

SACRAMENTO HOTEL ASSOCIATION

Reader Board

November 2009

The Hospitality Industry Helping in the Community

South Natomas—Site of 3rd Annual Community Service Day

On Saturday, October 3, the Sacramento Hotel Association and more than 200 volunteers from its member hotels and vendors offered a day of improvements, donations and community pride in South Natomas.

This was SHA's third annual community service day—*The Hospitality Industry Helping in the Community*. For this community revitalization project, SHA again teamed with the City of Sacramento to identify projects and organizations to assist.

Joining us for the event—and serving as the team leader for the Garden Highway project—was City Councilmember Ray Tretheway, who also serves as executive director of the Sacramento Tree Foundation. He welcomed and thanked volunteers for their participation in the community.

SHA had teams from 13 hotels and four vendors working at the South Natomas Community Center and Park, the Stanford Settlement Neighborhood Center, the Community Garden Program, Bannon Creek Elementary, the South Natomas Library, and at the Garden Highway cleanup project.

Several weeks before the service day, employees from our member hotels and vendors collected clothing for a clothes closet for South Natomas residents. Two clothes closets are scheduled at future Family Night events at the South Natomas Community Center. The books collected went to The Greenhouse Community Enrichment Center in the Northgate area.

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Golf Tournament Festivities

13th Annual Hospitality Classic

Some may believe 13 is an unlucky number, but luck was with those who played in the 13th annual Hospitality Classic at WildHawk Golf Club on September 21. Cheerful teams of golfers and a group of generous sponsors came together to enjoy a fabulous event in support the Association's scholarships and other education programs.



Special thanks to Sacramento Vice Mayor Lauren Hammond, City Councilmembers Steve Cohn and Ray Tretheway, and County Supervisor Jimmie Yee for joining us at this year's tournament.

The annual Sacramento Hospitality Classic golf tournament is sponsored by the Sacramento Hotel Association and the Sacramento Convention & Visitors Bureau. We were fortunate to have a number of sponsors supporting the various components of this year's event—their contributions are a key factor in the success of the Sacramento Hospitality Classic (see sponsor list).

Shrimp cocktails, pork sliders, lobster tostadas, mushroom ravioli, berry shortcake and more brand this event as having the "best food at any golf tournament." Each year, the chefs present a dazzling showcase of grilled and savory foods. Special thanks to our reception host teams from the Doubletree Hotel, Embassy Suites, Hilton Arden West, Holiday Inn Capitol Plaza, Hyatt Regency, Radisson Hotel, Sacramento Marriott Rancho Cordova, Sheraton Grand and WildHawk Grille/Classique Catering.

As the score cards were being tallied, participants pulled out their tickets and got ready to win donated prizes—gift baskets, hotel stays, wine, dinner and brunch certificates and, yes, even a snowboard.

After the tournament and reception, each golfer took home a gift bag, courtesy of Southern Wine & Spirits. Earlier in the day, each golfer received a golf towel from WildHawk.

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Reader Board is published by the Sacramento Hotel Association, a nonprofit trade organization. The newsletter is distributed to all members of the Association and to others who have an interest in the Sacramento hospitality industry. Articles and press releases of interest to those who work in the Sacramento hospitality industry are welcome.

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Landmark Study Reveals ROI of Business Travel

New research conducted by global research firm Oxford Economics establishes the first clear link between business travel and business growth as American businesses plan their 2010 budgets and federal policymakers are looking to stimulate the American economy. For every dollar invested in business travel, businesses experience an average \$12.50 in increased revenue and \$3.80 in new profits, according to the study.

“This study shows that not all spending cuts are smart cuts,” said Adam Sacks, managing director of Oxford Economics. “When companies reduce their travel budgets, there are negative consequences that we can now quantify, in terms of lost revenue and profit growth, and in terms of giving competitors a distinct advantage.”

This is the first time that the return on investment of business travel has been successfully measured. The study found that curbing business travel can have a strong negative impact on corporate profits. The average business in the U.S. would forfeit 17 percent of its profits in the first year of eliminating business travel, and it would take more than three years for profits to recover.

Business travel in the U.S. is responsible for \$246 billion in spending and 2.3 million American jobs; \$100 billion of this spending and 1 million American jobs are linked directly to meetings and events. In the first six months of 2009, business travel spending is down by 12.5 percent and business travel volume is down more than 6 percent. A 10 percent increase in business travel spending would increase multi-factor productivity, leading to a U.S. GDP increase between 1.5 percent and 2.8 percent.

“In tough economic times, many business executives have an understandable short-run focus on managing costs. The report points out the less visible—but significant—long-term benefits resulting from business travel, such as partnership building and new business opportunities,” said Dr. Martin A. Asher, adjunct professor of finance at the Wharton School. “Increased business travel in this economy can actually increase sales and reduce the financial decline companies might otherwise suffer.”

Both executives and business travelers estimate that 28 percent of current business would be lost without in-person meetings. Roughly 40 percent of prospective customers are converted to new customers with an in-person meeting, compared to 16 percent without such a meeting. Executives cited customer meetings as having the greatest returns, approximately \$15.00-\$19.99 per dollar invested, with conference and trade show participation returns ranging from \$4.00-\$5.99 per dollar invested.

The Oxford Economics Business Travel study is sponsored in part by the Destination & Travel Foundation, a combined effort of the U.S. Travel Association and Destination Marketing Association International. For copy of the full study and additional resources, visit www.meetingsmeanbusiness.com/value-meetings.

Source: United States Travel Association www.ustravel.org

Events Calendar



- **Monday, December 7, 2009**
SHA Holiday Reception and Toy Collection
The Sterling Hotel Sacramento
4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
- **Friday, January 15, 2010**
SHA Luncheon Meeting
- **Friday, February 19, 2010**
SHA Luncheon Meeting
- **Friday, March 19, 2010**
SHA Luncheon Meeting
- **Friday, April 9, 2010**
SHA Hospitality Gala and Awards
Employee and Supplier Recognition Awards
Doubletree Hotel Sacramento
(evening event)

U.S. Travel Industry to Add 90,000 American Jobs in 2010

Modest Increases in Travel Volume, Spending Demonstrate Industry's Unique Ability to Quickly Create Employment Opportunities

The U.S. Travel Association recently announced that projected modest 2010 increases in leisure, business and international inbound travel will enable the industry to add nearly 90,000 American jobs. Leisure travel is expected to rise 2.0 percent, business travel is projected to increase by 2.5 percent and



international inbound travel will increase by 3.0 percent. These job gains come on the heels of 400,000 combined travel industry job losses in 2008 and 2009.

“The travel industry shares President Obama’s goal of putting Americans back to work. Our industry is uniquely capable of adapting to economic upswings and quickly adding tens of thousands of jobs,” said Roger Dow, president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association. “What we announce today (November 5) is based upon modest increases in travel. Given its immense potential, we call on the Administration and Members of Congress to build a plan for economic recovery that drives significant increases in travel.”

A federal economic recovery plan to significantly increase travel and create jobs would include:

- Passage of the Travel Promotion Act to encourage millions of travelers to visit the United States;
- Improvements in the visa and entry processes that have largely driven the decline in overseas travel to the United States post-9/11;
- Funding for a “NextGen” air traffic control system that will limit flight delays, cancellations and negative impact on the environment; and,
- Encouragement of meetings, events and incentive programs through tax deductions and other mechanisms.

The travel industry employs 7.7 million Americans, supporting one out of every eight non-farm jobs in the United States.

Domestic Travel Overview

Domestic leisure travel is expected to increase two percent in 2010, with a corresponding increase in leisure travel spending of nearly five percent. Domestic business travel volume will grow 2.5 percent next year and business travel spending will increase four percent.

“Projected growth in leisure travel is an indicator of rising consumer confidence and disposable income,” said Dr. Suzanne Cook, senior vice president of research for the U.S. Travel Association. “Following a difficult 2009, businesses have a heightened focus on the value and bottom-line benefits of travel. We expect to see a slight increase in business travel next year based in part on pent-up demand for face-to-face meetings that drive growth and productivity.”

International Inbound Travel

International inbound travel will increase nearly three percent in 2010; however, growth in overseas travel (excluding Canada and Mexico) will remain stable at about one percent. Overseas travel visitation in 2010 will remain below 2000 levels (23.5 million versus 26.0 million, respectively). The concern about the lack of substantial growth next year from this market is that overseas travelers contribute significantly more to the U.S. economy, spending an average of \$4,500 per person, per trip compared to about \$900 per person, per trip for Canadian and Mexican travelers.

Source: United States Travel Association www.ustravel.org

HR Professionals Group Meets

SHA’s human resources professionals group met in late October at the Sheraton Grand Hotel.

HR professionals and general managers from SHA-member properties were invited to attend the October 26 roundtable to learn about recent developments in employment law and leave of absence issues. Joining the group for the roundtable was attorney Lisa van Krieken from Folger Levin & Kahn LLP. Her practice includes litigation and counseling in the areas of employment law and traditional labor law; she provides pre-litigation counseling and advice to clients on employment-related issues and problems, and reviews client policies and handbooks to ensure legal compliance.

The group is co-chaired by Kim Dunbar, regional director of human resources for Larkspur Hotels & Restaurants, and Richard Hernandez, director of human resources at the Hyatt Regency.

Special thanks to our Sheraton Grand hosts—Julio Fernandez, director of human resources, and Kelly Macy, human resources manager.

The next meeting of the group is scheduled for February. Watch for future e-mail meeting notices.

People News

Toby Valdez has joined the **Sacramento Marriott Rancho Cordova** as the new director of sales and marketing. Valdez previously served as director of sales and marketing at Marriott Fisherman’s Wharf. His career has included stints as director of revenue management at the Sheraton Fisherman’s Wharf and the Hilton Sacramento Arden West. He has also worked at several local properties, including the Courtyard Rancho Cordova, Courtyard South Natomas and the Hilton Garden Inn Roseville. Prior to moving to Northern California, he worked in Marriott’s regional offices in Southern California.

PricewaterhouseCoopers U.S. Lodging Industry Update Forecasts Beginning of Lodging Demand Recovery in 2010

PricewaterhouseCoopers' (PwC) updated U.S. lodging forecast, released in early November, reflects performance during the initial stages of economic recovery and the continued expectation that lodging demand will begin to recover in 2010. While occupancy levels and average daily rates (ADR) in the last quarter of 2009 are expected to remain below levels from one year ago, resulting in a 16.4 percent decrease in room revenue per available room (RevPAR) in 2009, PricewaterhouseCoopers expects hotel occupancy rates will increase in 2010. However, 2010 ADR levels are expected to remain below 2009 room rate levels.

PwC's quarterly lodging forecast is based on updated macroeconomic forecasts from Macroeconomic Advisers, LLC. Updated forecasts from Macroeconomic Advisers, LLC expect real gross domestic product to increase 3.5 percent in 2010 relative to 2009.

According to PwC's current lodging forecast, lodging demand in the fourth quarter is forecast to be 0.5 percent below last year's levels, resulting in an annual decline of 5.5 percent in 2009. Lodging supply continued to grow in the third quarter of 2009, resulting in an upward revision of PwC's supply growth forecast for this year to 3.2 percent. However, the pace of supply growth peaked at a slower rate in this cycle than during the previous two recessions of 1990-91 and 2001. Despite a deceleration in supply growth, the supply-demand imbalance is expected to compress occupancy levels by 8.4 percent in 2009, resulting in an average annual occupancy level of 55.2 percent. Room rates are expected to continue to be compressed, resulting in an 8.8 percent decline in ADR and a 16.4 percent decrease in RevPAR in 2009.

In 2010, PwC forecasts that a supply growth of 1.4 percent, combined

with growing demand, will result in a subtle recovery of hotel occupancy to 55.8 percent, which is seven percentage points below the long-term average of 62.8 percent. Meanwhile, signs of recovery in hotel pricing are not yet evident. It is expected that the steepest declines in ADR have passed, but year-over-year ADR levels will continue to decline, resulting in a 1.8 percent decline.

"Barring any unforeseen circumstances from an operating perspective, the worst appears to be over," says Scott D. Berman, principal and U.S. Industry Leader, Hospitality & Leisure, for PwC. "To what degree the industry experiences recovery is predicated on an improving economy, which facilitates lodging demand growth, and operators' ability to achieve higher pricing."

Source: PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (www.pwc.com)

PricewaterhouseCoopers US Lodging Forecast – 2009 and 2010

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Occupancy	63.3%	59.8%	59.1%	59.2%	61.4%	63.1%	63.3%	63.1%	60.3%	55.2%	55.8%
ADR Growth	5.4%	-1.4%	-1.5%	0.2%	4.2%	5.5%	7.5%	6.2%	2.7%	-8.8%	-1.8%
RevPAR Growth	6.1%	-7.0%	-2.7%	0.5%	7.9%	8.5%	7.8%	5.8%	-1.8%	-16.4%	-0.7%

Sources: Smith Travel Research and PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP



Toys and Holiday Cheer

SHA Annual Holiday Reception & Toy Collection

Monday, December 7 • 4:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.
The Sterling Hotel Sacramento • 1300 H Street

Members and guests are invited to continue SHA's holiday tradition of collecting new toys for the less fortunate children in our community.

Please plan to bring a new unwrapped toy (no toy guns/weapons) to the Holiday Reception. The Association will donate the collected toys to Operation Cratchit, a project of the Stanford Settlement Neighborhood Center. The Center was one of the locations where our volunteers did cleanup work as part of the Association's community service project in October.

Operation Cratchit (remember Scrooge?) serves more than 600 households in North Sacramento. One parent from each household personally selects the gifts for their children in the Center's gift room. We invite you to bring an unwrapped toy or gift for a child, especially for 11 to 15-year-olds, to the Holiday Reception.

Thanks also to The Sterling Hotel staff for serving as our hosts for this annual festive holiday gathering. Bring your staff and join your industry colleagues for some holiday cheer!

Golf Tournament Festivities

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Congratulations to our tournament winners. The winning team members received golf art gifts from the J. Fitzpatrick Collection.

Watch for 2010 Sacramento Hospitality Classic news in future issues of *Reader Board* and at SHA's Web site—www.sacramento hotellassociation.com.

First Place

Steve Cohn, City Councilmember

Howard Harris, Hilton Arden West

Jim Jungsten, Audio Visual Management Services

Doug Remedios, Hilton Arden West



First-place honors went to the Hilton Sacramento Arden West and their guests, including (left to right) Doug Remedios and Howard Harris from the Hilton and Jim Jungsten from Audio Visual Management Services. Not pictured is team member City Councilmember Steve Cohn, who was unable to stay for the awards reception.

Second Place (threesome)

Igor Avanto, SuperShuttle/ExecuCar

Dave Boldt, SuperShuttle/ExecuCar

Matt Curwood, SuperShuttle/ExecuCar



The second-place team included a threesome from SuperShuttle/ExecuCar (left to right) Matt Curwood, Dave Boldt, and Igor Avanto.

Third Place

Jim Cleary, Cache Creek Casino Resort

Daniel Kane, Cache Creek Casino Resort

Volkan Tuzer, Cache Creek Casino Resort

Jennifer Wollstadt, Cache Creek Casino Resort



The Cache Creek Casino Resort foursome took home third place honors—(left to right)—Volkan Tuzer, Daniel Kane, Jennifer Wollstadt and Jim Cleary.

Long Drive

Women – Betty Lucchesi, Sacramento Convention Center

Men – Jonathan Wisner, Sheraton Grand

Closest-to-the-Pin

Women – Kelly Macy, Sheraton Grand

Men – Howard Harris, Hilton Arden West

Putting Contest

Dan Clarizio, Holiday Inn Capitol Plaza



Yellow Cab's 1951 restored taxi overlooks hole #12, the hole-in-one location. No one took home the hole-in-one cash prize, and the taxi went home unscathed for the second year in a row!

View a brief
golf tournament
slide show at
www.sacramento hotellassociation.com
– on the home page.

Thanks to all our sponsors

Golfer Gifts

Southern Wine & Spirits
WildHawk Golf Club

Newspapers and Sunscreen

USA Today

Putting Contest

Holiday Inn Capitol Plaza

Longest Drive – Men's

Yellow Cab Co. of Sacramento

Longest Drive – Women's

Sacramento Hotel Association

Closest to the Pin – Men's & Women's

Sacramento Hotel Association

Hole-in-One

Yellow Cab Co. of Sacramento

Golf Cart Placards & Tee Markers

Comcast

Hole Flags

Embassy Suites Sacramento

Beverage Carts

The Interior Plant Company/
The Growing Company
Sacramento Convention & Visitors Bureau

Hole Sponsors

Allied Waste Industries
Ambius
Holiday Inn Capitol Plaza
Prestige Cleaners
Residence Inn by Marriott
Sacramento Downtown
Sacramento Marriott
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Reception Sponsors

Special thanks to our awards reception hosts.

Doubletree Hotel Sacramento
Embassy Suites Sacramento
Hilton Sacramento Arden West
Holiday Inn Capitol Plaza
Hyatt Regency Sacramento
Radisson Hotel Sacramento
Sacramento Marriott
Rancho Cordova
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WildHawk Grille/
Classique Catering

Prize Sponsors

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Cruzan Rum
Doubletree Hotel Sacramento
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Hilton Sacramento Arden West
Holiday Inn Capitol Plaza
Holiday Inn Express
Sacramento Convention Center
Hyatt Regency Sacramento
The Interior Plant Company/
The Growing Company
Kunde Estate
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(ri)1 Whiskey
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Sacramento Marriott
Rancho Cordova
Sacramento Opera
Sauza Hornitos
Sheraton Grand Sacramento
Skyy Vodka
USA Today
Yellow Cab Co. of Sacramento



Sponsors keep spirits high during the tournament while reception hosts assemble an array of savory selections at the awards reception.

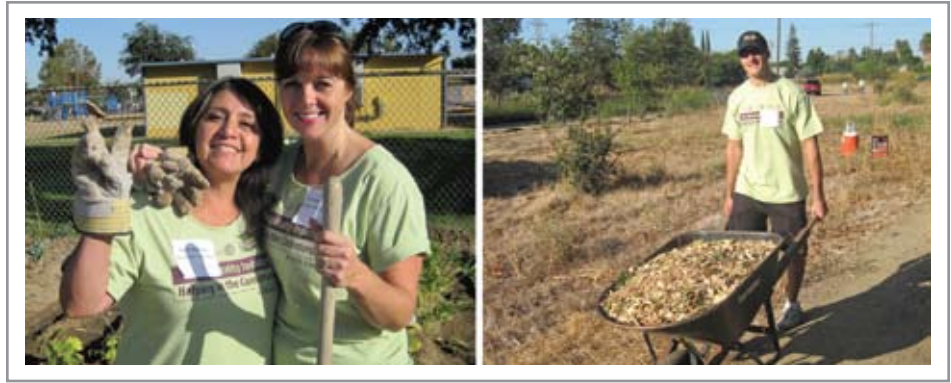
Community Service Day

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Special thanks to the team leaders for their time and energy in attending planning meetings, recruiting volunteers, organizing donated items and coordinating teams and tasks onsite.

Hot cups of coffee hosted by the Hilton were welcome as volunteers assembled in the early morning. After a scrumptious breakfast buffet hosted by the Doubletree and Holiday Inn Capitol Plaza, SHA President Howard Harris welcomed volunteers and thanked them for their participation in the project.

Wearing T-shirts, sponsored by Yellow Cab Company of Sacramento, with team logos on the shirt backs, hotel and company teams dispersed across the South Natomas neighborhood to complete a variety of outdoor and indoor tasks at multiple venues—community center cleaning, landscape clean-up, gardening, painting, as well as sorting of donated clothing and books and a holiday card project.



As the day warmed up and the work continued, the Larkspur Landing Hotel Sacramento, the Residence Inn Downtown, and the Sacramento Marriott Rancho Cordova kept the teams hydrated and had snacks at the ready as teams worked at their tasks.

After the morning's work, volunteers gathered at South Natomas Park to celebrate the support they provided to the community with a hearty picnic lunch hosted by Embassy Suites, Hyatt Regency, Radisson Hotel and Sheraton Grand.

SHA President Howard Harris distributed a variety of donated gift baskets and gift certificates to volunteers with lucky tickets. Thanks to Robert Weight from the Embassy Suites for coordinating the raffle prizes.

President Harris presented awards to volunteers for special recognition.

Most Enthusiastic (*passionate about the project*)

(tie) **Gabi Radu, Hilton**—Just kept going and going...like the Energizer Bunny.

Matthew Walters, Sheraton Grand (youth volunteer)—Hard worker... always ready for another project.

Best Dressed (*volunteer shirts with a new look*)

(collective award) **Patsy Holloway, Jennifer McDonald and Lorraine Buckley, Holiday Inn Capitol Plaza**—In their girly versions of the standard volunteer t-shirt.

Break Champion (*took the most breaks*)

Tracy Harris, Embassy Suites—Team mates said he never needed a break because they didn't think he ever did any work! (Note: He did help with clean-up tasks after the event.)

Most Entertaining (*happy, happy, happy*)

Maria Gutierrez, Hilton—Cheerful all day...kept everyone's spirits up.

Dirtiest Shirt (*needs no explanation*)

City Councilmember Ray Tretheway—He showed up in a dirty shirt due to an early start on the Garden Highway project. After breakfast, SHA presented him with a clean t-shirt for the day.

Thanks to everyone's efforts and participation, the Association's third annual community service project was a tremendous success for all involved.

SHA Nominated for Volunteer Award

Mary Lynn Perry from the City of Sacramento nominated the Sacramento Hotel Association for a 2009 Volunteer Spirit Award. Although the Association didn't win the corporate volunteer award at the October 30 luncheon presented by the Volunteer Center of Sacramento, we're pleased to announce that Julie Mier, Coordinator of the City of Sacramento Parks and Recreation Volunteer Program, was named Volunteer Coordinator of the Year. Mier has been a key partner with SHA at each of its annual community service projects.



General Managers Lawrence Walters, Sheraton Grand, and Ulrich Samietz, Hyatt Regency, congratulate Julie Mier for being named Volunteer Coordinator of the Year at the Volunteer Spirit Awards Luncheon, sponsored by the Volunteer Center of Sacramento. Mier coordinates the City's Parks and Recreation Volunteer Program.

The Hospitality Industry Helping in the Community

Hats off to our hard-working teams:

Allied Waste Industries, Inc.
The Citizen Hotel/Grange Restaurant & Bar
Clarion Hotel Mansion Inn
Doubletree Hotel Sacramento
Embassy Suites Sacramento
Hilton Sacramento Arden West
Holiday Inn Capitol Plaza
Holiday Inn Express Natomas
Hyatt Regency Sacramento
Larkspur Landing Hotel Sacramento
Lions Gate Hotel
Radisson Hotel Sacramento
Sacramento Convention & Visitors Bureau
Sacramento Marriott Rancho Cordova
Sheraton Grand Sacramento
SMUD
Yellow Cab Company of Sacramento

Special thanks our project partners:

Mary Lynn Perry, Volunteer Coordinator, City of Sacramento
Alex Vargas, Director, South Natomas Community Center/Park
Julianna Iniguez, Program Coordinator, South Natomas Community Center/Park
Bill Hall, Supervisor, Department of Parks and Recreation, City of Sacramento
Julie Mier, Coordinator, Department of Parks and Recreation Volunteer Program, City of Sacramento
Sister Jeanne Felion, Executive Director, Stanford Settlement Neighborhood Center
Julie Rhoten, ACSW, Group Work Coordinator, Stanford Settlement Neighborhood Center
Bill Maynard, Community Garden Program Coordinator, City of Sacramento
Bridget Laws, South Natomas Library
Randi Kay Stephens, Special Projects, Office of Councilmember Ray Tretheway
Linda Wilkinson, Principal, Bannon Creek Elementary
Bill Taylor, Photographer, Department of Information Technology, City of Sacramento



View the community service slide show at www.sacramentohotelassociation.com – on the home page.



What You Should Know About Social Media Policies

[Editor's Note: Excerpts are from an article by Christine Blank that appeared in the November 10 edition of *Hotel News Now*; excerpts used with permission.]

Hoteliers face a quandary in today's social media realm: how to use the medium to effectively market their brands while maintaining control over the massive amount of information in the Webisphere. As some companies have learned, that can be a difficult balancing act.

"An ounce of prevention is a pound of cure. Once something gets out, there is not much you can do about it," according to Wendy Robertson of law firm Baker Donelson in Memphis, Tennessee.

As a result, many hotels have, or are in the midst of, developing social media policies that help prevent erroneous information from getting out. The policies also prepare hotel management and staff about measures to take if and when negative information does leak.

For all executives and employees, Jim Abrams, of law firm Jeffer Mangels Butler & Marmaro in Los Angeles, suggests asking themselves the following questions before blogging, posting, or e-mailing comments and photos: "Would you like to have your kids seeing this?" and "If this showed up on the front page of the newspaper, would you like your neighbors to see it?"

Another tricky area for hoteliers to manage is the growing use of travel social networking sites, where travelers can post reviews about their trips and hotel stays. "I get a lot of calls about business review sites, such as TripAdvisor. A lot of businesses are posting false good reviews of themselves and false bad reviews of their competitors," Abrams said. The most important first step is to monitor the reviews and comments and respond to those reviews.

Guidelines are Key

While hotels cannot control what others are saying about them, they can develop policies about what their employees are allowed to communicate online. When developing a social media policy for hotels, attorneys suggested the following guidelines for hoteliers to follow:

- A good social media policy should prohibit all uses of social media that are "disrespectful, inflammatory, offensive, dishonest or damaging to the company's business interests," Robertson

said. The policy should prohibit employees from publishing any information that "has the potential or effect of involving the employee, their co-workers, or XYZ company in any kind of dispute or conflict with other employees or third parties," according to a sample social media policy provided by HospitalityLawyer.com. Employees also cannot publish anything that creates a harassing, demeaning, or hostile working environment for any other employee, according to HospitalityLawyer.com.

- Employees must be informed in advance that communicating about the company in any electronic form—even via handheld device—is not prohibited, according to Abrams. "You need to have a policy saying that communicating about our company is not permitted, and saying anything bad about us is grounds for discipline, up to and including discharge," Abrams said. Hoteliers should also let employees know upfront that they are monitoring their e-mails, social media activity and other communications. "You have the right to do that, but you have to tell them," Abrams said.
- Employees who are posting on personal blogs and social media sites should include a disclaimer that the opinions expressed are their own, and not those of the company they work for. Employees must disclose their identity and state that they have a vested interest in a conversation.
- The hotelier should prohibit all uses of social media that disclose proprietary or confidential information about the company. This could include customer identities, trade secrets, and the company's financial details, according to Robertson.
- The policy should be communicated in writing to every employee immediately upon hire, according to Robertson, and should be re-emphasized periodically so the provisions stay fresh in the employees' minds.

- Monitor all electronic mentions of the brand, including those on social media sites, blogs, travel review sites and other Web sites. Hoteliers can monitor this online activity themselves via services such as Google Alerts or can hire companies to track all online communication. "Monitor what the electronic world is doing to you, good or bad," Abrams said.
- Put together a team that is prepared to handle damaging information should it be released, according to Robertson. "Such a team should generally be comprised of employees from corporate communications ... senior management, and people in the legal and marketing departments," Robertson said.

Source: *Hotel News Now*, 10 November 2009
www.hotelnewsnow.com



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