

A Word About Breakfast

By Edward L. Xanders, CHA



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Recently, a hotel owner commented that he had trouble building repeat business in a highly competitive market. He had an 80-room national limited-service franchise with a \$57 ADR at 53% in 1995. Above-average decor in the guest rooms greeted the guest. His occupancy should have been much higher.

However, at the complimentary continental breakfast, the owner demanded that the manager cut all costs.

1. Purchased from a local grocery store were instant coffee and a powdered orange drink. The night auditor reconstituted the products by 6:00 a.m., but there was no hot plate for the coffee, or ice for the orange drink—all was served warm.
2. Donuts and other baked goods were purchased at a bakery thrift shop and served cold — two to three days old.

The owner stated that he did not eat breakfast and that the franchise requirements were satisfied. There was only one free *USA Today* provided, along with a sign: "Do not take the paper from the lobby." At 9:00 a.m. a maid saved the leftover food for the next day, and cleaned the lobby. Chairs were inverted onto table tops until the night auditor reset them the next day. And the

owner wondered why his occupancy was decreasing!

We trust your hotel breakfast is served fresh, at the appropriate temperature, meeting and/or exceeding all franchise requirements.

How Much to Offer

Offering free food to your hotel guests began as, and sometimes remains, a game of one-upsmanship — I can do better than you. I can take care of my guests, and keep them coming back, because I give them free coffee in the Lobby 24 hours a day!

The hotel next door said, "I will give them coffee and a donut," and so on it goes.

Bradbury Inns of Atlanta offers a hot breakfast of scrambled eggs, sausage,

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toast, oatmeal/grits, pancakes/Eggo waffles, cereals, Danish, fruit, juice, coffee — all *without* a full production kitchen.

Now Homewood Suites is offering two soups (a clear and a cream) each evening, along with serve-yourself draft beer and wine (where permitted by law).

Cookies—we've got hot, fresh-from-the-oven cookies. Not only can Doubletree Hotels offer free cookies at the front desk from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m., now you can too. Bake your own in your equipment, using your

grandmother's favorite recipe, or call Otis Spunkmeyer (800/938-1900 in San Leandro, CA) for the oven (about the size of a large microwave) and the ready-to-use cookie dough. In theory, this dough helps you make more dough through repeat business, and it works!

A hotel at an interstate interchange, visible from the highway. Once off the interstate, however, you cannot see the hotel and because of zoning laws no signs are permitted to direct you to the property. As a way of building business, the property markets large, fresh, hot, morning muffins in orange, blueberry, bran, and chocolate, and cookies in the evening. They use billboards, AAA Tour Books, AARP magazines, local radio and television (remember, they could not buy or rent the expensive signs). Their reputation and occupancy are excellent; the manager and sales personnel take muffins along on morning sales calls, and cookies in the afternoon. Recently, a competitive hotel on the corner added free half pints of cold milk to their cookie program — and the one-upsmanship goes on.

Whether you offer cold continental breakfast/full hot breakfast; beer and wine/cocktails to order; fresh hot muffins/soup du jour—first meet the requirements of your franchise, and then exceed your competition through the best products and service that are cost effective.

Remember—whatever you offer, you are offering it to increase occupancy and happy guests. **F**

Edward L. Xanders, CHA, is President of Interim Hospitality Consultants which provides hotel planning and operations assistance. Call 904/893-6010.