

TeleGRAM

Great American Hotel Group Newsletter

Another Year Wiser

Wishing a very happy birthday to our Great American Hotel Group office and property GMs:

Gabrielle Smith - September 24

RJ Greene - October 4

Bill Webster (Tallahassee) - October 18

Candy Grimbilas - October 22

Around the Block

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

Suzanne Baele - 20 years

Bob Weiser - 19 years

Welcome Aboard

Welcome to our new Sales Manager at the Courtyard Lake Placid. Carolyn Bordonaro has joined the team from DelMonte Hotel Group in Rochester, NY. Also, we welcome Michael Dobbs, new sales manager at the Clarion Wakefield. Michael joins us with extensive sales experience in the apparel industry. He is also the Woman's Soccer Coach at Tewksbury High School. Please join us in welcoming Carolyn and Michael and wishing them success in their endeavors.

A Laugh A Day...



Versatility Is Our Middle Name

by Dave Akridge

Great American Hotel Group is one of the most experienced hospitality management firms in the nation. Servicing over 50 clients and more than 160 hotels in the last 25 years, GRAM's management expertise focuses on special service work, new construction, and long term joint venture deals for full service, select service, limited service, and boutique hotels. GRAM has also leveraged these management skills and services to branch into golf course management, full service marina management, and office park management.

The company has been successful in the past, and strives to continue its success in the future. We are constantly expanding and growing in new areas, accepting new challenges, being progressive, staying abreast of industry trends, and focusing on education. Our philosophy is one of continuous improvement of our services to our guests and clients.

As we look back over the last 25 years, we have certainly seen our industry change. Technology, product design, segmentation of brands and much more. However, our past, current and future success will be always be tied to the core principles that we have held since inception:

1. All things being equal, people do business with people they like. This means that at the core of every business relationship there has to exist a genuine relationship based on trust, fair dealing, accessibility and always going the extra step on a personal basis.

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Workplace Bullying

by Leslie Zieren, Esq.

Bullying is a workplace problem. Some estimate that bullying is 4 times more common than discrimination, and 30% of American workers have experienced bullying at some point in their careers. The fact is that no workplace needs a bully. Workplace bullying is more than just "he doesn't like me" or "she's rude to me." Bullying is a power play—a way to dominate or control.

Advocates of workplace bullying laws state that bullying can include:

- Making false accusations of errors a coworker did not commit
- Using the "silent treatment"
- Harshly and constantly criticizing the person, especially in front of others
- Starting or not stopping, damaging rumors about a person
- Instigating others to turn against a person
- Directing gross or undignified behavior at the victim
- Screaming or yelling in front of others to humiliate a worker
- Constantly threatening a person with job loss
- Physical or verbal assaults

Many state legislatures are considering anti-bullying laws. Are laws regulating bullying necessary? Would they be effective? Would they instead actually be detrimental to employers and employees?

Those who doubt legislation is the answer point out that we already have tort laws that can address much of what is considered bullying—laws such as those prohibiting defamation, assault, and most importantly, intentional infliction of emotional distress. The big problem with anti-bullying legislation is defining where rudeness ends and bullying ends.

For instance, what constitutes the "silent treatment" or a "damaging rumor"? At what point do proper and necessary management techniques, like warnings, evaluations and consultations, go from constructive to being labeled "harsh criticism" in a state court lawsuit?

Most employees do not like to be criticized or reprimanded. Some may consider correction as "being bullied," even if a manager's comment is communicated in the most professional manner.

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2. Our job is always to meet the expectations of our fellow associates, clients, guests and the brand whose flag we fly. Not always an easy task, but always our goal.

3. Our Corporate Staff and General Managers have worked together as a team for most of these 25 years. While we all have our own areas of expertise, we have developed a team chemistry based on trust, talent and many shared experiences. In short, no matter the title, we respect each other's unique abilities and do whatever it takes to accomplish the objective. We have all seen sports teams on paper that have the best players money can buy. They often fail, because egos take over and they lack team chemistry. I know our team has this chemistry because I have been blessed with being a part of it for 25 years. We all have our area where we are the best and we are all smart and humble enough to put the person with the best expertise front and center to make the key play. The rest of the team will be the supporting players. If one of our team is not available, we always have the bench strength to compensate. Why? Most of us know just enough about everything to step up when needed. This is how we have won more than we have lost over the last 25 years.

4. Doing what is right is not always easy. We will make decisions based on what is right for the the people we work with and for.

We will never get stuck doing business just because that is the way we have always done it. We will always make changes based on incorporating the foregoing. In short, we will not lose sight of who we are for short term success.

Getting Hammered at the Clarion

The renovation of the Clarion Inn - Wakefield, MA is in full swing. Over the past several months the guest rooms have been getting a make over as well as the fitness center, and corridors. The response from our customers has been very positive.

The attention is now on the public spaces. Lobby carpet is being replaced with black granite, and the focus wall now boasts a new LCD television and mantled fireplace.



Next on the agenda is the business center, coffee/tea station, and new travel center.

Also under renovation is the restaurant/lounge. The project includes a new bar, gaming area, entertainment station and inlaid dance floor as well as a full renovation of the outdoor deck and pool.

Future work includes the refurbishment of the two meeting rooms and exterior portico.

1. a 2. b 3. b 4. d 5. b 6. c 7. d 8. a 9. b 10. a 11. c 12. c 13. a
Autumn Trivia Questions Answers:

You're Probably Checking Your Work Email On Vacation— But you Shouldn't Be

Some professionals might need to take the text of their own out-of-office replies to heart. According to a study released today by HR consulting firm Randstad, 42% of employees reported feeling obligated to check their email during vacation, while 25% feel guilty even using all of their vacation time.

"There's an impact on productivity, there's an impact on allowing people to release and come back refreshed," said Jim Link, Randstad chief HR officer, who noted that effects on employee decision making and productivity were also observed. The numbers are even more stark when broken down by generation. 40% of millennial employees reported feeling guilty using their vacation time, compared to 18% of baby boomers.

While some of this can likely be attributed to changing concerns on different rungs of the corporate ladder—those in jobs closer to entry level are likely more anxious about appearing diligent and hesitant to take time off, while those with more seniority may feel a greater sense of freedom regarding vacation time. Link says the bigger reason is actually the work-life bleed being facilitated by technology.

"Studies about millennials always say there are four Fs this generation places before all else: fun, family, freedom, and friends," said Link. "But then you look at this information that says these folks are on board more than any other generation, and don't feel the need to delineate between work and life."

67% of respondents, reported feeling more productive following a vacation, which means that some of those surveyed both checked email on vacation and reported higher productivity upon their return. Link suggests those in the overlapping group may have found a balance that both pressured the separation of a vacation and managed the build-up of communication and tasks that often undo any of the effects of rest.

"Historically it was much easier to separate. It becomes harder, technologically speaking, to really build that separation in," said Link. "There's that group of people who find more satisfaction in being able to occasionally check in than to come back and have to respond to 500 emails and 60 voice mails."



Hoodies, Crisp Air, Hot Cocoa.... Celebrate the Beauty of Fall!

How much do you really know about the autumn season? Enjoy! (Answers to quiz can be found at the bottom of page 2 of this newsletter.)

1. During which month does summer end and autumn begin?
a. September b. October c. August d. November
2. In autumn, do you turn your clocks ahead or back?
a. Ahead b. Back
3. Why do the leaves change color in autumn?
a. Wind + Cold = Color b. Leaves lose chlorophyll, exposing pigments
c. Less rain d. Air is thinner causing oxidation
4. Which of these animals hibernate?
a. Ducks b. Deer c. Squirrels d. Bears
5. When do Canadians celebrate Thanksgiving?
a. September b. October c. November d. March
6. What is the best way to dispose of fallen leaves?
a. Bag them and put in trash b. Controlled burn
c. Compost them d. Rake them to your neighbor's yard
7. Squash is harvested in the fall. Which is not a variety of squash?
a. Spaghetti b. Summer c. Acorn d. Eggplant
8. True or False? According to Farmer's Almanac, one sign of a harsh, cold winter to come is a large amount of acorns on the ground in the fall.
a. True b. False
9. What does the word "Hallow" mean?
a. Without a core b. Sainly c. Frightening d. Dark
10. What was the name of Dracula's sidekick?
a. Renfield b. Ronson c. Shrek d. Roscoe
11. From which words(s) did bonfire originate?
a. Combustion b. Big+Blaze c. Bone+Fire d. Bonbon+Fire
12. Other than orange, which of the following are NOT pumpkin colors?
a. White b. Blue c. Yellow d. Green
13. True or False? Vampire bats do exist, but they are not from Transylvania. They live in South and Central America and thrive on the blood of cattle, horses and birds.
a. True b. False

Selling the Sizzle *Linda Komornik, Corporate Director of Sales & Marketing*

Negotiating is hard. It takes practice and it takes time. When does a sales person's job become easy? At what point can you call yourself a seasoned-sales person? According to "LindaKonomics", here are a few thoughts on how one can improve themselves in the art of negotiating:

Master the facts. - If you do not know your product, and if you are not comfortable talking about your hotel as it relates to your competition – you are going to be an ineffective negotiator. This one step is the basis of your entire job! You must know your hotel product inside and out, its abilities, and its limitations. You must also know how you stack up to your competitive set. Have you toured your competition? Have you seen their products, promotions, brochures, advertising, and collateral? Have you been on and SHOPPED their website? Do you drive their parking lots regularly? Do you know their sales people? Are you a member of their brand loyalty program? Do you know how to talk with customers about their strengths and weaknesses versus your offering?

Mastering the facts doesn't happen in a day, week or even a month. This task is on-going and you must make a commitment every day to become savvy. Do you have a talking script (not one that you read, but one that has bullet points in a natural and organized progression) that you can use for various types of sales calls? Do you have your value added benefits taped inside your sales portfolio and near your phone so that these facts roll off your tongue and so there are not those uncomfortable silences during conversation? Do you work from a check list when prospecting or doing maintenance calls? (In your marketing plan template, I included sample forms that can [and should] be part of your sales files.)

Understand the other party's position. - Listening to what your customers have to say and responding to questions, concerns, and ideas is paramount to the sales process. Yes, sales calls can become routine and boring. You find a contact, do some research, send a couple of emails, make a couple of calls, schedule an appointment or drop by, (hopefully) book the business, cook the business, and then send a follow up. "Shampoo. Rinse. Repeat." Have you become boring and are you just going through the motions? Is your sales process stale and uninteresting?

Being creative, current, trendy, recognizing the seasons, stepping outside the box every time you see a customer makes the process (for both parties) more fun. Yes, dare I say it..... FUN! When was the last time you had fun on a sales call? When was the last time you WOWed your client?

Finding new and creative ways to communicate with your customers, unleashes the monotony and helps you understand their needs. Are you incorporating "fishing questions" into your sales spiels? Asking your customers questions like, "in a perfect hotel utopia, what is your expectation as it relates to hotel facilities?", "what is most important to you as a planner?", "what is most important to your guests?", "what do you like about your current hotel?", "what do you dislike about your current hotel?" and being able to counter-sell to their response takes practice. Practice and role play in front of a mirror or with another associate. Do you look relaxed? Do you look confident? Do you look like you LOVE your job? DO YOU LOOK LIKE SOMEONE YOU WOULD BUY FROM?

Are you changing up your selling scripts to reflect the seasons? Can you write a clever headline or create an interesting flyer? Do you have different sales tools for different types of groups? In the perfect world, you would have sales kits for different market segments. The Corporate buyer doesn't want or need the same information that a soccer coach wants or needs. A bride doesn't care about the same things a meeting planner needs. Make all of your sales pitches and collateral "segment appropriate".

Know what you are willing to give and take to reach a win-win situation. - Knowing your hotel's need periods, rate ranges, and seasonality is all part of the sales process. If you have a customer that wants to "deal" during your prime selling days, offer them concessions if they change their dates or arrival/departure patterns that are more in line with the hotel's need period. If they can't change then you must justify and prove why you are worth what you are charging. A savvy salesperson knows what is going on in their hotel BEFORE they make a sales call.

Look at historical information and forecast reports. Read your daily report DAILY. Review your rate structure at least weekly. Read the newspaper and on line news so that you are current with community activities. If you are a hotel in Phoenix and haven't optimized rates for the Super Bowl yet, odds are you have already left money on the table! Know what is going on in your community and when you can negotiate with confidence. Write down your hotel's list of negotiables. For example, while speaking with a customer you find out that complimentary breakfast is very important to their guests, but your property has a restaurant and no comp breakfast. Quote rates to include breakfast. If you have a list of things you can use as "value adds" instead of always lowering rate, you are maneuvering towards that win-win situation for both parties. They get what they want at your rate.

So now – re-ask yourselves my initial questions: "When does a sales person's job become easy? At one point can you call yourself a seasoned-sales person?" Do you possess the above 3 skills? Happy Negotiating!

Operationally Speaking *Bob Weiser/Rob Greene, Regional Directors of Operations*

Recently, the hotel industry has been wrestling with a growing trend. A guest whom the hotel suspects violated smoking policies by smoking in his room or inside the hotel itself has his credit card charged for the violation fee after leaving the hotel. The guest either promptly or eventually disputes this charge, denying the alleged violation, which often garners agreement from the credit card company and results in a chargeback to the hotel. These four best practices will help hotels win disputes over smoking policy violations with credit card companies and avoid chargebacks:

1. Post a clearly-visible sign in each guest room that advises readers of the smoking policy and associated fine, including the method(s) by which the hotel will collect the fine.
2. Maintain a log of custody for each guest room that notes the precise times that your housekeeping staff interacted with the room.
3. Before collecting a smoking policy violation fee, ensure you have acquired reliable evidence of a policy violation. This can include witnesses (preferably several), used cigarettes in guest room waste receptacles, and/or tobacco residue in the room (accompanied by a cleaning record that dates the residue).
4. Require all guests to sign a document (or include text on existing registration/check-in documents your guests sign) that specifically prohibits (a) smoking in any guest room or anywhere inside the hotel and (b) disposing of used cigarettes in guest room waste receptacles. We recommend the following text in this document:



“This hotel is a completely non-smoking facility. By my initials below, I confirm that I fully understand and agree that if hotel staff find any evidence that I or someone visiting me at the hotel was smoking or utilizing a “smokeless” cigarette device anywhere in the building, including the sleeping room, I will be subject to a \$250 higher nightly room rate, which I agree to have charged to my credit card that was used to secure the reservation or pay the higher room rate in cash at the time of checkout.”

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

Because Millennial employees will dominate the workforce in a decade, employers would be wise to develop practices now to keep them engaged.



Train managers to have discussions with their employees regularly about what gives them job satisfaction and try to incorporate their suggestions into the workplace culture. Knowing what will keep your workforce engaged is essential to minimizing turnover rates, which could increase with the growing number of millennial employees, who are more likely to change jobs frequently if unsatisfied.

Some ways employers can foster engagement include: asking employees to help develop new projects and come up with fresh ideas; letting employees know how their work contributes to the overall goals of the organization; having managers mentor younger employees and ask for their input on projects; continually providing opportunities for further training and greater responsibility; giving feedback on their work; having opportunities to participate in collaborative projects; and encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship.

Roomer Has It

SPRINGHILL SUITES—Sarasota, FL

Sales Manager Alan Wells is setting a great pace in Sarasota. Recently appointed to the Sports Commission as a board member, Alan has already achieved great numbers in 2014. YTD, he has increased group business by 29.8% over last year, and LNR business by 17.6%. On May 8th, he married his sweetheart Claudia, and on May 25th he graduated with his masters in Hospitality Management. The former GM of two small Venice, FL hotels, Alan's goal is to be a leader in the hospitality industry. Go Alan!



HAMPTON INN—BENNINGTON, VT

They are "Moving and Shaking" in Vermont. Congratulations to the entire team for receiving the Mover and Shaker Award from Hilton!



HAMPTON INN—East Hartford, CT

Congratulations to Cheyenne Marshall and Angel McFarlane who are the recipients of the Spirit of Hampton award for their great cooperation and support at the Front Desk.



Feel the Hamptonality!

The Hampton Inn - East Hartford General Manager Mercy Breitenbach and Sales Manager Kattie Bonilla hosted a very successful Guest Appreciation Reception this past month. Attendees included in-house guests, local negotiated accounts and other corporate customers. They also hosted a raffle that included a wine basket, Hampton Inn souvenirs and other certificates. Vendor partners Nolita's Ristorante and Melissa's Treats provided a smorgasbord of delights to include Pasta Primavera, Bruschetta, Cherry Bomb Chicken and exotic Indian finger foods. The vegan cupcakes were a special hit and guests were delighted with the quality of the food, the beauty of the hotel and hospitality shown by the staff.

