



Guest Services

by Gilles Ardit, CHA

25 steps to increase efficiency and boost the bottom line in your hotel

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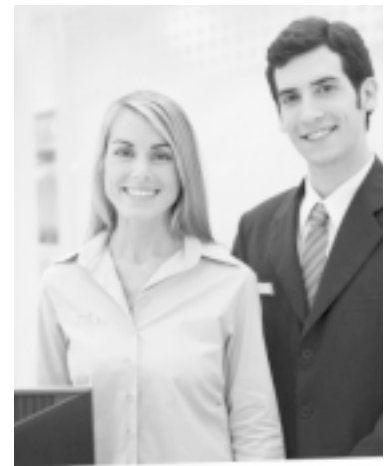
Many hotels around the country have made major changes in operations to run a more efficient operation – a must in this slower economy. But many hotel operators are missing opportunities, and some might not know where to start on what can seem like an overwhelming task.

The good news is that whether it is improving an underperforming property, simply weathering the economic storm, or taking over a new hotel, owners and managers can usually make some relatively quick and easy changes to deliver an immediate boost to the bottom line.

Here is a short and sweet to-do list of 25 points to consider, across some key operational departments, to inject a dose of economy-proofing in your property.

Management and Accounting

1. Designate specific managers with a like-minded focus to oversee:
 - A reduction of workforce, if needed, to better match occupancy levels.
 - An energy savings program within the hotel.
 - Working with vendors to help reduce such expenses as food, beverage, and supplies.
2. Establish a program whereby receivable accounts can earn a nominal discount if their balance is paid off early. Less time chasing money = less labor and expenses.



Engineering

3. Change or clean all HVAC and PTAC filters. This will enhance the performance and efficiency of the equipment, resulting in less energy use and longer operational life of the mechanicals.
4. Check all window and door seals. Caulk and insulate where possible to minimize drafts and create a more comfortable guest environment.
5. Check and repair ALL leaky toilets, tubs, showers and sinks in guestrooms, public areas, and the kitchen. Leaky plumbing = wasted water.
6. Check and replace all defective sink aerators. Damaged aerators will not restrict the flow of water and will drive up water usage unnecessarily.

7. Reduce the landscaping water cycles where possible, and use mulch (which reduces recurring water bills). Alternatively, consider the use of reclaimed “gray water” to irrigate landscapes.
8. Change the property’s exterior lighting timer switches to turn on and off by zones. For example, create zones of every third lamp, and have each zone turn on at 30-minute intervals, then off at 30-minute intervals. Alternate the zones to minimize electricity consumption.
9. Convert lighting to low wattage bulbs wherever possible. Converting to fluorescent tubes in your shops and back of the house will save money.
10. Change out all EXIT signs from incandescent to LED-lighted signs.
11. Install motion sensors in offices, shops and storerooms, including Laundry, Housekeeping and Engineering, to ensure lights are off when no one is in the room. Motion sensors are great to use in public restrooms and for vending machines.
12. Use programmable thermostats and thermostat guards for all back-of-the-house areas, public areas and meeting space. The programmable thermostats will set the temperature back in areas when they are rarely in use. Thermostat guards prevent unauthorized individuals from changing temperature settings.

Housekeeping

13. Make sure that housekeeping employees are dusting light bulbs as part of their daily cleaning. Dusting light bulbs helps them perform more efficiently, increases the bulb’s life, and minimizes replacement expense.
14. Wash full loads of laundry ONLY – partial loads waste energy.
15. Implement a linen and towel re-use program where guests choose whether or not to have linens and terry towels cleaned daily. Such an initiative will help protect the environment and signal the hotel’s commitment to a green operation philosophy.
16. Reduce guest bathroom amenities and/or resupply stayovers only as needed, without affecting guest service. If the hotel is franchised, verify compliance with your franchise agreement.
17. Educate room attendants to conserve energy while cleaning guestrooms. Have them reset the thermostat in occupied rooms to 72 degrees and dial down the setting in vacant rooms to 66 degrees during colder months.
18. Close all guestroom drapes in the summertime to keep the warm sunlight from increasing room temperature. Open drapes in the wintertime to take advantage of the warmer sunlight. If closing them all the way is not an option, close them half or three-quarters of the way.
19. Use cold-water laundry or ozone washing equipment where possible to minimize energy and water expense.

Food & Beverage

20. If the hotel’s restaurant or room service business is slow, change the hours of operation to operate at the minimum requirement yet it still meets the needs of the majority of guests.
21. Change menus to adopt more cost-effective or seasonal items.
22. Reduce food and beverage inventory levels and work with your purveyors to minimize deliveries. More deliveries = more labor requirement to accept, store, and rotate stock.
23. Increase your offerings in all the hotel’s mini-marts.

Human Resources

24. Join forces among properties wherever applicable to take advantage of economy-of-scale purchasing and minimize redundancy of labor.
25. Work with all managers to increase efficiency within their department through task streamlining, cross-training, and specialized training.

To incorporate many of these types of measures, managers and owners often need to break long-held habits and instill new ones. Establishing some form of encouragement or incentive for employees can help new policies take hold quicker.

And even though these efforts can be a challenge to implement, they will pay off. In this economy, it is hard to find a hotel that couldn't be helped by taking at least some cost-cutting measures. ✧

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