

TeleGRAM

Great American Hotel Group Newsletter

Around the Block

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

Adam Robitaille - 2 years
Karen Beranger - 1 year

A Little Bit Wiser

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

Linda Komornik - March 1
Teena Nikias - March 16
Diana Fowler - April 14

Movin' On Up

Welcome to Albuquerque property General Manager Sheela Patel and St. George, SC property General Manager Hemu Patel. We look forward to working with you and ownership on these two new assets in the GRAM portfolio.

Social Butterflies

GRAM recently opened a Twitter account. While we are newbie tweeters - we'd love you to follow us! @GreatAmerHG. If you haven't already - "Like" us on Facebook too.

A Laugh A Day



"I'm sorry, sir. No dogs allowed in the hotel."



A Grand Day Planned in Bakersfield

April 6, 2016 marks the date when the ribbon will be cut and the WoodSpring Suites Bakersfield will be declared officially open. A grand opening celebration has been planned from 4-6 pm at the hotel and representatives from WoodSpring Suites, Great American Hotel Group and ownership will welcome the Bakersfield community to the hotel. The hotel actually opened its doors last November.

Leading the team of ribbon cutters will be Bakersfield Mayor Karen Goh, Kern County Supervisor Leticia Perez and Kern County Sheriff Donny Youngblood.

The event will include tours of the hotel, food and beverage, and a Grand Prize Raffle with local gifts and a 50" SMART television.



Roomer Has It

WOODSPRING SUITES BAKERSFIELD

WoodSpring Suites announced its brand winners for property awards that will be presented at their annual conference next month. Our NEW hotel located in Bakersfield, CA is not yet eligible for an annual award; however, they are currently #1 in Customer Satisfaction for the brand and would have received this award had we been open for at least a year. Congratulations to Dan Hays on his great leadership and to his team for their dedication to all things good!



COURTYARD & FAIRFIELD FRESH MEADOWS QUEENS

Leadership at Marriott International knows what it means to "go big or go home." No doubt about it. "Go Big" is the brand's rallying cry and theme of the biannual Select Brands General Manager Conference held in the Big Easy - New Orleans the last week of March. Jon Kozma, dual brand GM attended the conference. Brand conventions are prime opportunities to talk shop with GMs about what's new, what's coming next and how they can play a role in helping the vision come to life.

GREAT AMERICAN HOTEL GROUP

Dave Akridge recently represented our company at the Hunter Hotel Conference in Atlanta, GA. This conference is a Real Estate and Finance Company gathering for Hotel Owners. It is a great opportunity to meet up with potential new clients, and follow up with existing clients and owners.

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

There seems to be more scrutiny and questions asked than ever, regarding our use of pre-employment background and credit checks, before we post a conditional offer of employment.



As a reminder, here are a few reasons we use this tool:

- Increases Applicant And New Hire Quality
- Reduces Potential For Work Place Violence
- Protects Us Against Negligent Hiring Liability
- Reduces Employee Dishonesty Losses
- Acts As A Screening Mechanism For Employees Whom Have Access To Guest Rooms
- Reduces Employee Turnover If Managed Well From Vetting Through Hire
- Helps Avoid Negative Publicity If There Were An Issue
- Helps Regulatory/Insurance/Guest Expectations And/Or Requirements

8 guaranteed ways to reduce your hotel's largest operating costs

Article excerpted from Hotel Effectiveness Blog 2 January 2016.

Rising labor costs, utilities, and maintenance expenses are a few of the largest operating costs in a hotel that greatly impact your bottom line. If you're not taking a proactive approach to controlling these expenses, your hotel will not generate the amount of profit that it should.

Here are a few ways you can reduce your hotel's largest operating costs and increase your profitability:

Labor Costs (accounts for almost half of operating costs):

1. Make sure your schedules reflect the day-to-day variations in business volume. You never want to create fixed schedules for hourly employees. Oftentimes, a hotel will either be overstaffed or understaffed when using a fixed schedule - and overstaffing wastes profits. Instead, use the forecast to schedule to the labor standards you've created for each position in your hotel, and then update the schedule accordingly if adjustments need to be made.
2. Never set one MPR (minutes per room) standard for all room types. Have clear standards for how long it should take housekeepers to clean every room type in your hotel. Even further, a clear MPR standard should be set based on clean types (for example, stayover rooms, which might require a light clean, vs. checkout rooms, which will require a full clean).

From there, you'll be able to monitor how long each housekeeper spends on cleaning each room and compare it to your standards. This will enable you to spot out any inefficiencies and address them immediately to avoid overspending on housekeeping labor.

(Article continued on Page 4... Hotel Effectiveness)



Property Happenings



HOMEWOOD SUITES GATEWAY HILLS

Meet Diesel James, new Great Dane puppy to GM Adam Robitaille. Sweet dreams "little" angel. Rest assured, these puppy kisses are a "big" deal!



ATLANTIC HOUSE INN

It's April, and the anticipation of opening day at The Atlantic House Inn is growing! Innkeeper Karen Beranger is looking forward to welcoming the first guests of the season on April 28th. "Advance bookings are strong – I've enjoyed chatting with returning guests making their reservations for their annual summer vacation, along with new first time visitors to the York area. 2017 is looking to be a very favorable season!" Karen and Linda have been busy making some updates to the website, FB page, and in house collateral. Now we just need the sunshine and salty air.

HAMPTON INN & SUITES EAST HARTFORD

They say a picture is worth a thousand words! New photography is up on the Hampton Inn website and it looks GREAT. Hopefully our customers will get better vision of our beautiful hotel!

By The Numbers *Gabrielle Smith, Corporate Controller*

Criminals are everywhere and we must always be diligent about protecting our people, customers and properties. The article reprinted below, while written specifically about payroll/tax info, could also apply to fake invoices sent and they are now calling and trying to collect, someone posing as your utility company and a wire or western union must be done immediately. (usually on a Friday afternoon), etc. Please be mindful about what you do, say and pay! When in doubt, call the number YOU have on file or visit the purveyor to get to the bottom of the request and call your staff accountant/controller if you have any doubts. Read on....

This scam has evolved beyond the corporate world and is spreading to other sectors, including school districts, tribal organizations, and nonprofits.

Payroll and human resource professionals across the country have received emails purporting to be from an organization executive requesting employee W-2 information. The email often looks official to unsuspecting employees who then send the requested information, disclosing private employee information to an unauthorized party.

Nationally, about 100 businesses employing 126,000 individuals were hit by scammers last year. By comparison, about 80 businesses have already been targeted in the first month of this tax season.

This scam puts employees' personal information at risk. Disclosing the information to unauthorized parties can lead to an increase in tax refund fraud as criminals use that information to file fraudulent returns. If an employee's W-2 or other private information is stolen, it can lead to longer waits for refunds as we work to verify the employee's tax return, and ensure the right refund goes to the right person.

"These tax information scams have evolved and grown more sophisticated over the last couple of years," stated one state's Revenue Commissioner. "Employers need to be on high alert for scams and have their employees trained on what to do if they think something is suspicious when dealing with requests for employee personal information."

The department encourages all businesses to notify their employees of the scam and have procedures in place to ensure that W-2 and other personal information is not disclosed to unauthorized parties.

When a request for private/sensitive information is made, **Stop**. **Connect**. **Confirm**. **Stop** – Stop for a moment before complying with the request and sending that information. **Connect** – Connect with the person who sent you the request by phone or by walking over to see them. Do not respond to the email to get confirmation of the sender's identity. The sender may be a criminal who has disguised their identity by spoofing your colleague's email address. **Confirm** – Confirm with the executive requesting the information that their request is legitimate.



Play Ball!

Spring is in the air. Test your knowledge about Major League Baseball. (Quiz answers on Page 6.)

- 1. The Red Sox sold Babe Ruth to what team in 1920?**
a. Los Angeles Angles b. Brooklyn Dodgers c. Washington Senators d. NY Yankees
- 2. What father-son pair was the only to play in major leagues at the same time?**
a. Barry/Bobby Bonds b. Tito/Terry Francona c. Ken Jr./Ken Sr. Griffey d. Dale/Yogi Berra
- 3. Where is the Baseball Hall of Fame and National Museum located?**
a. Cooperstown b. Boston c. Baltimore d. Cleveland
- 4. Who was the only pitcher to pitch a perfect game in a World Series?**
a. David Wells b. Sandy Koufax c. Dennis Martinez d. Don Larsen
- 5. Which team has won the most World Series titles?**
a. Chicago White Sox b. Toronto Blue Jays c. New York Yankees d. Atlanta Braves
- 6. Which pitcher has struck out the most batters?**
a. Nolan Ryan b. Roger Clemens c. Tom Seaver d. Cy Young
- 7. Who was the first African American baseball player to play in the modern major league?**
a. Jackie Robinson b. Buck Leonard c. Willie Mays d. Satchel Paige
- 8. What player has won the most MVP awards?**
a. Stan Musial b. Barry Bonds c. David Ortiz d. Lou Gehrig
- 9. What player holds the all-time record number of hits?**
a. Pete Rose b. Mark McGwire c. Sammy Sosa d. Alex Rodriguez
- 10. What famous baseball player said, "it ain't over 'til it's over"?**
a. Hank Aaron b. Bill Buckner c. Yogi Berra d. Joe DiMaggio

Hotel Effectiveness - Continued from Page 2

3. Cross-train your staff. You should always equip your staff with the necessary skills to perform tasks outside of their day-to-day job functions. This way, they will be able to lend a hand to other departments during any downtime they may have.
4. Implement a labor management system. Labor management systems are a suite of tools designed to help hotels control their labor costs. Small hotels with 25 employees typically save over \$20,000/yr. with Hotel Effectiveness' labor management system.
5. Utilities account for approximately 6% of operating costs. Consider swapping out old thermometers for new ones with occupancy sensors. According to the California Statewide Utility Codes and Standards Program, occupancy controls in hotel rooms are estimated to save between 12 and 24% in heating and cooling energy, based on a 5-degree setback when the room is vacant. The same concept applies to lighting, as well. And speaking of lighting...
6. Switch to LED lighting. LED lighting is one of today's most energy-efficient and rapidly-developing lighting technologies. Energy.gov states LED bulbs use at least 75% less energy and last 25 times longer than incandescent bulbs.
7. Encourage guests to reuse their towels. Placing small signs or placards in the guestroom encouraging guests to reuse their towels can go a long way. The American Hotel and Lodging Association estimates that the request reduces the number of loads of laundry washed—as well as the related water, sewer, energy, and labor costs—by 17%. The association also notes that this initiative increases the lifespan of towels and linens, thus reducing replacement costs. Hoteliers generally save up to \$6.50 a day per occupied room with such programs (source: Association for Linen Management).
8. Property operation and maintenance accounts for approximately 4-6% of operating costs. Stay on top of preventative maintenance. Did you know that an air filter that has not been replaced in over 4 months can reduce HVAC efficiency by 10%? Pushing off preventative maintenance can cost you in the long run. Make sure your engineers are keeping up with scheduled maintenance tasks.

Implementing any one of these simple tactics will surely reduce your operating expenses by some degree. Where you'll notice the real savings is when you apply a few or all of them – it all adds up.



How many of us actually know about details of the culture of our hotel brand? Do you know your brand's marketing phrases and buzzwords? Even if you do, do you weave them into your sales emails, letters, collateral and presentations?

GRAM currently represents 8 brands and 8 independent hotels. Each of our products have a unique culture and vibe. While the branded hotels have "built in" marketing phraseology and specific hospitality characteristics, there is room to embrace and enhance these cultures and play off the already-done hard work and research. For example, branded marketing messages include:

WoodSpring Suites - "It's Simple. Done Better."
Hampton Inn - "Feel the Hamptonality."
Courtyard - "Put a little play in your stay."
Fairfield - "You'll never skip a beat."
Homewood Suites - "Homewood is where the heart is."
SpringHill Suites - "Feel Suite."
Wyndham Garden Inn - "Count on me."
TownePlace Suites - "Add life to longer stays."

Does your hotel "feel" like your marketing message?

Have property leaders read their brand websites, do you understand the demographics and characteristics of your target customers and have you incorporated these culture characteristics into line-level training? If not, it is time that you log on to your brand website, reread your orientation manuals and learn about your brand and what it represents. I have spent many an hour with property sales/marketing associates asking them to use the culture when writing emails/letters, looking for sales gifts, or creating advertising and promotions. But this task needs to start at the top and trickle down. At your next stand up - ask your staff: "Do you know our brand tagline?" Then, ask them to give an example of how they use the meaning of the tagline in their every day job.

If you work for an independent hotel, you can embrace culture as well. Meet with your teams and find out what works for your hotel. Maybe embrace your city or area's culture. If your hotel is situated in the "Art Capital of North America" then developing a tagline for your hotel focusing on art. "Picture yourself here!" is a good example. If your hotel is a beach location, then develop a tagline for your hotel around that location. "Memories are just a wave away." is the tag line for the Atlantic House, our hotel in York Beach, ME. What does your hotel/city/county/region have to offer?



Independent hotels have great benefits because you can utilize your creativity in a much broader manner - you don't need a "brand" to approve what you want to do (although you need to run it through GRAM first!).

Many of you know that I have a blog page. This page is supported by a Facebook page. My goal is hotel sales and marketing mentorship. My blogspot is called: TheRoomerMill.net. My tagline is: "Don't sell the Steak. Sell the Sizzle". Each of my blogs, and each of the articles I share "feel" like my brand. It's all about the sizzle!

So "walk the walk and talk the talk" and let's all jump in to our brands and learn who we are and how we can represent!

Happy Culture Diving!

Linda



A Trifecta of New Marriott Managers for GRAM

We are proud to welcome three new General Managers assuming roles at GRAM Marriott portfolio hotels! Congratulations to Terry Foye, new GM at the TownePlace Suites Tallahassee North FL, to Jeffrey Webb, new GM at Fairfield Inn & Suites Millville NJ, and to Alfie Sabino, GM at both the Courtyard Tulsa Center OK and Fairfield Inn & Suites Tulsa Center OK.



Terry Foye is all about sports, especially UNC Tarheels basketball and FSU football. His experience spans many "teams" as he has worked in every Marriott CFRST brand over an 18 year time period. His most recent post was in Altamonte Springs, FL where he was the GM at the Residence Inn. Property milestones included raising Medallia scores 9 points in his first 60 days, modified revenue strategies so that the hotel met budget goals for 3 consecutive months, retrained staff on proper housekeeping and front desk procedures and lead the team to their first non-red zone GSS score in 18 months. Terry's experience includes leadership roles at the SpringHill Suites Kissimmee, SpringHill Suites Norfolk/Virginia Beach, Courtyard Greensboro Airport and Fairfield Inn & Suites Asheboro NC. Terry is originally from North Carolina but "enjoys the Florida sun much better". Welcome to Tallahassee Terry!



Jeffrey Webb claims to have been in hospitality "FOREVER"! While we actually challenge the "Forever" statement after seeing his youthful picture, we do know that he comes to Millville with a plethora of hospitality experience! Most recently Jeff served as area manager for two hotels: Hampton Inn and Clarion Inn & Suites Absecon NJ. He also held the position of GM



at the Courtyards in Jackson TN, Norfolk VA and Glassboro Rowan University NJ, as well as the SpringHill Suites in Hampton VA. Jeff is married to Jennie and boasts a 12 year old daughter Sameena. In his free time, Jeff loves to fish, take cruises, and still roller skates (on 4 wheels not roller blades). He is a part time photographer. Raised in a military family, Jeff was born in Cleveland Ohio but stationed mostly in NJ, where he and his family currently reside.



One of his favorite pastimes is breaking out the BBQ Grill (all year round). He has even grilled steaks during the Blizzard of 2003 and 2010. Living life to its fullest - we welcome our enthusiastic new GM to Millville!



Alfie Sabino is our dual brand General Manager in Tulsa. He oversees both the Courtyard and Fairfield Inn & Suites Tulsa Central, GRAM's latest additions to the management portfolio. Prior to the takeover, Alfie served as the GM at the Courtyard Tulsa Central and his accomplishments included increasing Guest Satisfaction by 8% over 7 months, achieving the highest Brand Standard Audit for the hotel in 2016 (88.4%), increasing corporate accounts/RFPs by 40% compared to 2015, and decreasing accounts receivables to less than \$500 and within 30 days. Alfie's prior experience includes leadership stints at the Courtyard Tulsa Woodland Hills, as Director of Operations for Marriott's Waiohai Beach Club Koloa HI, FOM duties at Marriott's Maui Ocean Club Lahaina HI, FOM at Cebu City Marriott Cebu City Philippines, Miri Marriott Resort and Spa Malaysia, New World Renaissance Hotel Makati Philippines, Bethesda Marriott Hotel MD and Sofitel Grand Boulevard Hotel Manila Philippines. We welcome Alfie to the GRAM family!



Play Ball Answers: 1. d 2. c 3. a 4. d 5. c 6. a 7. a 8. b 9. a 10. c

