



Sustainability

by Brian Miller, Ed.D

Where to start to find information on sustainable hotel practices

Another great article from *The Rooms Chronicle*®, the #1 journal for hotel rooms management! ***Important notice: This article may not be reproduced without permission of the publisher or the author.*** College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Niagara University, P.O. Box 2036, Niagara University, NY 14109-2036. Phone: 866-Read TRC. E-mail: editor@roomschronicle.com

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Over the past year and a half, I have provided suggestions in this column as to how hotel managers can make their operations more sustainable. These articles have covered topics such as setting up your hotel’s green team, recycling, conserving energy, green meetings and more. In every column, the idea is to assist hotel department teams to think differently about how they carry out the day-to-day tasks that they are responsible for. During this time, I have noticed significantly more attention to sustainable practices in hotels being presented in the lodging trade press. With this column, I want to highlight resources that are available to your team that can be used to increase your sustainable efforts.



“It just takes **10...**”

A 10 percent reduction in energy consumption

- Can be achieved through low cost measures such as operations and management strategies.
- Would be equivalent to taking almost one million cars off the road for one year, if achieved across the country.
- Would have the same financial effect as increasing the average daily room rate (ADR) by \$ 0.83 in limited-service hotels and by \$2.45 in full-service hotels.

Source: AH&LA Green Resource Center

Your industry trade association

The American Hotel & Lodging Association (AH&LA) has become a significant force in distributing sustainable operations’ content. From their website, www.ahla.com, the association has a link to a variety of programs and initiatives. One of their key initiatives is a comprehensive “Green Resource Center” (www.ahla.com/green) that offers tips for organizations to become more eco-friendly. These guidelines and best practices are provided to enable both hoteliers and suppliers to become more efficient in their sustainability programs.

In the AH&LA Green Resource Center, the association provides their membership with information broken down into three levels: “Green”, “Greener,” and “Greenest.”

Level 1 - Green

Under Level 1, content offered include examples of “best practices” that provide guidance for hotels just getting started by seeing what other hotels have done and what lessons they have learned. This level also provides members with expert written publications on the *Do’s* and *Don’ts* when greening your operations. Finally, this section provides a set of 11 Minimum Green Guidelines that are tactics that all lodging properties should be able to achieve. A copy of these guidelines has been included in this issue of TRC.

Over the last year, the association has expanded these minimum green guidelines to include additional steps that hotels can take along with a variety of case studies that detail step-by-step procedures as to how to carry out the initiative(s).

Level 2 – Greener

Under Level 2, content is provided for hotels that have begun to embark on making their operations more sustainable. So once a hotel has its green team in place, the hotel may benchmark its results using the guidelines from the association’s resources. Additionally, AH&LA provides access for its members to participate in a free, web-based service for tracking and managing water and energy usage as well as providing a listing of the top utility rebates that hotels should be participating in.

Once your property has begun to see results from the implementation of the association's 11 minimum guidelines, an additional 50 more guidelines are provided. Finally, in Level 2, AH&LA provides their membership the ability to ask questions about sustainable operations as they move through the various stages of sustainability and to receive free of charge researched-based responses to their questions.

Level 3 – Greenest

Once hotels have progressed through the first two levels, many will begin thinking about having their hotels designated as a “Green” hotel. In Level 3, AH&LA provides information on some dozen different types and levels of certification that are associated with designating a hotel as “Green Certified.” Certainly there is one that may make sense for your property. In addition to national certification schemes, the association has compiled information from 26 states that have initiated green audits, recommendations, and certifications for hotel operations within their borders.

Finally, as most hoteliers understand, key to any sustainable operations efforts is the education of customers as to what your property is doing to help reduce its impact on the environment. To this end the association provides “Tips for Travelers” that hoteliers can use to enlighten their guests to reducing their impact while traveling for business or pleasure.

Other resources

Additionally, the AH&LA Green Resource Center provides viewers a “Green Glossary”, which is an A-Z listing of terms that operators will come across as they discover and access sustainable content and services.

In the next edition of this column, I will summarize some of the seminal “sustainable practices” articles that have been published over the last year that I think will provide you and your team information and excitement to continue your efforts in making your hotel’s operations more sustainable. ✧

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