

# TeleGRAM

## Great American Hotel Group Newsletter

### Another Year Wiser

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

*Bob Weiser - January 18*

### Around the Block

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

*Rob Greene - 18 years*

*Day Hays - 14 years*

*Diana Fowler - 13 years*

*Brandie Tweedie - 2 years*

### GRAM Go GREEN

Recycling is a priority these days and Great American Hotel Group is doing their part. In 2014, our company's recycling efforts conserved the following resources: 43,099 kW hours of electricity, 583 gallons of oil, 138 gallons of gasoline, 79 mature trees, 40,142 gallons of water, and 34 cubic yards of landfill airspace.

### A Laugh A Day ...

*"Welcome Back Sir. Are you here for one night only, or your usual extended stay?"*



*Garrett Desert Inn - Santa Fe, NM*

## GRAM To Operate "Inn" Santa Fe

Great American Hotel Group has been appointed as receiver by RiverSource Life Insurance Co., to operate the historic Garrett's Desert Inn in Santa Fe, NM.

The motel property, adjoining the Santa Fe River is also the home to Santa Fe Bite, an eatery whose organic beef burgers regularly make culinary lists for being among the best in the United States.

The construction of Garrett's, which stood out as a 1950's style building at a time when preservationists and community boosters were promoting Spanish-Pueblo Revival and Territorial architectural styles, helped lead to the adoption of city-enforced design standards in historic neighborhoods that have come to be known as Santa Fe Style.

The motel features 83 guest rooms and suites and all overlook Santa Fe's most beautiful outdoor heated pool. Rooms feature free WiFi, in-room coffee and tea, hair dryers, king or double queen beds, irons/boards, voicemail and work desk. Suites additionally have refrigerators and microwaves.

The property sits just back from the Old Santa Fe Trail and boasts a fitness room, laundry room and meeting facilities. Meeting facilities can accommodate up to 80 persons for meals and up to 125 persons theatre style. The meeting room also features a KIVA fireplace and wall of windows overlooking the pool.

## Predictions for 2015

No matter how good we are at what we do, no matter what challenges we've overcome in the past, it's time to wipe last year's slate clean and start over again.

Many prognosticators will tell you about "the rise of mobile, wellness and other well-trodden trends". To stay in control this year, let's look beyond what everyone is talking about and look at 3 things you may take for granted, and explore the real meaning of predicted trends:

**"Toppling Records"** According to STR, ADR will rise 5% while RevPAR will rise 6.2%. That's based on supply raising just 1.3% with a 2.4% demand increase all resulting in a 1.1% occupancy increase. While good news, it could be disastrous if we continue being human and lose focus and try to coast through it taking our sacks of money to the bank. Lesson: Don't be lazy and do push harder now that the egg noog buzz has worn off.

**"Millennials"** The entire hotel industry is bending over backwards and going gaga over this rising group of customers. Are we doing this at the cost of ignoring the the industry's existing customer base (which isn't going anywhere soon)? Yes, Millennials are more comfortable with technology and they have a better concept of work/life balance. But really - they are the same as the rest of us, just younger. The changes being made to the hotel industry have features actually representative of what pretty much all travelers want — faster Internet, healthier food, more comfortable lobbies and gathering places. Lesson: Don't get so crazed over one demographic group that you alienate everyone else.

**"Marketing"** Stop doing the same thing over and over. It's time to do something new. You may think your ads are working, but it is probably more to do with demand soaring than you having an amazing ad. Create sales and marketing plans that engage and get customers to have an emotional connection to your product. Brands focus on the 99% - what about the 1%? Lesson: Stop doing what everyone else is doing and create something that nurtures the soul.

## Weathering the Weather

Baby it's cold outside! Across the Northeast, and around the Eastern seaboard, inclement weather has made travel inconvenient. While Juno made it's presence known, we are happy to report that all GRAM properties and staff homes weathered the storm without consequence!



Even with the inconveniences, you have to concur, that the snow-covered winter landscapes are beautiful! The good news is for winter sports' fanatics.... now there is a great Mother Nature made base of snow!



Trivia Questions Answers:  
1. b 2. b 3. b 4. d 5. d 6. b 7. a 8. c 9. d 10. c 11. a 12. c 13. c 14. b

## Selling the Sizzle ....

Linda Komornik, Corporate Director  
of Sales & Marketing

Effective Directors of Sales and Sales Managers have huge responsibilities. It is that strategic revenue management partnership between operations and sales that ensures the right customers are booking at the right rates and at the right times.

To ensure efficiency, add these "must do" tasks to your day:

1. *Set your top priorities every day and STICK to the list.* It might be tempting to "just get this one task out of the way" - but don't. Start at the top of your the list and work through it. If you don't have a daily plan, like a squirrel you may be distracted by frivolous activities rather than the more pressing matters on your list.

2. *Evaluate your hotel product.* Dedicate 5 minutes a day to read reviews and integrate solutions to issues mentioned that affect group business. Discuss operational issues with GMs.

3. *Monitor sales and marketing metrics that affect performance.* Make any rate changes and manage inventory to assure that you are positioned properly.

4. *Check progress of top 20 sales opportunities.* Double check active prospects. Review details about who is competition and hot button issues.

5. *Speak with any in-house accounts, guests, meetings or planners.* Make sure all is well with their group.

6. *Monitor comp set activity.* Know what is going on in the market by driving parking lots, doing mystery shops, reviewing star reports and using Google Alerts. Know your competition's strategic accounts.

7. *Read industry news and monitor trends.* Learn something new every day.

8. *Give praise to your team.* Always thank associates for working hard to ensure that business is happy in your hotel.

9. *Review your performance versus your goals.* Keep track on weekly, monthly, quarterly and yearly goals. Pick up pace if you are behind.

Happy organizing yourself!



## Are You Smarter than a 5th Grader?

Here's a chance to test your knowledge about Valentine's Day and President's Day! Answers to the quiz can be found on page 2 of this newsletter. Enjoy!

- According to Chocolate Manufactures's Associates, how much chocolate was sold in 2014 in celebration of Valentine's Day?
  - \$1.2 billion
  - \$58 million
  - \$81 million
  - \$12 million
  - \$325 thousand
- Approximately what percentage of Valentine's Day cards are sent by women?
  - 60%
  - 85%
  - 33%
- Cupid is whose son?
  - Iris
  - Venus
  - Aphrodite
  - Juno
  - Nike
  - Hestia
- In what Shakespeare play is St. Valentine's Day mentioned?
  - Romeo and Juliet
  - Taming of the Shrew
  - Othello
  - Hamlet
  - A Midsummer's Night Dream
- Approximately how many Valentine's Day cards are sent each year?
  - 1 million
  - 50 thousand
  - 500 thousand
  - 1 billion
  - 5 million
- Roman myth says that when Cupid spilled a certain liquid, from that spot roses grew. What was the liquid?
  - Wine
  - Nectar
  - Honey
  - Love Potion #9
  - Water
- Which state was Abraham Lincoln born?
  - Kentucky
  - Virginia
  - Illinois
  - Pennsylvania
  - Hawaii
- Which President is also known as the "Father of the Constitution"?
  - Abe Lincoln
  - Thomas Jefferson
  - James Madison
  - George Washington
  - John Adams
- How many stars did the US Flag have under George Washington?
  - 12
  - 22
  - 15
  - 13
- Which President is associated with the term "O.K."?
  - John Tyler
  - Ulysses S Grant
  - Martin Van Buren
  - Winston Churchill
  - William Henry Harrison
- Who was the only President to serve more than 2 terms?
  - Franklin D Roosevelt
  - Herbert Hoover
  - George W Bush
- Which President died on the 4th of July?
  - Grover Cleveland
  - Ronald Reagan
  - John Quincy Adams
  - John F Kennedy
  - Gerald Ford
  - Millard Fillmore
- Which President was also a popular movie actor?
  - Bill Clinton
  - Richard Nixon
  - Ronald Reagan
- Who established the Peace Corps?
  - Dwight Eisenhower
  - John F Kennedy
  - Franklin Roosevelt
  - Jimmy Carter
  - Thomas Jefferson

When hiring an associate, employers are always trying to find the best candidate for the job. Oftentimes they base their decisions on these factors: *Personality* - would this person fit in the current culture and get along with teammates so productivity will remain high? *Aptitude* - would this person be able to adjust to the way we do things without constantly comparing us to their old employer's way of doing things? *Experience* - Does this person have the skills and knowledge to be able to hit the ground running, or at least get up to speed quickly? *Affordability* - Will this person be happy with the pay scale and benefits, or will they be disappointed and feel like accepting a job with us that was a step down, or worse - jumping ship for another opportunity? These factors are what ultimately determines if you are hired.

Once you are hired, a different set of criteria determines if you are seen as a good hire with future potential. How well you integrate into the company in those early months matters greatly. There is a direct correlation between being seen as an exceptional new hire and having an opportunity to fast-track your career growth with an employer. Management loves it when a new hire turns out as good, but loves it more when a new hire turns out even better than expected.

Here are a few tips for creating a strong first impressions and powerful office relationships:

1. *Identify your manager's communication style.* Set a meeting with your boss and get clear on the best way to update him/her on your progress, ask questions, or communicate.
2. *Develop (and get management sign off) on your 30-60-90 day plan.* Outline in writing what you plan to accomplish each week/month in the next 90 days. The plan should have specific milestones highlighted to reassure your manager that you are getting up-to-speed and adding value as efficiently as possible.
3. *Get clear on each coworker's job AND professional agenda.* Each coworker you collaborate with is a stakeholder in your success and you are a stakeholder in their success. It is important to take the time to get to know their goals as a professional at the company. It shows you respect them and care about partnering with them successfully.
4. *Refrain from making and "fast friendships" with overly outgoing peers.* Be wary of coworkers who rush to be your friend and start giving you the inside office gossip. Eventually you may find their reputation in the office isn't the best and that being aligned with them isn't in your best interests.
5. *Map out your core work and master it in less than 40 hours.* Get clear on your tasks and responsibilities and become efficient enough that you can do them easily in less than a full work week. This demonstrates that you know how to "work smarter" not "harder".
6. *Ask, don't tell.* Smart questions are your secret to success in a new company.
7. *Keep your emails professional and your personal cell phone on vibrate.* Everyone will be watching your technical etiquette. Don't send personal emails from the company account. Put the phone away as coworkers don't want to hear your phone ding nor do they want to see you texting away. You need to prove yourself as committed to making a good impression on the job.
8. *When in doubt, include anyone whose opinion might count.* If a coworker has a stake in something you are working on, copy them. Let them tell you that you can take them off the cc list.
9. *Find a trustworthy "new hire" buddy.* Identify someone who is well-respected in your department and ask if they might be willing to be your on-boarding mentor for the first few months.
10. *Be reliable.* Employers expect you to be at work when scheduled and on time. Deliver your work on time and without issues.

If you can leverage the tips above, you should be able to establish yourself as an effective team player with a desire to exceed expectations. You'll build positive office relationships and define yourself as a solid contributor.

## Operationally Speaking .... *Bob Weiser, Regional Director of Operations*

Hotels are plagued by “booking misunderstandings”. How often do guests arrive at our front desks and walk away feeling “annoyed”, “frustrated”, and “duped”. Granted, most guests do not - but those that do severely impact our Guest Satisfaction surveys and performance scores. So why do these situations happen? In most cases, it starts with the reservation.

When a GSR or reservationist takes a reservation we must always ensure that we are listening to customer.... more importantly however, we need to make sure that the customer is listening and understanding US! Here is a true story about a guest who had a problem about honoring a room price:

*The guest tried to book on line with no success so they called the hotel reservation line. When he called the hotel, the guest noted he needed a “single room”. The rate was offered and the reservation was booked. Later that day, the guest realized he wanted to add a day to the stay so they called back and indicated that “he and his wife” needed to stay an extra day. No problem - reservation was modified and guest was given a confirmation number. There was no discussion about price when he added a night to his existing reservation. When the guest(s) arrived at the hotel, the guest reviewed his folio at check in and noticed that the rate was different from the first portion of the stay to the extra day’s stay rate. When he asked the GSR why, the only explanation given was he first booked a “single room”, and then a “double room” for the last night. (This particular hotel had an “additional guest charge” based on the number of occupants in the room.) The first error happened because the first reservationist neglected to ask the right questions from the start (i.e. how many guests will be occupying the room?) and ASSUMED that when the guest said single room that it was one person. The second error happened when the second reservationist heard the customer when he said “he and his wife” and ASSUMED that it was a double occupied room. By not reviewing the reservation with the guest, confirming dates and rate, both reservationists caused the confusion that occurred when the guest checked in to the hotel.*

Many individual travelers get confused with hotel terminology (i.e. guest asking for a single room, reservation agent booking as a single person). In this scenario, there was a difference in revenue based on the number of occupants in a room and it was not communicated to the guest. We need to remember that guests are not hoteliers; some only travel periodically, and our lingo is not that common. Reservationists and GSRs need to speak to guests like guests and not other hoteliers. In the long run, putting aside our terminology and understanding the customers NEEDS, WANTS and at what PRICE POINT, will minimize the instances of annoyed, frustrated, or (perceived) duped guests arriving at your hotel front desk. Combine this with proper “closing of the sale” steps (such as reviewing reservation before hanging up with the guest) will eliminate potential issues and dissatisfaction at the desk.

## By The Numbers .... *Gabrielle Smith, Corporate Controller*

Recent headlines are overrun with information about scams. The reality of the situation has put many people on edge and more protective than ever of their identities and personal information. We need to remember that safety and security of personal information, including credit card numbers, is paramount to our reputation.

Recently, an article by Michael Cohn, entitled “IRS Scammers Net \$14 Million From 3,000 Victims” noted that a pervasive IRS impersonation phone scam claimed nearly 3,000 victims who collectively paid over \$14 million. As the 2015 tax filing season begins, the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration reminds taxpayers to beware of phone calls from individuals claiming to represent the IRS while intending to defraud them.

“It is critical that all taxpayers continue to be wary of unsolicited telephone calls from individuals claiming to be IRS employees,” said TIGTA Inspector General J. Russell George in a statement. “This scam, which is international in nature, has proven to be the largest scam of its kind that we have ever seen. The callers are aggressive, they are relentless, and they are ruthless. Once they have your attention, they will say anything to con you out of your hard-earned cash.”

If taxpayers receive a call from someone claiming to be with the IRS asking for payment, TIGTA advises that if they know they owe federal taxes, or think they might owe taxes, they should hang up and call the IRS at 800-829-1040 for help. They should also fill out the “IRS Impersonation Scam” form on TIGTA’s web site, [www.treasury.gov/tigta](http://www.treasury.gov/tigta) or call TIGTA at 800-366-4484.

It should be noted that the IRS will never request personal or financial information by email, texting, or any social media. Scam emails can be forwarded to [phishing@irs.gov](mailto:phishing@irs.gov). Recipients should not open any attachments or click on any links in these emails.

Protect personal and hotel guest financial and personal information by reporting all of these types of inquiries.

## Should You Outsource Your Hotel's Accounting?

The ability to send and store data securely "in the cloud" has transformed the way that all types of business can be conducted and the hospitality industry is certainly no exception. Dramatic changes have taken place in our industry over the last couple of decades: hosted back-office technology, integrated reservations systems, mobile technology enhancing the guest experience, analytics upon analytics. Technology continues to enable hotel owners and operators to streamline their operations and visualize new ways to complete back-office tasks, allowing more time and dedication where it should be placed, upon the guests. However, all of the new technology, new demands and new deliverables can sometimes put a strain on the human resources functions and senior staff oversight of asset management, hotel management and owner/operators. It becomes more and more difficult to be all

things to all people - top notch recruiter, all-encompassing trainer, leading edge sales producer or manager, comprehensive operator, SSAE-16 compliant IT leader... and world-class guest services provider!

So, what's next? One emerging business opportunity that is making itself available to hoteliers is transitioning their back-office hotel and even some corporate accounting functions to an outsourced business model. This option can be delivered with minimal time investment from senior hotel management and typically produces a tangible, and often immediate, return on investment and bottom line savings. In addition to having more time to focus on your guests, it is a great option for Great American Hotel Group!

Call us today to discover why having GRAM host your back-office accounting services will make your hotel more successful!

### Roomer Has It

#### HAMPTON INN BENNINGTON

GM Teresa Maynard is challenging all her associates with a "Wellness Resolution" for the new year! The focus is on health and well being and making making better choices when it comes to food and beverage.



As many hotels do, after breakfast is over for our guests, we move left over product that cannot be re-served on the buffet into the employee break room for associate consumption. The team has decided that items like eggs and cheese, sausage, bacon, and biscuits and gravy will no longer be consumed, but oatmeal, fresh fruit, hard boiled eggs and wheat bread for toast will be available in their place. They also have agreed that in place of soda that the hotel provides them, that water will now only be offered.

Each associate has also agreed to give up one thing from their existing eating regimen, like chips, chocolate, etc., and to share healthy recipes and nutritional information with each other. The goal of this program to to have happy, healthy lifestyles!

Great job Team Hampton Inn Bennington!

## Making Strides in Nashua

Work continues on the construction of the Homewood Suites Gateway Hills Nashua. The building is up, the roof is on, windows in place, and exterior finishes almost complete. Work continues on the interiors in preparation for the mid-Summer 2015 opening.

GRAM is currently interviewing GM and Sales Manager candidates and the pre-opening office will open in early March.

Keep track of progress by "Liking" the hotel's Facebook page!

[HWS Gateway Hills Facebook](#)

