

**HLAGH
MISSION
STATEMENT:**

**THE MISSION OF
THE HOTEL &
LODGING
ASSOCIATION OF
GREATER HOUSTON
IS TO IMPROVE THE
LODGING INDUSTRY
IN THE GREATER
HOUSTON AREA
THROUGH
EDUCATION,
GOVERNMENTAL
AFFAIRS AND
PUBLIC
AWARENESS OF
THE TRAVEL
INDUSTRY
ECONOMIC IMPACT.**

In this Issue:

Chair's Message	1
Changes in the Industry	2
Welcome New Members	
Industry Happenings	3
Article:	4
The Room Rate Conundrum: The leap from Tactical to Strategic	
NCAA Final Four Recap	5
Share your Hospitality Month Recap	6
Article:	7
Think Breaking Up Is Hard To Do? Guests Don't! 10 Ways to Keep Your Facebook News Feed Alive	
National Senior Games	8
International Housekeepers Week	
Article:	9
The Hotel Front Desk is a Distribution Channel	
Happy 4th of July	10
2011-2012 HLAGH Officers & Board of Directors	12
2012 Hospitality on Parade	13
Upcoming HLAGH Events	14



***The Staff and the Board of Directors of the
Hotel & Lodging Association of Greater
Houston hope that you, your family, and staff
have a Happy Fourth of July Celebration!***

2011 Summer Newsletter ~ Chair's Message

Summer is here and it's hard to believe my term as Chair of the Hotel and Lodging Association of Greater Houston for the 2010/2011 fiscal year is nearing an end.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our current Board and staff as well as all of our members for your participation and commitment to our organization. Despite continued challenges for our industry, our commitment to serve visitors to our city has never wavered.

Our incoming Chair is Tom Mathews, General Manager of the Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites - Medical Center. I know that he is excited and I am confident that he will diligently work with the Board to make our organization even stronger. Within this newsletter is a complete list of the incoming Board.

Our organization will continue to keep you informed of issues that arise from city and state actions. The staff can also be a resource for hospitality related issues. Take advantage of the many great things we have to offer whether it be luncheons, partnerships with vendors or just networking opportunities.

In closing, let me take this opportunity to thank you for allowing me to serve as Chair of this dedicated and worthwhile association. It has truly been a remarkable experience and I hope you will take any opportunity to get more involved with our organization. Have a great summer, and I look forward to seeing you at one of our upcoming events.

Sincerely,
Tom Rosepink



Tom Rosepink
HLAGH Chair and General
Manager of
Houston Airport Marriott at
George Bush
Intercontinental
Airport

Hotel & Lodging Association of Greater Houston

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CHANGES IN THE INDUSTRY:

Armadillo Security Services of Texas
Suzie Palmer, Office Manager

Comfort Suites – Greenspoint
Tiffany Roland, General Manager

Comfort Suites – Seabrook
Robert Liggett, General Manager

Courtyard by Marriott – Energy Corridor
Jon Craven, General Manager

Homewood Suites – Galleria
Pinal Patel, General Manager

Hampton Inn – Baytown
Andrea Farr, General Manager

The Inn at Dos Brisas
Brent Gresham, General Manager

Hilton Garden Inn – Northwest
Susan Swank, Director of Sales

Marriott Hotel – Greenspoint
Troy Schroeder, General Manager

Marriott Hotel – Sugar Land Town Square
Michael Newbrand, General Manager

Residence Inn – Downtown
Courtyard by Marriott – Downtown
Josh Decker, General Manager

Royal Carriages Limousine, Inc.
Bonnie Lopez, Marketing & Affiliate Manager

Sheraton Suites – Galleria
Jack Farr, General Manager

Staybridge Suites – Galleria
Tim Graves, General Manager

Staybridge Suites – I-10 West
Jon Lau, General Manager

Woodley Suites – IAH
is now
America's Best Value Inn & Suites – IAH

Regency Inn & Suites – Hobby
is now
Days Inn & Suites – Hobby



NEW MEMBERS:

Candlewood Suites – Westchase
Felicia Mitchell, General Manager

Carrier Enterprise, LLC
Edward C. Neumann, Building Specialist/Strategic Accounts
Jillian Moak, Carrier Sales TM
Anna Noack, Commercial Sales Engineer
Richard Wright, Carrier Sales TM

Comfort Suites Near Medical Center
Ashwin Patel, General Manager

Cotton Commercial, USA
Billy Hawkins, Regional Director

CTI Transportation, LLC
Richard Mishriky, President

Eagle First, Inc.
Ivan Rudiger, President

Enterprise Holdings
Nathan Collier, Business Rental Sales Executive

Houston Uniform & Apparel
Andrea Files, Major Marketing

Myers Pest & Termite Services, Inc.
Brian Anderson, Southwest Regional Account Manager

Palace Inn – Beltway 8
Jayesh Patel, General Manager

Rexel
Norma Alaniz, Commercial Outside Sales
Jennifer Gori, Commercial Outside Sales

SERVPRO of Kingwood/Humble
Mara Bilanchch, Business Development Manager

Westin Memorial City
Mark Weatherhill, General Manager

INDUSTRY HAPPENINGS

The Omni Houston Hotel at Westside, known for delivering outstanding service in a beautiful setting for over thirty years, has ushered in 2011 by announcing the completion of a comprehensive lobby, bar and meeting room renovation.



With the luxury hotel's location in the heart of Houston's Energy Corridor, the renovation was designed to be reminiscent of a contemporary oil baron's estate with a rich gold and brown color palette.

The multi-million dollar project incorporated the renovation of 25,000 square feet of meeting space, including ballrooms and boardrooms, as well as the hotel's Black Gold Bar, where guests can enjoy time with friends and colleagues in a fun and casual saloon-style setting. In addition to new wall coverings, lighting, carpet and paint, the Omni Houston Hotel at Westside has added sumptuous new furniture and other appointments throughout the spacious atrium lobby, known for its beautiful waterscape which extends the picturesque two-acre lake outside into the hotel.

"We are especially proud of the job everyone involved with the project has done," said Judy Orlando, general manager of the Omni Houston Hotel at Westside. "The hotel's fresh, new look has been well received by both our long term guests as well as new visitors and meeting attendees. The results of this project lend even greater warmth, elegance and energy to our four diamond property."

Awards & Renovations

Faisal Kamal with Embassy Suites Houston - Energy Corridor had an outstanding 2010!



Faisal was 1 of the 6 GMs that was selected to join the Circle of Leadership Excellence group. Aimbridge Hospitality awarded him and his hotel with GM of the Year Award, President's Award for exceeding their Market Share Goal, Sales Team of the Year and Quality Excellence for Ranking 9 of 210. Faisal's hotel also received a Quality Award for being in the Top 10% for service and product from the Embassy Suites Brand. Congratulations to Faisal and his team; may they receive many more awards of excellence in the future!

The St. Regis Houston announces the completion of a total redesign of the property's Grand Ballroom, pre-function areas, adjacent meeting rooms as well as an expanded and electronically sophisticated executive board room, all located on the Mezzanine level of the hotel.

The project commenced December, 2010 with the redesigned space available at the beginning of May; a full 4 weeks ahead of original projections and perfectly timed to welcome executives in Houston to attend the Offshore Technology Conference. The completed spaces were designed and expanded to offer guests an interior landscape that is both flexible and elegant, providing a flawless backdrop for Houston's highest profile events, business as well as social.

The Ballroom classroom meeting capacity has been expanded to accommodate 200 delegates and is supported by 8 break-out rooms. The venue will accommodate with ease a formal seated dinner of up to 250 guests and cocktail receptions of 300 plus. There will be the continued ease of access afforded by the original property design, which supports a completely separate entrance for guests to access events and celebrations."



The Room Rate Conundrum: The Leap from Tactical to Strategic

By: Dr. Gabor Forgacs

We all make tactical room rate adjustments on a daily basis. We need higher occupancy, increased cash-flow, plus show the owners how hard we tried. We also must be sure these tactical decisions are in alignment with our strategic objectives. Actually, do we want to compete on room rates at all?

This is a possible scenario: "We decided to aggressively lower our room rates from \$179 to \$119 because occupancy was dipping under 60%. We offered the price incentive to stimulate demand. The result was discouraging: we gained some occupancy but our REVPAR took a nosedive and our hotel attracted a new clientele that wanted everything free: parking, WiFi access and buffet breakfast. These new guests ordered local take-out instead of eating at our restaurant. They also complained about anything possible, just to force an apology and a discount at checkout. Is this the new normal?"

The above is an imaginary scenario: it never happens at well-run hotels... Right?... Right. However, if it sounds vaguely familiar, read on. This article will deal with the most pertinent questions and will offer some perspective on our challenging times.



Why Can't We Improve Profits if Lower Room Rates Lead to Higher Occupancy?

It depends on how much we discount and what clientele we attract as a result. Let's look into the changes both from quantitative and qualitative perspectives.

Quantity of units sold. The simple answer for quantifiable changes in profit: it's negative. There are two key variables at play: rate and occupancy. It is very difficult to increase occupancy enough to generate so much more net room revenue (rate minus variable costs) that it covers the net revenue shortfall that results from lower rates. Our rate may drop, but the cleaning costs don't. If it would cost us e.g. \$18 variable cost (labor + laundry + supplies) per occupied room to clean it, and we were unhappy with 60% occupancy, the numbers reveal that an occupancy of 95.6% would be required just to break even, i.e. generate identical net room revenue, if our average rate is lowered from \$179 to \$119. Hotel revenue management text books can be consulted to find the simple formula that calculates identical net room revenue at various room rates. In the given scenario: $(179-18) / (119-18)$ multiplied by 60% equals 95.6%. It is up to our revenue manager to

consider if that high occupancy is realistic to achieve. The formula is good to run scenarios: if the average room rate would be \$129 then 87% occupancy would do, for same net room revenue. Sound research by Cornell University's Centre for Hospitality Research had conclusively shown we can expect on average a 1.3% rise in occupancy after each 10% room rate discount. If we can't improve the financial performance of our business, why would we expect that discounted rates lead to an increase in profit? The financial performance of a hotel will improve only if we are able to gain a significant, double digit jump in occupancy at slightly lower rates.

Quality of the clientele: Most of those guests who react for a discounted rate offer are typical bargain hunters. They are not brand-loyal but price-loyal, and they go where the sweetest deals are to be had. They select their hotel at their chosen destination based on room rates. If we lure them away from our competition on occasion, we may boost occupancy by stealing market share. When next time someone more desperate will undercut our rates, we know where these travelers will choose to stay. Unfortunately, there is no protection against undercutting. It can happen any day that a competitor is more aggressive than us. In other words: we can't build and retain market share and we can't hope to expand our customer base. The war cannot be won even if can win some pricing battles. Yes, we may attract a deal-hunter segment that is neither possible nor worthy retaining. Why are we so desperate to impress and attract these potential guests?

The Easy Way versus the Hard Way

How resource intensive can be changing room rates? Well, it depends on how many mouse clicks are required to change a BAR (Best Available Rate) from \$179 to \$119. That is the easy way. It is much harder to identify other ways of gaining a competitive advantage. We need to elevate our thinking from tactical level solutions to strategic thinking.

First we need to develop a solid understanding of our target market's needs, wants and preferences. Then we have to invest time and resources in finding relevant differentiation and communicate it to our guests. CRM (Customer Relationship Management) enters the picture: transactional information, customer history and customer intelligence can be tied together for maximizing the lifetime value of return guests. Bundling may be considered. Product development could start: an additional LCD television screen hidden behind the bathroom mirror? Docking station for iPods? In-room exercise machine set up on request? Introducing a new food service concept? A door lock that can be opened by a smart phone? The industry has a plethora of exciting new solutions to select from. Cost/benefit analysis, strategic decisions are the hard way.

Lastly, we have to tackle the hottest and fastest-paced strategic issue: distribution channel management. Which is the channel that the largest volume of our booking comes through? Channel costs and booking volume need to be analyzed. Do we need to develop a mobile friendly version of our internet presence? Are we going to harness the potential of the social media? Can we leverage our location to push quick-response digital coupons to potential guests within a perimeter and engage in location-based mobile marketing? There is so much more. It would be unfair to suggest that discounting room rates is the easy way of boosting occupancy for the lazy revenue manager. It needs to be pointed out however, unlike dropping room rates, the development of sustainable competitive advantages will be the result of hard work and they may not produce overnight results. *Room rates should be the last thing to touch.* We have worked too hard to be in the position of charging e.g. \$179 a room night. We have earned market acceptance and had built a clientele. We have an image and a reputation to manage. Should all these be thrown out the window just because we hit some turbulence? What if we discount PPV (pay-per-view) movies, parking fees and the WiFi access but hold our rate for our core product?

Room rates are too important to play a continuous game of pull/push with. Hotel brands that held their rates and didn't dilute their rate integrity were the first to lead ADR recovery after market slumps. Coming down with REVPAR is fast. Rebuilding it, after heavy discounting may take years and it will be uphill all the way.

2011 NCAA Final Four Recap

2011 NCAA® Men's Final Four® Fact Sheet



2011 NCAA Men's Final Four Games - Attendance

75,421 - Highest attended National Semifinal Games (previous record 72,456 in Detroit - 2009)
 70,367 – Third-Highest attended National Championship Game (record 72,922 in Detroit - 2009)
 145,747 - Highest total Final Four attendance (previous record 145,378 in Detroit - 2009)

2011 NCAA Men's Final Four Media

1,387 media members were credentialed for the 2011 NCAA Men's Final Four March Madness on Demand (MMOD): The MMOD digital service drew 52 million visits on all platforms from Selection Sunday through Monday night's championship, up 63 percent from a year ago. Unique broadband users were up 16 percent, and the amount of streaming video was up by 17 percent.

International: For the first time in tournament history, all 67 games were broadcast nationally through the NCAA's new agreement with Turner Sports and CBS. Beyond the national reach, games were broadcast internationally to 185 countries across the globe. These include Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea and Spain. In addition to its national and global telecast and online availability via March Madness on Demand, the 2011 NCAA Men's Final Four had the potential to be viewed by approximately one million U.S. Armed Forces, Department of Defense civilian employees and their families stationed overseas and aboard 140 US Navy ships at sea via the American Armed Forces Radio Network.

2011 NCAA Men's Final Four® Fan Events:

Bracket Town™ Refreshed by Coca-Cola Zero: Over 49,000 fans and community members attended the event over five days at the George R. Brown Convention Center.

The Big Dance™ Concert Series: Approximately 140,000 fans attended the series over three days. (The Big Dance attendance takes into account crowd turnover throughout the day and evening on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.)

Final Four Friday®: Over 16,000 fans attended the four teams' open practices and the Reese's College All-Star Game.

Final Four Dribble® presented by Lowes Senior Class Award: Approximately 4,000 youth participants, with additional parents and guardians, joining in dribbled from City Hall to the George R. Brown Convention Center on Sunday, April 3.

Tip-Off Tailgate presented by Infiniti®: Over 53,000 college hoops fans attended pre-game festivities outside Reliant Stadium including live music, food and beverages.

Community Outreach Activities:

Volunteer Participation: More than 2,000 volunteers were utilized for the 2011 NCAA Men's Final Four, giving over 50,000 hours of service.

Samaritan's Feet and Feed the Hungry Distributions: 2,011 pairs of shoes and 2,011 boxes of food were distributed among four locations.

NCAA and The Tyler Ugolyn Foundation: The NCAA spent \$100,000 for court refurbishment at the MD Anderson YMCA Gymnasium through support of NCAA licensees Wilson, Connor Sports Court, Daktronics, Molten, Sports Imports and Spalding. In partnership with the YMCA and the Tyler Ugolyn Foundation, the MD Anderson YMCA Gymnasium was the 68th court completed in the HLOC community initiative, "68 Courts in 68 Days."

NCAA® Men's Final Four® Career and Sports Forum: More than 361 high school and college students attended to learn about athletic and non-athletic sports career options.

USBWA Writing Workshop: Approximately 100 college and high school students participated in a sports writing workshop.

Middle School Madness: More than 4,500 students from the Houston Independent School District and the Alief Independent School District participated in this year's NCAA Middle School Madness program - a link between classroom learning and the NCAA that enhances student awareness of the opportunities available through athletics, provides inspiration through student-athlete role models and allows middle school students to participate in the local excitement surrounding the 2011 Final Four.

Final Four Youth Day: The NCAA Final Four Youth Day provided Houston area youth with the opportunity to embrace the values of education, sports and community involvement. The educational session, which focused on life skills, healthy living, character development, leadership, diversity and community service, involved 400 middle school students, while over 1,000 students took part in the afternoon's activities at Reliant Stadium.

Achievement Scholarship Program and Awards Luncheon: The NCAA, Office of Inclusion, supported the Houston Citizens Chamber of Commerce (HCCC) 35th Anniversary of the Educational Achievement Awards on Thursday, March 31. The HCCC Educational Achievement Scholarship program awarded \$1,000 scholarship(s) to graduating high school seniors from the Greater Houston Community based on competitive essays, academic performances, and personal interviews.

NCAA Final Four Turner/CBS Community Service Project: Fifteen NCAA media coordinators and Turner/CBS representatives teamed up to volunteer their time to refurbish a Houston basketball court, part of the "68 Courts in 68 Days" community outreach initiative.

NCAA Men's Final Four Stars 4 Tomorrow and Legacy Program:

The Legacy Program is an opportunity for Houston's underprivileged youth to graduate from high school, to engage in college readiness and to obtain financial support for college. The program follows 100 eighth grade students from four selected schools beginning in the Fall of 2011 through their high school graduation date in 2016. Each student that completes the program will be eligible to receive a \$500 college scholarship for each year they participate in the program. The program also provides after-school tutoring field trips for career exposure, career assessments, standardized test preparation and community service.

Powerade® NCAA Youth Clinics

University of Houston: 344 participants
 Texas Southern University: 144 participants
 Houston Baptist University: 159 participants
 John H. Reagan High School: 215 participants
 Bracket Town (Friday-Monday): 393 participants
 Special Olympics Clinics at Bracket Town refreshed by Coca-Cola Zero: 22 participants

Girl Scouts of America Participation (in conjunction with 100th anniversary) and Sam Houston Area Council Boy Scouts: Thursday, March 31– Seat Cushions Day 1 – 100 Boy and Girl Scouts/Rice University student-athletes

Friday, April 1 – Seat Cushions Day 2 – 180 Girl Scouts


NCAA Final Four and the NABC Ticket to Reading Rewards: The NCAA and the National Association of Basketball Coaches teamed up to encourage middle school students to read books outside of the classroom and obtain rewards through reading. In Houston, the Ticket to Reading program reached approximately 14,000 students within 12 Houston Independent School District schools.


Final Four Food Recovery Program: The NCAA the Houston Local Organizing Committee teamed up with eight Houston non-profit organizations to direct food from hospitality events held during the Final Four week to local charities, homeless shelters and other community organizations. Over 1,400 pounds of food was donated.


*"NCAA, Final Four, The Big Dance, Final Four Friday and Bracket Town are trademarks of the National Collegiate Athletic Association."
 Source: NCAA, Houston Local Organizing Committee, and IMG.*


Share Our Hospitality Month Recap May 2011


The First Annual Share Our Hospitality Month was a notable success!

 The Conrad Hilton College and Hilton Hotel at the University of Houston participated in the 5 mile March of Dimes, March for Babies.

 InterContinental Hotel donated time in the thrift ship at The Women's Home.

 Hotel Indigo Houston had an employee bake sale which raised money for the USO of Greater Houston.

 HLAGH Staff participated in a cutting party for Smocks for Life, which makes treatment smocks for breast cancer patients.


 Courtyard by Marriott Reliant/Medical Center and St. Regis Houston participated in the American Cancer Society Making Strides for Breast Cancer walk.





Hyatt Regency Houston had a great time partnering with the Star of Hope on Friday, May 27th. A mix of both managers and line associates made up the team of 23 Hyatt volunteers.





JW Marriott Houston's Management Team helped prepare approximately 8900 pounds of food at the Houston Food Bank's Keegan Center on Friday, May 6th. The meals went out to hungry seniors (Meals on Wheels), children (Kidz Cafe) and US vets in our community.


 Crowne Plaza Houston River Oaks and the Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites Medical Center as well as other IHG brands facilitated a fundraising auction for Give Kids the World charity.


 InterContinental Hotel participated in the Cystic Fibrosis event.


 Courtyard by Marriott Reliant/Medical Center and Residence Inn Reliant/Medical Center built a home for a deserving family affiliated with Rebuilding Together Houston.

 Hyatt Regency Houston partnered with Star of Hope for trash pickup and grass mowing.

 The Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites Medical Center volunteered every Tuesday at MD Anderson Cancer Center through Volunteer Services.

 InterContinental Hotel hosted a Mother's Day luncheon at a local shelter.

 The Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites Medical Center volunteered with His Grace Foundation, part of Texas Children's Hospital, by supplying items for their first furnished apartment that will house bone marrow transplant patient's families.

 Hyatt Regency Houston served in the kitchen and wrote messages of encouragement for Star of Hope patrons.



Strike Force, a team comprised of employees from Courtyard by Marriott Reliant/Medical Center and Residence Inn Reliant/Medical Center joined forces with Rebuilding Together Houston on Saturday, May 21st to build a home for a deserving Houston area family.

Think Breaking Up Is Hard To Do? Guests Don't! 10 Ways to Keep Your Facebook News Feed Alive

By: Amanda Dennis

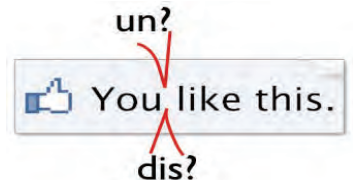


After resisting for months, you finally gave in to the pressure and set up a Facebook page for your hotel. Threw up a few photos, listed all of your promotions and, oh yeah, updated the status when you had a spare moment. You get a few "likes" right away and then they begin to multiply. Your status shows more "likes" every day. This wasn't so tough after all.

Suddenly, it comes out of nowhere. You're blindsided! OMG, your customers are breaking up with you! Some aggressively...they're literally going to your site and unliking you. Some passively...they're hiding your news feeds so they don't have to face you. And the rest....they're just not into you enough to bother one way or the other.

What happened? What did you do wrong? How do you get them back? If you lost them, will you lose others?

MarketingProf.com quotes a recent survey by ExactTarget and CoTweet¹ where 55% of Facebook users say they have "liked" a brand on Facebook and later "unliked" the brand. Why? Content frequency and quality are the top reasons. 63% say it's because of excessive postings; 38% say it's because the content became boring or repetitive. Let's put that in dating terms: you're suffocating, clingy, uninteresting and the thrill is gone.



First, we need to understand why you got "liked" in the first place. Think of it as the initial dating phase. They met you, liked what they saw and agreed to go out again. Next, scroll through your "likers" and omit your mother, father, siblings, cousins employees...you get the idea. Your edited list contains those who represent future revenue promise; the first step in a potentially long-term relationship. Now, how do you grow this list and, more importantly, what do they want from you? Need a little nudge? Here are 10 suggestions to consider:

- 1 Create a custom welcome page.** Let people know what they can expect by clicking on the "like" button. Making a good first impression is crucial to starting a new relationship or taking a relationship to the next level. It's no different here. A welcome page defines you.
- 2 Facebook is not an extension of your website.** They will be linked, of course. But this is entertainment, a place where you can have some fun with your customers. We want them to ooh and ah, laugh and *share*. Literally. One thing to remember, though. This is not your profile page; it's a business page. Balance the fun with professionalism. Don't say anything online that you wouldn't want broadcast on a lighted billboard with your name and face right next to it.
- 3 Offer one-of-a-kind promotions.** One reason followers keep business posts in their news feeds is because they're afraid they will miss something if they hide them. Posting your latest packages (especially if the packages are predictable and boring), offering a measly percentage off...they can get that anywhere. Be daring and take some cues from the retail sector. Right now, McDonald's is offering a free small coffee. What can you offer that is creative, interesting, desirable and maybe a little edgy?
- 4 Post regularly, but not too often.** We want to cultivate and grow our customer relationships, not drive them away from us. They like us but they may not love with us...yet. Facebook provides a channel to interact with customers in a less formal way, giving us a chance to build stronger brand loyalty. It is important to show personality while maintaining a certain level of professionalism. Respect your customers and don't get spam happy.
- 5 Engagement must be interesting, not boring or repetitive.** It is important to understand that effective social networking is customer-generated. Our job is to recognize the conversation points and to determine the best place for us to add our voice, almost like a guide. We may start the conversation by asking a question or making an observation, but the customer should be the most active participant. The more you know and understand the people in your social community, the more effectively you can communicate with them. Don't get discouraged if people don't respond right away. Based on several surveys, active participation comes from less than 10% of your followers.
- 6 Discover your influencers and reward them.** It's not the quantity of your followers; it's the quality. Stop thinking about it as the Amazing Race toward some arbitrary number. What is your goal in creating this community? Bottom line, we want ambassadors who like our product so much that they tell others, thereby creating demand. If you don't have influencers, create some using polls, contests, videos, and photographs.
- 7 Emphasize niche markets.** Use separate pages or tabs to get their attention. Family resort? What about a personalized "Mom" tab with mom's offering advice about the area, what to pack, etc. Your goal is to bring together people with similar interests and get them talking. Weddings? A personalized page dedicated to interaction with other brides may be just what you need to close the business. Golf resort? A tab featuring the resident pro offering advice, complete with instructional video, may be just the thing to spark interest and keep customers coming back for more.
- 8 Group business.** If the highest conversions come from third-party referrals, then group business is perfect for a Facebook business page. Better yet, what about a separate Facebook business page focused exclusively on groups and linked to your website? There is no better advertising than meeting planners and attendees raving about how much they liked meeting at your hotel.

Summer National Senior Games ~ June 16-30, 2011



The National Senior Games Association was founded in 1985 and is a non-profit member of the United States Olympic Committee dedicated to motivating senior men and women to lead a healthy lifestyle through the senior games movement. The NSGA is the organization that governs the Summer National Senior Games, the largest multi-sport event in the world for seniors, and other national senior athletic events.

The 2011 Summer National Senior Games will be held June 16-30th, 2011 in Houston at George R. Brown Convention Center, Reliant Park, University of Houston, Turner Stadium in Humble, and other Houston area venues. 10,000 athletes as well as an additional 20,000 family and friends are projected to attend.

Competition will take place in Archery, Badminton, Basketball, Bowling, Cycling, Golf, Horseshoes, Race Walk, Racquetball, Road Race, Shuffleboard, Softball, Swimming, Table Tennis, Tennis, Track & Field, Triathlon, and Volleyball.

For a complete list of all events and the entire schedule, please click <http://www.nsga.com/>.

International Housekeepers Week ~ September 11-17, 2011

International Housekeepers Week, celebrated during the second full week in September each year, recognizes the professionals who maintain a cleaner, safer, and healthier environment for us all each and every day. This year we will celebrate and honor housekeepers from Sunday, September 11th through Saturday, September 17th, 2011. Although this is the official week of celebration, you may celebrate with your facility's staff any time of year.



International Housekeepers Week has been celebrated around the world since 1981.

Please let HLAGH know how your hotel will be showing appreciation to your housekeeping staff. Will you be providing meals? How about gift cards or other tokens of gratitude? We will be sending ideas to your HR directors in the near future, and would appreciate your feedback so that we can distribute your ideas and our industry can spread the camaraderie!



The Hotel Front Desk Is a Distribution Channel

By: Doug Kennedy



As revenue managers work diligently these days to try to maximize profits during the economic recovery, there seems to be a disproportionate amount of efforts focused on the electronic distribution channels. As addressed in another of my recent articles, the savvy hotel marketers recognize the value of their voice distribution channels.

Yet there is still another distribution channel which is far too often overlooked: the hotel front desk.

At most properties the front desk team faces a myriad of other opportunities to increase sales and optimize profits every day. Depending on factors such as your property's destination, location, brand, and market segment, here are some situations your front desk salespeople might encounter daily, along with corresponding training techniques for review at your next departmental meeting.

- **Capturing more walk-in business.** Create a positive first impression by initiating contact and welcoming the guest when they enter the lobby. Rather than quoting only the lowest rate and sending them back out to the car to make an "either-or" decision, instead create a "which should I chose?" decision-making scenario by offering two or three room types and/or rate options. Reiterate benefits; embellish descriptions of features that appear to be especially relevant to the walk-in party. Offer to show a room where operationally feasible.
- **Securing "move-overs" from disgruntled guests currently staying at other hotels in the area.** Hotels located in dense markets might encounter "move-over" opportunities when guests of nearby properties stop by to inquire. Train your team to present your hotel's unique advantages and to avoid negative remarks about the competition. Rather than saying what the other hotel's shortcomings, focus on the advantages your property has to offer: "*What's unique about us is...*"
- **Upselling effectively during registration.** With so many guests booking either online or via third parties, the registration process might represent the best time of all to up-sell to higher-rated accommodations. After reassuring the guest that the option they booked is still a good choice, gauge the guest's interest with questions like: "*Did your travel agent have a chance to mention our concierge floor?*" or "*Are you familiar with our suites at all?*" Present the upgraded options as being a unique opportunity: "*We've had some of our executive king rooms open up this evening...*" Personalize the benefits: "*As a guest on level you would receive full access to...*" Consider displaying a slide show of pictures of upgraded accommodations on an I-Pad placed at the front desk.
- **Securing return reservations at departure.** Although many guests use express check-out, plenty of others still stop by to pick-up their zero-balance receipt. Make sure guests, especially corporate and business clientele, are offered the opportunity to rebook for their next trip upon departure. You'll not only be ensuring that your guests aren't tempted to check-out the competition, but you'll also potentially be eliminating distribution costs such as travel agency commissions and CRS fees, while along the way showing guests that you value their future business.
- **Maintaining rate "Fences" and eliminating "Rate Slippage" from guests who re-negotiate during registration, while in-house, or during check-out.** Many of today's savvy guests make it a standard practice to try to re-negotiate their rates upon arrival and/or during their stay. Make sure your front desk sales team is aware that most are just double-checking to make sure they have the best offer available. It is often helpful to gently remind them of the terms/conditions of their offer versus the lower-rate they are seeking: "*The advance purchase rate would have required full payment upon the time of booking, and unlike your reservation would not have been eligible for change or cancellation.*" It might also be appropriate to mention rate-tiers that are even higher than what they have committed to: "*Just to let you know the normal (standard) rate on this room is usually \$__X__, so the \$__Y__ rate you have confirmed is still a good value.*"
- **Using "Channel Conversion Techniques" to convert calls from "rate double-checkers" who have visited online travel agencies.** Many hotel prospects call directly to the front desk to make sure the rates they are seeing online are the best available. With most companies practicing rate parity across all distribution channels, more often than not the rate is in fact the same either way. Make sure your front desk team offers to secure the reservation for the caller right here, right now, versus directing them to book online after they hang up. Not only will you ensure that guests aren't lured away by other online offers, but you'll potentially be significantly cutting distribution costs, OTA commissions, and even CRS fees.
- **Capitalizing on "after-hours" leads for group and catering sales.** With the 24/7/365 work schedule many of us lead these days, it is not uncommon for the planners of business meetings and social events to place their initial call or walk-in inquiry after business hours or on weekends when the sales department is closed. Train your front desk team to properly field these calls by expressing interest, offering to answer any initial, basic questions and by offering the option of leaving a paper message versus a blind transfer into the sales department's voicemail. For walk-in inquires, make sure your front desk team is prepared with sales kits, brochures, and business cards of the sales director. Most importantly, make sure that everyone knows what not to say: "*You'll have to try tomorrow between 9am and 5pm when the sales department is open.*"
- **Discovering leads for new local corporate accounts from current in-house guests.** Especially for hotels located in or near corporate office parks, industrial complexes, and city-center locations, it is not unusual for guests to return monthly or even weekly. Over time the front desk team gets to know and recognize these guests. Train your team to pay close attention to the names of the companies your guests work for and to be on the lookout for those representing new corporations and organizations. By probing further to find out more about these guests and their companies, it is often possible to uncover leads for the local/corporate business.

By expanding your front desk training to address these sales and profit optimization opportunities, you will ensure that your team capitalizes on each and every chance to secure additional business and to maximize the margins.

Doug Kennedy, President: Kennedy Training Network

Website: www.kennedytrainingnetwork.com

Email: doug@kennedytrainingnetwork.com

Happy 4th of July!

FREEDOM OVER TEXAS CELEBRATES AMERICA'S BIRTHDAY



CITY OF HOUSTON'S OFFICIAL FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION TO LIGHT-UP DOWNTOWN SKYLINE

Mayor Annise D. Parker's official Fourth of July celebration, **Freedom Over Texas**, will set the stage for an extraordinary patriotic celebration filled with family fun and a spectacular fireworks show. The 25-year-old tradition and lively outdoor festival will feature star-spangled performances by country music artists **Jack Ingram**, **Chris Young** and **Rodney Atkins**. The crowning highlight of Freedom Over Texas, a fireworks show produced by Pyrotecnico, will light up Houston's downtown skyline while combining specially choreographed music with pyrotechnic artistry.

During **Freedom Over Texas** festivities, **KBR Liberty Park** will showcase military artifacts and vehicles including representation from all five military branches, and on-site recruiting. The **Bud Light Zone** will showcase its' Budweiser Beer Garden, the Bud Light MXT Vehicle and offer a prime view of the seventh annual *Bud Light Texas Volleyball Championship Series Finals*. More than 30,000 square feet of free educational programming and entertainment will appeal to children of all ages in the **Walmart All-American Kids Zone**.

Houston Area Land Rover Centres will have the latest and newest innovative vehicles from Land rover and Range Rover. In **Reliant Energy's Red, White and Green Scene**, families can learn how to reduce their carbon footprint and become energy efficient via various sustainability exhibits on display (recycling, green building, solar power, wind power, sustainable transportation and more). In the **Family Fitness Challenge Area** activities will be provided by all five of Houston's hometown professional sports teams including the Houston Dynamo, Houston Rockets, Houston Astros, Houston Aeros and Houston Texans.

Where:

Eleanor Tinsley Park @ Buffalo Bayou along Allen Parkway

FREE ADMISSION with a can of food benefitting the Houston Food Bank or \$8 per person (children under 2 free)

Schedule of Events: Monday, July 4, 2011 4:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

4:00 p.m. -- Gates open and festival activities begin

4:00 p.m. to 9:15 p.m. -- Continuous Entertainment on Stages

8:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. -- Featured Artists: Jack Ingram, Chris Young and Rodney Atkins

9:35 p.m. -- Fireworks extravaganza

10:00 p.m. -- Event closes

For more information visit: <http://www.houstontx.gov/july4/>

Join The Woodlands Convention & Visitors Bureau at the annual **Red, Hot & Blue Festival!**

The Festival is **FREE** and open to the public. It will be held at 2 locations – Town Green Park and Waterway Square – on Monday, July 4, 2011 from 6 pm to 10 pm.

The Festival will feature live music, face painting, strolling performers, games, hot dog and watermelon eating contests, vendor booths, concessions and much more! Also, be sure your kids enter the Little Firecracker Essay Contest to win great prizes for the summer.

For more information visit: <http://www.thewoodlandscvb.com/redhotblue/about.html>



Continued from Page 4: The Room Rate Conundrum: The Leap from Tactical to Strategic

By: Dr. Gabor Forgacs

Measure REVPAR or GOPPAR or ADR?

It depends on what we need to learn. Room rate is a crucial component in all measures that are worth tracking and benchmarking. Comparing our own REVPAR to past years can reveal top-line performance by indicating how well we have played the hand we were dealt. It is useful to look beyond it and see if REVPAR changes were driven by ADR or occupancy, so we can learn from our own successes or mistakes. A REVPAR penetration index within our own comp set can help us, or interested investors see how well we lived up to our business potential in comparison to our peers.

Many hotels are run by management contract. A REVPAR, however impressive may not be a sufficient measure for the owners because their interest is in bottom-line performance. That is the reason behind the growing popularity of GOPPAR. Cost efficient operators may be identified more accurately through GOPPAR, because REVPAR doesn't reflect cost containment.

High or Low Rates -- Guest Perceptions and Price Sensitivity

Businesses that sell tangible products have a chance to justify price adjustments upward or downward with changes that the buyer can touch and feel. More horsepower or an extra cup holder in a car; more gigabytes of memory for a computer; 15-ounce steak vs. 12 ounces and the customer will understand that fast. What about a room night at a hotel?



HOTEL LEXINGTON
LEXINGTON AVENUE AT 48TH STREET
NEW YORK CITY
CHAS. E. ROCHESTER, MANAGER

RATES:

FOR ONE PERSON,	\$3.00	3.50	4.00	5.00	
FOR TWO PERSONS, DOUBLE BED,	\$4.00	4.50	5.00	6.00	7.00
FOR TWO PERSONS, TWIN BEDS,	\$5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	

DIRECTED BY
NATIONAL HOTEL MANAGEMENT CO. INC.
RALPH HITZ, PRESIDENT

What if last week a hotel charged \$119 super saver rates and this week the room rate is back to \$179? The guest is greeted by the same doorman, checked in by the same GSA, sleeps in the same bed, flips through the same set of channels watching the same 42" LCD television screen? The guest will certainly understand the changes in supply and demand. But guests also like to know what they are paying for. They comparison-shop with the click of the mouse and are knowledgeable, wired and these days they are also value conscious.

They can tell apart what is low priced and what is cheap, as they have learned that a low price point may not necessarily be cheap at all. Even a \$50 rate may be overpriced if the room is not clean, the TV-remote's battery is dead and staff is unwelcoming. Guests may be able and willing to accept a higher price point for value drivers: a prime location, quality service, superb mattress and a clean, safe hotel. Room rates are important but not always the only value driver in the eye of many hotel guests.

The morale of the room rate conundrum is that if we choose to use our room rates as a strategic weapon, we can only fight problems that are room rate related. Cheaper room rates will not make a destination safer or turn tired attractions into world-class ones. Destination image problems cannot be cured by room rate discounts. Discounting a mediocre product, than heavily promoting it will successfully tell now the whole world how mediocre it is, even if we can temporarily steal some market share. Driving the guests' attention to room rates is a questionable strategy. We can do much better in the long run if we resist the temptation of fast and easy downward rate adjustments and try working harder but smarter.

Dr. Gabor Forgacs, Assistant Professor: Ted Rogers School of Hospitality and Tourism Management

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Email: gforagacs@ryerson.ca

Continued from Page 7: Think Breaking Up Is Hard To Do? Guests Don't! 10 Ways to Keep Your Facebook News Feed Alive

By: Amanda Dennis

9 Ask them to like you. A call to action is essential. The Facebook icon should be everywhere: your website, your signature line, anywhere your hotel is presented electronically.



10 Help is not a dirty word. If Facebook is the social "face" of your hotel, you must invest time and, yes, a little money into making it work for you. Don't get me wrong...I'm an avid believer in handling social networking on site and not out-sourcing this important marketing channel. On the other hand, outsourcing the initial set-up is a wise investment unless you already have an expert on staff. Call on someone who has experience handling this type of project and work alongside them to learn how to use your Facebook pages efficiently and effectively. Sort of like a driver's education course. You take a class to understand the rules, test drive to get the feel of it and then it's all up to you. Your investment can generally be recouped within a few months.

I'm going to go out on a limb here and say that if you are setting up a Facebook business page only in order to book a room, then you are going to be disappointed. The transaction itself is a by-product of effective community engagement. Be very clear about your goals, expectations and responsibilities. How do you know what's working and what isn't? Facebook Insights and Google Analytics both provide reports that help guide you. Keep asking questions, monitoring engagement, testing and filtering judiciously. Listen to Seth Godin, "Conversations among the members of your marketplace happen whether you like it or not. Good marketing encourages the right sort of conversations." And the right sort of conversation forms a path leading to revenue enrichment.

Amanda Dennis, Founder: Amanda J. Dennis & Associates

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Hotel & Lodging Association of Greater Houston ~ Summer 2011

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Hospitality On Parade ~ November 18, 2011

The Seventh Annual Hospitality On Parade is set for November 18th! This year the event will take place at the InterContinental Hotel. As always, this is your night to celebrate our industry. We ask that you promote this evening of enjoyment and camaraderie to all of your staff. This is a great night and is meant to be "our" party of hospitality, so come and enjoy! Nominations will be sent to all members in early August, so start thinking about what makes your employees special and who goes above and beyond their responsibilities.

hospitality on parade awards gala

Enjoy an evening of fun and camaraderie with fellow hoteliers as well as recognize and award the outstanding men and women whose hard work and dedication to excellence have made a difference in the Houston Area hotel community!

Friday, November 18, 2011
InterContinental Houston Near The Galleria
Reception & Silent Auction ~ 6:00 pm
Dinner, Entertainment & Dancing ~ 7:30 pm
Black Tie Optional

Yes, I would like to attend the Hospitality On Parade Awards Gala!

- Please reserve ___ tables of 10 at \$1,250 per table.
Please reserve ___ corporate tables of 10 at \$2,500 per table.
Please reserve ___ places at \$125 per person.
Please reserve ___ tables of 10 at \$1,000 per table. (Special price available until 7/22/2011)

Sorry I can not attend, but enclosed is my contribution to support the H&LAGH and the Conrad N. Hilton College in the amount of \$ _____

COMPANY NAME _____

CONTACT NAME _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

OFFICE PHONE _____ EMAIL ADDRESS _____

Checks Should Be Made Payable To: Hotel & Lodging Association of Greater Houston

Invoice my Company (HLAGH Members Only)

The following credit cards are accepted: AMEX VISA MasterCard

Check box if you would like to pay in monthly installments: (HLAGH will contact you with details)

Credit Card # _____ Expiration Date _____

Signature _____

Please Send Your Completed RSVP to:
Hotel & Lodging Association of Greater Houston
P.O. Box 1043, Houston, Texas, 77251-1043
director@houstonhotels.org
Fax: 713-223-0760
Phone: 713-437-5250



Hospitality on Parade is a co-production of H&LAGH and Conrad N. Hilton College



UPCOMING 2011 HLAGH EVENTS

Mark your calendars with the following HLAGH events. For more information, please contact us at 713-437-5250 or via email at Director@HoustonHotels.org. Please note dates subject to change.

Thursday, July 21, 2011

HLAGH Membership Luncheon
GHCVB Update with Greg Ortale
The St. Regis Houston

Thursday, August 18, 2011

HLAGH Membership Luncheon
Location TBD

Thursday, September 15, 2011

HLAGH Membership Luncheon
2011 PKF Trends Report with Randy McCaslin
Location TBD

October 2011

THLA/AAHOA/HLAGH Joint Trade Show
Location TBD

Wednesday, October 19, 2011

HLAGH Membership Luncheon
Hall of Honor Featuring Randy Smith, Smith Travel Research CEO
Conrad N. Hilton, University of Houston

Friday, November 18, 2011

Bowling Mixer
300 Houston
925 Bunker Hill Road, Houston, TX 77024

Fall 2011

Camp Hospitality
Various Houston Area Hotels

Friday, November 18, 2011

Hospitality On Parade
InterContinental Hotel

December 2011

Bike Building Competition
Location TBD