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A Clean Hotel Will Lead to More Business

By Edward L Xanders, CHA

“If 1995 and 1996 have been so good in the hotel industry, why can't I get more rooms sold? This is the question of the moment.

Each month high occupancies are reported in all regions of the United States, in all hotel segments. Now is the time to maximize your occupancy by filling these vacant rooms without spending additional money.

Target Marketing, Yield Management, and Use of Franchise Marketing Programs are all subjects that must be addressed to top off at 100% each day. None of these strategies work effectively if the hotel is lacking in cleanliness and service.

Through the Guests' Eyes

Try to look at your hotel as your guest would. Is the hotel clean, what about the service provided? Are the billboards painted and are all the lights working? The same goes for the property signs. Your entrance may be city or county property, but it's your entrance - the first impression your hotel makes. Mow the grass, edge the sidewalks, pick up the daily garbage thrown about.

Notice the parking lot, is it clean? Is it re-stripped once a year and are pot holes filled? An unkempt exterior indicates dirty rooms to a customer. What is your curb appeal to your potential guest? Are the light fixtures at the front door filled with dead bugs? Is the entrance door handle worn out and are the windows filled with credit card decals? Every hotel accepts credit cards; why advertise for them? You don't see the decals on Hilton and Marriott doors.

The lobby should be an inviting atmosphere. Remember, this is where you welcome guests into your hotel. Use sofas, easy chairs, and table lamps (warm white fluorescent light bulbs instead of cool white for a softer glow).

Is the front desk uncluttered, with only the hotel logo or an appropriate picture on the back wall of the desk? Only four signs should be posted, and all tastefully done.

1. Ownership License Agreement.
2. Manager on Duty.
3. Checkout time.
4. Credit cards accepted.

Why say "No"?

An owner will spend thousands of dollars in franchise fees, marketing, and advertising, furnish great rooms — yet, simple requests are denied.

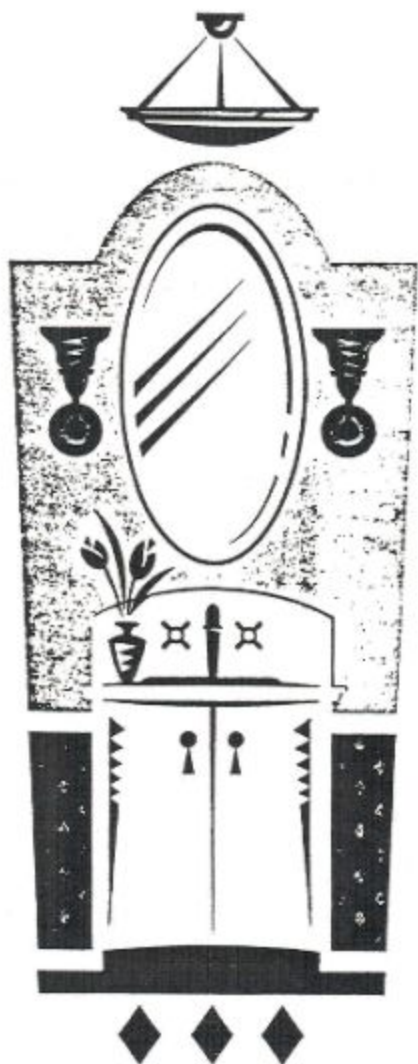
NO CHECKS ACCEPTED. Why? Use Telecheck Inc. (800/835-3243). It costs you the same as a credit card, uses the same verification machine and not all guests use a credit card.

NO PETS. Why? You have rooms designated for guests who smoke; why not two or three rooms for guests with small pets? Thousands of AARP members have pets with them when they travel. You solicit AARP business—keep it all.

NO FREE LOCAL CALLS. Why? If you want commercial business guests, then make it cost effective to them. It normally costs you nothing to give free local and 800/888 access calls.

The Clean Room

Every guest expects a clean room. In fact, it is a hotel owner's requirement by state law to provide a clean room. Guest room decor may be old or new, contemporary or traditional, bright or subdued, but it must be clean and comfortable.



(Continued on next page)

A Clean Hotel Will Lead to More Business (continued)

Regardless of the number of chairs, guests will sit on the edge of the bed, thus requiring the turning and flipping of mattresses on a regular basis. Most chains require that this be done four times a year. Also, be sure to rotate the box springs once a year. These simple procedures will:

1. Extend the life of your bedding, *saving you money.*
2. Provide your guests with a more comfortable bed which will increase your repeat business, *making you money.*

How often do you clean the carpets? Possibly only when required by an accident or according to your general cleaning schedule. An owner who felt that the carpets were clean enough, was requested to walk in guest rooms with clean white socks. There was visible evidence of dirt in the carpets, validating guest complaints. In high-occupancy hotels, try to clean a room carpet every six weeks.

The "sanitized" paper band placed on commodes is a waste of time and money. That is why the most noted chains do not require them. What they do require is a sparkling, shining clean commode, and that is accomplished only by using bowl cleaner and a commode brush. Clean the bathtub, shine the chrome, and don't forget to check for garbage under the bed and behind the dresser.

\$10 For A Housekeeper

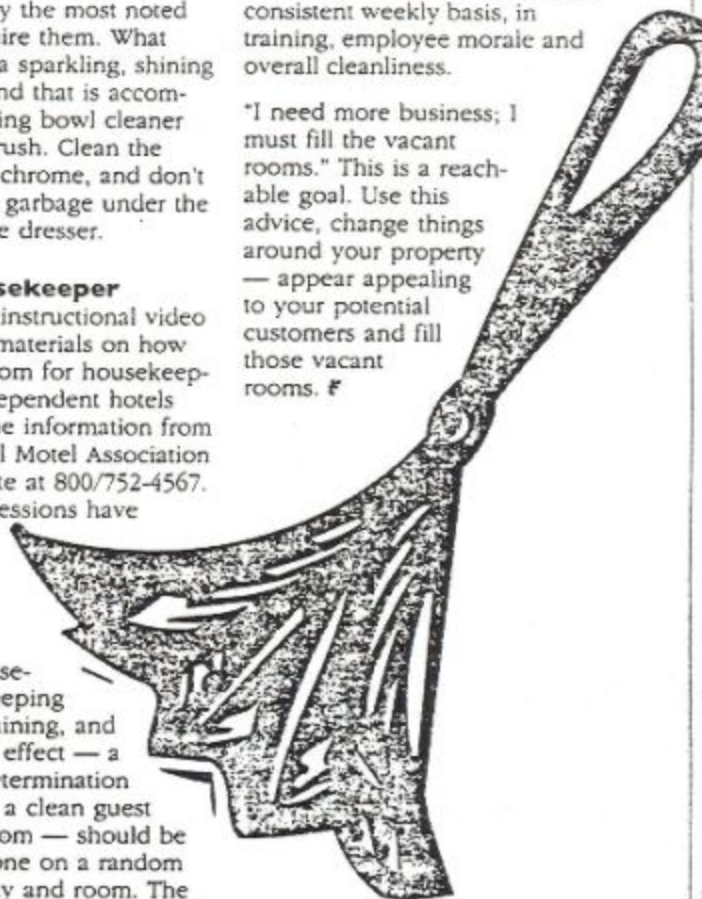
All chains provide instructional video tapes and printed materials on how to clean a guest room for housekeeping personnel. Independent hotels can obtain the same information from the American Hotel Motel Association Educational Institute at 800/752-4567. After the training sessions have been held, follow up the classes with individual testing.

This testing of housekeeping training, and in effect — a determination of a clean guest room — should be done on a random day and room. The housekeeper who cleaned the vacant room, along with the supervisor, should observe the inspection.

Ten one-dollar bills are placed on the bed. The owner or general manager inspects the room, picking up one dollar for each defect found. The inspection should follow the instructions from the class. Following inspection, the housekeeper corrects any problems and is awarded the balance of the remaining

money. This procedure has proven extremely effective, if done on a consistent weekly basis, in training, employee morale and overall cleanliness.

"I need more business; I must fill the vacant rooms." This is a reachable goal. Use this advice, change things around your property — appear appealing to your potential customers and fill those vacant rooms. **F**



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