

# TeleGRAM

## Great American Hotel Group Newsletter

### A Little Bit Wiser

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

Dan Hays - May 28  
Danny Comellas - June 25  
Rob Greene - June 28

### Around the Block

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

Candy Grimbilas - 17 years  
Mercy Breitenbach - 3 years

### A Laugh A Day ...

*"In true pirate tradition, all of our sails are made from stolen hotel towels."*

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## GRAM Awarded Management Contract in Millville, NJ

On June 1, 2016, Great American Hotel Group, Inc. (GRAM) assumed the management of the Fairfield Inn & Suites located in Millville, NJ. The 111 room hotel was built in 2010 and is owned by Ray Brown, Dilip and Ramesh Petigara, under the entity Gran Prix Partners LP.

"We are delighted that Dilip and Ramesh Petigara have selected our company to manage a second hotel for their group. We look forward to working with them in Millville and to leading their team," noted Dave Akridge, President of GRAM.

With settlement roots dating back as to 1720, this quaint NJ town once relied on revenues from sawmills. Today, the Millville downtown area features a scenic riverfront 7 full time and 10 part time galleries and studios, shops and restaurants. It's close proximity to attractions such as the NJ Motorsports Park, Southward Vineyard & Winery, the Levoy Theatre, Wheaton Arts & Cultural Center, and Glasstown Brewing Company make it a draw from nearby demand generators such as Philadelphia, central and northern NJ, and other points south.

The hotel is located at 301 Bluebird Lane, just north of the downtown area and features meeting facilities, indoor pool, exercise room, Market, and complimentary breakfast and WiFi.

Are you WOWing your customers every day? Here are a few ideas to let guests know you are thinking proactively and care about their comfort. What's your favorite WOW tip?

- If you have large groups of kids, teams, or a group staying in your hotel, consider opening up your meeting room and encouraging them to bring their breakfast into that area. OR, set up a “quiet zone” area in your breakfast room for business travelers.
- Record personalized wake up calls (if your system permits). Rather than hearing the standard “this is your wake up call” recording, wouldn't it be nice if you heard a pleasant voice saying, “Good Morning. Today is Wednesday, June 1st and Virginia Beach weather is glorious today with temperatures ranging in the mid-70's, and sunny conditions. Now get up and enjoy the day!”
- Post the specials at local restaurants at the front desk so guests know their dining options.

## Operationally Speaking .... *Rob Greene, Regional Director of Operations*

Here are 10 issues about which you should be training your employees right now to limit your company's cyber exposure.

1. Passwords are mandatory, and must be strong. Employees generally resist having to enter a four-digit pin code every time they turn on their iPhones. The iPhone's recent fingerprint scanner makes this process relatively frictionless. Your IT, legal, and risk management departments, however, should require them, since they make it that much harder for someone to access data on a lost or stolen device. If your organization deals in confidential information, this requirement is that much more important.
2. Manage email and attachments. Do your employees know not to open attachments from unknown sources? Even the best and most up-to-date security software will miss some viruses and malware. Your employees must understand not to open any attachments unless they can 100 percent verify the authenticity of the sender.
3. Fear phishing emails. Do your employees know how to recognize an attempted phishing attack—a cyber-criminal impersonating a trustworthy source in order to steal credentials, or place malware on a system? Nearly 40% of all employees report opening a suspicious email. “When in doubt, throw it out” is a refrain you should drill into your employees' heads.
4. Limit removable media and cloud storage. Removable and cloud storage limit your control over the portability of your data. If you need portable data, limit your employees to company-approved solutions that you can monitor and control.
5. Avoid public and other unsecured wifi. An open wifi system is no different than an unlocked house. Just as you would not leave your house in the morning with the front door wide open, don't leave your network exposed by using open wifi networks.
6. Report lost or stolen devices immediately. IT must have the ability to remote-wipe a missing mobile device. Guess what happens, though, if an employee's first call upon losing a phone is to their mobile carrier? The carrier turns off the device, and your organization loses the ability to remote wipe any data from it. Employees should be told that if they lose a mobile device, their first call should be to IT so that the device can be wiped of any corporate data.
7. Limit apps and programs. Ban the installation of apps other than from the official iTunes App Store or Google Play, and limit software installations to approved programs. It will limit the risk of the installation of viruses, malware, and other malicious code on the devices.
8. Back up everything. In the event of a cyber attack that shuts down or kills your system, you need to have the ability to restore from ground zero. You cannot do this unless you routinely back up everything.
9. Think before you post. Social media has irrevocably blurred the line between public and private. This evisceration, however, does not mean that your employees need to share everything. In fact, the more they share, the easier it will become for a phisher to gain trust, and, therefore, access.
10. Terminating employment means terminating access. Employees should be reminded that at the end of their employment, devices must be returned immediately, or, if it's an employee's BYO device, it will be wiped clean of all company information.

Data breaches are not an if issue, but a when issue. You will be breached; the only question is when it will occur. While you cannot prevent a data breach from occurring, you can and should train your employees to sure up any knowledge gaps that further opens the risk they inadvertently pose.



## An Obituary for the Hotel Business Center

Excerpted from a blog written by Larry Mogelonsky

Born in the early days of personal computing, the hotel business center had its peak in the mid-1990s. At its zenith, the facility was a high priority for road warriors who needed to refine presentations, print materials, prepare travel itineraries or work on other business matters.

Businesspersons from all the world have come to pay their respects, some with bouquets of flowers and freshly dampened handkerchiefs while others ceremonially shovel dirt and obsolete fax machine parts onto the open grave. The advent of mobile devices, tablets and streamlined laptops proved to be the hotel business center's downfall, rendering it as obsolete as the stapler and three-hole paper punch. Many have come to blame the millennial's preference for new third space lobby modalities, but it's likely that the sheer convenience of a smartphone and its numerous apps are the main culprit.

And yet there is still hope for this fledging facility. Deep within the catacombs of many brand franchise agreements lays a mandate for a business center and one with a primary physical location to boot. And so, even with its dwindling usage, this particular hotel amenity limps on in many properties. Despite these compulsory (and outdated) brand standards, the transformation of the hotel business center into a more contemporary space is all but assured.

There are many steps that can thus be taken to pay your respects to the deceased while preparing the future. If you are not restricted by your brand, plan an alternate 'portable business center' for your guests. Purchase one or two 'loaner' laptops (one Mac and one PC), making their safekeeping and distribution the responsibility of your concierge or another equivalent team position. A standalone printer can be stationed at a front desk location with Bluetooth or wireless linkages readily available to these laptops.

### Repurpose the space

However, the big question now is: What are you going to do with this defunct space? Usually, a hotel business center was designed to be highly visible (think glass walls and door) and already secured to protect those (at the time) valuable computers. (more —>)

## May & June Trivia

1. Name the ballet dancer who requested asylum in France while in Paris with the Kirov Ballet in June 1961  
a. Anna Pavlova    b. Rudolph Nureyev    c. Mikhail Baryshnikov
2. Who was the first person to fly solo from Hawaii to California?  
a. Charles Lindbergh    b. Jessie Coleman    c. Amelia Earhart
3. When does the astrological summer start?  
a. June 22    b. June 21    c. June 20    d. July 4
4. Which of the following is NOT a birthstone for June?  
a. Moonstone    b. Alexandrite    c. Ruby
5. Who wrote the book "A Girl Named June"?  
a. Johnny Cash    b. Jerry Mathers    c. Ernestine J. Tebo
6. The Roman goddess Juno is the goddess of what?  
a. Summer    b. Marriage    c. Sunshine    d. Hops
7. The Empire State Building Opened in May of what year?  
a. 1931    b. 1920    c. 1945    d. 1962
8. What famous horse race is held in May?  
a. Preakness    b. Kentucky Derby    c. Belmont
9. What is the birth flower for May?  
a. Xenia    b. Lily of the Valley    c. Foxglove    d. Rose
10. What is the birthstone for May?  
a. Garnet    b. Opal    c. Emerald    d. Aquamarine

(continued...) Depending upon its size and location within the property, here are some options for you to consider. Be creative, as this is in effect, free space.

- *Grab and Go Café* open on-demand with coffee, snacks and other consumables changed based on time of day
- *Wedding/Catering Sales Center* displaying your finest table settings
- *Local Art Gallery* with optional staffing and all items listed with telephone numbers/ web links for those interested in purchase detail.
- *Pop-Up Store* reserved for local/regional crafts
- *Mini-Spa Outlet* for massages, manicures or other sample treatments
- *Reception Area* to host small to mid-sized events

Lastly, if your archaic brand franchise agreement stipulates a business center, inevitably you will have to decide whether it is time to test your metal. Examine and document the profitability of this space before you present your alternatives. See if they are prepared to walk in order to protect a facility that no longer meets today's hotel guest. In all likelihood, they will be enthusiastic about breathing new life into an obsolete amenity.

1 b 2 c 3 a 4 c 5 c 6 b 7 a 8 b 9 b 10 c

May & June Trivia Answers:



## New Kids on the Block



Karen Beranger, has assumed the leadership reigns at the Atlantic House Inn, and brings a wealth of local experience to the facility. In her most recent position as General Manager of the 88 room Homewood Suites by Hilton in Dover, NH, Beranger led her team to one of the hotel's highest quality evaluation scores in the 8 year property history and achieved the highest average daily rate in its competitive set. Previous to her stint at the Homewood Suites, and spanning more than 25 years, she served as General Manager of the Inn on Main, Wolfeboro, NH, the General Manager of The Wolfeboro Inn, also in Wolfeboro, NH, Director of Operations for Castle In the Clouds, Moultonborough, NH and General Manager of The Centennial Inn, Concord, NH. Ms. Beranger's experience also includes two years of regional sales and catering manager duties for Lafrance Hospitality and food/beverage management experience for Courtyard by Marriott.

Richard (Ricky) Irving has been hired to operate The Shrimp Boat Restaurant, Gracie Rae Bar & Grill, Lowe's and The Salty Hawg Oyster Bar Restaurant, a landmark restaurant complex located in Panama City, FL. Irving is a seasoned restaurant general manager, most currently employed at Caribbean Jack's in Daytona Beach, and previously responsible for overall operations at Cracker Barrel, TGI Friday's, Granite City Food and Brewery and Lone Star Steak House. He is a business management graduate from Syracuse University obtaining his master's in American History from Framingham State University. "I am delighted to be in Panama City and look forward to the challenge of bringing this iconic restaurant back to it's glory days," noted Irving. "My family and I love the area and look forward to making it our new home."



Danny Comellas has recently joined the Great American Hotel Group corporate office team as a Staff Accountant. His experience includes working for Marathon CFO where he was responsible for handling the books for approximately 7 small businesses with interests ranging from bioscience companies to firms who handle legal work only for clients. Previous to this position, he worked in the Partnership Accounting Division at Boston Capital, a real-estate investment firm. A 2010 graduate in Accounting from UMass Lowell, Danny was recently married (2014). Originally from Miami, he and his wife are now residing in Hampton, NH. Danny's outside the office interests include listening to music, watching local sports and playing guitar. "I have thoroughly enjoyed working for GRAM for the past couple of months. Everybody has been wonderfully nice to me and I look forward to working with everyone in the future," he noted.



Congrats to the Homewood Suites Gateway Hills Nashua NH. Hilton Worldwide awarded the hotel a \$3000 "Travel With Purpose Action Grant". The hotel's application was chosen from 502 submissions, all who are demonstrating local commitment and passion in their local communities and making a difference. Now in its fourth year, the program has awarded more than \$880,000 of support to nearly 305 innovative teams and their creative projects.

Award criteria for winning projects included engaging their individual property teams and aligning with Hilton's three "Travel with Purpose" pillars: Creating Opportunities, Strengthening Communities and Preserving the Environment.

Sales Manager Jayme Putnam submitted the hotel's application for the grant after their hotel conducted a Mock Interview session for their local Project SEARCH/The Plus Company students. Project SEARCH, a career training program for individuals with developmental disabilities. It offers enrollees classroom instruction and one-on-one job training services in a medical setting (St. Joseph Hospital) to pair them with local companies with an end goal of securing employment at the conclusion of the internship. The \$3000 award will be used to conduct similar activities for the organization.

As a member of the Business Advisory Council for Project SEARCH at Saint Joseph's, and as a result of the hotel's ongoing efforts to work with this program, Jayme now is able to more closely work with the decision makers at the hospital. It is a win-win relationship for both the hotel and the hospital.

Depending on your location, summertime is either the start to your high season, or the time where your business goes “poof”. In either case, you’ll need to craft a sales and marketing strategy for each of these scenarios.

For the hotel in HIGH season, because your hotel is doing well and business is walking in the front door naturally, this is the perfect time to do maintenance sales check up calls/visits to stay in touch with your customer base and prepare for the third/fourth quarters. Keep your eye on rates and make sure you are positioned perfectly so you maximize every day of your prime money-making season. Look for last minute “filler” business for those small gaps in availability – usually weekdays. Most “busy” summer hotels have built in events and activities that happen over weekends, so offering pre- or post- arrival specials to these groups and event attendees might capture shoulder business and boost a good month’s results to great month’s results. Keep up with social media by posting pictures, articles, and information about events in your community, and encouraging your guests to interact with your sites.

Now, for those of you who struggle in the summer because your customer base goes somewhere else, it is especially important for you to create reasons to come to your hotel. You don’t have a great outdoors draw, you don’t have a beach, you don’t have shopping, and you don’t have the “largest ball of twine in North America” to get people to visit your city. So, what can you do? Look to the people who live and work in your community. Encourage family reunions – you can offer economical rates which many families require. People still get married, people still need their “peeps” for less than happy circumstances, and people still do business travel. Encourage road warriors to bring their families on the trip to enjoy the pool and family events. Build a weekend package that includes a map of “things to do” in your area. You’d be surprised how many people love to do what the locals do and find local history interesting. Put together picnic baskets and offer to your guests as an amenity. Plan pool activities, or movie nights. Partner with a local restaurant, bowling alley or movie theatre for family friendly opportunities. Look for alternative business like fantasy football draft, speed-dating events, cooking demonstrations,

collectable or art exhibitions, kids/adult sports tournaments, summer school or vacation bible classes... the possibilities are endless.

Keep in touch with your customer base. Keep prospecting for new business or to share shift business. Call on customers who have said “no” in the past and encourage them to try your hotel by offering a “Second chance to love us” promotion.

Celebrate off-holidays. For example, July is Anti-Bordom Month, it’s National Blueberry Month, National Hot Dog Month and National Ice Cream Month. (The second week of July is also Nude Recreation Week but I don’t encourage this celebration at your hotel.) Consult the list of unique and obscure holidays website <http://www.holidayinsights.com/moreholidays/> for interesting and out-of-the-box ideas on how to reach out to guests.

If you have social media pages for your hotel, make your posts interesting and engaging and include the “event of the day”. Wishing customers a “Happy International Joke Day” and sharing a (tasteful) poke at travel, might be a fun way to encourage guests to share their favorite hotel humor. Remember, commenting is great but sharing is better! Make your social media “sharable”.

Lastly, I have often encouraged our sales people to celebrate non-traditional holidays. I have written several blogs in the past (<http://theroomermill.net/celebrate-today/>, <http://theroomermill.net/packages-and-promotions-they-just-arent-for-the-holidays/>, <http://theroomermill.net/summer-doldrums-who-said-so/>) and suggested sending off-holiday cards/gifts. Be a horse of a different color, don’t be predictable, and don’t try to save all your holiday wishes for December..... be the sales person who wishes people a Happy Flag Day, Happy Earth Day, or Happy Belly Laugh Day. You can find cards, notecards, decorations or gifts that support these types of holidays from companies such as Current, Oriental Trading Company, Lakeside Collection, etc.

So get up, get out, and get celebrating.... your customers will definitely remember you!

Happy Flip A Coin Day (June 1)!

Linda



## Roomer Has It

### NORFOLK COUNTRY INN & SUITES

Welcome aboard to Lacie Hinrichs! Lacie has been hired in the accounting department. Additionally, we reported last issue that the hotel restaurant were going to give all Mother's who chose to eat at Bailey's on Mother's Day, a free breakfast and 100 lucky ladies were rewarded!

### THE SHRIMP BOAT RESTAURANT

Website management contracts were awarded to Mannix Marketing, Glen Falls, NY and social media contracts were awarded to Pipeline Social Media Services, Atlanta, GA for all 3 venues within The Shrimp Boat Complex.

### HOMEWOOD SUITES GATEWAY HILLS

The team at the Homewood Suites in Nashua celebrated Cinco de Mayo with a fiesta for their staff and guests. GM Adam Robitaille organized the event as a "thank you" to the staff for their hard work at the hotel. All the cuisine was themed around the day.

## He's Baaaccckkk!

A familiar face, a blast from the past, yes.... our own Jim Davis is back! As many of you are aware, Jim took a break from the hotel business to resume active duty in the US Army. His adventures have included assignments in our nation's capital. We are delighted that he is able to rejoin GRAM and look forward to seeing his friendly face! Welcome back Jim!



## E-Verify Update

Until further notice, employers should continue using Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification. This current version of the form continues to be effective even after the Office of Management and Budget control number expiration date of March 31, 2016, has passed. USCIS will provide updated information about the new version of Form I-9 as it becomes available.

Employers must complete Form I-9 for all newly hired employees to verify their identity and authorization to work in the U.S. To learn more about Form I-9 visit I-9 Central.

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

*Excerpted from the article Managing Challenging Customers To Avoid Discrimination Litigation by Leslie Zieren, The McCalmon Group, Inc.*

"You have trained your employees. You monitor and mentor them. Their customer service skills are pretty darn good. However, one angry customer can bring chaos to your peaceful workplace.

When we consider discrimination or harassment litigation potential, we often think of litigation between employees and employers. However, discrimination or harassment litigation between customers and employers is another risk to consider. Managers must help set a tone to keep customer complaints from spinning out of control.

## HR CORNER

Of course, every workplace and situation is different, but in general, what are some effective approaches to difficult customer issues that fall in your lap and could lead to a bigger risk?

- Venting is important. Thank the client for the opportunity to be of service, and then just let the client vent, especially if you observe anger or disappointment.
- Listen to the venting. Don't interrupt. Make sure there are no digital device interruptions. Make eye contact. When the client stops, repeat back to the client (not like a parrot, but rather paraphrase) what you heard the complaint is all about. Ask the client if there is anything else.
- Get clear on the complaint. Ask the client about anything he or she said that was unclear to you. Remember, you are still gathering information, not refuting anything said. At this point, the facts are whatever the client believes they are.
- You know what the problem is now, so it is time to fix it. Let the client know what your plan is. Be sure to surprise the client by not only solving the problem, but throwing in something extra to exceed expectations.
- Thank your employees for following their training and referring the difficult matter to you. Document all of your efforts.
- Check in on the client with a personal handwritten note or in person. Find out if your solution is still working for the client. A little extra attention can go a long way to preserving the business relationship."

For information on this or other HR Topics, please contact [Suzanne.Baele@GreatAmericanHG.com](mailto:Suzanne.Baele@GreatAmericanHG.com)

