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"EcoGreenHotel believes hotels and resorts benefit financially by continually improving their management of energy resources, and the environment benefits from reduced levels of related pollution. We are proud to offer services and products that can assist businesses who have committed to the goals of ENERGY STAR."



Green Practices Winning Corporate Travelers

By Scott Parisi

In many of the years I spent in the hospitality industry my focus was on repositioning distressed hotels. As we took over hotels that were not reaching their fare share of RevPar (Revenue Per Available Room) the reasons could range from a non-friendly and non-responsive team, an inferior product or a non-aggressive sales team. One thing I did learn is revenue is the key to many evils and allows for a hotel to maintain a friendly trained and responsive staff, a clean and maintain the facility and focus on the sales and marketing process. On a few occasions when taking over hotels at the beginning of the year we found that we did not win or even worse did not submit a bid for an RFP (Request for Proposal). RFP's come from major corporate accounts that could impact your **green hotel** from anywhere from 5% to 20% of the properties occupancy. That means if we arrived in a hotel in February we may have lost out on the markets top room supplier for that entire year.

You may know your top suppliers but do you know what their environmental policy is for 2013? I would hate to see **green hotels** loose a large percentage of revenue because they don't know how to answer the environmental questionnaire that is becoming mandatory from many corporate traveler buyers. July and August mean a lot of things to a lot of companies, but for those in hospitality sales and marketing, it's the start of the Requests for Proposals season.

RFPs ask the standard questions about room count, location, amenities, ratings, ADA compliance, etc., but did you know questions regarding your property's eco friendly practices and procedures are rapidly becoming the norm? In 2007, after gathering recommendations from their association members, the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA), introduced a series of environmental questions on their Hotel RFP form. The members had indicated that business travel buyers are driving green hotel initiatives in much the same way they insisted on Internet connectivity, luxury bedding and flat panel TVs. Fast forward 5 years and these questions have not only become a standard, but corporate travel programs and associations have whole sections on their RFPs dedicated to finding out every detail about a property's sustainability practices. And the trend is growing

These RFPs are asking hotels to describe their top carbon offset initiatives that are visible and actively communicated to their guests (ie: all recycling programs that are in place, the hotel's use of environmentally friendly cleaning solutions, or if there is a water conservation program being practiced, like a linen reuse option or the installation of water conservation fixtures.) Additionally, questions ask about hotel participation in environmental certification initiatives (such as **Energy Star** or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). Some RFPs even go a step further and inquire about environmentally friendly design and construction practices. Since big companies want to be able to report that their own **carbon footprint** is in good standing, they are looking closely at their travel programs. These group and business transient customers are asking the hotel chains that they do global business with to provide detailed, sustainability metrics and practice.

Here are some sample RFP questions:

1. Is your building LEED certified?
2. Are any staff members LEED accredited professionals?
3. Do you have an Energy Star score of at least 60?
4. Are there bike racks within 200 yards of the building?
5. Is there a preferred parking for mark carpool vehicles or alternative fuel vehicles?
6. Do roofing surfaces minimize heat by using highly reflective material and/or vegetation (ie. green roofs)?
7. Does the building have an indoor air quality management program in place?
8. Does the building use low flow plumbing fixtures and appliance?
9. What percentage of the site requires regular irrigation?
10. Does the building employ storm water retainers or 3 use systems?
11. Do you provide a recycling program?
12. Have you implemented a green cleaning program (cleaning materials that are green seal certified)?

Green out the competition

Even though just a few short years ago some travel management consultants said the subject of green hotels was not yet a tipping point in travel buying decisions, present day, corporate customers are giving their final preference to hotels that are actively and successfully participating in sustainability. If it came down to comparable properties, it's important for hoteliers to know that their sustainability practices might be what could make or break the sale. These green questions are now being weighed against all other major factors that buyers will use when negotiating hotel contracts and can be offset by other items, such as rates, meeting space, food and beverage, etc.

In fact, **one of the largest hotel brands recently reported that 16 of their major customers, valued at over 1 billion dollars worth of business**, have indicated that providing this information is a key factor in whether or not a hotel is accepted into their 2013 travel program. Greening your property can and will bring you the business and the revenue. Will your hotel come out on top this season?

For more information on EcoGreenHotel's sustainable solutions for hotels, contact us at info@EcoGreenHotel.com

About the Author

Scott Parisi is the founder of EcoGreenHotel, a firm that develops energy and sustainability projects for commercial buildings with a large focus on the hospitality sector. As President of EGH, Scott's day to day responsibilities include developing and implementation of energy and sustainability strategies into hotels, leveraging federal state and local utility incentives to subsidies projects and building partnerships with like minded companies that add value to EGH's client base. Additionally, Scott develops and hosts educational workshops, staff trainings and has spoke at national and regional events including AAHOA's National Convention, Green Lodging & Hospitality Conference, Boston Green Tourism Events, Philagreen Hospitality Association Events, GF Management University Sessions, National Purchasing

Network Annual Expo and the Global Renewable Energy Networking Summit.

About EcoGreenHotel

EcoGreenHotel LLC (Knoxville, TN), is a privately held company dedicated to helping lodging facilities address a broad spectrum of sustainability issues. EcoGreenHotel provides customized consulting services tailored to the needs of the hospitality industry in the areas of energy efficiency and certifications, including LEED, Green Seal and Energy Star., For further information, email info@EcoGreenHotel.com or call 888-229-0213.

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