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See p.45



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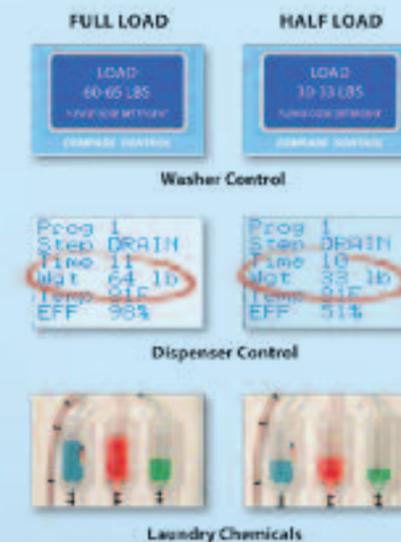
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The Connected Customer

According to the latest results from the 2014 HAC Travel Intentions Survey, more Canadian travellers are looking to the web and social media for travel information. Smartphone use has increased 11 per cent over last year bringing total usage to 70 per cent of travellers, although there has been no change from last year in the 14 per cent of smartphone users who book hotels with their devices.

The annual survey, presented at the HAC Conference recently held in Toronto, found almost a quarter of business travellers now use social media to help make their hotel selections. Online testimonials have the most impact on accommodation selection (58 per cent). Ratings on Internet booking services and other sites have a great deal of influence on where leisure travellers choose to stay (72 per cent). Fifty-one per cent of leisure travellers in the 18-24 year old category and 34 per cent of those in the 25-34 year old category are most influenced by social media, while leisure travellers in the 55+ category are the least influenced.

Of course, this begs the question what are hoteliers doing to ramp up their on-line marketing. At the HAC Conference Google Canada's Eric Morris addressed this question in his look at best practices in hotel marketing. Citing specific examples, Morris reviewed issues such as how fast websites are and how they present on mobile. More importantly, he addressed the need today to have a dedicated digital staff and a culture of digital experimentation to help drive the best online results—something that Google can assist with its variety of analytic services. Content, he said, needs to be tested and measured at all times as does the profitability of on-line marketing efforts.

In this issue, Ken Kwong, our social media commentator, looks at some of the best social media campaigns by hoteliers and some of the biggest slip-ups. With this medium becoming more and more important as an avenue for driving business, hoteliers must step up to the plate—and as you will see many have already done so.

Frank Yeo, Publisher

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business NEWS

Patricia McClintok & Associés Inc. Celebrates 30 Years Working with the Hospitality Industry



Thirty years ago Patricia McClintock started her hospitality design firm in Montreal, QC. She had just completed a large and major new Meridien Hotel property in San Francisco and felt that with the experience and knowledge acquired, it was time to establish her own business in the town she had just moved to.

Thirty years later, the firm is still working on all types of hospitality projects: urban and resort projects, boutique and branded properties and with a number of the well known brands. In all those years, the constant was to offer to all its clients the best services with constant attention to

details, to insure that the projects delivered met the pre-established budgets and also to assure that the projects were implemented within the pre-established schedules.

At Patricia McClintok & Associés inc. they are thankful to have worked in an interesting and constantly evolving industry, and to have met such incredibly visionary people. The firm and its team are looking forward to many more years of collaborative work with younger generations.

Ramada Edmonton Hotel and Conference Centre Awarded Best Dinner 2013 by La Chaîne des Rôtisseurs

Ramada Edmonton Hotel and Conference Centre's Executive Chef Harjeet Mehdwan and the hotel team have been awarded the Best Dinner 2013 Award by La Chaîne des Rôtisseurs Edmonton.

Chef Mahdwan and the hotel hosted members of La Chaîne at a special dinner in June 2013, at which they were asked to score the food and wine pairing selection. The result was an impressive average food score of 8.56, one of the highest scores ever given for the Best Dinner Award. The evening's service, ambience and décor also received excellent feedback.

"I've wanted to host a dinner for La Chaîne ever since I became a member of the chapter in 2011, and winning the award means being recognized by some of the region's best professionals in food and fine dining," says Chef Mehdwan. "The award acknowledges our team's dedication to provide our guests with spectacular services and really helps put Ramada Edmonton on the region's fine dining map."

Chef Mahdwan, the culinary team and the hotel staff trained for nearly two months to ensure a flawless execution of the dinner event. The team ran several mock training sessions from setting the tables, wine pouring to tableside services. The Chef personally oversaw every detail of the dinner, including making sure the dining room décor reflected colours of La Chaîne's brand.



eRevMax Adds Metasearch Channels in its Distribution Offerings

Leading hotel channel management and connectivity solution provider eRevMax has announced its partnership with World Independent Hotel Promotion (WIHP) to offer meta-search management capabilities. Through this partnership, hotel customers of eRevMax's RateTiger and Connect solutions can push real time rates and availabilities to Google Hotel Finder, TripAdvisor, Trivago, Kayak and WeGo to drive more booking traffic directly to their own booking engine.

eRevMax now provides XML interface connectivity to all channel classes (OTAs, Wholesalers, Tour Operators, Social Media, Metasearch sites) from a single platform and allow hoteliers to bid for higher positions in the meta-search channels and increase the visibility of the rates available on the hotels' website. WIHP will also provide hotels with a managed service to execute the Bid Management process from a digital marketing perspective based upon a monthly or daily advertising budget.

This new offering will help hotels to increase bookings and revenue for their property, by driving qualified leads from metasearch sites to their own website. This will help them in reducing OTA commissions and improve overall profitability. The advanced tracking available with the service will help hotels to know the exact return on investment for each metasearch channel they are advertising on. They will have access to custom-built hotel analytics platform, where they can monitor the performance of their campaign and most importantly, see the revenue generated by the campaign.

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business NEWS

Global Hotel Prices Rise for the Fourth Year Running

The average price of a hotel room around the world rose three per cent during 2013, according to the latest Hotels.com™ Hotel Price Index™ (HPI™). This means there have now been four years of steady rises in hotel prices since the substantial falls during the financial collapse of 2008/9.

Set at 100 in 2004, the HPI tracks real prices that hotel guests actually paid for their accommodation around the world. The HPI for 2013 stands at 110, seven points lower than its peak in 2007 despite the recent growth, and just ten points higher than at its launch.

Higher occupancy levels recorded in many areas helped the North American HPI climb three per cent, matching the global rise.

Days Inns - Canada Redefines Business Travel

Capitalizing on an intriguing insight into business travel, Days Inns - Canada is rolling out a multifaceted tongue-in-cheek campaign throughout 2014, tapping into the growing market of the millennial business traveller.



Business travellers sometimes enjoy tacking on a little leisure time to a planned business trip. However, this isn't the only benefit enjoyed by time-strapped, family-focused business travellers. Days Inns - Canada tasked creative shop Giants & Gentlemen to create a campaign that would stand out and resonate with today's business travellers. Using

their proprietary process of sourcing insights, Outthinking™, it was discovered that a business trip in and of itself is sometimes considered a bit of a vacation.

"Our research revealed it's those moments away from the strains of everyday life that a business trip affords you, a pleasure that is quietly treasured," said Alanna Nathanson, partner & creative director, Giants & Gentlemen. "Like eating Pad Thai while watching your favourite television show or a great night's sleep, the kind you had before kids."

Based on this insight, Giants & Gentlemen created a commercial that highlights the unspoken perk of business travel. BIZCATION™: the simple act of relaxing in the quiet solitude of a peaceful hotel room, able to watch a favourite television show with full control of the remote while enjoying a great take-out dinner from the restaurant of your choice at a time that's best for you.



Electrolux Expands North American Headquarters in Charlotte, North Carolina

Electrolux will invest \$85 million in a 20-year lease agreement, as part of the development of a second building adjacent to its existing headquarters.

The new six-floor, 375,000-square-foot building featuring LEED certification and solar panels is needed to meet Electrolux's three-year plan to hire 810 new employees. The jobs are in the areas of research and development, marketing, design, engineering, supply chain, finance, IT and executive management.



"We are excited to see Electrolux expanding as Electrolux Professional and Wascomat laundry equipment brands continue to rapidly gain market share in North America," states Neal Milch, Laundrylux CEO. "Electrolux is a global leader in sustainability and innovation, and we are proud to have our distributors come to Electrolux North America's world-class facility for hands-on product training. This expansion further illustrates the company's commitment to its customers and partners."

Choice Hotels International Inks Partnership with Maplewood Hotels & Resorts

Choice Hotels International, Inc. has announced a partnership with Maplewood Hotels & Resorts to develop new Cambria Suites properties in Canada. Maplewood is a joint venture between Driftwood Hospitality Management and Pacrim Hospitality Services Inc.

"The lodging sector in Canada is experiencing momentous growth, making it the ideal market to bring the Cambria Suites brand to key locations," said Carlos Rodriguez, Drift-



wood's executive vice-president. "Through our strategic partnership with Pacrim, Maplewood is perfectly poised to introduce Cambria Suites to today's Canadian traveller in key urban markets."

"Choice Hotels is excited to share the Cambria Suites experience with Canadian travellers. The brand continues tremendous growth in top-tier, key markets and Canada is an ideal location," said Michael Murphy, senior vice-president, upscale brands, Choice Hotels International. "The unique blend of style, smart design and sophisticated technology that is the Cambria Suites experience is sure to resonate well within this market."

"Pacrim has been a major hotel developer in Canada since the mid-1990s, and we are looking forward to developing Cambria Suites across Canada. Our joint venture in Maplewood Hotels and Resorts with Driftwood Hospitality Management provides outstanding opportunity to enhance our portfolio through new build opportunities in Canada, the U.S. and beyond," said Glenn Squires, CEO of Pacrim. "We expect to have a minimum of five Cambria Suites Hotels under construction in 2014 with openings to occur starting in Spring of 2015."

Designed as a lifestyle hotel brand, all Cambria Suites properties are new-construction and feature a larger lobby to give guests a more social atmosphere; all-suite rooms that are larger than standard hotel rooms and include separate living, working and sleeping space; and the latest Medi-aHub technology

Certified Hotel General Manager (CHGM) is the First Canadian-Made Credential for Accommodations Administrators



A new, Canadian credential is now available for hotel administrators through emerit. Developed and validated by representatives of over one hundred accommodations properties from across Canada, the Certified Hotel General Manager (CHGM) designation is awarded to candidates who successfully complete the emerit Hotel General Manager certification program.

Based on industry validated National Occupational Standards for Hotel General Manager, emerit Professional Certification and Credentials are:

- **Canadian-made and -managed;**
- **Competency-based, requiring demonstration of skills required in the occupation;**
- **Developed by managers, administrators, and educators in the hospitality industry;**
- **Focused on recognizing industry experience and expertise;**
- **Recognized globally for their development process and rigor of assessment.**

Professional Certification for Hotel General Manager, which leads to the CHGM designation, is now available for purchase at emerit.ca. There are three components of the certification process: a proctored, multiple choice exam; a performance evaluation, which consists of a structured interview; and a work history verification to ensure that experience requirements are met.

Atlic to Manage Homewood Suites by Hilton Inn Winnipeg

Atlic Hotels will be managing the Homewood Suites by Hilton Winnipeg Airport - Polo Park. The property, owned by MLS Management, marks the 1st Homewood Suites in Manitoba and the 12th Homewood Suites in Canada. Guy Hamilton, an industry veteran with over 25 years of hotel industry experience, has been appointed general manager. "We are delighted to work with MLS Management Ltd. and to partner once again with the Hilton family of hotels," said Philippe Gadbois, senior vice-president operations, Atlic Hotels. "Our dependable management is a solid match for the reputable Homewood Suites brand and we look forward to servicing a larger portion of the Winnipeg market," he added. The four-storey hotel offers 113 studio and one bedroom suites. Each guest room comes equipped with separate living area, thoughtfully designed work spaces and flat screen TVs. Full kitchen facilities round out each suite with a two-burner stove, full-size refrigerator, dishwasher, microwave and utensils so that guests can prepare and enjoy meals as though they are in their home kitchen.



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Carrier Joins Colliers

Jessi Carrier has joined Colliers International Hotels as Associate Vice-President

He will be based in the Montreal office and work closely with the national hotel team.

Carrier brings a unique dimension to the Colliers Canadian Hotel Practice Group with his comprehensive background in several investment disciplines, in particular hotels, restaurants and related industries. He most recently worked with an investment banking firm. Prior to that, he was with GE Capital for seven years as a senior account manager responsible for mortgage and asset-based lending specializing in the hotel and restaurant industries, where he sourced and completed several high-profile transactions.



business NEWS

HLT Advisory Inc. Reveals Results from Canadian Tourism Industry Survey

Canada's tourism operators feel good about 2014, but are less certain through the end of the decade as the industry faces challenges that could affect travel patterns around the world.

A survey by HLT Advisory prepared in advance of the Canadian Tourism Marketing Summit Feb. 12-13 found that two-thirds of tourism businesses in the country were "very optimistic or optimistic" about the industry's prospects this year compared to the last several years.

Their opinions are rooted in reality: the more than 600 respondents represent a cross-section of the country's tourism industry including destination marketing organizations, attractions, lodging providers, those who put together festivals and events, transportation and service companies and other industry suppliers.

The industry is a bellwether for the broader economy, generating \$81.7-billion and employing more than 600,000 Canadians from coast-to-coast. The Conference Board of Canada recently underscored its importance, pointing out that travel and tourism make a bigger contribution to gross domestic product than agriculture, fishing and hunting combined.

While a good year would be a boost to the Canadian economy, HLT Advisory's Managing Director, Lyle Hall, said external factors were largely responsible for the optimism. He also expressed concern over a reliance on a lower Canadian dollar as a strategy to help the industry.

"Much of the optimism seems to stem from a strengthening U.S. and world economy, which is good news for both leisure and group/convention travel," he said. "The unnerving aspect of the survey results was not so much the repeat-

ed concerns over cost, particularly air travel, but the belief that a weaker Canadian dollar might alleviate this problem.

I would have thought we'd learned by now that we can't discount ourselves to prosperity."

Indeed, the optimism is built on a shaky foundation. When asked to extend their forecast through to 2020, just over half of the respondents expressed optimism.

Their main concerns centred around the cost of airfare, inadequate funding for various public-sector entities that help boost the industry and a concern that too many organizations might be involved in marketing structure ... taking away from funds needed for in-marketing promotion.

More than one quarter of the respondents believe Canada could get back to the levels of international visitation last seen in 2000 by 2017 (19.6 million international visitors), a target discussed in the 2013 Canadian Tourism annual report.

"The target we identified for 2017 is aggressive but we need to focus on something meaningful," Hall said. "It's not as simple as saying there needs to be more money for marketing. We need to be smarter about how and where we spend it, as well as making sure we minimize duplication and waste."



Choice Hotels Canada Announces 2014 Hospitality Award Recipients

Chosen from more than 300 Choice Hotels Canada properties, the recipients of the 2014 Hospitality Award make up the top 10 per cent of performers. With two categories – Platinum and Gold – the 32 honourees included 11 Platinum recipients, putting them in the top three per cent. The remaining 21 received Gold.

"The franchisees honoured this year should be very proud," says Tim Oldfield, managing director, Choice Hotels Canada. "They've shown tremendous leadership that has taken guest service to the next level, garnering standout reviews and recommendations any hotel would be proud to have."



In order to qualify for a Platinum or Gold award, properties must excel in a variety of categories such as guest surveys, independent quality reviews and low guest complaint scores. The detailed list of 2014 recipients is below.

2014 Platinum Hospitality Award Recipients - Comfort

Comfort Inn & Suites, Airdrie, Alberta
 Comfort Hotel Bayer's Lake, Halifax, Nova Scotia
 Ascend Hotel Collection
 Chateau Saint John Hotel & Suites, an Ascend Collection hotel, Saint John, New Brunswick

2014 Platinum Hospitality Award Recipients - EconoLodge

EconoLodge Montmorency Falls, Boischatel, Québec
 EconoLodge, Winnipeg, Manitoba

2014 Gold Hospitality Award Recipients - Comfort

Comfort Inn & Suites, Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan
 Comfort Inn, Halifax, Nova Scotia
 Comfort Inn, New Glasgow, Nova Scotia
 Comfort Inn, Brockville, Ontario
 Comfort Inn, Chatham, Ontario
 Comfort Inn South, Winnipeg, Manitoba
 Comfort Inn Downtown, Vancouver, British Columbia
 Comfort Inn & Suites, Lévis, Québec
 Comfort Inn & Suites, Salmon Arm, British Columbia

2014 Gold Hospitality Award Recipients - Quality

Quality Inn Northern Grand, Fort St John, British Columbia
 Quality Suites, Drummondville, Québec
 Quality Inn & Suites, Val d'Or, Québec
 Quality Inn & Suites, Victoriaville, Québec
 Quality Inn & Suites, Petawawa, Ontario

2014 Gold Hospitality Award Recipients - MainStay Suites

MainStay Suites, Winnipeg, Manitoba

2014 Gold Hospitality Award Recipients - Quality

Quality Hotel & Suites, Woodstock, Ontario
 Quality Suites, Oakville, Ontario
 Quality Inn & Suites, Matane, Québec
 Quality Hotel & Suites, Langley, British Columbia
 Quality Inn & Suites, Lévis, Québec
 Quality Hotel, Burlington, Ontario

2014 Gold Hospitality Award Recipients - Comfort Suites

Comfort Suites, Kelowna, British Columbia
 Comfort Suites & Conference Centre, Sault Ste Marie, Ontario

2014 Gold Hospitality Award Recipients - Rodeway Inn

Rodeway Inn Fallsview, Niagara Falls, Ontario

2014 Gold Hospitality Award Recipients - Econo Lodge

Econo Lodge, Forestville, Quebec
 Econo Lodge, St-Apollinaire, Quebec
 Econo Lodge, New Liskeard, Ontario



SilverBirch Hotels & Resorts Named One of the Achievers 50 Most-Engaged Workplaces

SilverBirch Hotels & Resorts has been named one of the 50 Most-Engaged Workplace in Canada by Achievers. This annual award recognizes top employers that display leadership and innovation in engaging their workplaces.

SilverBirch Hotels & Resorts currently owns and operates over 20 properties across Canada, employing over 3,000 employees. The company prides itself on a performance-driven culture where employees are engaged in their careers and enabled by supporting systems and processes.

"We make significant investments in the communities where we build and operate hotels. Over time the largest single investment we make is in our people. The most important asset we have in the company is our engaged workforce," says Steve Giblin, president & chief executive officer, SilverBirch Hotels & Resorts.

"We are honoured to be recognized as one of Achievers 50 Most-Engaged Workplaces in Canada," says Christine Maassen, senior vice-president, human resources, SilverBirch Hotels & Resorts. "We genuinely believe that keeping our people engaged is essential to our ability to continue delivering against our strategic goals. We therefore strive to create a healthy and engaging workplace that is built upon open communications, a supportive management team and respect for diversity. We invest in the professional and personal growth of our employees, which ultimately enables them to deliver exceptional hotel experiences for our guests. The award tells us that we are on the right path."



Correction Notice

In the last issue of *Western Hotelier* featuring the "Western Buyers Guide" the website listing for Procter and Gamble Professional was incorrect.

Listed in the guide as "www.pgpro.com" the correct listing should be "www.pgpro.ca". We apologize for the error.

Rick Antonson recipient of Skål International Vancouver's 2013 Bill Rowe Memorial Tourism Award

Rick Antonson was awarded Skål International Vancouver's 2013 Bill Rowe Memorial Tourism Award for his role in contributing to the success and growth of tourism in Vancouver and British Columbia.

Upon receiving the award, Rick exclaimed, "It's been a wonderful ride. You all mean a lot to me. To be seen as worthy of recognition from your peers... it doesn't get any better."

Antonson was appointed President & CEO of Tourism Vancouver in June 1993. Tourism Vancouver is a 1,000 member organization whose vision is to be the global leader in destination marketing, sales, management, and visitor experiences.



THERE'S STRENGTH IN NUMBERS*

Rooms:	533,000
Properties:	6,600
Years:	70
Countries:	30+
Potential:	Unlimited

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*Source: Internal data as of 09/30/12. Data reflects open and under development properties worldwide.
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business NEWS

Innvue Leads Canalta Hotels into the Age of Digital Marketing

Innvue, Canada's pioneer in HD entertainment and digital marketing solutions for the hospitality industry, signed its biggest-ever contract earlier this month with Canalta Hotels for equipment sales and client application development.

Canalta Hotels, which owns and operates 38 hotels in Alberta and Saskatchewan, chose Innvue's patented technology for the amazing potential it offers for additional entertainment and in-room information revenue: "We chose Innvue's marketing and in-room entertainment platform to improve and standardize the branding and entertainment experience across all of our properties. The ability to inform, entertain, and manage content remotely from our head office is a powerful and efficient tool. We want to offer our guests an experience that is as good, or better than what they get at home, and our partnership with Innvue should help us to achieve that," said Brooke Christianson, vice-president of Canalta.

INNVUE 

Au-delà de l'entertainment.
Beyond Entertainment.

"This contract represents nearly \$1 million in equipment sales and more than double that in recurring application revenue. In addition to just our HD entertainment offer, Canalta Hotels sees our platform as an opportunity to become, within the next five years, a paper-free hotel chain able to remotely manage its brand image with guests consistently throughout its network," notes Vincent Beaudet, vice-president, sales and development at Innvue.

Innvue revolutionized the hospitality industry several years ago with the launch of Odyssey, a patented platform that allows hotels to interact constantly with guests and generate additional room revenue via the television in every room.



DoubleTree by Hilton Opens in West Edmonton

The first DoubleTree by Hilton hotel to debut in Alberta, Canada, has opened in West Edmonton. This 238-room hotel features a contemporary design that celebrates the region's natural canvas juxtaposed with the city's urban edge. The hotel opens to business and leisure travellers with its state-of-the-art SilverBirch Conference Centre, offering 38,000 square feet of flexible meeting space, and on-site restaurants to suit every palate with global fare enhanced by locally-influenced ingredients.



Attention Hotel Operators:

Do you have an employee that goes above and beyond the call of duty?

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business NEWS

The Refinishing Touch Analyzes Furniture Asset Management Trends from 2011-2013 and Prepares for a Strong 2014



The Refinishing Touch has released a three-year snapshot of furniture asset management and refinishing trends from 2011 to 2013 as it wraps up a strong 2013 and prepares for growth in 2014. The Refinishing Touch is a world leader in on-site environmentally safe and sustainable furniture asset management services that has provided services to more than 22,000 public and private organizations across the government, hospitality and university sectors.

Mario Insenga, founder and president of The Refinishing Touch, said: "Our proximity to brands and institutions through many completed refinishing, upholstery and remanufacturing projects and a broad client base gives us the opportunity to analyze furniture asset management trends - and to ensure we maintain a strong vision as we head into 2014 and our 37th year in business."

Key trends from January 2011-2013 that emerged from data analyzed by The Refinishing Touch, which included thousands of individual standard and color changing refinishing, upholstery and remodification projects for an estimated 30,000 rooms and more than 165,600 single pieces of furniture, include:

- A significant reduction in landfill waste and carbon emissions due to an increased investment in refinishing services. An estimated 9,200 trees saved by refinishing existing furniture within the three years, and 99 per cent carbon footprint reduction
- A 35 per cent increase in refinishing-only projects from 2011 to 2013 across hospitality, education and government clients, resulting in an average cost savings of 80% compared to the cost of acquiring new furniture
- A nearly 33 per cent increase in large-scale refinishing projects from 2011 to 2013, reflecting signs of positive growth in the hospitality industry following the industry's downturn in 2011-2012
- An increase in demand for color-change services. This increase highlights trends within the hospitality, university and government industries of embracing a more modern feel within facilities by completing
- An increase in upholstery projects by 24 per cent in 2013 compared to 2011. This steady increase mirrors the demand for practical and elegant furniture upholstery and the growing breadth of The Refinishing Touch's upholstery services and the materials available via its Touch Textiles™ division; a nationwide fabrics distributor that offers a complete line of functional, durable and decorative quality fabrics
- A steep decline in armoire modification projects by 67 per cent in 2013 compared to 2011, reflecting the completion of modification projects as hotels have adopted flat-screen televisions

Alberta Hotel and Lodging Association Announces 2014 Employer of Choice Recipients

The Alberta Hotel & Lodging Association has announced the recipients of the 2014 Employer of Choice (EoC) designation. This year 87 properties have achieved the standards to receive this coveted award, an increase from 73 in 2013. This demonstrates the growing efforts of hotels and motels to appeal to staff and guests alike.



Leading human resource practices, which include strong selection and recruitment procedures, investment in employee development, and direct and indirect employee benefits, are more important than ever given the tight supply of labour in Alberta. Recent figures from Statistics Canada list the unemployment rate for Alberta in January 2014 as 4.6 per cent, significantly lower than the seven per cent national average. The shortage of individuals to work in food and beverage, housekeeping and front desk positions has created significant challenges for hotel and motel owners in communities around Alberta.

"Staff who understand the importance of their work and feel valued will contribute to creating a culture that supports a positive guest experience in offering our customers a satisfied stay," says Perry Batke, general manager of the Best Western Plus Denham Inn in Leduc. "As an industry, we need to do our part to show that we offer meaningful and satisfying careers," Batke continues, "the Employer of Choice designation validates those hotels and motels that are making positive efforts to do so."

The Employer of Choice designation was created to raise the standard of human resource practices in Alberta's hospitality industry. The award, which has been presented by the AHLA since 2008, is based on a comprehensive audit of participating employers' HR practices, including staffing, compensation and workplace health and safety. Participating properties must also engage in an online Employee Opinion Survey that measures employees' understanding of a variety of the property's human resource policies.



The Employer of Choice designation was created to raise the standard of human resource practices in Alberta's hospitality industry.

Atlific Hotels & Temple Hotels Inc. Donate Robert Leoppky Bursaries

Atlific Hotels & Temple Hotels Inc. has created the Robert Leoppky Bursary which will award four Selkirk College Resort & Hotel Management Program students \$2,500 each.

Leoppky passed away at the age of 59 last March after a brave battle with cancer. His career encompassed 40 years in the hotel industry and he was Atlific's vice-president operations, overseeing operations in Western Canada.



"Atlific is proud to extend Bob's legacy by offering students the opportunity to follow in his footsteps with these four bursaries," said Robert Chartrand, executive vice-president, Atlific Hotels. "His contributions

to the hospitality industry were exemplary and this was the perfect opportunity to give back to the community. The Robert Leoppky Bursary will ensure that his legacy lives on for future generations."

Atlific Hotels is one of the leading hotel management companies in Canada, operating more than 55 hotels with offices in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. The company has 13 hotels in British Columbia including the Victoria Marriott Inner Harbour and the Vancouver Island Conference Centre in Nanaimo.

Temple Hotels Inc. is a publicly listed company trading on the Toronto Stock Exchange and owns a growing portfolio of 26 hotel properties (3,671 rooms) primarily in Western Canada. Arni Thorsteinson, chief executive officer of Temple Hotels and we are proud and honoured to be a part of the Robert Leoppky Bursary."

With more than 50 years of experience managing well known Canadian hotels, resorts and extended stay properties, Atlific was ranked by Hotelier Magazine as one of the country's top-five performing hotel management companies in 2012.

Selkirk College is excited to partner with an industry leader and proud to help honour Leoppky's contribution to the hospitality industry.

The Selkirk College Resort & Hotel Management is a two-year program based out of the Tenth Street Campus in Nelson. Students gain a thorough understanding of the tourism and hospitality industry. Graduates become proficient in management accounting, organizational leadership, business communications, hotel and resort management, food and beverage management, and event planning.

For more information on Atlific Hotels please visit www.atlific.com and for more information on Selkirk College go to www.selkirk.ca.

Super 8 Calgary Shawnessy is Waking Up to Green



The Super 8 Calgary Shawnessy has joined the EcoStay program, as a national initiative that helps hotels measure their carbon footprint, identify and fund reduction strategies and balance off their greenhouse gas emissions through carbon offsetting.

"We're very excited to be part of the EcoStay Program," said Monica Stewart-Bittner, general manager of Super 8 Calgary Shawnessy "It's a meaningful and effective way of demonstrating our concern for the environment."



Under the program, Super 8 Calgary Shawnessy will collect two dollars per night from hotel guests. Funds will be used to purchase carbon offsets in support of emission-reducing projects across the country such as renewable energy, sustainable farming, energy efficiency, composting and recycling - making each hotel night completely 'carbon neutral'.

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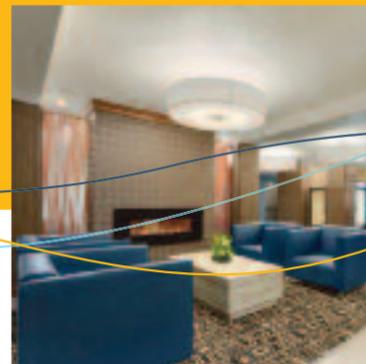
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business NEWS

SilverBirch Hotels & Resorts' Friends in Need Campaign Supports Local Charities

SilverBirch Hotels & Resorts has announced that its annual Friends in Need campaign raised more than \$44,000 in December 2013. During the holiday season, participating SilverBirch hotels offer guests special holiday rates, with \$10 from each room booked during the week of December 21 to 27 going towards each hotel's local charities of choice.

"Friends in Need is just one of the ways for SilverBirch to give back to our communities, and since we started this initiative, we have raised close to \$1.2 million," said Steve Giblin, president and CEO of



"Friends in Need is just one of the ways for SilverBirch to give back to our communities, and since we started this initiative, we have raised close to \$1.2 million,"

SilverBirch Hotels & Resorts. "While this is a national campaign, all of the proceeds collected at each participating hotel go towards supporting local programs."

Among the organizations benefiting from the Friends in Need campaign are BC Children's Hospital Foundation, Ronald McDonald House, Canadian Red Cross, Food Bank and Missing Children Network.

The Friends in Need campaign is a part of SilverBirch's "Hotels with Heart" social responsibility program, which includes educational internship programs with culinary and hospitality training schools and implementation of the Hotel Association of Canada's Green Key ECommodation program.

Franceen Joins the ASTM International Board of Directors

Franceen Gonzales, WhiteWater's vice-president of business development, has made a huge splash in the amusement world having sat on boards of industry organizations including the World Waterpark Association (WWA), International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) and Amusement Industry Manufacturers and Supplier (AIMS). Now, she is a member of the Board of Directors for ASTM International, a leader in the development and delivery of international voluntary consensus standards to improve product quality, enhance safety, facilitate market access and trade, and build consumer confidence. Gonzales enlightened us about her new role and her goals for the future.



"It is my intent to bring my previous board experience and my passion for safety to the table for the benefit of ASTM members and stakeholders." In addition to her role on the board of directors, Gonzales serves on Committees D22 on Air Quality, F15 on Consumer Products and F24 on Amusement Rides and Devices.

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True Key Hotels & Resorts Ltd., strategic growth in a niche market.

Hoteliers have a singular objective, regardless of where their venues are located or how many stars they have: to make guests feel as if they're in a home away from home.

This can be an enormously difficult and costly challenge, but the people behind True Key Hotels & Resorts Ltd. provide that experience to a growing number of customers — in a way the traditional hospitality model cannot emulate.

Established in 2010, True Key presides over four luxury properties in B.C.: Bighorn Meadows Resort in Radium Hot Springs; Sunrise Ridge Waterfront Resort in Parksville; Harrison Beach Hotel in Harrison Hot Springs; and Sooke Harbour Resort & Marina in Sooke.

Although the guest experience in each venue is distinct, the properties share many similarities: proximity to water (oceanfront in the case of Sooke and Sunrise, lakefront in the case of Harrison). Bighorn makes up for a lack of a water view by being in the midst of the majestic Canadian Rockies Kootenay National Park. Amenities range from pools and hot tubs to complimentary high-speed Internet, retail, food & beverage, fitness facilities, meeting rooms and, in the case of Sooke, onsite marina and fishing charters.

True Key's diligence in making each of these properties live up to its fullest potential is such that three of them have earned the prestigious Certificate of Excellence Award from TripAdvisor for 2013: a designation only presented to businesses that consistently achieve outstanding traveller reviews on that website.

Equally important from a business perspective, all of True Key's properties have, over the past four years, experienced between 10 and 40 per cent annual growth in rental revenues; and during that same time they also underwent over \$1-million dollars in capital refurbishment. These are impressive figures, considering



Michael Anderson,
President

HOME Sweet HOME

the hospitality sector as a whole is just beginning to climb out of the recession.

But while spectacular locations and high-end amenities contribute to an unforgettable guest stay, they don't necessarily amount to a home away from home. True Key deftly bypasses the traditional ways of creating a home experience because its properties comprise fully equipped, luxury condominiums that are privately owned (sometimes by up to 34 owners per unit), with these owners placing their vacation homes in the True Key rental program when they are not enjoying their ownership personally.

Although hardly new, this business model has been refined to the point where the relationships between True Key and its owners run as smoothly as a finely tuned Swiss chronometer, with True Key providing full management services to the properties and its administrative people delivering industry-leading rental revenues to the owners.

True Key President Michael Anderson observes, "Back in the early 2000s this concept was new and seemed to be the way resort development was headed. It can still

"Our model is definitely not for everyone. It takes a lot of skill and dedication to make it work the way it should."

be a great method of financing new development, and I think it's the most logical way to provide a home away from home in some markets: because from the consumers' perspective, this is an opportunity to own a vacation retreat. Even if they wind up staying for less time than intended annually, they can offset the cost of ownership by renting their vacation home through our program for the remaining time period."

In fact, when he indulges in flights of fancy (which he is normally not prone to



do), Anderson suggests that the future for hotels "will be primarily for the business traveller, whereas the model I operate under could well become the keystone for the vacation traveller."

But not all is roses. From an operational perspective, managing a resort property that has hundreds if not thousands of owners is far more complex than standard

hotel management. To take one example, True Key only receives 40 per cent of rental revenue from which the expenses related to administration, sales & marketing and the rooms division need to be recovered (the condo owners get 60 per cent). Expenses such as housekeeping are astronomical, because the condos are between 800 and 1,800 square feet as opposed to a standard 400 square foot hotel room. Further compounding this issue is the size of the resort sites which range in size from two to 10 acres

with multiple buildings adding additional cost through transportation of laundry, supplies and in-room consumables. "Our model is definitely not for everyone," says Anderson. "It takes a lot of skill and dedication to make it work the way it should."

True Key's marketing strategies include ensuring that website and booking engines are as easy to find as they are to use (it partners with key third party travel marketing companies such as Expedia, Travelocity, and Booking.com to optimize reach, and it utilizes social media to enhance offers). True Key also uses its growing database of guest history information to target marketing communication based on region, age, interest, and so forth. Other marketing focuses include public relations, print advertising, trade shows, sales calls and working closely with DMOs.

Anderson happily admits, "This is my dream job. My main base of operations is Bighorn Meadows, I love the people I work with, and there are new challenges daily. I wouldn't think of doing anything else." It's a somewhat ironic statement given Anderson's evolving career, which has seen him strategi-

(Left) True Key Hotels & Resorts Ltd. was established in 2010.

(Below) JoAnne Silgallis, controller and Katie Wallace, director sales & marketing.



cally jump from one enterprise to another, leaving a staggering number of successes in his wake. "I've always looked for new challenges and opportunities," he admits.

Anderson started in the hospitality industry at the age of 14, first as a busboy, then dishwasher, doorman and bartender. "From

16 to 20 I also sold used cars for extra money, so I had the entrepreneurial spirit early on," he says.

Some of his more quirky endeavours include buying a RV unit and hiring someone to drive it to town fairs to record would-be karaoke

artists — a profitable if brief venture. He honed his management skills managing at a total of 25 nightclubs and lounges in Alberta and Saskatchewan, improving the revenue, efficiency and profitability in each. He also co-owned and opened the wildly successful Bo' diddy's Pub & Grill chain.

Because of his restlessness and the late-night hours demanded from the beverage business, Anderson switched to the accommodation aspect of hospitality in 1999 by becoming general manager of Brewster's Mountain Lodge in Banff. "And that really was the catalyst for me," he recalls. "I found the variables of being a hotelier a lot more controllable than in the foodservice sector. And the atmosphere was a lot more positive."

But he didn't get his true calling until 2003, when he took a job as general manager for Bellstar Hotels & Resorts to prepare a "dramatically underperforming" condominium hotel for sale in Canmore: within a year he had doubled occupancy and increased its average daily rate. He stayed on as operations manager for Bellstar to grow its business, and over a four year period he helped expand the Bellstar portfolio from two to 12 properties with footprints in B.C. (Osoyoos and Kelowna) as well as Canmore, Alberta.

Bellstar proved that the hospitality sector could accommodate a shift among developers from building and owning traditional hotels to developing condo-style hotels and selling the individual units to one or several owners. "It's a great model for new development because it enables developers to share the financial burden of resort development amongst a host of owners and once complete they can either stay involved as the manager or step away from the completed development," he says. "The problem with the model is that frequently the developers would hire under-qualified management companies that don't have a clear understanding of the legal and financial structure of the development. This results in unproductive relations with the condo owners, ineffective marketing of the asset, poor communication with stakeholders, improper allocation of revenues and expenses and, consequently, they're unsustainable and they lose money." Via Bellstar, Anderson gained a deep under-



Bighorn Meadows Resort is in the midst of the Canadian Rockies Kootenay National Park.

standing of the legalities and financial structures associated with the model.

In 2007, Anderson joined the predecessor of True Key, Glacier Lake Management Corporation, and as vice-president of operations he helped get Sunrise Ridge and Bighorn Meadows up and running along with two properties in Belize (which were subsequently sold). Three years later he acquired an equity position in the company and renamed it True Key Hotels & Resorts, “simply because Glacier Lake wasn’t a brand that was easily built on, the name True Key Hotels & Resorts was more consistent with our vision for the company and better aligned with our customers’ perception.”

A third existing property, Harrison Beach Hotel, soon received the ministrations of the True Key team, and as a result Harrison’s owner group has become one of the firm’s most ardent supporters.

Anderson’s team includes Controller JoAnne Silgailis and Director of Sales & Marketing Katie Wallace. “They have done a tremendous job helping put True Key on the map in a short space of time,” he says. “Many

The Name “True Key” Hotels & Resorts was more consistent with our vision for the company and better aligned with our customers’ perception.

other people have been crucial to our success, but JoAnne and Katie are on the front lines.”

Silgailis, who has worked for True Key and its affiliates for over nine years, currently oversees the daily accounting of five owner associations (comprising over 1,000 owners) and the four properties. Prior to True Key, she held controller positions with several vacation and resort management companies. Wallace joined True Key only three years ago, but her background in real estate and 12 years in the hospitality indus-



Sunrise Ridge Waterfront Resort on Vancouver Island near Parksville.

try has enabled her to build the type of strong customer relationships Anderson has cited as being of paramount importance. “She develops and implements sales and marketing initiatives and manages all of our marketing and advertising mediums,” says Anderson.

Aside from not having the proper people skills to deal with strata ownership, Ander-

son cites another common mistake management firms make in following the business model he so admires. “Generally speaking, some companies are bad at tracing the financial process and cost recovery, the latter of which can easily mean the difference between success and failure,” he says.

For example, a unit of any property can have as many as 34 owners, each with a specific period of ownership, which makes the precise and timely allocation of owner usage and allocation of rental revenues a potential nightmare. “We have very complex software to track the owners’ periods of occupancy, distribute rental revenues, collect maintenance fees and pay a multitude of expenses all while ensuring each owner and stakeholder’s reporting is accurate,” says Anderson. “Obviously, our business wouldn’t have been feasible 15 years ago, the advent of technology has enabled us to accurately and quickly report on financial outcomes for our stakeholders.”

There are many other obligations associated with the smooth function of the four properties. “We’re contracted by the strata corporations to undertake grounds keeping, pool maintenance, snow clearing and other duties,” says Anderson. True Key also manages fractional owners’ associations and vacation rentals of strata titled condominium and staffing of all daily operations, including guest and concierge services, housekeeping, administration and accounting. “Plus, we implement and oversee capital refurbishment plans that help the owners’ association of each property; this year alone, \$500,000 will be spent in refurbishment activity.” Additionally, True Key implemented a new environmental funding program that will collect money for recycling, composting and other green initiatives.

True Key’s hands-on management style and attention to detail have resulted in all four properties enjoying steady growth. With 123 units and 198 rentable doors (due to lock-off studio suites), Bighorn Meadows has achieved between 10 and 15 per cent annual rental revenue growth since 2010 as well as numerous



business awards (including the coveted TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence designation). “Bighorn is our most successful property due to its scale,” says Anderson. Sunrise Ridge, which consists of 43 units and 65 rentable doors, has achieved up

to 40 per cent annual rental revenue growth since 2010.

Harrison Beach Hotel, boasting 42 units, has achieved up to 14 per cent annual rental revenue growth over the same time period (it also holds a TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence). Finally, Sooke Harbour, with only 34 units, has nonetheless enjoyed 48 per cent growth last year — plus an RCI Gold Crown designation for 2012. “Although fairly small, Sooke Harbour has the distinction of being our fastest-growing performer,” says Anderson.

Now that Anderson has reached a point in his career where he can commit to the long haul, he thinks that True Key is just starting to hit its stride. He discusses the immediate future of the company, and his goals hardly come as a surprise. “I want another property to



Sooke Harbour Resort & Marina in Sooke, BC.

come into our fold this year,” he says. “It could be on a lake or a golf course, and ideally it would be between 50 and 200 units in a region we already compete in — although we’re definitely interested in expanding into the Okanagan.”

Although Anderson has made a specialty out of examining legally or financially complex or troublesome situations and developing solutions for efficient management, he stresses that future venues “don’t have to be in distress — Our intent is very simple: we wish to grow our business and drive value to our stakeholders; strong relationships are built on achieving mutual benefit. I’m very excited about the growth that lies ahead for us.”



Harrison Beach Hotel in Harrison Hot Springs.



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Business and Leisure Travel Stable Nationally, Business Travel Down in Ontario

Latest results from the 2014 HAC Canadian Travel Intentions Survey show that business and leisure travel is projected to remain the same as last year. Eighty-one per cent of business travellers will be travelling more or the same for business in 2014. The exception is Ontario, where business travel is projected to be down four per cent over last year's numbers. The highest increase for business travel in 2014 is in the Prairies and B.C. at 27 per cent, three per cent more than the national average.

"While business travel numbers remain stable for 2014, there is some worry about the down turn in Ontario," said Tony Polard, HAC president. "This information, on the heels of the federal budget cuts to provincial transfer payments is not good news for Ontario properties catering to domestic business travellers."

Eighty-three per cent of leisure travellers will travel more or the same as last year and 11 per cent will travel less. Overall, leisure travel intentions are the same as 2013 and 2012 results. While leisure travel is static nationally, 36 per cent of British Columbians said they would be travelling more for leisure, 14 per cent more than the national average and up two per cent over 2013. Respondents from the Prairies expressed the most uncertainty regarding leisure travel with 17 per cent indicating they will travel less than 2013 and eight per cent undecided.

Business travellers who said they would be travelling less this year said they would be doing so for two main reasons, the price of gas/energy (20 per cent) and the cost of air fare (20 per cent). The economy, not as



Philippe Gadbois Assumes Role as New Chair of the Hotel Association of Canada

The Hotel Association of Canada (HAC) is pleased to announce the election of Philippe Gadbois as the new Chair of the HAC Board of Directors. Mr. Gadbois' new role is effective as of the Association's Annual General Meeting held in Toronto on Tuesday February 11, 2014.



Philippe Gadbois has over 40 years of varied experience in the hotel industry including senior positions at Atlific Hotels, Realstar Hospitality Corp, the ownership of a fully integrated hotel consulting firm and Hilton International.

Gadbois started his career with Hilton International at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal. He was then transferred to the Quebec Hilton. He returned to Montreal in 1985 where he was promoted to vice-president sales and marketing - Hilton Canada. A few years later, he moved to New York City to take on the responsibility of vice-president - marketing for the Americas for Hilton International. In 1992, he was appointed general manager of the Hilton Ottawa before being promoted to chairman and president of Hilton Canada Inc. He then moved on to found DSP Hospitality Group whose raison

d'être was to help developers bring their hotel projects to fruition. Clients included the owners of the Hilton Niagara Falls, the Waterloo Inn and Conference Centre, the Homewood Suites by Hilton Mont-Tremblant, the Bostonian Hotel in Ottawa, the Embassy Suites Niagara Falls, the Fairfield Inn Oakville and the Radisson Admiral in Toronto.

In 2003, Gadbois joined Realstar Hospitality to spearhead the company's new development alliance with Accor Hospitality with the mandate of developing Novotel, Motel 6 and Studio 6 products throughout Canada. In partnership with Accor, Gadbois, on behalf of Realstar, spearheaded the development of a new Novotel prototype in Montreal to critical and commercial acclaim.

In 2007, Gadbois joined Atlific Hotels, Canada's largest third party management company, as senior vice-president sales and marketing with additional responsibilities to oversee their development function, and since has been appointed to senior vice-president operations, for the company. Achievements include the addition of two dozen management agreements in the past five years of both branded and unbranded hotels.

Gadbois is currently vice-chair of the Hotel Association of Canada and the founding chairman of the Business Council for Tourism Issues. He sits on ownership committees for Starwood, InterContinental Hotels Group and Marriott Hotels.

Gadbois is an economics graduate of the Université de Montreal.

"Gadbois' history and dedication to the success of the Canadian Lodging Industry is an invaluable asset to the Hotel Association of Canada and to everyone working within the industry", said Tony Pollard, president, HAC. "I look forward to working with Philippe and the rest of the board to ensure the industry's needs and goals are achieved."

Six Corporate Board members have also been elected to serve as corporate representatives of the HAC. They include:

- Nora Duke - president & CEO, Fortis Properties
- Robert Pratt - president, Coast Hotels & Resorts
- Irwin M. Prince - president & COO, Realstar Hospitality
- Satinder Dhillon - senior vice-president operations, Westmont Hospitality Group
- Vito Curalli - executive director Canada, Latin America & International Sales, Hilton Worldwide
- Marc Staniloff - president & CEO, Superior Lodging

They will be joined at the HAC board table by Past-Chair Hank Stackhouse and ten Provincial Hotel Association representatives including:

- James Chase - CEO, British Columbia Hotel Association
- David Kaiser - president & CEO, Alberta Hotel & Lodging Association
- Jim Baker - president & CEO, Manitoba Hotel Association
- Tom Mullin - president & CEO, Saskatchewan Hotel & Hospitality Association
- Tony Elenis - president & CEO, Ontario Restaurant, Hotel & Motel Association
- Danielle Chayer - president & CEO, L'association des Hoteliers du Quebec
- Raymond Roberge - 2nd vice-president, New Brunswick Tourism Association
- Jeff Ransome - president, Hotel Association of Nova Scotia
- Greg Fleming - president, Hotel/Motel Association of Newfoundland & Labrador
- Kevin Murphy - president, Hotel Association of Prince Edward Island

much of a concern in 2013, has jumped back into the top three reasons for traveling less for business in 2014 (17 per cent). The Canadian dollar, for the first time in four years, is again a concern with 16 per cent of business respondents. Worries about the economy, the Canadian dollar and the price of gas are highest with Ontario business travellers.

Canadians Travelling to the United States

Twenty-nine per cent of Canadian travellers said they would be doing more travel to the U.S. in 2014 than 2013, up three per cent over last year's numbers.

Seventeen per cent of 2014 respondents said they travelled to the U.S. for cheaper airline tickets in 2013, with the highest number of cross-border ticket buyers from Ontario and British Columbia. A further 23 per cent said they plan on cross-border shopping for cheaper airfares in 2014. An alarming 60 per cent of respondents also said they knew people who travelled to the U.S. in 2013 to purchase cheaper airline tickets.

"Canada's aviation cost structure is one of the highest in the world. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Canada ranks 136th out of 139 countries," says Pollard. "Aviation and airport fees and charges make Canada's aviation costs almost 30 per cent higher than other jurisdictions. It is no wonder Canadians continue to flock to the U.S. to purchase less expensive airline tickets."

Influence of Technology

More Canadian travellers are looking to the web and social media for travel information. Social media, while not influential for business travellers four years ago, now has almost a quarter of business travellers saying they use information from this medium to help make their hotel selections with on-line testimonials having the most impact on accommodation selection (58 per cent). Seventy-two per cent of leisure travellers said ratings on Internet booking services and other sites have a great deal of influence on where they choose to stay. Fifty-one per cent of leisure travellers in the 18-24 year old category and 34 per cent of those in the 25-34 year old category are most influenced by social media, while leisure travellers in the 55+ category are the least influenced.



"More and more Canadians are using social media to post pictures, load videos and make comments about places they have stayed, and it's having quite the influence on other travellers' decisions," says Pollard. "Hotels know they are being scrutinized like never before and are rising up to the challenge."

Smartphones – Travellers are Connected

Seventy per cent of travellers (up 11 per cent over 2013) use smartphones when they travel. The majority use their phones to get in touch with family/friends (52 per cent), particularly those from the Prairies (59 per cent). As always, Canadian travellers are weather-obsessed, with 48 per cent (up seven per cent over 2013) saying they use their smartphones to check the weather. Again those from the Prairies check the weather the most at 58 per cent. Forty per cent said they use GPS and/or get directions on their smartphones, an increase of eight per cent since 2011. Facebook is becoming more popular with all age groups with 29 per cent of travellers (up five per cent from 2013) using their smartphones to check facebook.

For the first time, HAC asked about hailing a cab with a smart phone and 13 per cent of travellers said they have. Fourteen per cent book hotels (almost same as 2013) and seven per cent buy air, train, or bus tickets on their smartphones. Ten per cent use their smart and mobile phones to Tweet, up three per cent from 2013.

"Almost 60 per cent of 18-34 year old travellers are using their smartphones for GPS or directions, 20 per cent more than the rest of the Canadian population. The days of reading a map are long gone for this young adult crowd," said Pollard.

Green Key Program – Important to Both Business and Leisure Travellers



The importance of hotel environmental certification such as the HAC Green Key program took a dramatic leap this year with 44 per cent of Canadian business travellers, up 18 per cent over 2013 numbers. Those from the Atlantic (53 per cent) found it the most important, followed by B.C. (48 per cent). Three per cent more leisure travellers over last year said environmental certification programs are important to them. This is up seven per cent over the past five years.

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- Bring in hotel guests
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Banff, AB

Holiday Inn
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Ramada
Creston, BC &
Whitehorse, YK

Pacific Inn
Vernon, BC

Econolodge
Cranbrook, BC &
Brooks, AB

Executive Express
Leduc, AB

Super 8
Ft. Saskatchewan, AB



The Conversion Process

Finding the right partner is critical.

In the hotel business, the term "conversion" refers to when a hotel owner re-flags a property from one banner to another, whether or not the owner was an independent prior to or operating under a previous franchise agreement. It is not, in other words, as is often thought, solely when independents convert their properties to a franchise system.

Conversions of any sort can be costly and challenging to owners, not least because of the frequent failure to do proper due diligence in examining the franchise offer. But there are many reasons why they may be attractive. Typically, for example, the cost to do a conversion is substantially less than new-build construction. The main reason an owner will convert their property, however, is because they believe they will get a better return on investment. Indeed, the market views conversions as new properties, making it possible to capture more market share and significantly improve the asset value. Brands help achieve this because they are well known and trusted.



Hotel management companies are adept at identifying the right brand opportunities and implanting the necessary support systems from marketing, to staff management and revenue controls – all needed to make a new conversion deliver maximum return on investment.

One of the main considerations is what brand would be the best fit for the property and the market. This very much depends on how your competitors have positioned their properties and what brands left available best fit your physical asset, deal points and investment strategy. This is where a third party management company comes into play. Hotel management companies are adept at identifying the right brand opportunities and implanting the necessary support systems from marketing, to

staff management and revenue controls — all needed to make a new conversion deliver maximum return on investment.

Another consideration is what resources and logistics will be required to upgrade or renovate the hotel to the expectations of the franchisor and what the timeframe and turnaround will be. Many management companies can handle this for you. It is critical to assess the major mechanical systems — heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, plumbing, electric, elevators, laundry equipment, kitchen equipment, etc. — to avoid any major surprises that could affect your financial success.

The final consideration is what brand- and market-specific strategies you need to maximize the asset's potential. Renovated and converted properties typically enjoy a period of renewed interest and it is important to capitalize on that. A strong social media and Internet marketing campaign during your brand transition will vastly improve awareness and help ramp-up hotel revenues.

If done properly, conversions can reap big rewards for owners. Joe Komaric and Al Nathoo of Stampeder Inn (1990) Ltd., for example, recently converted two Alberta properties, one in Cochrane and the other in Calgary, to the Days Inn banner franchised by Realstar Hospitality. Both were underperforming properties that the pair was able to acquire at well below standard market rates knowing that considerable investment was needed.

The Cochrane property had previously been a Travelodge and was kept under that banner for a year before the decision to convert was made. “When we purchased the hotel we knew it was underperforming. There had already been a number of other conversions in this market, which upped the ante. We were familiar with the Days Inn brand and found it very easy to work with the people at Realstar Hospitality,” says Komaric.

And it appears the decision was a good one. “RevPar was increased dramatically and occupancy is now at a whopping 85 per cent.” The property, which caters to a lot of crews, sports teams and the local population, is now No. 1 in the market after the pair set out to market the proper-



ty more effectively and deliver on service.

With the Calgary conversion, the property was a former Econolodge in the Northwest of the city that was severely distressed. The partners, however, “saw a small gem” and set out to invest \$2 million in interior and exterior upgrades and convert to the Days Inn. As part of this process, they spent a great deal of time working to re-build the image and presence of the hotel in the local community, efforts that have now paid off with significantly improved metrics.



A Conversion within a Conversion?

During the conversion process, it may also be necessary to find solutions to lagging foodservice sales by revamping an existing restaurant or building out a new one. Many operators may consider joining a well-known franchise to help bolster sales.

Ricky's All Day Grill, for example, offers a franchise program specifically for hotels which the company describes as some of their most profitable franchises, including two Best Western properties in Saskatchewan, an Econolodge in B.C. and a Super 8 in Alberta. A new Ricky's and Econolodge has also opened in Brooks. The benefit to the hotel operator is they receive the brand recognition that Ricky's brings to the table plus a proven menu can forego the mistakes likely to occur in setting up their own restaurant operation by relying on the expertise of others.



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“Working with an ownership group that truly appreciates the value and benefits of branding makes the conversion process all the easier.”

Both experienced hoteliers, Komaric and Nathoo found the conversion process was made a lot simpler because of the support received from Realstar Hospitality who has a team dedicated to new openings. Having access to the Central Reservation System through Wyndham Hotel Group (WHG) has also helped...bringing in about 25 per cent of the business. While fees were higher by about two per cent, the increase in business has more than justified this.

“Working with an ownership group that truly appreciates the value and benefits of branding makes the conversion

process all the easier. Constant two-way communication with our Openings Team ensures that everything is completed in accordance with our agreement,” said Irwin Prince, president & coo of Realstar Hospitality, the master franchisor for the Days Inn brand in Canada. “The professionalism and attention to detail that Al Nathoo and Joe Komaric have demonstrated in each of the conversion projects with us has set the foundation for the ultimate success that their hotels have experienced upon opening as Days Inns.”



Irwin Prince, president and CEO, Realstar Hospitality

Another instructive example, in this case an independent converting to a franchised banner, is the former Best Rates Inn, a 20-room property in Parry Sound, Ontario. Operated by Chris and Darrel Painter for the last 20 years, the property is now branded as a Knights Inn.

The brothers already had a lot of experience in conversions. Prior to operating their independent banner they had been a Travelodge but at the time thought it better to strike out on their own, a deci-



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The Choice is Yours

Choice Hotels Canada has its roots firmly in the conversion landscape. In fact, the company was established in 1993 through the conversion of Journey's End properties to create a network of Comfort Inns across Canada. Since then, Choice has built its reputation as the leader in budget and midscale hotel conversions, largely due to the enhanced performance associated with the Choice family of brands.

From the company's experience, it typically takes 12-18 months to ramp up. This is often associated with the length of time owners require to complete all PIP (Property Improvement Plan) items. "When we look at post-conversion key performance indicators, the four-year average demonstrates occupancy growth of 4.3 per cent and average rate improvement of almost 24 per cent," says Tim Oldfield, managing director, Choice Hotels Canada. "Independent hotel owners are attracted to Choice largely because of our high levels of service, our commitment to franchisee success and brand contribution, which last year topped 43 per cent."

Right from day one, says Oldfield, the company works to ensure that their hotels have the necessary resources available to help deliver a great guest experience, keep them competitive in their market and optimize their return on investment. "We have dedicated resources in place to support properties as they transition into the Choice system. We give them a single point of contact that can help guide a hotel



Tim Oldfield, managing director, Choice Hotels Canada.

through the process and help it to best leverage the comprehensive array of tools we make available." After opening, hotels are appointed a franchise performance consultant who works with the hotel to ensure their business objectives are met. At the same time, the consultant also helps the hotel access Choice's leading suite of services including training, quality assurance, sales, marketing, pricing and channel distribution and guest relations, plus newer services such as online reputation management and social media.

"Helping hotels put our programs into action, truly taking advantage of all we offer, is what really allows hotels to optimize their performance after converting. And as a pure-play franchisor, that's exactly what we do best," says Oldfield.

The Comfort Inn & Suites in Windsor came online with Choice in July 2010. Prior to renovation and branding with Choice, this hotel's performance trailed its competition set and lagged the industry

in all key metrics. The Windsor market as a whole had struggled against a backdrop of weakening demand so choosing to invest in renovations and rebranding was an important decision by the owners. It's important to note that this experienced hotel operator is actively engaged with the brand and results have been very positive:

- Occupancy rose +21.3 per cent
- RevPAR jumped +21.7 per cent
- Central Reservation contribution revenue soared +53.7 per cent
- RevPAR Index (versus direct competitors) increased +8.0 per cent (94.7 to 102.3)
- Guest Information Survey scores also picked up: "Likelihood To Recommend" +4.2 per cent and "Staff Service" +2.7 per cent

sion that later failed to bear fruit. The Best Rates Inn, says Darrell Painter, "slowly saw room totals dwindle". One of the reasons was the construction of a new Microtel that began to draw a lot of business from the independent operators.

The brothers then decided to convert to a Knights Inn. "It opened our eyes to the power of this brand," says Painter. In their case there were no upgrades required to the building to bring it up to the Knights Inn standard. "But we just didn't want to meet those standards. We wanted to surpass them." They invested in the highest quality king and queen beds along with feather duvets; installed 40" flat screen televisions, and put Tassimo coffee machines in every room and bolstered the water pressure system so the guest can have a great shower if they wish!"

One of the things that attracted the Painter brothers to the Knights Inn banner was the flexible fee structure. If a property is 49 rooms or less, the franchisee can pay five per cent of monthly gross room rev-



Converting to a franchise can be challenging, but can also be attractive and a better return on investment.

enue or \$25.00 USD per room per month. The company's central reservation system has also brought a significant amount of additional business.

In the year since operating as a Knight's Inn ADR has gone from \$47 to \$74 and RevPar has increased from \$19.1 to \$33.31.

"Working with Chris and Darrel Painter was a unique and rewarding experience," says Glen Blake, president & CEO, Full House Franchise Systems Limited, who are the master franchisor of the Knights Inn banner. "They embraced the Knights Inn brand, and our philosophy of service and

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- Entry level franchise system, with easy to read and understand franchise agreement
- Choice of monthly franchise fee options: 1) 5% of Gross Room Revenue or 2) \$25.00 per room per month (*)
- Dedicated support from our Oakville, Ontario franchise services team

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- A warm, friendly greeting and sincere smile
- A genuine concern for our guests
- Our commitment to you, our customers

Knights Inn[®] is a budget hotel chain with over 365 locations across North America. Our hotels provide value-conscious travelers looking for familiar, dependable lodging, easily accessible and basic overnight accommodations, with a complimentary continental breakfast at participating locations. The brand has grown at a fast pace, across US and Canada mainly due to its easy terms, low cost of operating the franchise and a dedicated support team. It is also backed by the extensive resources of the Wyndham Hotel Group including the world's largest loyalty program, providing an excellent opportunity for entry level and first time potential franchisees

(*) Low fee program is subject to all conditions, as set forth in our franchise disclosure document.



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For additional information regarding franchise opportunities with Knights Inn, please contact **Glen Blake at (905) 829-4002** or email Glen.Blake@fhfsl.ca.





A strong social media and Internet marketing campaign during your brand transition will vastly improve awareness and help ramp up hotel revenues.

Doing Due Diligence

When entering into a franchise agreement there is always an initial franchise fee, an initial investment in changing the business identification to that of the franchise organization, a required regular payment to an advertising fund and a required periodic royalty payment.

These costs must be added up and subtracted from your profit and loss statement. Determine how much in incremental sales at the now-reduced profit percentage you will need to reach break-even. To make the conversion decision a profitable investment you have to exceed that sales number by a substantial margin. See if sales ranges achieved by their franchisees are provided broken down into the categories of: (1) the number of franchisees in the top 25 per cent, the second 25 per cent, the third 25 per cent and the bottom 25 per cent; (2) the number of franchisees in each geographic region that are in each sales per cent category and (3) the length of time the franchisees have been affiliated with the franchisor in each percentage of sales grouping. Without this information you may be making a big mistake if you decide to convert your business to their franchise.

product. I was very impressed when they decided to introduce Tassimo coffee makers in their rooms to set them apart from the competition. Chris and Darrel also launched a very successful local marketing program, to communicate the conversion to Knights Inn, which was received and supported very well by the local community. They knew from the beginning that changing the flag and making the improvements also required a strong local marketing message. They executed a very strong conversion program and we are thrilled that they decided to join our Knights Inn Canada system.”

Of course, executing a successful conversion strategy is not without risk. Ultimately, it all comes down to bottom-line results. How do you improve your asset value? How do you maximize ROI? And the means to that end, increasingly, is a strategic rebranding and a hotel conversion with an experienced, results-oriented partner. ●



Glen Blake, president and CEO Full House Franchise Systems Limited

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HARRISON HOT SPRINGS RESORT & SPA

HARRISON HOT SPRINGS, BC

ROOMS: 337
CLOSED: April 2012
VENDOR: Delaware North Corporate Parks & Resorts
PURCHASER: Adelta Hotel Group

Located in the heart of British Columbia, the resort is bordered by the southern stretch of Harrison Lake and the stunning backdrop of alpine forested mountains. The property has a wide array of resort amenities including 237 rooms, three food & beverage outlets, a spa, 20,000 sq ft of meeting space, an 18-hole golf course and the job opportunities the Village's natural mineral hot spring water source that supports the best looking hot mineral pools.

The buyer was one of many groups making its 5th Canadian hotel acquisition. The property continues to be managed by Delaware North Corporate Parks & Resorts.

SUPER 8 ABBOTSFORD
 Location: Abbotsford, BC
 Size: 39 rooms
 Closed: September 2012
 Contact: cbre@cbre.com

CLARION HOTEL CALGARY AIRPORT
 Location: Calgary, AB
 Size: 165 rooms
 Closed: July 2012

QUALITY HOTEL GRANDE PRAIRIE
 Location: Grande Prairie, AB
 Size: 102 rooms
 Closed: March 2012

HELIA OASIS RESORT
 Location: Tofino, BC
 Size: 55 rooms
 Closed: December 2012

KNIGHTS INN VANCOUVER
 Location: Seattle, WA
 Size: 250 rooms
 Closed: November 2012

KNIGHTS INN VANCOUVER
 Location: Vancouver, BC
 Size: 100 rooms
 Closed: August 2012

KNIGHTS INN VANCOUVER
 Location: Port Moody, BC
 Size: 134 rooms
 Closed: February 2012

KNIGHTS INN VANCOUVER
 Location: Coquitlam, BC
 Size: 80 rooms
 Closed: June 2012

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Review of the
Best Hotel Social Media Campaigns of 2013

Recently, I came across a fantastic website dedicated to curating information dedicated to the professionals in the travel industry and the frequent traveller (raise hand). It coins itself as a “travel intelligence company” that offers news, information, data and services to help “those in the business of travel” make smart decisions about travel. Check out skift.com.

Sometime near the end of 2013, Skift.com resident writer, Samantha Shankman, wrote a blog that reviewed the Best Hotel Social Media Campaigns of 2013, that I found very interesting. I would like to share some highlights with you in this column. To read the whole blog article, go to <http://skift.com/2013/10/21/the-best-hotel-social-media-campaigns-of-2013/>.

Best Facebook Page By Brand
Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, Toronto

Four Seasons has refreshed its facebook page's voice with a more conversational and personal approach it calls “the voice of the traveller,” which shares inspirational content and highlights one-of-a-kind experiences.

Best Facebook Page By Property
W Taipei, Taiwan

W Taipei focuses on contests and posts about cocktails, cuisine, events and celebrities on its facebook page, emphasizing images instead of text...To build followers, the hotel also tagged certain third-party fan pages, asked other fan pages such as Vogue.com to share information on the hotel and promoted the fan page with \$2,000 in facebook advertisements targeting Hong Kong and Singapore users.

Social Media Marketing: Faux Pas and Missed Opportunities

Social media and online marketing has evolved quite a bit over the last 10 years. It has, now, become an integral part of most hotel marketers' tool bags and with the advancement of mobile devices and apps, there is no need to be tech savvy to participate anymore. However, this does not preclude us from the need to be mindful in utilizing social media as a tool for brand management, communication and public relations. In this part of the column, I would like to share with you some common social media slip-ups and missed opportunities that even the biggest brands can make.

Lack of interaction

It's called "social" media for a reason. Engage your audience and build your fan base. Automated and scheduling tools should only be used as a supplement.

Ignoring Questions and Complaints

Having issues aired out in public is scary but your lack of response will only hurt the trust in your brand / business. Responding to critics and complaints in a public and social environment proves that you have nothing to hide and can only strengthen your brand.

No one likes spam

Do not overwhelm your audience with your feed or you will be blocked. Great rule of thumb is to keep content relevant. Remain interactive and stay visible.

Hearing but not listening

Engaging with your audience should be a two way communication process. While you may have heard the issues and complaints, listening to "what" they say about your services and competitors will give you some insights into what they are interested in and how you can help them.

Me, me, me....

No one like to hear "only" about you and your brand. Social media marketing is about your customers and what's interesting to them. Sharing other content that's relevant helps to build the dynamic nature of you and your business.

Sell, sell, sell....

No one likes to be "sold" to on social media. It is about building relationships. Let your audience get to know you and your brand / business.

Current Events

Show that you are real and can stay in the loop. Keep track of current news and discuss about relevant events. Be careful when using pre-scheduled posts as news changes.

Spelling and Grammatical errors

This one is a tough one to judge as it seems acronyms and abbreviations in communications are becoming the norm. However you choose to manage this, just make sure that your audience knows what you are trying to say and that it leaves little room for misinterpretations.

ALL CAPS IS VERY ANNOYING

As it is interpreted as SHOUTING. Stop it NOW!

#hashtag #every #word #is #annoying

#stop #it #now #or #else This is especially annoying on Instagram and Facebook where photos are over tagged. The proper way to use hashtags is sparingly and with fore thought. #Springpromo is sufficient enough to "tag" the message as relating to spring promotion. Limit hashtags to two, maybe three. Please! #please #stophashtagingeveryword

Missing Banner Photo

In case you haven't noticed, almost every social media site, now, allows you to post a banner photo. This is where you can express your companies' image and personality. Leaving it blank is... well... boring.

Hijacking irrelevant hashtags

Don't be tacky and try to hijack a ride on a trending hashtag. Especially if it has absolutely nothing to do with your message. This is considered spam-style tweeting and done in #bad-taste #iphone #sochi #oscars2014

Post Articles with Photo

Taking a moment to insert an image to accompany your article post on Facebook will increase interest and engagement with your post by up to 40 per cent (according to data from Zabisco).

Best Facebook Promotion By Brand

Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, Toronto

Four Seasons' "Ignite the Spark" global promotion included an interactive facebook application available on the brand fan page with localized versions of the app on property fan pages. The facebook app invited all facebook users to create their own personalized "countdown to romance" widget by filling in the details of a forthcoming romantic getaway, with the option of selecting their partner's facebook profile.

Best Facebook Promotion By Property

Four Seasons Resort Jackson Hole, Wyoming

The "Stealth Stache" contest was created to launch and promote on-property gastropub The Handle Bar...challenged consumers to capture, share and submit photos of their own Stealth Stache (such as putting their finger over their mouth to make a fake moustache) for a chance to win a vacation for two to Four Seasons Jackson Hole.

Best Use Of Twitter By Brand

Fairmont Hotels & Resorts, Toronto

Fairmont focuses on adding value for its twitter followers through special offers and incentives such as an American Express Partnership that offered a free night for cardholders. Twitter followers that interact with Fairmont occasionally receive gifts and giveaways as a reward for following. Fairmont alerts followers to services and amenities as well.

Best Use Of Twitter By Property

Renaissance Blackstone Chicago Hotel

In 2012, the Blackstone was one of Sage Hospitality's best properties reporting revenue from social media channels with close to US \$5,000 from 33 room nights booked with a direct referral from social media.

Best Reputation Management: Social Media By Brand

ITC Hotels, Gurgaon, India

ITC Hotels has a real-time recording mechanism and four levels of criticality to classify each comment to ensure the most important ones are addressed first...Over the past year, ITC saw its ratio of positive to negative TripAdvisor reviews improve from 1,032:221 to 1,530:295. On twitter, 43 negative tweets were resolved into positive tweets from guests.

"Best Reputation Management: Social Media By Property"

Royal Wing Suites & Spa, Pattaya, Thailand

The hotel's Internet marketing team monitors reviews with software, summarizes the results and reports them to the hotel's senior managers, sorting online comments from guests for the department responsible.

To put the social media ecosphere in perspective, I came across a recent statistical infographic* about "the growth of social media" over the last decade. Facebook was launched back in February 2004, and since then, it has accumulated over 1.15B users worldwide. Twitter launched in 2008 and boasts over 600M users. Google+ has over 1B users registered. Instagram has 150M and Pinterest claims to host over 80M users. Over 97 per cent of marketers are now using social media for business. Seventy per cent of these marketers have used Facebook to successfully gain new customers. Thirty-four per cent have used twitter to generate leads. When online, the average person will spend 25 per cent of their time on social media sites. The fastest growing age group in social media networks is between the ages of 45 to 65 at a rate of 79 per cent on twitter, 46 per cent on facebook and 56 per cent on Google+. Over 71 per cent utilize a mobile device to access social media.

Considering the scope of the social media arena and the fact that anyone can make a gaffe, you can avoid that imminent slap in the forehead moment if you just become more mindful in what you do when it comes to social media marketing. Doing so will mean less need for damage control and more time for brand and business relationship building. All the best in 2014!

If you are interested in being featured in the social media segment of Western Hotelier please have your social media-marketing department contact Ken for an interview.



Ken is the vice-president of sales and marketing for New Age Marketing & Brand Management Inc., (NAM&BMI) a national brokerage company specializing in brand management of natural and organic CPG brands and products in all channels and markets in Canada. His opinions expressed in this column are solely his own and do not necessarily represent those of this publication. Ken can be contacted via email (ken@newagemarketing.com), twitter (@kenkwong) or linkedin.

* Statistical data from infographic titled "Growth of Social Media" hosted on mediabistro.com (Nov 2013)



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Convention 2014

APRIL 14 & 15, 2014 | SHERATON CAVALIER | SASKATOON



The Saskatchewan Hotel & Hospitality Association (SHHA) is pleased to present the 83rd edition of the Hotel, Bar & Restaurant Conference & Trade Show being held at the Sheraton Cavalier Hotel, Saskatoon, Monday April 14 & Tuesday April 15, 2014.

Members of the SHHA will gather for business meetings, information sessions and award celebrations, along with the province's largest hotel & restaurant related trade show. The Hotel, Bar & Restaurant Trade Show will take place on Tuesday April 15, 2014 at the Sheraton Cavalier Hotel, Saskatoon.

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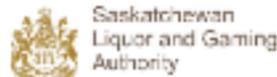
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SASKATOON HOTEL ASSOCIATION



RECEPTION & DINNER



LUNCH/BREAKFAST



REFRESHMENTS



Floorplan



Conference Agenda

MONDAY, APRIL 14

9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

SHHA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

CONVENTION REGISTRATION

Delegates may pick up their registration kits on the convention floor. Name badges are required to be worn for entry to all functions and sessions

Noon - 1:30 p.m.

AWARDS LUNCHEON

Official opening of the Convention. We'll salute the 2014 Employers of Choice, SHHA scholarship winners and Long Service employees

**SHERATON CAVALIER - SASKATOON
APRIL 14 & 15, 2014**

1:45 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

TAKE BACK YOUR GUESTS

Sponsored by Check In Canada Traditional online travel agencies (OTAs) took over \$9.5 million out of Saskatchewan in 2012, either through lost revenue or commissions paid. Any SHHA member who wants to increase direct bookings to their property and get their guests back from the OTAs should plan to attend this session.

2:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

REFRESHMENT BREAK

3:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

BREWERS DISTRIBUTORS LIMITED

Lil Schultz and Ray Vandale of BDL will update all delegates on beer volumes, ordering procedures and answer any inquiries on BDL operations

3:45 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

PLAN TO MEET THE DEMAND

Rob Ruiters, business development manager, Prudhomme International will provide delegates with timely information on supplementing your employee shortages through immigration

3:45 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

SELF DEFENCE FOR HOSPITALITY STAFF

Awareness and non-verbal cues, body language, human behavior reacting to stress. Professional Brad Hutchison teaches the philosophy of protection by Understanding the Use of Force Continuum.

6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

BREWERS' WELCOME RECEPTION

Great Western, Labatt and Molson Coors hopes you enjoy their complimentary beverages as you relax with colleagues after a busy afternoon at the convention

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

DELEGATE DINNER AND SHOW

Prize draws, a scrumptious buffet, and guest speaker Hon. Donna Harpauer, Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Liquor & Gaming Authority, followed by comedienne Brad Muise on stage to wrap up the day

9:00 p.m. - 11:30 p.m.

DELEGATE LOUNGE OPENS

TUESDAY, APRIL 15

8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.

SERVICE & HOSPITALITY SAFETY ASSOCIATION BREAKFAST

Jim Bence, CEO, salutes the hospitality industry for the historic reduction in WCB premiums. Enjoy breakfast and as a reward for getting up early you will be eligible to win a HD TV

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9:15 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.

SLGA PRESENTATION AND QUESTION PERIOD

Barry Lacey President of SLGA and his officials will answer your questions on liquor and gaming, discuss any upcoming regulation changes and provide insight on liquor retailing in the future.

10:30 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.

REFRESHMENT BREAK

10:45 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.

SHHA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

At this important business session members will be asked to approve the 2013 Audited Financial Statement, elect the east zone directors, approve resolutions

brought forth prior to the meeting, induct life members and be introduced to the new Chair of the Association.

Noon - 5:00 p.m.

SASKATCHEWAN HOTEL & RESTAURANT EXPO

Have lunch with the exhibitors and view the numerous products and services available for the accommodation and hospitality industry. A major prize draw will take place at 4:00 p.m. and you must be in attendance to win.

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**AJM Solutions Group Inc.**

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AJM Solutions Group Inc. is comprised of a team of extraordinary, seasoned veterans of the hospitality industry with experience in new construction and/or retrofit of through the wall heating/cooling systems, energy management systems, guest room electronic lock solutions, video surveillance systems and in-room safes. We design and install everything we sell. We are focused on serving hotels, motels, retirement and assisted living, along with residential and commercial applications. We selected Amana (HVAC), Onity (guest room locks), & Schneider (energy management systems) for their superior performance and quality. AJM Solutions Group has developed a reputation for on time delivery, knowledge and quality service. We have extensive experience with both construction and retrofit projects.

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pests; and the use of Cryonite, a newer method of treatment that uses a carbon dioxide generator to produce dry ice "snow", which freezes eggs, larvae, and adult bed bugs on contact. For rodents, they use ionization machines and ultrasonic devices, as rodents hear at a much higher sound frequency than humans. These machines create a sound that is irritating to rodents, but out of human hearing range. For flies, they use light traps and organic cleaners that are made with naturally occurring bacteria and enzymes that eliminate the grease and grime that pests feed on and breed in.

Just as every hotel is different, every pest issue is different. Orkin Canada tailors its pest management approach to each individual hotel, as well as each instance of pest problems.

"By partnering with your pest control provider, you can determine the most effective way to implement an IPM approach for your facility depending on a number of relevant factors," says Dawson, adding that it's important to stay vigilant and remember that an effective IPM program is a process and not a one-time event.

BC Bug, based in Vancouver, also supports the IPM approach. The company

started from personal experience, after one of the owners owned an apartment building that became infested with bed bugs. After many unsuccessful attempts and many months of trying to get rid of them with other pest control companies, the owner trained himself and eradicated them from his building.

For bedbugs, BC Bug offers heat and traditional pesticide treatments, depending on the client's preferences. Most clients prefer chemical treatments as being the most cost-effective option, says Darin Craig, service manager at BC Bug. For rodent infestations, they use a trapping program.

Lincoln Poulin, vice-president at Poulin's Pest Control, the third largest pest control company in Canada, says that the best form of pest control is proper sanitation and prevention.

"We stress to all our clients that pests are far more likely to infest an area that is not properly sanitized or well-maintained. Before we start a service, we do a walkthrough of the facility with the customer and address any areas we find are more susceptible to pest infestations," he said, adding that when choosing a pest control provider, ensure that they can provide an emergency service. "This is an important discussion to have with a pest control company prior to contracting one, as pest problems can occur at any time and the pest control provider should be available any time."

One of the most common places that pests can infest is hotel mattresses. Bed bug infestations generally occur in areas where people sleep, according to the Government of Canada website. They are wingless and cannot fly or jump but are able to hide in small or tight spaces, such as a mattress box spring. Traditionally, hotel mattresses were a commodity acquired and maintained by housekeeping, but as many hotels now offer expensive high-performance versions, management is becoming increasingly aware of the importance of proper mattress maintenance and protection.

Protect-A-Bed is a worldwide leader in mattress protection innovation that offers a complete line of protective bedding products. Now available in over 40 countries, Protect-A-Bed products help create a dry, hygienic, bed-bug-free and anti-allergy sleep zone, while protecting the mattress warranty. The company developed the proprietary Miracle Membrane® and patented BugLock® with SecureSeal® and three-sided zipper system. Protect-A-Bed products are listed as Class 1 Medical Devices with the Food and Drug Administration, and have received the Good Housekeeping Seal.

On average, treatment of a typical mattress and box spring can require up to 45 minutes. By applying a mattress encasement to the bed, treatment can take less than 15 minutes.



Orkin Canada is the largest provider of pest management services in the country.

"Encasements offer hotels substantial benefits. Encasements provide a protective barrier from human contamination, bed bugs and allergens. By protecting their mattresses, hoteliers save cleaning and labour costs, lost room revenue due to recovery time, secure their mattress warranty, and extend the life of their mattress by protecting their assets from human damage, stains and deterioration," said James Bell, CEO of Protect-A-Bed.

Caber Sure Fit, based out of Markham, Ont., also provides encasements for mattresses and other furniture. Their BedCare™ mattress and box spring encasements are designed to keep pests out so that hotels don't need to worry about infestations in the first place. They also protect against spills and allergens, lengthening the life of existing furniture.

Superior Quilting, which is a leading



BC Bug offers heat and traditional pesticide treatments, as well as a trapping program for rodents.



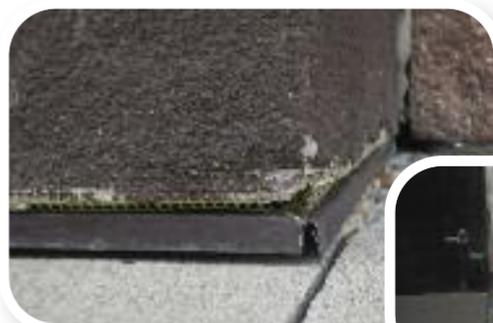
commercial bedding manufacturer, offers a comprehensive range of quality, ready-to-ship bedding, such as draperies, sheets, bedspreads, mattress pads, protectors, comforters, pillows, duvets, and much more. They also provide custom and contract-sewing services. The company provides mattress encasements with SilverClear, as well as a fabric refresher with SilverClear, which is a highly efficient antimicrobial, bactericidal and anti-odour liquid solution for the treatment of various types of material. The company also provides hotel employee and housekeeping staff training.

"Because bed bugs are relatively new to North America, many people don't have the experience or knowledge to prevent and deal with them," said Joey Benoliel, owner/founder of Superior Quilting. "The most important point here is to put a preventative program in place, as opposed to trying to find a solution after an infestation. Be proactive by creating a barrier of protection around your guests and hotel. Be prepared and knowledgeable before you have a problem."

Often, a single pest sighting is brushed aside as an isolated incident, but hoteliers need to be wary, as it can often be a sign of a larger infestation. There are a variety of ways to detect and remove pests from hotels. As a result, hoteliers must be informed on how to prevent and manage pests, and contact the best company to help get rid of them. Unlike clientele, pests don't discriminate, if they are offered shelter, food, and water, they can make a home and spread across the area. The presence of pests can be the deciding factor that can bring a five star hotel down the ladder.



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Poulin's Pest Control advises hoteliers to ensure their pest control provider offers an emergency service, and are available anytime.

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Alberta's Economy is booming, and its tourism and hotel sector is just as robust.

Alberta may have experienced an unprecedented flood in 2013, but the province's forward momentum was certainly not washed away with the waters of the Bow. A strong economy, population increase, low unemployment, and increased weekly earnings made the province a desirable place to live, work, and do business, while travellers enjoyed Alberta's many tourist attractions, both old and new.

There's no question Alberta is a leader in Canadian economic performance. According to Alberta Treasury Board and Finance, in 2012, Alberta's real GDP at market prices grew by 3.8 per cent, the strongest growth in the country. In the second half of 2013, oil production and exports jumped, which also coincided with higher prices for oil produced in Alberta. Manufactured product sales also reversed a weak start in 2013, with growth picking up in the second half. In the agriculture sector, farmers witnessed a bumper crop in 2013, as favourable weather conditions pushed wheat and canola production to record heights.

Provincial reports state Alberta's labour market has continued to perform very well, despite December's dip in jobs. In the second half of 2013, Alberta added on average 5,900 jobs per month compared with a decline of 2,500 in the rest of Canada. As a result, year-over-year job growth in Alberta has diverged sharply from the rest of Canada.

According to the province's "Economic Trends for January 2014," strong job creation continues to be closely matched with a large inflow of workers, keeping the labour market balanced and the unemployment rate between 4.3 and 4.8 per cent since July.

And, there are certainly the people to fill those jobs. As of October 1, 2013, Alberta's population was estimated at 4,060,719, a 3.5 per cent increase from a year earlier. Nationally, population grew 1.2 per cent over the same period to reach 35,295,770. And, in the third quarter of 2013, Alberta welcomed 10,269 net interprovincial migrants and 16,436 net international migrants.

Weekly earnings for Albertans jumped to \$1,131.40 in November, a 3.7 per cent increase over one year prior. Year-to-date average weekly earnings were up 3.2 per cent. The rise in earnings more than offset increases in the cost of living, as measured by changes in the consumer price index (CPI). Inflation was modest for the second straight year at 1.4 per cent in 2013, less than half the increase in average earnings.

Good Times at Hotels

While the province was putting up big economic numbers, so too was Alberta's hotel industry. As reported by PKF, 2013 November YTD RevPAR was up 7.4 per cent, with Edmonton beating out Calgary with an 8.6 per cent increase. Calgary saw a rise by 6.5 per cent, with "Other Alberta" up 7.9 per cent, and Alberta resorts up 4.7 per cent.

Alberta Tourism's Market Monitor states for the first eleven months of 2013, the occupancy rate for Alberta (excluding resorts) was 69.5 per cent, up +2.3 points compared to 2012 (67.2 per cent). The average daily room rate for Alberta (exclud-



Dave Kaiser, CHA, president & CEO, AHLA

The Place to Be

Courtesy of Shutterstock

ing resorts) for the first 11 months of 2013 was \$137.86, up +3.8 per cent compared to 2012 (\$132.81).

“2013 was overall a positive year for hotels in Alberta,” states Dave Kaiser, CHA, president & CEO of the Alberta Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA). “Northern Alberta perhaps slightly stronger than south due to energy sector activity.

Also, some southern properties and resort properties in Banff and Canmore were negatively impacted by June floods in Southern Alberta. However, some of the negative impact on initial hotel occupancy was mitigated by displaced residents who needed a place to stay

and restoration services and insurance companies whose personnel stayed in hotels long after the event to clean up and assess claims.”

Then there were the people that came to see what Alberta has to offer. Whether it be to visit family, or take a trek through the stunning landscape, people certainly took the time to access the province.



Comfort Inn & Suites in Airdrie, AB is of Choice Hotel Canada's Platinum Hospitality Award winners.

“Tourism growth is happening across the province,” says Bruce Okabe, chief executive officer, Travel Alberta. “2011 Stats Can data shows \$7.8 billion in tourism expenditure with 35 million person-visits. In the Autumn 2013, Travel Market Outlook, the Conference Board of Canada estimates total visitor expenditure in Alberta

will grow 5.7 per cent versus the national average of 4.9 per cent in 2014.”

The diversity of Alberta's economy has created jobs and disposable income for Albertans, who are in turn seeking out exciting travel experiences within their own province. From Alberta, overnight visitors increased, with 42 per cent people

The Alberta hotel industry put up big economic numbers in 2013.



Some points to note from Market Monitor:

- For the first eleven months of 2013, the occupancy rate for Alberta (excluding resorts) was 69.5 per cent, up +2.3 points compared to 2012 (67.2 per cent).
- For 2013, average employment in the Accommodation, Food and Beverage sector in Alberta is up +1.4 per cent compared to 2012.
- Air Passengers 2013 (000's of enplanements and deplanements) is up 4.5 per cent for Edmonton and Calgary International Airports (YTD Jan - Nov 2013).
- Visitor attendance to Historic Sites and Museums as down 1.5 per cent over 2012.

travelling to visiting friends and relatives (VFR), 45 per cent for pleasure, and seven per cent for business.

From the rest of Canada (excluding Alberta) for overnight visitors, the breakdown of visitation is 49 per cent VFR, 30 per cent pleasure, 16 per cent business, while international markets saw U.S. visitation as 24 per cent VFR, 43 per cent pleasure, 25 per cent business; Europe 26 per cent VFR, 59 per cent pleasure, 10 per cent business, and Asia-Pacific: 37 per cent VFR, 48 per cent pleasure, and 12 per cent business.

Regarding air traffic for 2013, domestic passengers were up four per cent, trans border passengers up 7.7 per cent, and international (overseas) passengers up 3.4 per cent.

Edmonton International Airport reported that for 2013, 6.98 million passengers either boarded or deplaned at the airport, a 4.6 per cent increase compared to 2012.

Even highway traffic count was up by 1.2 per cent.

“Travel Alberta is doing an excellent job promoting Alberta tourism,” claims Kaiser, who also points to the province's Tourism Ministry which recently introduced a new “Tourism Framework” with a goal of increasing industry revenue to \$10.3 billion by 2020. “Travel Alberta has an over \$50 million dollar budget. Also, voluntary Destination Marketing Funds (DMFs) operating in major cities and some regions across the province are contributing another \$25 million [or more] to local destination funding efforts.”

Since DMFs are not legislated by the government, the AHLA acts as the trustee for the DMFs collected in some Alberta communities.

Even minus any extra funding pumped into tourism, Alberta's 2013 attractions stand alone as a draw for guests. This year the province hosted the CHAMPIONS TOUR (formerly the Senior PGA Tour) which has the most recognizable and accomplished players in the game, with many of its 32 members in the World Golf Hall of Fame competing regularly in its events; Tour of Alberta, the newest pro-cycling event on the international cycling circuit; and of

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course The Calgary Stampede which saw over one million people attend the 10-day event, even though only weeks before some of the venues were under water.

The upcoming year will see Calgary's Heritage Park celebrate its 50th anniversary, and the opening of Glacier Skywalk, a fully-accessible, cliff-edge walkway and glass-floored observation platform 280 metres (918 feet) over the Sunwapta Valley.

"People will often travel for experiences. Travellers are interested in Alberta's authentic experiences set in our breathtaking landscapes across the province," explains Okabe, who points to the Canadian Badlands, and Dark Skies - the night time sky of Jasper - as just two options through their Official Alberta Travel Planner.

Travel Alberta's 2014-2017 Strategy (their three-year business and marketing plan) will be posted online April 1, 2014 for more information and destination ideas.

Built It

Along with travellers investing their time, hotels invested their money in the province with numerous new builds in 2013. A partial list from the AHLA highlights the 214-room Solara Resort & Spa in Canmore, Comfort



The Fairmont Banff Springs.

Inn in Fox Creek, Best Western Okotoks, and 108-room Holiday Inn Express & Suites in Bonnyville. Holiday Inn also opened the 97-room Holiday Inn & Suites Edmonton Airport & Conference Centre.

Calgary seems to be the hotbed of hotel openings. In addition to the newly opened 112-room Four Points By Sheraton, and the Radisson Hotel & Conference Centre Calgary Airport East, 2014 will see an additional estimated 507 rooms, with builds from Homewood Suites/Hilton Garden Inn, and Homewood Suites/Hampton Inn & Suites by Hilton. According to a previous article in Western Hotelier Magazine by Carrie Russell, managing



People aren't just enjoying Alberta's lodging options. Dining seems to be just as popular.

According to results from Statistics Canada's Food Services and Drinking Places survey, Alberta's unadjusted total receipts for October 2013 were up +9.9 per cent to \$715.7 million, compared to October 2012 (\$651.0 million).

director, HVS, this represents an increase in supply of 4.1 per cent in 2014. Further, she states, this new supply will absorb the projected increase in demand and hold the occupancy level flat for the year, but the average room rate is projected to move up a further four per cent.

Kaiser agrees, stating 2014 is looking positive with forecast industry revenue growth of around two per cent.

Benefits of Membership

The positive energy of the industry has certainly touched the AHLA's membership. Member participation in the associations' Member Value Programs, including Electrical Energy, Natural Gas, Property Insurance, Property Tax Consulting, Health Plan, and RRSP program, continued to grow in 2013.

The AHLA also helped members manoeuvre the province's foreign labour issue, the biggest challenge facing the industry.

"We remain highly dependent on the Federal Temporary Foreign Worker program to fill key front line occupations," states Kaiser. "Frequent and ongoing changes to this program are problematic for our industry to deal with."

The AHLA continued to work on their members' behalf in 2013 in regards to this issue by engaging PWC to complete comprehen-

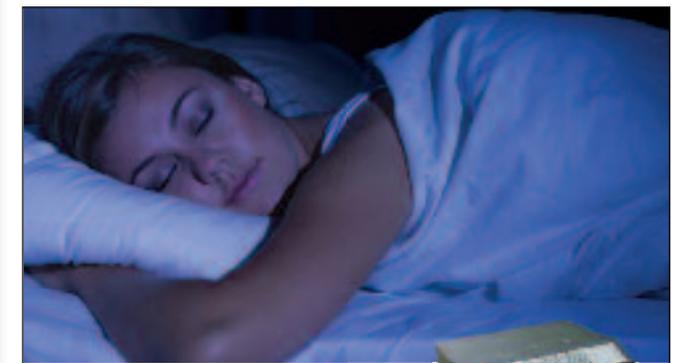


Delta Lodge at Kananaskis.

sive labour market research for Alberta's accommodation industry.

"We have used the research results to support our position that we need a permanent foreign worker solution for our industry," he states.

The Human Resources Development Pillar of the AHLA has also designed a template to assist employers in developing and documenting a "strategic plan" in effort to satisfy the government's requirement for an employer to show that they have made honest efforts to hire



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* Courtesy of STR

Canadians and therefore should not be prevented from hiring foreign workers.

One of the AHLA's major 2014 initiatives is the development of a comprehensive labour strategy for the industry that includes training/education for industry, staff recruitment and retention, and a permanent foreign worker solution.

During 2013, the AHLA also laid down the groundwork for the development of an Alberta pilot for Check In Canada, a national approved accommodation program endorsed by the Hotel Association of Canada. Check In Canada is an industry-driven hotel directory and booking solution that can be utilized by provincial and destination marketing organizations across Canada.

Noted benefits to consumers include quality assured reservations booked direct with hotels (81 per cent of consumers prefer to book direct), best rate guarantees, and hotel brand rewards and loyalty points, while the industry enjoys effective on-line marketing provided by Provincial Tourism Marketing Organizations, a low-cost distribution channel with commission-free direct bookings, and an industry-driven distribution channel that competes with OTAs

"Our goal for 2014, is to work with Travel Alberta and city and regional DMOs in Alberta to use Check In Canada as their accommodation directory and booking solution. We are hopeful that Manitoba and Saskatchewan will join the program in 2014."

With economic factors staying positive, tourism numbers increasing, and more hotel rooms opening up, there seems to be nothing but calm waters and smooth sailing ahead for the hotel industry in Alberta for 2014.



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Pull Up a Chair

By Alex Van Tol



Patio furniture sets the tone for your guests' outdoor experience.

Patio season is nearly upon us. With the weather getting warmer, your guests will be looking to enjoy some time outside during their stay. The right patio furniture can provide your property with a look and feel that's inviting, will also stand the test of time, and might generate you a little bit of extra revenue, too.

Enhancing Your Guests' Experience

When your outdoor areas call to your guests as strongly as the lobby or even the guest rooms with their fluffy triple-sheeted beds, you have a good thing going. With so much crossover between leisure and work, and with everyone carrying around mobile phones and iPads, it's important to offer the same level of comfort outside as your guests have

come to expect inside. "The idea of the whole outdoor concept is to give people the ability to take their business outside," says Vlad Spivak, co-founder and CEO of Modern Line Furniture. People love to gather and conduct business on the soft seating of outdoor couches and modular components, and will seek this sofa-like environment out over a table with chairs. "Everything is portable and movable in technology now," says Spivak. "So the outdoor [aspect] needs to be looked at these days, and not be put at the end of the hotel's list. You have to take care of the décor outside with the same as the effort you make indoors."

Having a usable outdoor space that draws people in means you can use every inch of available space in your property to drive revenue, especially if you serve food and drinks in that

area. Modular furniture lets you create the configurations that are suitable for any occasion, depending on square footage, number of guests, and situational needs (i.e. a wedding or cocktail gathering). "It quickly allows hotels to manoeuvre in their existing square footage to accommodate different parties and events," says Spivak, noting that guests often will bring home fonder memories of their time spent outdoors than anywhere else.

"Every hotel wants to put their stamp on, or have a signature piece. Whether that's branded cushions or custom-made furniture, it adds a touch of class and uniqueness."

Modular furniture can often be customized or arranged to address concerns with privacy, as well, or even protection from the elements. Need a ledge built in for iPhone or Kindle storage? No problem – some manufacturers can even build these design elements into the blueprint.

Style and Design

Style in patio furniture is flexible, with both traditional and contemporary looks holding traction in the market. "We are noticing a colour trend towards blues and greens, and pairing brighter colours with neutrals," says Rain Zhang, director of Willowest Enterprises. This punches up the look a bit, and can easily be changed every couple of years — or even between seasons.

For wicker-look furniture bases, black, white and brown tend to be popular and functional colours. "It depends on the décor," says Spivak. "The more practical colour is black, because you can see less dirt.

But if you want to brighten an area, sometimes white is the answer."

In terms of seating, says Zhang, "the bigger, the better" seems to be the trend. Deep, soft cushions with plenty of space to stretch out send a message of leisure and luxury. "Lots of interior elements are starting to follow the trends we see in outdoor furniture, such as deeper cushions etc.," says Zhang.

Hotels might consider putting their own special "stamp" on their patio furniture, suggests Silvana Levey, president and CEO of Levey Industries. "Every hotel wants to put their stamp on, or have a signature piece," she says. Whether that's branded cushions or custom-made furniture, it adds a touch of class and uniqueness.

Levey sees a Mediterranean vibe infusing design trends in patios in the coming years. "Everybody wants to believe they are in the Mediterranean Riviera," she says. While on a recent trip to Europe along the Italian coast, Levey saw a number of unique designs that will inform design on this side of the water for some time to come.

On a Practical Note

You want your patio furniture to be durable, flexible and cost-effective, with an eye to a return on your investment. Outdoor furniture is made with the weather in mind, and has to contend with the elements unless you place it in a protected spot. It will last longer than indoor furniture would under the same conditions — but that's not to say it won't deteriorate. Your cushions will fade in the sun, but the quality of your UV protectant and the amount of cover provided for your furniture will affect the rate of fading. Keeping your furniture and cushions covered during the winter or packing it away entirely will lengthen its life span.

While materials such as chrome and wrought iron look stunning, months of exposure to sunlight, moisture and salt air can compromise these materials and possibly make them unsafe for your guests.

Resin wicker is a popular choice for many properties. "Polyethylene rattan has become favourable for the hotel environment," says Zhang. This UV-coated vinyl product offers weather resistance and durability, and can be cleaned with power-washing. In the winter time, the furniture can either be put into storage, or, if space is limited, it can be protected with vinyl coverings and tied down securely.

While resin wicker furniture requires a simple wipe-down, real wicker needs a little more TLC. Use a sponge with mild detergent and water to remove soil, then rinse. Avoid foam cleaners, as the foam can collect in crevices and break down the weave. Vacuum your furniture periodically to keep true wickers as free as you can of dust and organic material, as these small particles can collect in the crevices of the wicker and lead to a breakdown in the fibres. Cover up on cold, wet or super hot days — chances are the furniture isn't being used in those conditions, anyway. Periodically inspect the weave, moving it back into place with your finger if there's evidence of shifting. Never place wicker meant for indoor use outdoors, as it can deteriorate very quickly.

Custom-designed foam furniture hit the market last September, and is finding excellent applicability to the outdoor environment. This unique, modular and ultra-shapeable furniture is protected with a patented coating that makes it durable, waterproof, easy to clean and well suited to high-traffic areas. Available in different densities, allows a variety of single or pieced-together seating applications — and it moves from pool deck to patio without any staining from sunscreen.

Product Showcase



Quality & Durability

Focusing on safety, durability and comfort, Willowest Enterprises offers a full range of polyethylene (PE) rattan outdoor furniture with aluminum framing in a variety of colours, including natural-looking brown weaves. Cushions are made of quick-dry foam and can be ordered in a variety of colours to make your outdoor spaces pop. The cushion fabric promises a five-year life-time with no colour fading.



Keeping Your Look Fresh

Modern Line Furniture offers many colours of wicker to meet your patio furniture needs. Its "naked cushion" option lets customers order new cushion covers whenever the urge to restyle strikes. "Once the hotel feels it's time to replace the covers, they call us and we send a box by UPS ground! They can unzip the old covers and put the new ones on," says Spivak. It's a fun way to refresh your look upon a new season's opening.



Foam Seating in Any Shape

If customizable is what you're after, look no further than Six Inch, a line of high-density polyurethane foam that can be crafted into any shape or size of furniture. "What makes it ideal for hospitality is the custom capacity," says Jed Burrows, national sales manager for Levey Industries. The custom pieces are protected by a patented coating to fully seal the furniture and give it durability, performance, and indoor/outdoor applicability.

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Not that long ago most people took careful consideration when deciding if they should make a long distance phone call from a hotel. It was often pricey and almost always a charge that was added to your basic bill. Alongside the mini fridge, for budget travellers, it was considered something to be avoided.

With advances in technology, such as Wi-Fi, VoIP and Internet-enabled televisions, travellers expect much more from their hotels regarding communications.

Internet and Wi-Fi

Do you remember using a guest computer in the “business centre” of the hotel you were staying in to check your email? Now, about 60 per cent of hotels in the U.S. offer free Wi-Fi in guests rooms, and that number goes up substantially when you look at only budget or mid-range hotels.



The rapidly changing world of phone and Internet services for hoteliers.



Courtesy of Shutterstock

Growing Digital

While not that long ago logging into hotel Wi-Fi seemed like a luxury, it is quickly becoming the norm. A study of over 53,000 hotel guests found that Wi-Fi access ranked higher than any other amenity. The next two items — parking and complimentary breakfast — were much less valued.

“The Internet has changed everything. It’s changed the lives of people throughout the world and it’s certainly changed the lives of the guests, whether they’re travelling for leisure or business,” says John Grubb, vice-president of sales and marketing for Cetus. “The hotelier is in a position to mirror what

guests expect in regards to connectivity.” While our demands may change whether we are travelling for business or pleasure, one constant always remains: people want a good Internet connection. “The idea is to get the access point in the room, not down the hall so the guests have a better connectivity experience,” says Grubb.

Kathy Schmidt, owner of Absolute Wi-Fi Solutions, predicts that there will be a movement toward a two-tiered payment system for hotel guests. “We’re finding that there is a huge shift coming with Wi-Fi because of the huge demand for band-

width. What we’re seeing is our clients are asking us to offer tiered billing systems. To offer basic usage — checking email, searching the web, logging into facebook, that kind of thing — for free. And then the higher applications — skype, VoIp, Netflix — those applications that demand higher bandwidth, to apply a charge to that.” When Wi-Fi was first introduced to hotels, the average traveller was likely to use only one device. As you can imagine, that number has increased dramatically with the prevalence of tablets, smartphones, laptops, gaming systems and alternative television.

While it may seem more cost-effective up front, Schmidt recommends hoteliers don’t undergo this burden alone. “You can’t do it on your own — don’t try to do it on your own,” she emphasizes. With businesses like Absolute Wi-Fi offering 24-hour

support, the mess is avoidable. “The front desk just can’t handle it; they don’t have the expertise and they don’t have the time to be handling questions from the guests,” Schmidt articulates. “There’s so many different applications, so many different devices that it just boggles the mind. The average front desk person can actually do more harm than good by telling a guest to change



settings or to delete a network or to change anything else — they just don’t know.” While it may seem more expensive up front, paying for services can save headaches and dollars.

Phone

John Grubb, vice-president of sales and marketing at Cetus, says that analog is still much more prevalent than VoIP services. “It’s still very much predominantly analog, though there’s been a movement toward

IP,” explains Grubb. While there was prediction that digital would take over the hospitality phone market, it’s much slower to come than anticipated.

Analog phones have supported businesses for decades, and are lower in cost than IP phones. They are reliable, predictable and boast the features you find on most home phones.

Felix Seiler is chief operating officer at Holloway Lodging Corporation, which operates hotels from B.C. to Atlantic Canada (and even one in Myrtle Beach). “We are replacing the phone systems now,” explains Seiler. In their legacy hotels, or hotels built before the Internet, the phone systems were all analog. “In the hotels where we have the infrastructure, we will go to voice over IP,” he says, but knows this is not an easy

battle. Many of the room systems will stay analog, but the phone systems themselves will be digital. Seiler explains that this is both more cost-effective and less cumbersome.

Cetus offers several different phone systems in response to problems experienced like those of Holloway Lodging Corporation. While some are basic, some are loaded up with innovative capabilities. One of their new systems, the E-series by Teledex, offers Bluetooth hearing capabili-

ties. “The guests can come into the room with their smartphone or tablet and connect to the phone to receive calls through the hotel phone,” explains Grubb. The alarm clock can even be set on the guest’s smartphone (which people are already comfortable using), and the wake up call with come through on the stereo speakers.

On the same vein, SONIFI Solutions now offers hoteliers an app that guests can use to engage with the hotel’s technology through their own devices. “We offer hoteliers a mobile app that enables them to what we call white label,” explains Janis Nakano Spivack, SVP product and customer marketing at SONIFI. “We have a standard app that any guest can download, but, and here’s the key, when the guest pairs to the television, they say I want to use you as a remote control, my mobile app as a remote control, it actually is auto branded to that hotel,” says Spivack.

When deciding on phone systems, digital or analog isn’t the only thing hoteliers must consider. The decision of what music or messaging to play to guests while they’re on hold is also a vital consideration. Gerry Gerling, owner and founder of ADTEL Group, focuses on music and messaging, especially within the hospitality industry. “I would guess that there probably would be 70 to 80 per cent of properties would have something playing on their telephone hold when people phone,” says Gerling. While it may seem like a minute detail, neglecting this can cost real dollars — an astonishing 60 per cent of callers will hang up within 60 seconds in the absence of any sound or music while on hold. Using the radio may seem like another good idea, but do you really want to give airtime to your competitors, gruesome news stories or the competitors of your guests while they wait to speak to you? “We give them an opportunity to increase revenue for their property ... and it reduces caller hang-up,” explains Gerling. While guests wait on hold, hoteliers have a captive audience they can utilize for upsells and sharing offers.

From Paper to Touch Screen

While legacy hotels are being retrofitted for more modern, digital solutions, the landscape is still in constant flux. To ensure a positive guest experience, hoteliers need to find a balance between offering cutting edge technology and a user-friendly interface. Regardless of what hoteliers choose to offer, one thing is clear: offering guests the means to engage through digital is essential, and becoming continuously more prevalent. ●

Commentary

Workplace Absenteeism Solutions

One hospitality company's experience.

When I set out to do this series of articles one company I really wanted to examine was Manitoba’s Canad Inns. They are one of the biggest employers in Manitoba, let alone the hospitality industry. They intrigued me because of the variety of occupations they employ. I assumed, incorrectly I soon learned, that they would experience disability management difficulties with a wide range of reasons for absence.

For the purposes of this article I got to interview one of the most interesting women I’d ever met. Bev Sterling is the vice-president of human resources for Canad Inns and has some of the most extensive experience in the field.

Her experience was what brought her back to Canad Inns after retiring the first time. She told me that despite employing 3,500 employees they do not have a significant absenteeism problem. Simply put, their disability management program is its policies and procedures and the strict enforcement of them. More importantly, it is strict adherence to the company mission statement. However after talking to her and seeing the staff in action I believe the greatest absence prevention strategy is the engagement of the staff.

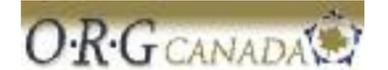
Sterling related that Canad Inns does not provide sick leave and therefore when an employee is ill or injured they’re either at work or not being paid. Unless of course it’s a workplace injury covered by Worker’s Compensation insurance. If they’re ill or injured either on the job or off, they are invited back

on modified or accommodated duties. Their commitment to their employees cannot be expressed in their sick leave policy. Their code of conduct is also very clear in its respect in the workplace strategy. Most importantly is that all employees follow the code and mission statement to the point that engagement results and those that cannot work in the culture that is created, simply don’t.

The first step in an effective absenteeism or disability management program is the development of achievable and effective policies and procedures. In developing such protocols it is important to consider the needs of the staff. In most cases we advise that the perception of such programs should be as that of a staff benefit. Canad Inns Code of Conduct is just that. It is a strict no bullying, no harassment, respect in the workplace document. Sterling stated that the key to the policy is its strict enforcement, there is no room for the behaviour in the Canad Inn’s culture and one instance of such behaviour is grounds for dismissal. The lack of tolerance allows employees to feel safe and empowered. They feel comfortable in their workplace under these circumstances.

Within these policies and procedures is Canad Inn’s commitment to their duty to accommodate. Sterling provided a series of examples where injuries have occurred but Canad Inns has been able to accommodate the employee with modified duties. Where a cook has injured a hand and cannot be in the kitchen, they can assist with rolling

Don Smith, managing partner, ORG Canada



napkins and cutlery. The concept of accommodations and modified duties is not foreign to the employee; it’s an expectation. After all, the alternative is not acceptable.

One of the things that drew me to Canad Inns was the range of occupations. It is just this variety that allows a company of this size to provide the accommodations when required.

So to summarize there are three key points to step one of a successful absence management program.

1. Achievable and strictly enforced policies and procedures
2. Willingness and a culture of modified and accommodated duties
3. Employee engagement, or buy in to the process

What’s the Mission statement at Canad Inns?

“Professionals serving Professionals, Community serving community and our family serving families”

I’ve seen Canad Inns active in the community and it certainly appears that the staff and management are living up to creating a culture consistent with its mission.

Further steps in developing a successful absence management program will be covered in subsequent articles, using Canad Inns as just one example. ●

Coffee Services

Serving up guest satisfaction with your coffee program.

Coffee has become the quintessential “comfort drink” for North Americans — and it can be a great boost to your offerings. In this issue, Western Hotelier takes a peek in banquet rooms and guest rooms and lobbies to see what’s brewing.

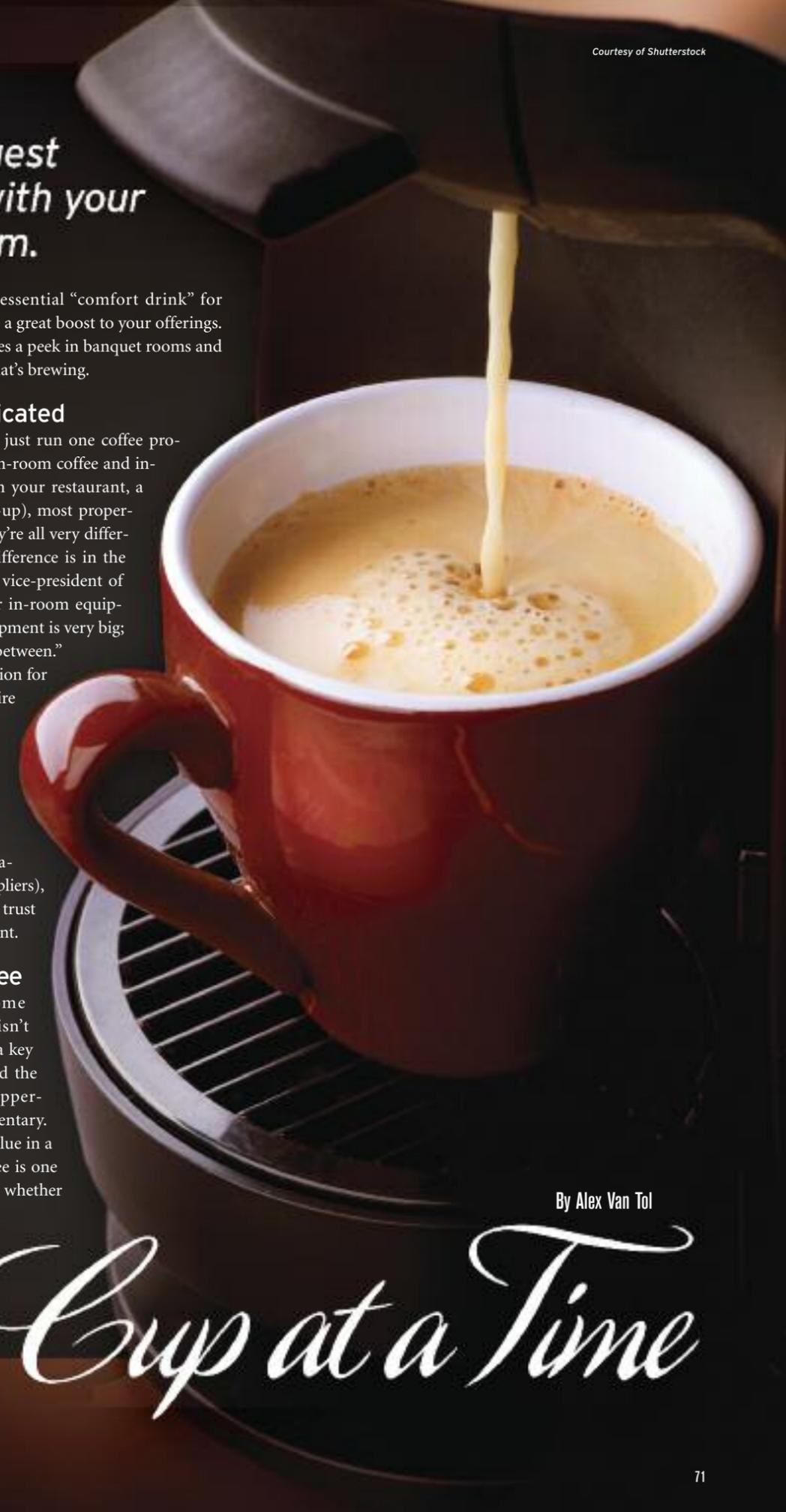
Coffee Can be Complicated

Most likely, your hotel doesn’t just run one coffee program. If you consider banquets, in-room coffee and in-house offerings (whether it be in your restaurant, a breakfast room or in a lobby set-up), most properties operate three programs. “They’re all very different programs, and the biggest difference is in the equipment,” says Blair Wankling, vice-president of sales for Harlan Fairbanks. “Your in-room equipment is very small; catering’s equipment is very big; and foodservice is somewhere in between.”

Maintenance is a key consideration for a hotel. Some machines will require little more than a wipe down, while others require dumping of grounds and a complete wash and dry. But no matter which supplier takes care of what aspect of your coffee service (sometimes properties have relationships with three different suppliers), reliability in your equipment and trust in your service provider is important.

Trends in In-room Coffee

For mid-range and even some budget hotels, in-room coffee isn’t seen as a luxury anymore — it’s a key part of your overall offering. And the expectation in mid-range to upper-range hotels is that it’s complimentary. “When you look at what drives value in a guest’s eyes in a hotel room, coffee is one of the highest-rated amenities for whether



By Alex Van Tol

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Product Showcase

The Strength of a Brand

"Coffee has changed so much in the last twenty years," says Wankling. Harlan Fairbanks is savvy to the value a branded program brings, and offers a range of coffees from the West Coast's original coffee roaster, 115-year-old Boyd's, in Portland. Offering the full spectrum of coffee services from in-room to banquet to breakfast room, Harlan Fairbanks is proud to be a trusted supplier to Canadian hospitality.



Portable and Posh

Requiring no operation other than pushing a button, Jura and Faema offer machines that will take your guest's coffee experience to new heights. The Giga X7 or X9 cost about \$7500 to \$8000, are portable (for moving from breakfast to banquet, plug into regular outlets, and has a generous tank. "You can buy two or three of these for the price you'd pay for a larger unit that's plumbed in and needs a drain and 220-volt power," says Di Donato.

The Gold Standard

A high-end program offers your guests an elevated experience. Starbucks offers three different coffee brands: its super-premium Starbucks brand; Torrefazione Italia; and Seattle's Best. "They all bring different values to the table," says Cunningham. "A branded coffee can generate a higher price point in banquet, restaurant or in-lobby execution. And since banquets are a big



focus for hotels, the products they're offering there can differentiate them from the next place."



Convenience in a K-Cup

Offering a full range of equipment from traditional drip systems to single-cup solutions, Van Houtte will find the program that's right for you. Keurig® is the brewer of choice right now, offering convenience, cost savings in housekeeping and less wasted coffee than in thermos-type applications. "The advantage of using the Keurig® brewing system is they can offer a 24-hour coffee program and there's always a fresh cup for the customer," says Campbell.



the guest considers it a good experience," says Todd Campbell, senior manager for sales and marketing for Van Houtte Coffee Services Canada.

Your in-room coffee service is an opportunity to set yourself apart from other hotels in your category. Whether you offer a standalone espresso machine that takes milk from the minibar, a customized K-cup or a simple pot of drip coffee depends on what your guests are expecting, and how much you're willing to pay.

Very high-end hotels sometimes fork out for small espresso machines that take fresh beans and fresh milk to create a customized brew. These machines take up more space and demand more intricate cleaning, but offer a truly exceptional coffee drinking experience for the guest. At several hundred dollars

per machine, however, those are likely only for the five-star players.

A little farther down the line of in-room offerings are the single-cup brewers (Keurig® comes to mind). "If you see a Keurig® brewer, and there are four K-cup® packs on offer, like a decaf, a hot chocolate, a dark and a medium, the guest sees that as added value to the room," says Campbell. Installing a Keurig® brewing system in every room isn't as expensive as you might think, says Campbell — you can recoup your costs for about a dollar a day compared to a four-cup percolator. "And when you compare that dollar-per-day increase in customer satisfaction to, say, a 42-inch LCD TV, the cost is small for the perceived value."

The Keurig® brewing system make for easier cleaning for housekeeping staff, too. Instead of emptying, cleaning and drying a coffee pot and then putting it back on the burner, housekeeping staff simply wipe the machine down. "If you're looking at a hotel with three hundred rooms and cleaning the coffee pot is an extra two minutes per room, that's 400 minutes a day, which increases efficiency," says Campbell.

Indeed, single-cup brewers are a game-changer in the in-room segment, and many properties are racing to get on the bandwagon. But hotels should proceed with foresight, says Wankling. "It's great for convenience; say if there are two or more people in a room, they can have different coffee. But it's a very costly way to provide coffee." Not only does the cost per cup go up with a Keurig-type setup, but the K-cups themselves tend to go walking. You might put five or six different selections in

a room only to find that they've been packed home in a suitcase, similar to the bathroom amenities.

Out-of-room Coffee

Coffee in the lobby is a wonderful touch, whether it's a branded coffee shop or a coffee-and-snack service offered by your own property. "If a hotel doesn't offer a breakfast, they can still offer coffee in the lobby. Customers love that experience," says Campbell.

Many high-end hotels have a special lounge area for preferred guests, where

they might have breakfast offerings plus a specialty coffee machine. "Some hotels want something better than a Nespresso-type product in your room," says Joe Di Donato, vice-president of operations for Faema. The guest can enjoy a cappuccino or latte using fresh milk, which isn't as easily done in the guest rooms.

If you operate a breakfast room, the extent and quality of your coffee program will be determined by your investment in the breakfast experience. "The limited-service hotels that offer a complimentary breakfast want to keep their costs to about

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three or four dollars per guest,” says Wankling. From your customer’s perspective, quality of the product is the number one consideration. If you’re operating a single-cup brewer experience, you’ll be able to offer a wider selection of coffees (and teas). “There’s a huge range in product available,” says Campbell. “One customer who likes a dark roast isn’t the same as someone who likes a decaf or a fair trade variety. So having one solution of a medium blend in the breakfast room doesn’t really give the customer a good experience.”

One unique offering at the Westin Grand in Vancouver is a coffee and chocolate pairing, available for conferences, conventions and weddings. It can be scaled for a small group all the way up to 600, and offers a beautiful presentation, with chunks of chocolate cascading off a tabletop. “We do it like a banquet reception and have stations,” says Michael Salhani, director of food and beverage. “We partner with Starbucks; they send one of their reps, who offers different kinds of coffee or tea, paired with different kinds of chocolate. It’s just like a wine pairing.”

The Lobby Coffee Shop

An in-lobby program can work as a revenue-generator for your property, whether it’s a fully licensed store or one of your own. “In-room coffee is a simple program,” says Kimberley Cunningham, director of foodservice for Starbucks Canada. “But in the lobby, there’s an opportunity to offer a whole portfolio.” Your number of rooms, foot traffic and whether you’ve got convention/banquet space can help determine whether you’ll enjoy greater ROI from a fully licensed store.

At the Westin Grand in Vancouver, lobby



Vancouver’s Westin Grand partnered with Starbucks for their coffee service, and includes a coffee and chocolate pairing.

coffee service is set up early in the morning to satisfy caffeine-craving guests until the restaurant opens at 6:30. “We have urns from Starbucks, and a rolling table that we bring out with coffee pots, cream, milk, sugar and mugs. It’s everything you need,” says Michael Salhani, director of food and beverage. As a smaller boutique hotel, the Westin prefers to drive guests toward the restaurant for their daytime coffee needs. “A lot of people will use the restaurant for impromptu meetings or as a working office with their laptops,” says Salhani. “It’s more comfortable for our guests to have their coffee in the restaurant than to have a kiosk.”

For your guests, the benefit in a lobby coffee service is customer satisfaction. “It’s about convenience. It means they’re not leaving the property to go and find their morning coffee,” says Cunningham. The benefit of a branded program is it offers those customer cues for higher quality. “If you’re a four- or five-star property, you want every detail to scream: I’m the best!” says Cunningham.

Offering a quality coffee program is one of the easiest ways to scream louder than the rest of your competition. ●

Marketing

By Jennifer Nagy

Courtesy of Shutterstock

An introduction to the newest marketing tool for business.



CONTENT MARKETING 101



Jennifer Nagy, President, jInpr

The traditional marketing methods that businesses have used in the past are becoming outdated and uninteresting to consumers, leading to low conversion rates, decreased website traffic and lower ROI (on a company’s marketing spend). Today, many companies are choosing to implement new and creative marketing strategies with the end goal of establishing their company and key executives as experts in their industry. Not only does this increase a company’s overall credibility, it also helps to shorten the sales cycle drastically. The most effective thought leadership campaigns use content marketing to educate readers (potential clients, media, industry

experts, etc.) about a company’s area of expertise.

So how can you get started with your content marketing strategy? First, it’s important to know the basics...

What is Content Marketing?

Content marketing is a targeted marketing strategy that involves creating insightful, engaging and interesting written content with the aim of creating customer loyalty and increasing opportunities for future business. An effective content marketing strategy will help a business engage with its customers, leaving them better informed and interested to find out more.

Content marketing is not a direct sales tactic, but rather a two-way communication medium between a business and its target audience. Like public relations and social media, content marketing is not directly designed to sell a product/service; however, it can have significant effect on brand awareness and can be highly effective at positioning a company as an expert in their field. As I'm sure you know, these activities cannot be directly linked to an increase in sales, but they can significantly decrease the length of the sales cycle, making it a highly effective marketing medium — especially for start-ups and companies working in a highly competitive market with high supply. By improving the public's understanding of who a company is and the product/service it offers, content marketing is a fantastic way to increase a company's credibility and brand recognition without the significant costs associated with more traditional marketing methods.

In order to get the highest ROI from your content marketing strategy, it is very important to follow these four tips:

Embrace the Blog

Hosting a blog and sharing content on your website not only allows your customer to understand your position as a

thought leader, but it is also the easiest and most effective method of driving traffic to your site and increasing your SEO ranking. Every time a new blog post is added to your blog, the search engines scan your site, which immediately leads to a boost in your search ranking.

Create a weekly blogging schedule and post on the same days every week, so your followers will know when to visit your blog to read your new posts. Businesses should

Content marketing can include a variety of tactics including:

- Thought leadership articles published in high-profile publications
- Blogging
- e-Books
- Webinars
- Among many others...

be publishing a new blog post with original content at least twice a week. At least another two times per week, you should be sharing content from other sources (news articles, other companies, studies, stats, etc. with links back to the original source) through your blog. For even greater consistency and brand recognition, you should cross-promote your blog through your company's social media channels.

Promote Through Social Media

Social media is one of the best ways to post and share your content but because many companies are only now beginning to integrate it into their strategy, it can go a long way to establish your company as innovative. Before getting started, it is important to understand the role of social media and the benefit it offers for businesses: social media is one of the best marketing medi-

ums for developing relationships with (and loyalty from) potential customers, but in most cases, it is not a direct sales tactic.

Implementing a social media posting schedule will help your business maintain its competitive edge, and ensure that you can offer interesting, unique content on a regular basis. The more views your post receives, the more it will be shared, commented on and enjoyed by both new and existing customers — and the greater ROI that your social media outreach will earn. Because of this fact, scheduling your posts to ensure the greatest exposure to your followers can make or break the success of your social media strategy. Scheduling tools like Oktopost will enable businesses to share content at the time of day that it will make the biggest impact.

As well as publishing your own content on a consistent, ongoing basis, businesses should be engaging with customers' posts to ensure continued customer satisfaction. For example, if a hotel guest tweets a picture of the fantastic view of the beach from her hotel room, the hotel should acknowledge the post offering a friendly greeting or 'thank you' for the post. Consider also retweeting (sharing the image with your followers) and then recognizing the customer on #FF (follow Friday), as one of your property's amazing guests. This will make the guest feel special and she will

remember the hotel for its fantastic beachside view, as well as its friendly staff.

Drop the Sales Pitch

Effective content marketing minimizes the need for a sales pitch. In fact, if a company does choose to promote their company within their content, its content marketing strategy will not be effective. Most consumers are highly distrustful of advertising messages and so the moment your content becomes promotional, readers are likely to lose interest. Customers visit websites and social media channels to learn insightful information about a business' area of expertise, not to experience a hard sell (or even a soft one!). Instead, provide customers with the information they are looking to find in a creative and informative way.

For example, a hotel can use content marketing to increase repeat site visits from potential customers, increasing brand recognition, brand loyalty and increasing direct bookings in the process. In order to do so, the hotel would need to make their website (and blog) a destination for consumers to find out valuable travel tips (including topics like: how to save on your upcoming hotel stay, etc.). Because readers keep coming back to the site to learn from your content, they will be more likely to remember your hotel and visit your direct website (instead of the OTAs) when they are booking their next hotel stay in that destination.

By providing info instead of just using your content to sell, you are giving the customer time to develop trust for your company, before receiving your sales messages. If your content continues to be engaging, informative and creative enough, the customer will remember your company and come back to make a purchase when they are ready to do so.

Add Videos

Videos are very popular content with followers because most people connect more strongly to visuals than copy; however, many companies are hesitant to use video content because of their perception of it as expensive and time-consuming to create. In reality, videos can be much easier to produce than you might think. With a well-planned script, a professional setting and proper lighting, you can use free video apps (i.e. Vine and Instagram) to create mini-looping videos that can be shared on all of your social media profiles quickly and easily.

Additionally, creating a longer video for your homepage or for YouTube will not

only position your company as a creative thought leader, but can also offer very beneficial marketing exposure. For example, multimedia content often appears on the first page of Google search results, which helps to make your business more visible (without having to invest in expensive SEO or Google AdWords campaigns). Even if your videos are not visible on the first page of search results, consumers will often use YouTube to conduct a search. In fact,

YouTube is the second most popular search engine in the world.

To conclude, as it becomes harder for companies to stand out from the crowd in a highly competitive market, a content marketing strategy becomes increasingly important. Content marketing is a low-cost, highly effective way for companies to establish a position of thought leadership and develop relationships with potential customers using top-notch content. ●

If you have any further questions about content marketing or if you would like help planning and creating your business' content marketing strategy, please don't hesitate to contact me at any time at jenn@jlnpr.com.



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PMS/POS

By Robin Brunet

Tech Wars



Myriad PMS/POS solutions vie for the hotelier's attention.

More than ever, technology defines the hotel experience, whether it's the self check-in and touch-screen kiosks that are part of an establishment's property management system (PMS), or the point of sale (POS) terminals scattered throughout the property.

But with advanced technology comes advanced concerns. To what degree does one have to manage the management systems? What happens if the network goes down? How vulnerable is a system to hacking?

Doug Ash, president of Smart Hotel Software, offers some basic advice. "Hoteliers should look for PMS systems that fit their business rather than the reverse. The system should also be easy to use, which believe it or not can be a challenge in the

complex PMS world."

Ash offers the same advice to hoteliers shopping for POS systems. "And then, to cap everything off, all the different systems in the hotel should be able to communicate with one another to provide front- and back-office management."

Christopher Browne, general manager of the Accent Inn Vancouver Airport Hotel, adds that hoteliers should also have a definite budget in mind, "because while the price of technology has dropped substantially, none of these systems come cheap."

The Accent Inn chain, which comprises five locations in B.C. (with each venue playfully described in the corporate website as "pint sized"), upgraded from an outdated DOS system in 2011. "We wanted a bigger

system to achieve more revenue growth and to improve guest retention, and we also wanted a system that would easily expand as our business grew," says Browne.

Instead of automatically choosing the most elaborate solution available, the Accent Inn decision-makers narrowed their search down to several contenders – and then they thoroughly researched the providers responsible for them. "That's how we wound up choosing to go with the Maestro by NORTHWIND PMS," Browne says. "The other systems were very good, but NORTHWIND had a good history of being responsive to its clients' needs, and that was the tipping point for us. Also, the Maestro Diamond Plus service has proven to be phenomenal, with turnarounds being as short as 30 minutes."



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Focusing on the hotel's operational needs, and doing some homework can help hoteliers obtain the system best suited for the hotel.

Warren Dehan, president of NORTH-WIND (the Ontario-based software developer that sells its Maestro open platform PMS to hotels around the world), says people can be overly swayed by technology. "I call it technology seduction," he says. "What they often do is the equivalent of someone buying a Ferrari and then realizing he can't fit the baby seat in the back."

Dehan agrees with Browne that hoteliers should shop for PMS or POS systems by narrowing a selection down to three good products, "And then you should ask yourself where you're going with your business and if the suppliers of these products can accommodate you. What kind of adaptabil-

ity do they offer? What about upgrades? And be sure to check the track record of each provider, because that says just about everything in terms of their reliability."

Dehan and colleagues have worked hard to gain a reputation for responding to clients' needs. "Lately a lot of their interest has been in enhancing their Internet presence, so we help them market themselves online," he says. "Also, in the last six or so months we've seen a growing trend of using alternative technology to get away from the traditional check-in experience: so we provide iPad check in/check out, and this has been so effective that one hotel client has torn out his front desk and installed a wine bar in its place."

World Web Technologies Inc. points out that PMSs were originally developed to manage bookings, guest charges, check-ins and other matters, all on a single platform accessed via a hotel's computer system. The next advancement was to interface with traditional hotel systems such as credit card terminals, keycards and phones.

But the company posits that all this is no longer good enough. Today's solutions must incorporate front- and back-office accounting, food and beverage, resort and package activities, housekeeping, channel management and GDS (global distribution system) connectivity — across multiple properties, and on a single platform.

World Web President Frank Verhagen points out that with an integrated PMS covering most facets of the property, guest folios are more comprehensive than ever. On-property guest activities are automatically recorded in the folios, providing invaluable prospects for customizing each guest's stay and meeting their needs more closely. This in turn leads to smart e-Marketing strategies: for example, due to the more in-depth profile information, email marketing campaigns become even more targeted and effective.



Accent Inn Vancouver Airport Hotel upgraded in 2011 from an outdated DOS system after thoroughly researching the contenders and providers.

From Verhagen's perspective, the best way to achieve all this is through the cloud, which his company specializes in. "Frankly, I'm surprised by what goes on in many of the 150-room and smaller hotels we deal with: no backing up of data, no redundancy, and so forth," he says. "And yet the owners can't afford to have these shortcomings, considering they're only breaking even in many cases. So with the cloud, they get what they need: no worries about losing data, no need for hardware other than a computer and Internet connection. The cloud can even be accessed through a smartphone — and doing business remotely is more important than ever these days."



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Maestro by NORTHWIND's pre-registration mobile online solution, WebPRO, offers convenience to the guest and provides pre-arrival information to the hotel.

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Master Management

InnQuest Canada's roomMASTER performs a broad range of PMS functions for hotels of all sizes, and its components include online booking, front desk and front office software.

InnQuest emphasizes that all of the PMS features needed to run roomMASTER, whether stand-alone or networked, are included in the purchase price.

Thin is In

Dell's Inspiron 23 All-in-One Touch Screen Desktop is the world's thinnest 23 inch desktop at less than half an inch thick.

It's the favoured desktop solution used by Smart Hotel Software and is powered by fourth generation Intel Core processors and Windows 8.1. It's also a true visual focal point of any POS area.

Cloud Control

The WebRezPro cloud PMS by World Web Technologies Inc. meets all front- and back-office needs, and features include a room reservation software that allows hoteliers to advertise deals, set up special rates, and package reservations with other services.

WebRezPro's \$5 per month/per room fee includes a full accounting suite and commission-free booking engine.

Book 'em

Five Star offers a PMS module for \$3000 or less depending on the size of the property, plus \$295 per year for updates.

"Plus, our Internet reservations module is a real time, fully-integrated booking engine for the hotelier's web site, with a two way interface with Expedia and booking.com," says Peter Abel.

Indeed, the hardware associated with standard PMS systems is not only expensive, but the installation and maintenance of it is the responsibility of the hotel: the PMS vendor is only responsible for the software. But vendors of cloud-based PMSs are accountable for the servers, databases, processors and other infrastructure, which is housed securely with the vendor or at dedicated data centres.

Peter Abel, owner of Five Star Hotel systems (which develops, sells, installs, teaches and supports a suite of fully-integrated hotel software), concedes that the cloud offers many advantages. "You don't need to do updates to the program or back up your data," he says. "But ironically, this is a concern for some owners. Are you comfortable with someone else being responsible? We talk to lots of hotel owners who aren't ready for that just yet."

Abel says the next issue about the cloud is cost. "This is a big one. Cloud systems are usually priced as a service like \$5 per room per month. For a 100-room hotel, that will cost \$30,000 over the next five years. A typical property-based system will cost about \$10,000 up front and \$1,200 per year. That's half the cost of the system that seemed so reasonable a few seconds ago."



Abel describes his hotel clients as having a keen knowledge about what they want out of a PMS/POS system but adds that the one thing they don't do so well is "take advantage of all the ways the Internet can get bookings in." Fortunately, Five Star is an expert in this realm: last year it upgraded a 50-room property in Victoria that was using an old DOS system. "Eight months later they reported that 75 per cent of their reservations was coming in through a fully integrated booking module we had provided. That means only 25 per cent of their business had to be keyed in the conventional way."

Finding a provider that truly understands the intricacies of the hospitality sector is another thing hoteliers should be on the lookout for when considering PMS/POS products. "We pride ourselves on the fact that our programmers worked in the hospitality sector before joining us," says Trina Stephens, president of InnQuest Canada. "They, along with hoteliers, generate ideas about how to tweak and advance our software."

Although Stephens estimates that at least half of all the hoteliers she encounters "have a good grasp of what's out there and what they need," even the most sophisticated hotelier needs plenty of support when learning how to use a new system. "Our roomMASTER product is so easy to use we've seen people who have never used a computer before effortlessly compile SQL reports," she says. "Plus our system has lots of 'help' features and a training environment that copies information and places it in a separate section purely for training purposes, so that the daily operation of system isn't affected."



For his part, Christopher Browne says that reputable providers will bend over backwards to facilitate the training process as much as possible. "Getting used to a new system is never easy, but in our case we had our providers come on site and spend several days with everyone showing us the ropes. After that, training modules within the PMS system that don't interfere with operations was a huge help to users who needed a little extra instruction."

Evolution in POS is just as vigorous as that of PMS development, and Smart Hotel's Ash notes that the biggest change is

tactile. "It's all touchscreen these days, and there are some really nice screens around, ones with brushed steel cases that come off looking like high end furniture," he says. "Gone are the days when you had to buy all-in-one units with sub-par processors."

Ash says Smart Hotel is one of the few companies to provide POS software integration to clients. "We use industrial strength software and connect everything so the hotel staff don't have to re-key data manually."

NORTHWIND provides POS integration thanks to a partnership with POS provider Sil-

verWare. SilverWare POS's Avrio solution fully integrates with Maestro for complete guest service. "Our integration performs normal processes such as room charges and voucher lookups, but it extends beyond that with integrated client synchronization, server alerts on guest status like same-day checkout, as well as message waiting and meal plans," says Dehan. The integrated systems share data from food and beverage outlets and retail stores for one hotel or a multi-property group for accounting accuracy and simplification of charge detail verification, revenue posting, and reporting.

Not surprisingly, advancements in the PMS/POS realm will continue to be fast and furious in 2014 and beyond. Five Star is currently working on credit card integration for wireless table side service, along with a smartphone self check in app. Meanwhile, InnQuest is catering to the growing popularity of integration with GDS vendors. "There's a lot to look forward to in terms of new products in the near future," says Stephens.

Just like smartphones, flat screens and other high-tech devices, property management systems tend to dazzle potential customers due to the sheer scope of what they can do. By focusing on one's main operational needs and doing some homework, hoteliers can avoid technology seduction and obtain the system best suited to their property. ●



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Online travel agencies (OTAs) are a vital part of the supply chain and have been largely responsible for the rapid growth in online travel bookings across both mature and emerging markets. While the online channel has been a beneficial one for hotels, it has also placed a strain on budgets due to increased distribution costs (caused by high OTA commissions).



Mike Ford, CEO, SiteMinder

Which are the Most Popular Metasearch Channels?

MF: Some of the popular sites include Google Hotel Finder, Trivago (Priceline) and Kayak (Expedia). Earlier this year, TripAdvisor also introduced a metasearch engine and more recently, TripConnect, the company's new advertising bidding tool. TripConnect enables hotels to place bids in TripAdvisor auctions to help drive direct bookings to their own website.

In Your Opinion, Why Are Metasearch OTAs a business imperative for hoteliers?

MF: There will always be a first-mover advantage for early adopters of new sales

investing in metasearch to drive bookings direct to their website. TripConnect combines the efficiency of metasearch with the cost effectiveness of the direct channel, enabling small hotel groups and independents (who may not have the large marketing budgets of the big chains) to take advantage of the opportunities presented by metasearch channels.

Do you Have Any Tips for Hoteliers on How to Best Implement Metasearch Channels?

MF: Metasearch OTAs present both a huge opportunity and a challenge for a property's sales and marketing teams. Unlike traditional OTA channels,

Metasearch OTA Channels

In recent years, new online channels have been created with the intention of lowering hotels' distribution costs, without negatively affecting occupancy. Some have been successful (others not so successful), but one that has seen a great deal of success recently is the metasearch channel.

In an attempt to illustrate the opportunities that metasearch channels present for hoteliers, we spoke with Mike Ford, CEO of SiteMinder:

What are Metasearch OTAs?

MF: Metasearch OTAs aggregate room rates from multiple online channels and display them to the consumer in a single list making it faster and easier for consumers to find and compare hotels and pricing options.

and distribution technologies. At the end of the day, whoever has the best ability to convert clicks to bookings no matter the type of property, the number of rooms, geographical location, star rating or amenities offered - will be most profitable. As such, hotels that understand the importance of metasearch and that take action today to capitalize on it will stand out from the competition in the exact place where consumers are looking for and booking hotel rooms online.

In Your Opinion, What is the Most Important Benefit Offered by TripConnect (over other metasearch OTAs)?

MF: Although metasearch was able to increase hotels' online visibility and bookings, distribution costs remained too high for most properties to maintain over the long term. As such, it was mostly larger chains that participated (and profited) by

metasearch channels merge the digital marketing and distribution activities of a property, requiring these teams to work in harmony to achieve the best possible results.

Advanced distribution technology can go a long way to facilitate the transition to TripConnect (or other metasearch OTAs). Metasearch channel management requires best-in-class distribution connectivity using a single platform to manage the connectivity from PMS or CRS, the digital marketing "bid management" and booking fulfillment at the hotel's website.

Any Final Words?

MF: With the right mix of integrated technology, a cost-effective commercial model and a consistent ability to convert more direct business using metasearch channels (like TripConnect), hotels will experience a decrease in distribution costs and an increase in total revenues, yielding a higher profit margin for online transactions. ●

British Columbia

Four Seasons Hotel Vancouver Sparkles with Prestigious Forbes Five Star Ranking

The results are in! The 56th annual Forbes Travel Guide Star Awards have announced their top picks for luxury hotels, restaurants and spas, and Four Seasons Hotel Vancouver is the proud recipient of the prestigious five star rating. The Forbes five star rating is a coveted honour awarded to the best of the best; this year Four Seasons Hotel Vancouver is among only four Canadian hotels receiving the highly esteemed nod of approval. Sending out undercover inspectors to stay at the selected hotels and grade them on points including service, atmosphere and amenities provides Forbes with an impartial ruling of the guest experience.

The distinguishing aspect between four star and five star hotels as per Forbes is predominantly service, a quality that Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts has always prided itself on. To achieve five star status hotels must "provide a memorable experience through virtually flawless service and the finest of amenities and delivery of service that is intuitive, engaging and passionate, and eagerly goes beyond expectations."

"Achieving this five-star rating is nothing short of spectacular," shares Robert Cima, regional vice-president and general manager of the hotel. "For me personally, it is a highlight of my 30-year career with Four Seasons. For the property, it is the highest praise possible in the hotel industry and confirmation that, as a team, we are doing things right, with passion and purpose."

The Forbes magazine five-star ranking goes hand-in-hand with FORTUNE magazine's recent recognition of Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts as one of the "100 Best Companies to Work For" for the 17th consecutive year.

Alberta

Knights Inn Canada Expands Into Alberta with the Addition of Edmonton and Lloydminster

Knights Inn Canada Franchise Systems Limited has announced that the Knights Inn flag will now be flying in the Province of Alberta, with the signing of two locations, the RoadRunner Motel in Edmonton and the Central Suite Hotel in Lloydminster.

"We are very pleased to welcome these two great locations, as we continue our 2014 expansion plan for Knights Inn", said Glen Blake president & CEO Full House Franchise Systems Limited and master franchisor for Knights Inn Canada. "The addition of Edmonton and Lloydminster create the beginning of additional opportunities that we are working on in the Province of Alberta."

Knights Inn are now located in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and New Brunswick.

The Central Suite Hotel will transition to become the Knights Inn - Lloydminster and is scheduled to open April 15th, 2014.

The RoadRunner Motel will transition to become the Knights Inn Edmonton-South Side and is also scheduled to open April 15th, 2014.

"Pop Up" Roof Restaurant Opens at Fairmont Hotel Vancouver

The pop up trend has hit Fairmont Hotel Vancouver with the return of The Roof restaurant on the 15th floor. The room, named in honour of the panoramic view, casts north to snow-capped coastal mountains and south to Point Grey peninsula and Strait of Georgia and with the re-opening, can be enjoyed over breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner.

The sunken bar boasts views of the city skyline with a list of libations reminiscent of Mad Men days and for the big spender, a Grand Sazerac cocktail made with Louis XIII cognac. Open from 11:30 a.m. to midnight, the lounge has cozy banquettes and overstuffed wing back chairs making it an ideal location for liaisons, lunch deals or a sunset rendezvous with live entertainment on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings.

Executive Chef Cameron Ballendine has returned to Vancouver from his tasty globetrotting travels that took him to kitchens in China, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, and France. But home is where the heart is, and the West Coast is where he is laying his chef's hat. Now in place as the top toque at Fairmont Hotel Vancouver, he oversees the culinary operation and is putting a contemporary twist on the cuisine in the "new" Roof restaurant.

The Fairmont Hotel Vancouver turns 75 in 2014, and a \$12 million lobby renovation will provide the grand dame, a designated heritage building, with a sense of renewed luxury. Newly appointed General Manager, Michael Pye, returned to his birthplace to oversee the project. "Vancouverites have had a love affair with the hotel since it opened and it's surprising how often we receive stories about the memories guests have of the property and our staff. The temporary opening of The Roof will introduce a new generation to the venue and, we hope, new memories to share."



Days Inn Debuts in Vernon, BC

Realstar Hospitality has announced the opening of its second Days Inn location in 2014, a 53-room hotel in Vernon, British Columbia. The newly renovated 100 per cent smoke-free hotel offers comfortable and stylish guest rooms, free Daybreak Café breakfast, free Wi-Fi Internet access and an indoor swimming pool.



The hotel has undertaken a complete overhaul to provide updated accommodations. All guest rooms offer comfortable beds with triple sheeting, 32" flat screen LCD TVs, work desk, microwave, mini-fridge and kitchenette. Days Inn - Vernon is pet friendly and free parking is available for all hotel guests.

"We are proud to be part of a well-recognized brand and join the Days Inn family as they continue to expand across Canada," said Peter Lim, owner, Days Inn - Vernon. "We're confident guests will enjoy our great service along with all the essential hotel amenities."

"Days Inn - Vernon is a great new addition to our portfolio of hotels and builds on our commitment to providing value-conscious travellers with quality lodging," said Irwin Prince, president & coo, Realstar Hospitality. "Guests will enjoy a distinctive travel experience when staying at Days Inn in Vernon."

Saskatchewan

Radisson Hotel Saskatoon's Trevor Robertson Wins First CCFCC Chef of the Year Title

Radisson Hotel Saskatoon's Executive Chef Trevor Robertson was awarded the prestigious Chef of the Year title by the Canadian Culinary Federation of Chefs de Cuisine (CCFCC) Saskatoon Branch at the 2014 Chef's Gala. The CCFCC also honoured Jasmine Goldsack, a talented associate on Chef Robertson's culinary team at the AROMA Mediterranean Resto-Bar, with the Junior Chef of the Year title.



Every year, members of the CCFCC Saskatoon Branch vote and recognize a fellow colleague in the foodservice industry who has demonstrated leadership and professionalism in the trade. Serving his third term as the vice-president of the CCFCC Saskatoon branch, Chef Robertson is dedicated to the education of both junior members and the upgrading skills of regular members for the advancement of Saskatoon's foodservice industry.

"Having me and Jasmine recognized by some of the industry's best in Saskatoon is very encouraging," says Chef Robertson. "Our team at AROMA is always looking for ways to improve our culinary skills to ensure that our food is fresh and current. Being a hotel restaurant can be challenging, so making sure our team is constantly refining our skills gives us the competitive edge in this market."

Chef Robertson's recipe to maintaining a level of professionalism and knowledge in the trade is by participating in culinary competitions, which offer opportunities for the chef to challenge himself to be creative as well as learn from other skilled chefs in Canada. He also recognizes the importance of mentoring talented associates like Jasmine to ensure continuous growth in the industry.

"We are extremely proud of Chef Robertson for his achievements," says Steve Giblin, CEO of SilverBirch Hotels & Resorts. "Chef Robertson's dedication to his cuisine reflects our organization's high standards in offering top-notch food and beverage services to our guests."

MasterBUILT Hotels Opens Prototypical Microtel Inn & Suites by Wyndham in Weyburn

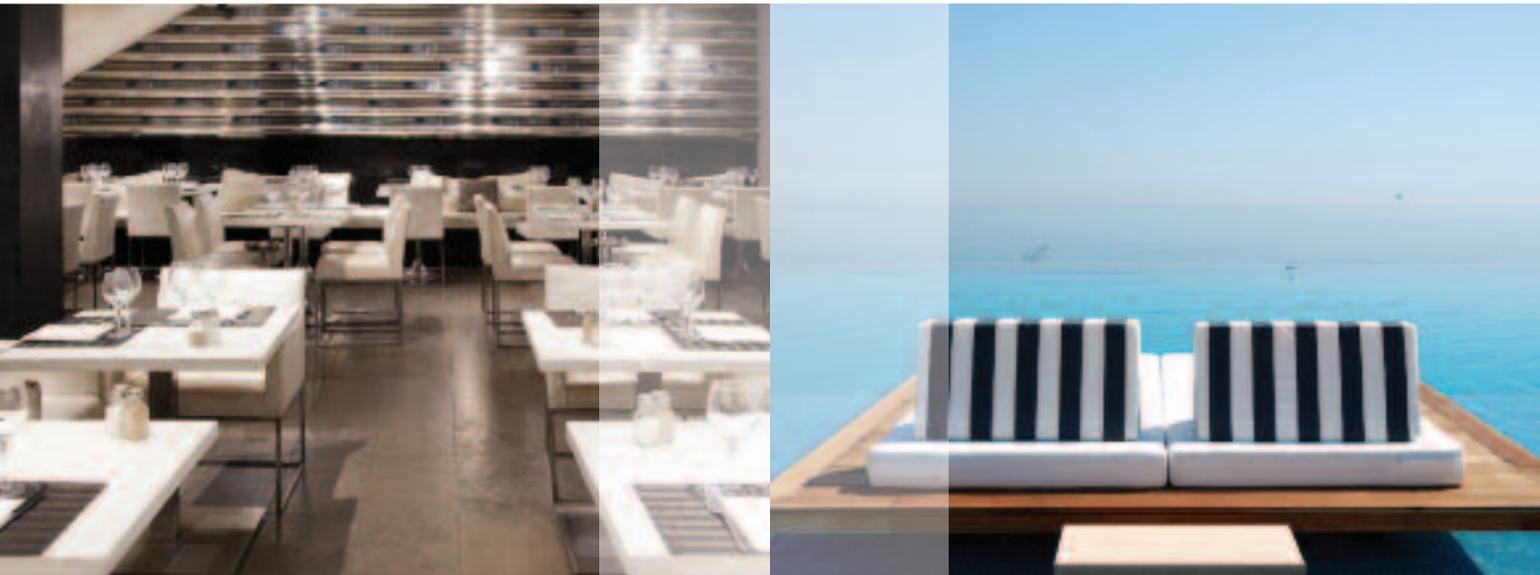
MasterBUILT Hotels, a joint venture between Superior Lodging Corp. – one of Canada's largest and most successful hotel developers renowned for establishing the Super 8 and Wingate by Wyndham brands in Canada – and Jayman MasterBUILT, one of Canada's premier residential builder developers over the past three decades – celebrated the opening of Microtel's third Canadian prototype hotel in Weyburn, Saskatchewan.



The Microtel Inn & Suites by Wyndham in Weyburn (www.microteleweyburn.com) offers guests an extensive range of complimentary amenities: including deluxe hot continental breakfast, coffee, high-speed wireless Internet, indoor pool with sauna and hot tub, state of the art fitness centre, parking and business centre. Guests also have access to valet cleaning service, a copy/fax / printing service. The hotel is situated on Grace Street and Highway 39 with convenient access to shopping, dining, historical museums and arts centres as well as an 18-hole championship golf course.

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UniMac® Expands Product Range with New 200-Pound Tumble Dryer

UniMac, a leading provider of on-premises laundry equipment, has expanded its product offering with the introduction of the UT200, a 200-pound tumble dryer. "The UT200 is just one example of UniMac's commitment to increasing our customers' satisfaction by offering a comprehensive range of equipment with innovative features that help on-premises laundries operate more cost-effectively," said Bill Brooks, North American sales manager for UniMac. "The 200-pound tumble dryer will allow operators to improve throughput and increase savings, ensuring the lowest cost of ownership." With the addition of the UT200, UniMac has one of the most extensive lines of on-premises tumble dryers in the industry, with capacities from 25 to 200 pounds, including 30 and 45-pound capacity stacked models.

The UT200 not only has an extra-large capacity, it provides superior efficiency with a high-performance heater box. Sealed cylinder rims and a concentrated airflow pattern ensure no heat escapes, helping to keep utility costs down and to maximize productivity. The self-cleaning lint screen means fast, efficient lint removal from the tumble dryer's large storage area.

Product information contact: 800.587.5458 or unimac.com/info



UniMac® UW45/65 Washer-Extractors Offer Spray Rinse Technology and ECO Cycles

UniMac®, the leading provider of on-premises laundry equipment, recently introduced OPTIspray™ Rinsing Technology and ECO Cycles to the UniLinc™ control system. These new features reduce water use and improve efficiency and energy savings on the UW45 and UW65 machines while producing superior rinse results when compared to competitive equipment.

The exclusive, state-of-the-art technology delivers optimized rinsing through unique bath and spray rinse intelligence, which can provide a 12 per cent faster rinse cycle time and increased throughput. Superior to bath rinsing alone, OPTIspray's spray nozzle pulls wash chemicals and dirt through the load, effectively removing them. Alternatively, using only a bath rinse simply dilutes chemicals and dirt, leaving residue behind on the linens.

With OPTIspray, OPL managers can achieve superior water savings using up to 39 per cent less water than competitive brands while maintaining optimal wash and rinse quality. Additionally, one can see 30 per cent more water savings and higher efficiencies when combining OPTIspray with the ECO cycle option. These 'green' ECO Cycle options are part of UniLinc's 41 available cycles.

UniLinc gives operators ultimate control by pinpointing specific areas where operators can increase efficiency and reduce operating costs associated with labour, linen replacement, utilities and maintenance. Additionally, UniLinc's nine ECO Cycles and 400 G-Force extraction combined with OPTIspray Rinsing Technology and OPTIdry™ Over-dry Prevention Technology assure the lowest cost of ownership in the industry.

For more informational please call 800.587.5458 or visit unimac.com/info.

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by Nicole Sherwood

If you build it they will come. Over the past 90 years the guests have kept coming to the Deer Lodge in Lake Louise, and have included nobility, artists, a military and research team and two film star dogs involved in "Son of Lassie".

The year was 1910 and tourism in the Canadian Rockies was booming. One tourist, Gertrude Crosby a C.P.R. telegraphist noticed the need for a more moderately-priced accommodation and a place for tourists to enjoy afternoon tea. Ten years later she was able to secure

quintupled with 29 rooms and provided its guests with hot and cold water and heat — a source of pride at the time. The hotel wasn't completely winterized until 1988 when it was renovated and restored.

The 58,202 square feet hotel now has 71 rooms including the Tower, Heritage and Lodge rooms. The historic tower rooms have been restored to their original condition — complete with cast iron radiators, woodwork, lighting and brass fixtures.

"All of our rooms have duvet comforters and most are furnished with

tures in the lounge include sheepskin fur throws on ice benches and candles throughout that highlight the beautiful craftsmanship of the Frozen Memories Ice Studio," describes McCaffrey.

Other features include a large sitting room with a grand fireplace and a games room with a pool table, television and board games. It is also home to the Mount Fairview Dining Room — one of the most noted dining rooms in the Canadian Rockies, which has received the Wine Spectator Awards of Excellence six years in a row.

The historic hotel provides a certain charm and uniqueness.

This originality is part of Deer Lodge's secret of success all of this time.

McCaffrey explains, "Deer Lodge's secret of success has come from remaining true to its original roots as a peaceful lodge offering rustic accommodation, boutique wines and delicious cuisine.

"Much of the original hand-hewn log structure and décor from the original tea house still remains, however it is now complemented by newly renovated Heritage Wing," he adds.

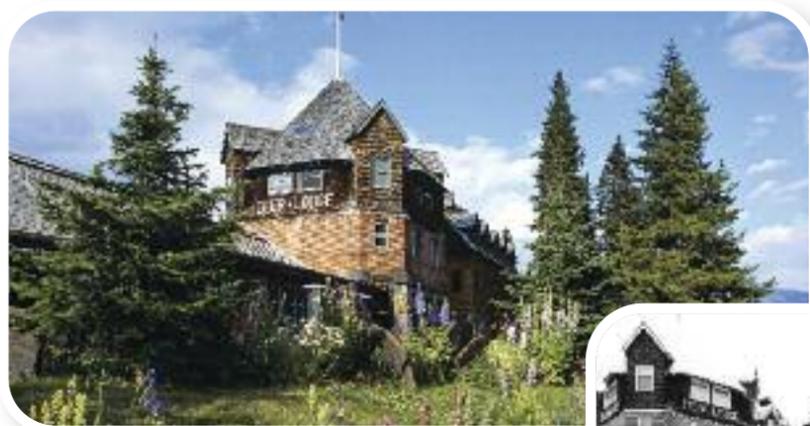
These are a few of the changes the hotel has seen in its tenure, and how it has continued to be a popular place to stay all of this time with its showcasing of rustic accommodations, boutique

wines, delicious cuisine and attentive staff.

The staff has seen many guests over the years, including international travellers from Germany, UK, Japan and Australia. "We often describe our guests as experienced travellers looking for an authentic Canadian experience, more intimate and a place to step back in time and relax," says McCaffrey.

The tourism industry continues to boom in the Canadian Rockies as it did all those years ago when Gertrude Crosby had her vision. Whether she could have envisioned what Deer Lodge would eventually become we will never know. But she would probably be happy that it has stayed true to the roots she planted over 90 years ago. ●

True to its Roots



Deer Lodge remains a popular retreat for over 90 years.

some land for development and in 1923 the Tea House opened, followed closely by the opening of Deer Lodge in 1925.

"The Tea House was just a few minutes stroll from Lake Louise and quickly became a gathering spot for visitors and the rapidly growing local population of guides," says Gavin McCaffrey, Deer Lodge manager.

Shortly after the Tea House opened a drug store, and YWCA residence was built giving birth to the original village of Lake Louise. "Over the years the lodge, teahouse, drug store and residence were joined together to form Deer Lodge," McCaffrey adds.

When Deer Lodge opened it had a mere six rooms. However, by 1928 it had almost

antiques from the era. As a rustic mountain retreat, none of our rooms have televisions," says McCaffrey.

Over the years many of the architectural features from the original buildings have been restored including the original hand-hewn log structure. Deer Lodge combines old world grandeur with the comforts of modernity, which is evident in features like the state-of-the-art rooftop that offers a captivating view of the Victoria Glacier and their new ice lounge. McCafferty describes this addition as old meets new.

"The ice lounge is perfect for après ski and is a great way to warm up. It features a special drink menu that is available specifically for the ice lounge. Other fea-

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