave Akridge.