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T 604-574-4577 1-800-667-0955
F 604-574-2196

info@emcmktg.com
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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

by Perry Wilford



Tourism: "What's in it for me?"

Plenty.

I am not a statistician. I doubt I could throw a lot of statistics out to try to support my particular point of view on a given subject. But that doesn't mean my opinion is any less valid. Just because I can't build a clock doesn't mean I can't tell time. I say this to warn you that I won't be filling this space with numbers that are easily found and that you likely already know.

Let me explain. Recently the Mayor of Calgary was quoted as saying "We [the City of Calgary] actually get nothing from tourism." He even mused about the need for the city to fund Tourism Calgary at all, given that the city gets no direct payback. If you have not heard this little chestnut before, I'm sure you are shaking your head now. Even without using statistics, it's safe to say that businesses that rely on tourism, like the airport, attractions, taxis, restaurants, tour companies, and retailers as well as hotels, might disagree with the mayor. Calgary has this little thing called the Stampede that may just impact tourism too. Just sayin'.

I don't believe for a moment that the Mayor of Calgary doesn't want tourism to thrive in his city. However, I do suspect he is testing the waters to see if the City can save some money by reducing funding for Tourism Calgary - or even cutting it altogether.

This isn't just about Calgary. In a time when the federal government has severely cut funding to the Canadian Tourism Commission, provincial and municipal funding of tourism

is even more important. Cities and towns that have a DMO typically help fund those organizations. In some communities, a Destination Marketing Fund (DMF) is in place to help support marketing efforts. If municipal governments stop funding their local DMO, DMFs would become the DMO's principal source of funding.

DMFs were created to support marketing efforts for their destination. While the dollars in question can be significant, it is unreasonable to assume that the financial burden be shouldered completely by one industry. The kicker here is that municipal governments should not view DMFs as sustainable funding. The truth is that DMFs remain voluntary and are sustainable only as long as hotels are willing to participate.

Municipal funding for the local DMO is the key to long-term viability of the organization. It shows that the municipality recognizes the value of tourism and believes in the win/win of supporting an organization that brings people to their area to experience what they have to offer.

So talk to the mayor and councillors in your community. Make sure those who hold the purse strings understand the value of your business and our industry. Even if Calgary's mayor doesn't see the value in municipal support for tourism, I'm betting a lot of other elected officials will.

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Tourism Marketing

by Dave Kaiser



I recently had the opportunity to check the pulse of the tourism industry by attending conferences in Alberta and British Columbia. I was most impressed with the level of engagement and excitement, particularly in Alberta, about the state and future of the industry.

More than 700 delegates attended the Travel Alberta Industry Conference held October 21-23 at The Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel. The delegate list was representative of the entire tourism industry and included a strong contingent of hotel and lodging operators. There is little doubt that the growth in destination marketing funds (DMFs) in Alberta is generating healthy interest for hotel managers to learn more about destination marketing. The Travel Alberta Industry Conference is a great place to learn and make connections with professional tourism marketers.

In my view, this year's sold-out event lived up to its well earned reputation as Canada's premier tourism conference. The annual

report provided by Bruce Okabe, CEO, on Travel Alberta's business plan - including the success of the "goosebump moments" brand strategy - was most impressive. Travel Alberta's "remember to breathe" campaign received many industry accolades and generated impressive results in 2011-2012. Visits to travelalberta.com totaled 1.89 million and YouTube hits on the "remember to breathe" video totaled 1.5 million. The next phase of the Alberta stories program revealed the unique experiences of travellers impacted by distinctive regions, events, and personalities in our province.

On November 4-6, I attended Host 2012, BC's Tourism and Hospitality Conference held in Vancouver. The conference was a collaborative effort that included the BC Hotel Association, the Alliance of Beverage Licensees, and the Tourism Industry Association of BC. The highlight of the event was the announcement by BC's Premier, Christy Clark of a new provincial tourism marketing organization - Destination BC. The new organization is to

be business-led, formula-funded, and fully accountable to industry and taxpayers.

My experience at the Host 2012 Conference confirmed a couple of things for me. Namely that Travel Alberta's tourism marketing strategy is truly leading edge with its focus on the traveller's experience and social media, and how fortunate we are in Alberta to have the Tourism Levy as a sustainable funding mechanism to promote and grow our industry.

A closing comment at the Host 2012 event noted the vital importance of hospitality to the tourism industry and tourism to the hospitality industry. Of course, the AHLA has understood this for some time with our mission to "support our members and strengthen Alberta's tourism and hospitality industry".

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COVER
STORY

HOTEL DEVELOPMENT TRENDS IN ALBERTA

by Carrie Russell

Alberta is currently Canada's hotbed for hotel development, as strong performance fundamentals and the availability of debt for new development spur new opportunities.



Alberta has 862 hotels with just over 68,000 guestrooms, representing 11% of the national inventory of rooms, but new development in Alberta is well beyond the province's fair share. In the last 12 months, over 1,000 new rooms have opened in the province, representing 24% of the new rooms nationally. 27% of the new rooms under construction in the country are in Alberta, and 20% of the new rooms in the planning stages are in Alberta.

Strong RevPAR Drives Development

Strong RevPAR growth is driving the development of hotels in the province. In 2011 RevPAR growth in Alberta was 5.5%,

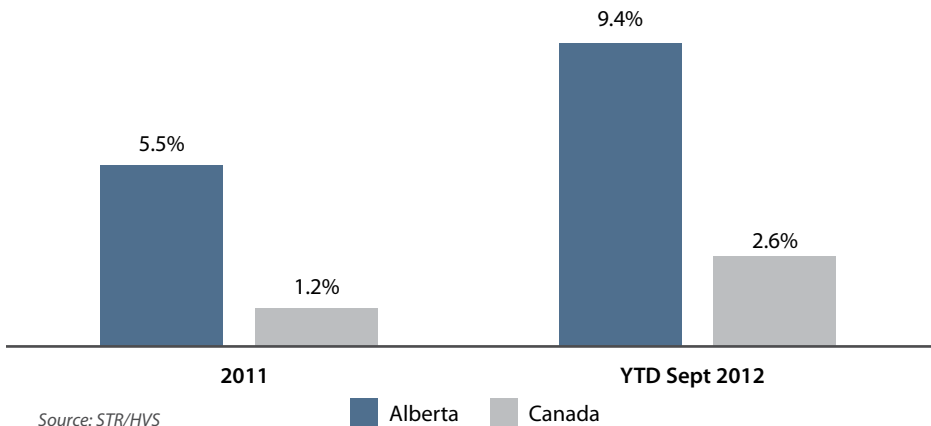


The RevPAR performance in Calgary leads the nation, with growth of 5.8% in 2011 and stellar 13.5% through September 2012.

well above inflationary levels, and 4.5 times the national average. Through September 2012, RevPAR growth in Alberta is dominating the country at 9.4%, well beyond the national average and substantially above the growth in the other buoyant provinces such as Newfoundland (5.7% growth) and Saskatchewan (4.3% growth).

The RevPAR performance in Calgary leads the nation, with growth of 5.8% in 2011 and stellar 13.5% through September 2012, thus it is no surprise that a significant portion of the new rooms in the province are planned for the city. Edmonton has seen a lot of new rooms in recent years, which tempered RevPAR growth in 2011 to 0.1%; however, the resiliency of the market was indicated with RevPAR growth of 7.7% through September 2012. This strength has attracted developers' attention and 48% of the new rooms built in the province in the last 12 months were in Calgary and Edmonton. Looking ahead, 74% of the rooms under construction in Alberta are in these major cities, and 50% of the planned rooms are in Calgary or Edmonton.

RevPAR growth in Alberta substantially higher than the national average



New Projects

In terms of product type, all of the approximately 3,000 rooms that have opened in the last twelve months, or are currently under construction, fall into the category of focused-service, limited-service, or extended-stay hotels. These hotel types typically have little or no food and beverage facilities and

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very limited meeting space. All of the projects are free-standing hotels and are not part of mixed-use developments. The average size of these hotels is 125 rooms, and the hotels currently under construction range in size from 56 to 220 rooms. While not under construction yet, Calgary does have a couple of hotel projects in the pipeline with room counts in excess of 350 rooms.

Looking ahead to hotels in the planning pipeline, there are several major full-service projects being considered in Calgary and Edmonton. These projects would be in the downtown core of the cities and would have mixed-use elements, either a residential or an office component or both. The branding on these hotels will likely be in the upper-upscale or luxury categories, which will provide cache to the overall development project.

Branding

Expanding more on the branding aspect of new hotels in the province, a look at the pipeline indicates a strong propensity to brand. 100% of the hotels that have opened in the last 12 months are branded and 85% of the hotels under construction have selected a brand. The major players are well represented, with Marriott’s family of brands (Renaissance, Courtyard, Residence Inn, and Fairfield Inn & Suites) representing the largest portion of proposed hotels that have selected a brand, followed closely by the Hilton brand family (Hilton Garden Inn, Homewood Suites, Home2 Suites, and Hampton Inn & Suites). InterContinental’s Holiday Inn, Holiday Inn Express, and Staybridge Suites have also proven to be popular choices for new developments. Best Western International has eight hotels that have either recently opened or are proposed; however, these hotels tend to be smaller, so based on room count they represent a smaller proportion of the total new rooms in the province.

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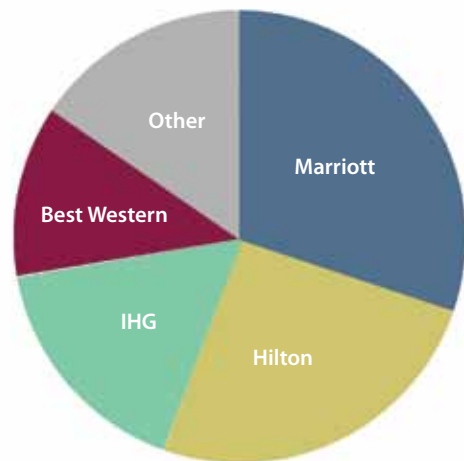
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Big brand families dominate the pipeline accounting for 72% of proposed new rooms



Robust Lending Environment

Along with strong hotel performance, a key aspect driving the substantial hotel development in the province is the robust lending environment. Unlike many areas of the country, Alberta, and the West in general, have a number of options when looking at financing for new developments. While the traditional banks still do not have much of an appetite to finance new hotel development, several other sources such as credit unions, ATB Financial, Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC), and

Canadian Western Bank, are readily available in the province. Lenders financing hotel developments are looking at loan-to-value ratios in the 50% to 60% range, with amortization periods that range from 15 to 25 years. Interest rates depend on the term, loan-to-value ratio, and amortization period, and are at historically low levels, making new deals easier to pencil.

Challenges


While there are many positives on the hotel front for Alberta right now, the development of a new project does have its challenges. The resource boom that has driven demand for new rooms has also put pressure on the provincial labour market, thereby increasing construction costs. This cost escalation is putting a question mark on several projects in the pipeline as developers struggle to determine if the potential income stream from the new hotel will be able to support the substantial development costs.

The other risk that Alberta faces is the oil and gas sector. The demand for hotel rooms in the province is closely tied to the price of oil and the activity that is generated both in the traditional oil and gas wells and the mega oil sands projects. If global demand continues to put downward pressure on oil prices and activity slows in the province, hotels will feel the impact, and the feasibility of some of the proposed projects may be questioned.

Oversupply?

Is oversupply of new rooms a concern for the province? There are certain areas of the province that have a plentiful supply of land and have attracted numerous hotel developers to consider building, with the north side of Calgary International Airport being the most notable. This market has a number of sites available for new hotel development and has potential for over-building; however, this market can sustain a number of new hotels. With the airport expansion and the rerouting of Barlow Trail, a new market for hotels is being created. The proposed increases in passenger volume will generate more demand for hotels in this market, and while there are 15 plus sites available for hotel development, it is unlikely that even half of these will be built in the near future given the cost of construction, the availability of brands, and the acumen of lenders to determine viable developments.

While new supply often puts downward pressure on occupancy levels in a market and hampers the ability of hotels to grow average room rates, the conservative lending environment in Canada generally keeps overall room supply growth in check. In addition, the new hotels in a market typically outperform existing hotels, once they reach a stabilized level of operations.

This is an exciting time for hotel developers in Alberta, where the robust growth and strong resource sector is creating many opportunities for new projects. The pace of growth is well above that of most other provinces in the country, spurring various types of projects around the province. While many hotels will get built, the challenges that face developers in terms of construction costs and uncertainty in future demand levels will likely result in some projects not coming to fruition. 

Carrie Russell, AACI, is Managing Director at HVS Canada.



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FEATURE

INCREASE ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE: Overhaul Your Culture

by Milton Almeida

We've all faced it: dysfunctional organizational cultures. Those cultures that hinder the meeting of organizational objectives, or worse, actively work against their achievement. Ensuring that your culture is healthy and aligned with organizational objectives are key leadership responsibilities.



Indeed, changing an organization’s culture can be a daunting task: deciding where to go, where to start, and what to do, but there are few easy answers. Let’s explore the elements of organizational culture and examine the traps, tips, and strategies of fellow hoteliers.

Getting to know your employees and helping them find meaning in their work is key to creating a culture that is healthy and respectful.

What is Culture?

Culture is the expression of an organization’s values, beliefs, and norms as manifested through behaviours and attitudes. It’s how a group of people solve their everyday work problems and subsequently how new members are taught to act. For example, let’s say offering new ideas is actively discouraged by management. Not only will current members refrain from offering ideas, but new members will quickly learn to keep their mouths shut.

In their book *Exploring Corporate Strategy*, Johnson and Scholes identify six elements that combine to form a cultural web: stories, rituals and routines, symbols, organizational structure, control systems, and power structures. The challenge for leaders is to manage these various elements so that the resulting organizational culture is effective in meeting its goals and objectives. Thus, managing culture becomes a key organizational strategy: a strategy that unfortunately doesn’t always make its way onto strategic planning documents.

Managing Culture

Tina Tobin, General Manager of the Alberta Place Suite Hotel, relates how when taking over a newly refurbished hotel, she realized that there

was an enormous business opportunity in changing her market mix to include more business travellers. Tobin knew that the culture had to change to provide a level of service that would draw and keep business travellers along with the higher average rate they generate. In less than a year, Tobin saw her average rate climb by \$17 and her marketshare rocket to third - no longer languishing at the bottom of the pack. Tobin shares that the first place to start with any cultural change initiative is to know the current culture, have a good idea of the desired culture, and then plan towards making those changes.

Let’s take a closer look at the elements of culture and provide some strategies leaders can use.

Stories

Stories are what organizational members tell themselves, each other, and customers about your property. These stories reflect what is important to your organization and what values it embraces.



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Sherry Scott, Director of Human Resources at the Radisson Hotel Edmonton South, highlights the importance of effective communication in changing stories. Part of Scott's communication strategies include a "scoop board" for employees that displays the hotel's daily activities, volunteer employee translators who help employees with a limited understanding of English, and employee surveys in multiple languages. These communication strategies ensure that new stories are effectively communicated to all employees. Tanya Yurko, Area General Manager at Bellstar Hotels and Resorts, points out that getting to know your employees and helping them find meaning in their work is key to creating a culture that is healthy and respectful.

Rituals and Routines

Rituals and routines include the behaviours and actions organizational members view as acceptable and the underlying beliefs that drive these behaviours. For example, are there opportunities for employees to get to know each other? What is discussed at regularly scheduled meetings? Do managers walk the talk?

Tobin and Scott agree that role modeling is a key strategy when it comes to changing engrained rituals and routines. Ensuring managers role model new behaviours is essential to having new behaviours cemented into the desired culture. Managers who say one thing while doing another have derailed many change initiatives.

Symbols

Symbols refer to any representations of the organization's culture. While these can be visual (think logos), symbols include how language is used in an organization and how employees dress. For example, you might have a general manager who prefers to be called Mr., Mrs., or Ms. and their last name. This sends a different message than a general manager who prefers to operate on a first name basis.

Grant McCurdy, General Manager of the Mayfield Inn & Suites, implemented a campaign called "How Do You Look" to drive the point that how employees dressed was an important part of how customers understood the organization.

Organizational Structure

Organizational structure includes who reports to whom and who has power within the organization. Lying underneath each formal organizational chart is an informal network of influential members. While getting them on side is crucial for the success of any cultural change effort, it's also important to recognize that not all employees will embrace change.

Tobin, Scott, and McCurdy all experienced that while they were engaged in positive cultural change efforts aimed at improving performance and the work environment, not all employees were willing or able to adapt to a new culture. They noted that some employee turnover is to be expected as employees realize that they would be happier elsewhere. Yurko calls this "healthy turnover" in that it provides an opportunity for employees to re-commit to the organization. They reflected that expecting and planning for such turnover is key to ensuring successful cultural change initiatives.

Edward Keenan, Vice-President Resort Operations, and General Manager of the Stoneridge Mountain Resort in Canmore, offers that having a

Involving the team in creating the framework helps build ownership for the initiatives.

clear framework, which includes roles and responsibilities, sets the stage for effective cultural change initiatives. He points to the importance of involving managers in being part of the change. Keenan claims that involving the team in creating this framework helps build ownership for the initiatives and build relationships throughout the organization.

Control Systems

Control systems refers to financial incentives, rewards, and training. For example, training is used to control the effectiveness of members and may include orientation and leadership development programs. Reward programs may be used to motivate employees or form part of an employee retention strategy.


Tobin revamped training at her hotel, beginning with employee orientation and continuing to management development. For her, training is grounded in core values that reflect the desired organizational culture. McCurdy shared that successful reward programs must come from an à la carte perspective; what one employee sees as reward is not the same for another.

Power Systems

Finally, power systems are those systems or people that exert the most influence when it comes to strategic decision making or who have direct influence in the organization. Typically, these are department managers or leaders.

McCurdy feels that hotel leaders are key to ensuring the success of culture initiatives. Getting managers on board isn't enough. It is just as important to have an executive team that is able to function expertly - "a team that can communicate effectively and support one another". McCurdy shared that flexibility is key: allowing for a certain freedom within the framework.

Leaders Create Culture

Effective organizational cultures are at the core of performance, and leaders create culture. Before embarking on change initiatives, leaders need to evaluate the current culture and clearly articulate the desired culture. They need to plan and execute strategies aimed at influencing the six elements of culture: stories, rituals and routines, symbols, organizational structure, control systems, and power structures. While culture change is painstaking work, and employee turnover is a real possibility, the alternative of a dysfunctional culture is always more costly. 

Milton Almeida is a coach, consultant, and trainer with Hospitality Performance Solutions and can be reached at milton@hospitalityperformancesolutions.com.



Travel Alberta is doing business differently and working with our tourism partners more effectively. We have made it easier for Alberta's hospitality industry to partner with Travel Alberta and reach millions of potential travellers.

There are a number of ways hospitality and tourism operators can acquire marketing support from Travel Alberta. Many of our partners are already participating in buy-in programs and co-operative marketing funding. Another opportunity to market your tourism product to potential Alberta travellers is through travel deals on travelalberta.com.

Travel deals is a free, online service available to all AHLA members. Upload your tourism packages and let us present them to the world via travelalberta.com. This is a central spot for visitors to find the authentic experiences that Alberta's breathtaking landscapes have to offer.

"Travel Alberta is the number one referral for our website", said Simon Trafford at Hotel Blackfoot in Calgary, "and one of our number one revenue generators as well."

This past summer, the Rosebud Theatre wanted to generate awareness around their Anne of Green Gables production and developed an inspirational package around the event. The "Anne VIP Package" included a copy of the novel signed by the cast, raspberry cordial with dinner, a photo with the cast, and a tour of the historical theatre after the show. This exclusive offer was listed as a travel deal on travelalberta.com and included in the monthly Travel Alberta e-newsletter distributed to more than 100,000 regional travellers.

"Since we registered our travel deal, we got the opportunity to be in the monthly Travel Alberta newsletter," describes Mark Lewandowski, Marketing Coordinator at Rosebud Theatre. "That exposure resulted in 53 people taking advantage of the deal. In a follow-up survey, about 80% of the patrons first heard of the Anne of Green Gables production through Travel Alberta. We were very pleased with these results."

Word is spreading that travelalberta.com is the place to generate awareness and get results for your tourism or hospitality business. Alberta tourism partners have added over 400 travel deals to travelalberta.com since January 2012. The result has been overwhelming with more than 450,000 lead referrals direct to partner websites between April and October of 2012.

BBJ Tackle and Fishing Adventures out of Fort Saskatchewan was looking for a new way to promote their fishing experiences. By working with Travel Alberta, they were able to create a family-focused fishing package that was featured on travelalberta.com and included in Travel Alberta's monthly e-newsletter. As a direct result, the operator received more than 1,500 lead referrals direct to their website and achieved 19 new bookings between July and August of this year. "I wish I knew about you guys sooner", exclaimed John Conroy, the owner.

Travel deals are populated on travelalberta.com using the Alberta Tourism Information Service (ATIS). Signing up for ATIS is quick, easy and free. Visit industry.travelalberta.com to get started.

Presenting your product online is an essential part of running a successful tourism business. When you create a profile and upload your travel deal information on ATIS, you are connecting directly with Travel Alberta and creating a link to share your organization's news, events, festivals, and packages.

You are always in control of the information you post. At any time, you can log into your account to update information and modify or add travel offers. ATIS can also expand your reach with job postings and news releases on industry.travelalberta.com.

"The online booking engine on our website, exploresouthwestalberta.ca, continues to see increased visitation and purchases thanks to our participation in Travel Alberta's ATIS", explains Colleen Bridges from Chinook Country Tourist Association.

"The benefit of the high volume of traffic that Travel Alberta receives flows directly from travelalberta.com through to ours, and by ensuring our latest packages are up to date on ATIS, Travel Alberta is consistently one of our top referring sites. This system allows our organization and our stakeholders access to a market and reach that we would otherwise have difficulty capitalizing on."

If you would like more information on how to post your travel deals on travelalberta.com please contact Christopher Smith, Manager Consumer Marketing at christopher.smith@travelalberta.com.

Richard Wong is Travel Alberta's Vice-President, Industry Relations. He can be reached at richard.wong@travelalberta.com.

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Rosebud: Dinner Theatre Extraordinaire

by Debbie Minke



From "The Diviners" with Giovanni Mocibob, Karl Sine, Levi Johnson and Nathan Schmidt – Photo credit Morris Ertman

Rosebud is a sleepy little hamlet of 100 residents located 35 km southwest of Drumheller and 100 km northeast of Calgary. Despite its size, the tiny town has made a name for itself by offering something extremely special to Albertans and out-of-province visitors alike. Rosebud Theatre is Alberta's only professional rural theatre company, showcasing award-winning, knee-slapping stage productions that attract over 35,000 visitors each year. Named as one of the 25 Most Innovative Organizations in 2012, by Alberta Ventures, Rosebud Theatre has given life to a small community that might not otherwise exist.

Outstanding attractions such as the renowned Royal Tyrell Museum, the Hoodoos, and the Atlas Coal Mine Historic Site in nearby Drumheller draw visitors from around the world. These visitors also avail themselves of the excellent regional arts and cultural opportunities - including the Canadian Badlands Passion Play, a seasonal performance with a cast of hundreds and seating for thousands, and the unforgettable year-round dinner theatre performances in Rosebud's Opera House.

After a gourmet buffet dinner with live music at the Rosebud Mercantile, dinner theatre guests walk across the street to the Opera House for a memorable show put on by a cast composed of resident actors, student apprentices, and visiting artists. The 2013 season includes Neil Simon's "Barefoot in the Park"; "Cotton Patch Gospel" by Tom Key and Russell Treyz, music and lyrics by Harry Chapin; "Our Town" by Thornton Wilder; "Underneath the Lintel" by Glen Berger; and "It's A Wonderful Life: The Radio Play" by Philip Grecian. The "Rosebud Presents..." series features concerts, one-man shows, and more. Children's programming and family festivals are also being planned for the 2013 season.

Rosebud Centre for the Arts was founded in 1973 when LaVerne Erickson decided to create a summer arts camp for kids. This morphed into a residential fine arts school that combined academics with art and work experience. In 1983 the students staged a play as a fundraiser for the drama program, and Rosebud Theatre was born. Now a post-secondary institution, students at the Rosebud School of the Arts study acting, art, speech, movement, choir, dance, script analysis, music theory, spiritual

formation, Christianity and the arts, drama ministry, and technical theatre. Students present their own shows each season, performed in the Studio Stage theatre.

Beginning its life as a grain annex, the Rosebud Opera House was moved to its current location in 1948 to serve as a community hall. In the 1970s, it began to be used by Rosebud School of the Arts for classes and meetings, and in 1984, it was renamed the Opera House, and became the main venue for Rosebud Theatre. After renovations in the early 1990s, the Opera House now has 220-fixed seats with a maximum capacity of 232, and hosts over 200 performances a year.

Once home to the general store, the Rosebud Mercantile was purchased by Rosebud Camp of the Arts in the early 1970s as a retreat centre. It eventually began to house students, classrooms, and the school cafeteria. With the first theatre show in 1983, the Mercantile began to host patrons with regular expansions as Rosebud Theatre began to grow. A major building project was completed in 2011 for the Mercantile's 100th anniversary. It now contains six-themed rooms and a sun deck for the dinner theatre, Rosebud Gifts & Crafts shop, a 32-seat restaurant (Wild Horse Jack's), and the Encana Conference Centre.

Beyond the dinner theatre and local dining, the "Rosebud Experience" might also include a visit to several gift shops and galleries, which feature local and regional arts and crafts. The Rosebud Centennial Museum, once the local Chinese laundry, displays artifacts and photographs of pioneer life. A nine-hole executive golf course offers a challenging game amid beautiful scenery.

The local inn and several B&Bs offer theatre packages with accommodation, and there's even seasonal camping within easy walking distance of the town centre.

Rosebud Theatre employs a resident company of artists who produce the shows as well as mentor apprentice performers and technicians for a career in theatre. This year marks Morris Ertman's 12th season as the Artistic Director. Tickets for the 2013 Season are now available.

THE EDMONTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LOOKS AHEAD

by *Debbie Minke*

The Edmonton Economic Development Corporation (EEDC) welcomed Brad Ferguson as its new president and CEO effective August 1, 2012. Ferguson shares some of his priorities and strategies for this year:

Q: What are your top priorities for Edmonton Economic Development Corporation?

A: Since starting in the position, I have digested every essential document about the organization, spoken with many of our stakeholders, and asked an incredible number of pointed questions about the value we should be delivering to the business community and to our shareholder. I am incredibly bullish about Edmonton's future, but also realize that there is much work to be done. My immediate priorities are: 1) To bring focus to the organization's activities on specific, measurable activities; 2) To build a senior management team that can provide leadership in the business community; and 3) To fundamentally increase the value we deliver to our customers... those being Edmonton's current and future business leaders. Once those three priorities are realized, we can get more ambitious and focus on Edmonton outperforming every major jurisdiction in North America. In the immediate term, however, 100% of my focus needs to be on building these three fundamentals.

Q: How will you achieve them?

A: Every morning I wake up and try to remember three critical things: 1) No matter how tempting, do not get distracted from pursuing the priorities - focus, team, and value; 2) Understand that success in economic development only comes through collaboration with industry leaders and stakeholders; and 3) Respect that we steward public funds, and we need to demonstrate a tangible return on investment of those funds in everything we do. Doing that represents a culture change for our organization, and one that will make us much more accountable to our customers (industry leaders), to our shareholder (the City of Edmonton), and to the public at large (the



taxpayer and our regional partners). Maybe this all sounds simple, but to me they are the fundamentals of business.

Q: How does the EEDC plan to promote Edmonton and support tourism in the months ahead?

A: Edmonton needs to offer visitors diverse experiences and attractions 52 weeks a year. As Canada's Festival City, those experiences should be "positively remarkable", which means "worth remarking about" to friends, family, and neighbours so our visitors become the greatest marketing department Edmonton could ever ask for. Recognizing that the vast majority of our visitors come from within a day's drive of the city, we need to position Edmonton as the top regional tourism destination for western and northern Canadians - filling our hotel rooms, restaurants, attractions, and venues. Our efforts need to be in coordination with the DMF and Travel Alberta in order to leverage our marketing, and we need to move forward with our industry partners so everyone benefits from the effort.



Brad Ferguson, President & CEO

HOTEL ELAN

Developed With Business Travellers Top-of-Mind

by Terri Perrin

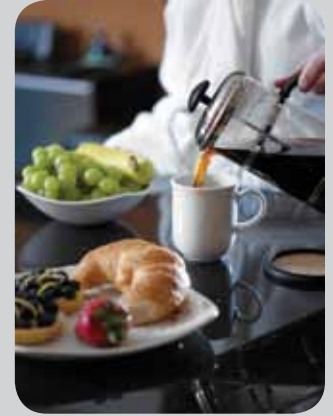
You can hear the excitement in Lewis Shaw's voice when you talk to him about his role as general manager of one of Calgary's newest and most unique hospitality venues - Hotel Elan. He was hired to run the luxury boutique hotel, located at 1122-16 Avenue SW, in June 2012. As the finishing touches are made on this unique 42 all-suite property, he is keeping busy overseeing contractors, hiring and training staff, and eagerly anticipating the establishment's opening in the first quarter of 2013.

With more than 20 years hotel industry experience, Shaw is well suited for the challenges that lie ahead to successfully launch and operate not just a new hotel, but also an entirely new kind of hospitality experience for Calgary's business travellers. Living up to the dictionary definition of its name, everything about Hotel Elan (like Shaw) will be reflective of "a vigorous spirit or enthusiasm".

"I have spent my entire working career in sales and customer service, starting at a little general store when I was in high school and, later, working through the ranks in both independent and franchise hospitality operations," explains Shaw. "What I love about this industry is that no two days are ever the same. Every day presents new challenges and I truly enjoy meeting those challenges. My first boss taught me that, in running a business, there is always something that can be done. I will work hard to instill this sense of commitment to my new staff at Hotel Elan and, as a team, we will do our best to meet or exceed the hotel's promise of a superior guest experience."

The Hotel Elan management team recognizes that even the most luxurious accommodation, best location, and a myriad of great amenities mean nothing if a guest doesn't have a good experience. Shaw explains that all employees will receive extensive customer service training.





Lewis Shaw, General Manager

“To provide excellent service you need to learn and remember each client’s particular preferences,” notes Shaw. “Every single guest is important and will be welcomed upon their arrival. The staff will be required to record notes about each individual guest’s experience, so that personal preferences can be duplicated. Staff will also be familiarized with all of the nearby restaurants and retail services, to ensure that their recommendations will help guests enjoy not just the hotel, but also the neighbourhood. I am very much about providing hands-on customer service, and

countless studies validate that it is vitally important to any hospitality experience.”

Conveniently located in the “Uptown 17th Avenue” district of southwest Calgary, Hotel Elan is within walking distance of dozens of restaurants, coffee houses, and pubs. While the proximity to eating and entertainment establishments will be a bonus, what truly makes Hotel Elan unique is that it thoroughly integrates the latest in essential business technology, including smart boards and video conferencing, into the overall design and function of the property.

The former eight-storey, 30-year-old apartment building has been undergoing a metamorphosis that was two years in planning. It has been completely renovated inside and out and now boasts spacious guest accommodations, ranging from 550 sq. ft. one bedroom and 950 sq. ft. two bedroom suites, all with private balconies, in-suite meeting room space, and boardroom-style tables.

Shaw explains that at Hotel Elan, guests will be able to live and work in personalized comfort without having to leave the hotel. In addition to the convenience (and cost savings) offered by in-suite meeting space, the two bedroom suites feature Japanese spa-inspired bathrooms with oversized chromatherapy soaker tubs as well as heated bathroom floors and toilet seats. Most bedrooms have king beds, luxury linens, and bathrobes. Euro-style kitchens have granite counters and induction cook tops, and there are 47-inch flat screen televisions in the meeting/living room space and 42-inch TVs in the bedrooms. An INNCOM system allows guests to customize their experience with individual automated lighting and temperature.

The fitness centre is equipped with state-of-the-art exercise machines, including a treadmill that is Google map-enabled, allowing the user to run a route of their choice anywhere in the world!

Executive Energizer Suites will have private exercise areas with stationary exercise bikes and yoga mats.

For unparalleled privacy and assurance of a restful and quiet experience, double thickness in the walls provides soundproofing between suites. Additional amenities include free local and North-American-wide calling and Internet, heated underground parking (for just \$18 a day), and a complimentary deluxe Continental-style breakfast.

Shaw believes that his familiarity with international guest relations - acquired by being both a world traveller himself and a hospitality manager for properties with many international guests - will prove especially helpful in serving an anticipated local, provincial, national, and global business clientele. “Calgary is a hub for corporate travel in Canada, but no other accommodation in the market fully integrates business needs with comfort, so we’re going to address that gap,” explains Sarah Webb, director of marketing. “We have identified our main target patrons as weekday business travellers between the ages of age 25 to 50, but we also feel we will have great appeal for weekend leisure travellers who are looking for a boutique hotel-style experience or a romantic getaway.”

To best reach this target market, the Hotel Elan marketing team is putting their faith in everything but mainstream media to advertise when the hotel will be open and to attract future business. A website with a corporate blog will be a primary promotional tool, but traditional print and electronic media will generally not be used to generate traffic to the site. Social media - like Facebook, Twitter, and a LinkedIn corporate page as well as strategically-placed Google “pay-per-click” ads centred on sites such as TripAdvisor and Expedia will not only generate traffic but enable the marketing team to accurately gauge the cost-effectiveness of every promotion, and report where clicks are coming from. (For more information on how Hotel Elan is optimizing the Internet in their marketing efforts, see the feature article, “Optimizing Your Website: Staying in the Game” in the Fall 2012 issue.

“We expect that this distinctive combination of meeting space, business technology, and luxury accommodations in one offering, along with a fabulous location, will position Hotel Elan to quickly become the hotel of choice for business travellers to Calgary,” boasts Shaw. ☺

FEATURE

WARMING THE HOME FIRES

Attracting Local Guests

by Kathy Eccles

During the London 2012 Summer Olympics, British Airways ran a witty advertising campaign with the slogan, "Don't fly. Support Team GB." The appeal to Londoners to stay home and support their Olympic athletes in Great Britain also addressed the gridlock and overbooked flights the airlines expected during the games. At the same time, the appeal embraced the trend for cash-strapped Londoners to take holidays closer to home as the country faced another recession.



Banff Aspen Lodge

Canadians, too, have enthusiastically adopted the concept of travelling at home, taking affordable mini-vacations nearby as they grapple with economic uncertainty. The 2012 Hotel Association of Canada (HAC) *Canadian Travel Intentions Survey* asked travellers how many times in 2011 they took a staycation - where they stayed in a hotel in their home town and visited local attractions, shopped, and ate at local restaurants. The results revealed a solid continuing staycation trend, with 22% confirming they did and 13% saying they would consider it in 2012.

On side with attracting short-haul visitations, Travel Alberta actively courts the highly lucrative in-province market. The most recently published data shows that, in 2010, Albertans travelling in Alberta (including all types of travel) represented \$3 billion in tourism revenue, out of \$5.5 billion total tourism revenue for the province that year. Executive Director for North America, Shelley Grollmuss, explains that Travel Alberta defines "Canada short haul" as the regional markets of Alberta, BC, and Saskatchewan, while "in-province marketing is about keeping people at home in the province of Alberta and experiencing what we have here. We want people to get out and see other parts of the province, to make long weekends, and go to festivals and events." However, she notes that the staycation trend is being affected somewhat by the changing economy. "As things are improving in Canada - certainly in Alberta - we're seeing a pent-up desire to travel to other places. With the Canadian dollar at par, or close to, the US dollar, we're competing with other destinations close to Canada."

Travel Alberta actively courts the highly lucrative in-province market.

In response, Travel Alberta's award-winning new brand, "remember to breathe" has been designed to produce "goosebump moments". Its panoramic images of towering Rocky Mountains, blue skies, waving fields of flowers, and horses thundering through open ranges, encourage audiences to take a break and remember what is on offer right here in their home province. The advertising is rolled out to the local market through a TV campaign, print ads in daily newspapers, and online displays. Grollmuss stresses that industry partners are encouraged to participate through buy-in advertising opportunities like the Travel Alberta summer and winter magazines inserted into newspapers. She adds, "Free listings on our consumer website allow our members to create an account and to promote special packages and seasonal things to see and do in the province."

Alberta hoteliers have also found a host of ways to entice locals to experience hospitality at their properties and to spend money in their own home towns. The Banff Aspen Lodge has been newly renovated from top to bottom in the last five years, creating what General Manager Chris Barr describes as a "hearty, homey atmosphere" to appeal to



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Banff Aspen Lodge

families. The short-haul market is extremely important to the lodge, with Barr attributing about 60% of its business to locals. The free continental breakfast with every stay is one of the draws; the hotel has turned it up a notch by offering a variety of fresh fruit and yogurts, making granola in its kitchens each day and baking fresh pastries in-house. "It's a fantastic Rocky Mountain continental breakfast that's more upscale," Barr stresses. The resort property's two outdoor hot tubs are attractive for families hiking in the summer and skiing in the winter; the front desk stocks board games; and the hotel's library has adopted an easy-going "leave a book, take a book" philosophy that underlines the fact that the lodge is a relaxed place to stay for family getaways.

Banff Aspen Lodge typically sells out on weekends, so it relies on promotional opportunities like "stay 3 nights for the price

We know what our guests want from their previous visits. They want a getaway here with their families... Deals are important to them, but not the most important thing that's driving them. They want to have fun!

of 2" to attract last-minute local bookings and fill space mid-week. "We steer away from paper advertising and trend toward online," notes Barr, who explains that an additional 20% pickup is due to third-party online promotional advertising on sites like Expedia, Travelocity, and TravelAlberta.com. With the hotel experiencing an excellent return on its staycation promotions, he adds, "The past year was good for us and the town is benefitting from that."

At Edmonton's Fantasyland Hotel, Director of Sales Kimberley Wilmer confirms, "At least 70% of our business is local." The hotel offers

a number of selective lures to go with its rooms, including a Fantasy Fun package for families that includes West Edmonton Mall attraction passes, two-in room pizzas, a pound of chicken wings, cans of pop, and an in-room movie. An adult-oriented When in Rome package offers a Fantasy Feast Platter for Two, complete with lobster tails, a bottle of Italian wine, fresh fruit, and cheese. Other packages come with dinner theatre or comedy club tickets, salon treatments, or even a romantic trail of rose petals and a sensual gift basket for couples looking for a close-to-home romantic getaway.




Fantasyland Hotel

The Fantasyland Hotel considers the short-haul market and the local market as one and the same. "We go provincial and then drill down to the cities and feeder markets." Staycations are big business and the hotel carefully targets that market. Wilmer advises, "We know what our guests want from their previous visits. They want a getaway here with their families; they want shopping; they want to go to the waterpark and to Galaxyland. Deals are important to them, but not the most important thing that's driving them. They want to have fun!"

To attract local stays, the hotel turns to its existing guest pool. "We have a database

of guests and send out email-blasts on rate promotions. We tell them about activities at West Edmonton Mall and what's going on here." However, less effort is required when encouraging guests to extend corporate stays for leisure or to bring their families. In those cases, Wilmer notes that the guests typically approach the hotel first to make the request. She says, "Because weekends are so full, the magic just happens. Approximately 50% of our rooms are non-themed, so there's something for everyone."

A quick scan of the ads under "Travel Deals" on Travel Alberta's website reveals how the Alberta hospitality industry is effectively

cashing in on short-haul guest and staycation trends by offering a vast and imaginative array of packages and promotions to sweeten the pot. There's everything from rooms packaged with side-to-side champagne pedicures, shopaholic discounts, and zoo passes, to a tongue-in-cheek "End of the World Sale" tied to the Mayan calendar. Despite a growing desire among Albertans to travel out-of-province as the economy improves, Travel Alberta's Grollmuss is optimistic, seeing an opportunity to influence how often people travel at home. "The great thing about Albertans is, even though we know there is this pent-up demand, we still do have the ability to motivate people to travel more in the province." 

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) conducted a labour market survey for The Alberta Hotel and Lodging Association in 2011. Results from the survey demonstrate the creativity and resourcefulness of the accommodation industry when it comes to finding staff. Employers are always looking for potential employees so that they can start to attract, retain, and motivate them, and these potential employees are getting harder to find! If your recruitment strategy is not producing the expected results, you may want to consider expanding your sources and methods.

Sources of New Workers - Internal hires and promotions were seen as the most important source of new workers in the accommodation sector, followed closely by the use of the temporary foreign worker program and the provincial nominee program. A majority (64%) of survey participants indicated that the following sources adequately meet staffing needs: Alberta universities/colleges; other Canadian universities; internal hire or internal promotion;

other Alberta accommodation properties; other Alberta industries; other Canadian provinces or territories; other international locations; Temporary Foreign Worker Program; and the Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program. Other sources identified include referrals, labour market centres, and new immigrant centres.

Recruitment Methods - Participants in the survey indicated job bank and website postings were seen as the most important method of recruitment, followed closely by walk-ins. A majority (72%) of survey participants indicated that the following hiring methods adequately addressed staffing needs: job bank postings; website postings; job fairs; newspaper advertising; social media; walk-ins; and staff referral programs.

Other general sources and recruitment methods included:

- Canada Experience Class (International Exchange Programs)
- Local advertising
- Social services

- Word of mouth
- Online recruiting websites (www.hcareers.com, www.indeed.com)
- External recruiting agencies
- Friends and family
- Holiday work visa programs
- Summer students
- Internal postings
- Japanese exchange students – JANlink
- Networking (LinkedIn, Facebook)
- Industry associations (Alberta Hotel and Lodging Association)

Consider looking at your current stellar employees. Find out more about them and use this information to target your search. For example, do they have a tourism diploma? Look at schools that have that type of program. Are they active or on a sports team? Maybe fellow players are potential employees. Posting jobs everywhere can be expensive and exhaustive. Posting jobs strategically will produce the results you anticipated in your recruitment strategy. Think smart, think creatively, and think hospitality!



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SAVE YOUR MONEY AND WORKERS WITH MODIFIED WORK

by Barbara Malacko

Despite your best efforts, it is inevitable that one of your workers will suffer a workplace injury, whether it's minor or major. Offering your employees modified work as they recover can be a win-win solution.

Alberta's hotel industry faces critical times as a shortage of workers looms over nearly everyone's heads. If one of your workers becomes injured, can you afford to lose them?

Fortunately, a health and safety program does not need to be complex to be successful. A hotel can experience great savings by implementing a few simple steps, and one of these is offering modified work. This is designed to get an injured worker back on the job as quickly as possible, which helps their rehabilitation and saves you money.

Why Offer Modified Work?

There are several great reasons to offer an injured employee modified work. Doing so helps you:

- Retain an experienced worker
- Boost worker morale
- Maintain a reputation as a supportive employer
- Reduce any additional hiring or training costs
- Reduce costs associated with claims

The chart below compares two very real hotels in Alberta. Although employer B has fewer workers, and less insurable earnings, compare what happens next based on how these hotels manage an injured worker. The dollars paid in WCB premiums speak loud and clear.

So how can you start to saving money and retaining your experienced workers? Here are a few suggestions:

1. Sign up through WCB to utilize the Occupational Injury Service (OIS). OIS is a medical clinic for people who are hurt at work. OIS clinics provide timely and appropriate care, and understand workplace injuries and job demands.
2. Create a job bank of possible modified duties for an injured worker. Contact the Alberta Hotel Safety Association at info@ahsa.ca for a list of possible duties.
3. Ensure your workers know you will assist them in getting back to work.
4. Make the program flexible so it can accommodate a variety of different situations including work and non-work related injuries

When a Worker Is Injured

1. Provide your worker with a description of the physical requirements for both their

current job duties and the proposed modified duties to share with the treating physician.

2. Encourage your worker to discuss the modified work options with the treating physician and obtain medical support.
3. Review the information provided by the physician to determine if your worker can start modified work.
4. Complete a written Offer of Modified Work agreement for your worker to sign.
5. Communicate with WCB-Alberta.

Modified work helps an injured worker return to work while recovering and provides the opportunity to contribute to the workplace. Modified work also helps the employer improve their bottom line by reducing their WCB premiums. In 2011, modified work helped more than 75% of injured hotel workers succeed at work following a workplace injury.

For more information, contact the Alberta Hotel Safety Association at info@ahsa.ca.

Barbara Malacko is Executive Director of the Alberta Hotel Safety Association and can be reached at 780-702-3059 ext. 254, 1-800-649-1242 or bmalacko@ahsa.ca

WCG Premium Comparison

	Employer A <i>Modified Work</i>	Employer A <i>No Modified Work</i>
Number of workers	225	181
Insurable earnings (2012)	\$6.25 million	\$5 million
Lost time claims (2008-10)	4	16
Lost time days (2008-10)	33	221
Average lost time days per claim	8.25	13.8
Experience rating	30.92% discount	34.33% surcharge
Poor performance surcharge	0%	88.36%
Industry rate	\$0.96	\$0.96
Employer rate	\$0.66	\$2.14
Premium paid	\$41,085	\$107,023

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BILL ROBINSON

The New “Blogging Boss” at AGLC

by Chris McBeath



“When I joined AGLC in August, I spent my first 30 days questioning everything just to see what made sense,” says Robinson. “Happily, what I found was a very dynamic, well run corporation that has enabled me to focus on moving us into the future.”

Solid Alignments

Having served in several positions over his 34-year RCMP career in Alberta and Manitoba, Bill Robinson has a solid perspective of how policy and procedures can both help and hinder front line operations. For the last 10 years, much of his work involved large-scale, change-management issues, and it’s a strength that is quickly making its mark at AGLC.

“Because we are such a multi-faceted organization - we are responsible for social responsibility programs and a charitable

As the recently appointed President and CEO of the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission, Bill Robinson’s vision for the organization is clearly about accessible, responsive leadership. With issues ranging from Internet gambling to the funding of a new hockey arena in Edmonton constantly rattling local media headlines, it’s a good thing this former Mountie understands how governing policy translates into reality.

AGLC’s Current Programs

Bill Robinson’s guiding principles include growing a sustainable, socially responsible organization. Current programs include:

For gambling:

GamTalk - access to a 24x7 online support forum that is Canada’s first moderated, national support forum for gamblers to discuss concerns, ask questions, and get advice online

Deal Us In - gambling awareness training for casino and racing entertainment centre (REC) staff

Reel Facts - online training for employees in licensed establishments with VLTs

A Good Call - industry awareness training for bingo staff

RGICs - onsite Responsible Gambling Information Centres

Self-Exclusion Program – Voluntary agreement to ban an individual from all Alberta casinos and RECs

Responsible Gambling Awareness Week

For liquor service:

ProTect Security Staff Training - earned the 2010/11 Bronze Premier’s Award for Excellence

ProServe - liquor staff training program, formally known as ASIP

Best Bar None - a new accreditation and awards program promoting the responsible management and operation of liquor-licensed premises

Coming soon:

Take Ten - a new campaign about responsible gambling as well as new initiative for liquor moderation. It launches this year.

gaming model as well as the liquor and gaming industries - it's important to have strongly aligned internal systems," explains Robinson, who is an advocate of best practices management alongside effective internal and external partnerships.

At the helm for less than six months, he has already set up a cross-jurisdictional advisory committee, which will meet for the first time early this year to discuss best practices, supplier processes, and hot-button issues. He has also met with most gaming sectors, and participated in the first-ever conference of the Alberta Liquor Store Association. He found the conference to be "tremendously helpful to speak with all these shareholders in one place."

Streamlining Connections

Communication is another Bill Robinson forté, so it's no surprise that he intends to use social media avenues to underscore AGLC's accessibility, transparency, and social responsibility. Through his new CEO blog, Robinson is connecting with any number of AGLC's 900-strong employees. "I'm engaged in this blog almost every day discussing

"We review the mark-up on all products as a matter of course, and are constantly assessing our enforcement priorities," explains Robinson. "For example, we take inducements very seriously, but it's important to note that we have not received a large number of complaints on this issue. It's also early for me to discuss Internet gambling, although it's certainly something we will need to look at in the foreseeable future. Internet gambling is all around us, especially offshore, and we are doing our due diligence to see what models, if any, best fit our best practices modus operandi. It's important to explore all aspects of how a program might exist, which really goes to the core issue of sustainability and responsible approaches to these things."

Social Responsibility

Being a part of an organization that is both socially aware and actively responsible reflects Robinson's core values. They are also central to how he sees the AGLC operating, since it contributes more than \$2 billion to the provincial revenues annually, including \$1.3 billion for the Alberta Lottery Fund.


He intends to use social media avenues to underscore AGLC's accessibility, transparency, and social responsibility

everything from supply issues to the gymnasium. It's a terrific medium for listening and searching out fresh ideas and innovation."

Moving the organization from paper to more electronic processes is key to his plans, because while he notes that the AGLC has a very user-friendly public face, there's room for improvement internally.

Warming Up to Hot Topics

As a Crown corporation, there are policy issues affecting the AGLC that can only be addressed at a ministerial level. These include Internet gambling, how to deal with retail inducements, and any changes to liquor mark-ups, including the issue surrounding small brewers.

"I have been especially gratified to see the solid contribution AGLC makes to charities and the significant investment we make into education on addiction," he states. "We simply can't be an industry that exists at all costs, and our partnerships with social agencies as well as with our stakeholders are essential to our being able to use our resources to the betterment of all Albertans." For Robinson, the opportunity to head up an organization that can make such a quality difference goes beyond rhetoric. It speaks to his heart. 

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THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON LODGING PERFORMANCE

by Chris Anderson Ph.D.

Social media has been touted as having an increasingly important role in many aspects of the hospitality industry, including guest satisfaction and process improvement. However, one of the more intriguing aspects of social media is their potential to move markets by driving consumers' purchasing patterns and influencing lodging performance. In the absence of a comprehensive attempt to quantify the impact of social media upon lodging performance, as measured by bookings, occupancy, and revenue, a study was done using the unique position of Cornell's Center for Hospitality Research. Data was combined from three CHR research partners (ReviewPro, STR, and Travelocity), and two other data providers (comScore and TripAdvisor) in a first attempt at determining ROI for social-media efforts.

The analysis finds the following: First, the percentage of consumers consulting reviews at TripAdvisor prior to booking a hotel room has steadily increased over time, as has the number of reviews they are reading prior to making their hotel choice.

Second, transactional data from Travelocity illustrates that if a hotel increases its review scores by 1 point on a 5-point scale (e.g. from 3.3 to 4.3), the hotel can increase its price by 11.2% and still maintain the same occupancy or marketshare.

Third, to measure the impact of user reviews on hotel pricing power, consumer demand, and revenue performance the study uses matched-sample data from ReviewPRO and STR. By matching ReviewPRO's Global Review Index™ with STR's hotel sales and revenue data, a

regression analysis finds that a 1% increase in a hotel's online reputation score leads up to a 0.89% increase in price as measured by the hotel's average daily rate (ADR). Similarly this 1% increase in reputation also leads to an occupancy increase of up to 0.54%. Finally, this 1% reputation improvement leads up to a 1.42% increase in RevPAR.

For more information or to download the full report, *The Impact of Social Media on Lodging Performance*, go to www.hotelschool.cornell.edu/research/.

Chris Anderson Ph.D. is Associate Professor, Services Operations Management at Cornell University School of Hotel Administration.

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APRIL 14 – 16, 2013

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Congratulations to the new general managers at the following properties: **Thomas Atkesone**, Hotel Selkirk, Edmonton; **Jack Au**, Rest E-Z Inn, Travelodge Edmonton East, Travelodge Hotel Stony Plain, Royal Inn Express Hotel, Edmonton; **Yong Bae**, Rainbow Centre Hotel, Rainbow Lake; **Salim Bharwani**, Travelodge Red Deer; **Kris Belleperche**, Windtower Lodge & Suites, Canmore; **Shiv Bobbal**, Super 8 Hinton; **Anastasia Breeze**, Bow Valley Motel, Canmore; **Richard Buckle**, Ramada Inn & Suites Cochrane; **Brad Clinton**, BCMInns Lac La Biche; **Angela Cochrane**, Canadian Rockies Chalets, Canmore, and Banff Boundary Lodge, Harvie Heights; **Vina Coles**, Super 8 Lethbridge; **Frank Delaney**, Best Western Plus Sherwood Park; **Kelly Dixon**, Beaverlodge Hotel, Beaverlodge; **Genevieve Dumais**, Holiday Inn & Suites Grande Prairie Convention Centre, Grande Prairie; **Shannon Ekstrom**, Vantage Inn & Suites, Fort McMurray; **Andre Fabbri**, Mount Royal Hotel, Banff; **Claudia Fopp**, Pipestone Motel, Millet; **Jim Gannarelli**, Stoney Nakoda Resort & Casino, Morley; **Jenelle Gartner**, Quality Hotel & Conference Centre Fort McMurray; **Arjun Gersappe**, Banff Ptarmigan Inn, Banff; **Joumana Ghandour**, Westin Edmonton; **Jeannette Gillis**, Nova Inn, Edson; **Marc Haine**, Drayton Valley Hotel; **Jason Hein**, Quality Hotel & Conference Centre Grande Prairie; **Kat Kalynchuk**, Mountaineer Lodge, Lake Louise; **Gabriel Kim**, Lakeside Motor Inn, McLennan; **Jin Kim**, Vulcan Country Inn, Vulcan; **Patrick Kim**, Western Valley Inn, Valleyview; **Emma Kirkwood**, Best Western Grande Mountain Get-Aways & Hotel, Grande Cache; **Barbara Koziak**, Chateau Louis Hotel & Conference Centre, Edmonton; **Sam Lee**, Key Inn, High Prairie; **Dawn Li**, Varscona Hotel on Whyte, Metterra Hotel on Whyte, Edmonton; **Hwang Gyu Lim**, Athabasca Hillside Motel, Athabasca; **Amanda Mattern**, Slave Lake Inn & Conference Centre, Slave Lake; **Kevin Maven**, Best Western Plus The Inn at St. Albert; **Janice McDonald**, Days Hotel & Suites Lloydminster; **Jennifer Meredith**, Ramada Inn & Suites Brooks; **Maria Miccoli**, Forestburg Motor Inn; **Olaf Miede**, Matrix Hotel, Edmonton; **Mark Moon**, Silver Crest Lodge, Grande Prairie; **Chris Parry**, Best Western Cedar Park Inn, Edmonton; **Victoria Perkins**, Ramada Drayton Valley; **Mark Perry**, Merit Hotel, Fort McMurray; **Kim Pinto**, Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites Calgary South; **Charmaine Reid**, Rycroft Hotel; **Afif Salibi**,

Fairmont Hotel Macdonald, Edmonton; **Rita Salopree**, Peavine Inn & Suites, High Prairie; **Judy Salter**, Totem Motel, Edson; **Bernhard Schneider**, Amethyst Lodge, Lobstick Lodge, Marmot Lodge, Pochontas Cabins, Pyramid Lake Resort, Jasper; **Prem Singhmar**, Coast Edmonton East Hotel, Sherwood Park; **Kent Sjolin**, Best Western Wayside Inn, Wetaskiwin; **Jason So**, Patricia Motel, Edmonton; **Theodore Stoubos**, Sandman Signature Hotel & Suites Edmonton South; **David Wei**, Holiday Inn & Suites West Edmonton; **Ryan Wynn**, Coast Hotel Medicine Hat; **Paul Yun**, Ramada Cold Lake Inn & Suites; and **Ralph Zimmerman**, The Lodge Motel, Taber.

Western Inn in Fox Creek is now Super 8 Fox Creek. Nova Inn Whitecourt is now the Days Inn & Suites Whitecourt. In Lloydminster, the West Harvest Hotel is now the Royal Hotel, the West Harvest Express has been renamed the Executive Royal Hotel, and the Best Western Wayside Inn & Suites is now Days Inn & Suites. The Holiday Inn 67 Street in Red Deer is now iHotel 67 Street. Lake Minnewanka Boat Tours is now called Banff Lake Cruise. The Commodore Hotel in Edson has been changed to the Edson Hotel. Sawridge Inn & Conference Centre is now the Slave Lake Inn & Conference Centre. The Trailway Motel in Edmonton has been renamed the Advantage Motel. Willowbrook Bungalows & RV Park in Hinton is now Cougar Creek Cabins & Campground. **Diane Kowalvsky** is the new owner.

In Sylvan Lake, the Inn at the Lake is now Sylvan Lake Country Lodge. The Harvest Country Inn, Cochrane has been renamed Super 8 Cochrane. Thriftlodge Lethbridge is now Superlodge Lethbridge, and **Marlene Girling** is general manager. Frontier Motor Inn in High Level is now Quality Inn & Suites, High Level, and **Celine Morad** is general manager.

Congratulations to **Tony Pollard**, President and CEO of the Hotel Association of Canada, who has been awarded The Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal courtesy of His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada. The Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal was created to celebrate Her Majesty's accession to the throne 60 years ago and pays tribute to Canadians whose achievements have benefitted their fellow citizens, their community, their organization, and the country.

Skål Club of Edmonton has inducted two new members - **Tina Tobin**, General Manager of Alberta Place Hotel, and **John Mytz** of the Ramada Conference Centre.

Congratulations to **Rain Emily (Shi Yu) Zhang**, President of Willowest Enterprise Co. Ltd. for receiving the Deloitte Start-Up Award at the 2012 RBC Canadian Women Entrepreneur Awards annual gala in Toronto. She was one of only six award winners, representing every region of Canada, who were honoured based on their contributions to the local, Canadian, and global economies. The RBC Canadian Women Entrepreneur Awards are the pre-eminent national business awards recognizing the country's leading female entrepreneurs.

VingCard Elsafe has promoted **William J. (Bill) Oliver** to the position of President - North America. His successful 27-year career has included management of a wide range of hotel properties, board of director positions with various associations, and the founding of a successful hotel consultancy firm.

Trudy Rautio is the new President and CEO of Carlson. She has been a senior executive in the company for more than 15 years.

Kurt Ritter, President and CEO of The Rezidor Hotel Group, will be retiring after more than two decades of leadership. **Wolfgang Neumann** succeeded Ritter as of January 1.

Congratulations to the **Comfort Inn & Suites, Sylvan Lake**, for receiving Choice Hotels Canada's Platinum award. Another winner was **Quality Inn West Harvest, Edmonton**, receiving a Gold award. Winners of these awards exceed Choice Hotels' standards for customer service, housekeeping, and product quality.

Travelodge Stony Plain received the Most Improved CRS Contribution award at the 12th annual Travelodge Canada brand conference.

Marriott International, Inc. has announced the addition of the new **Renaissance Edmonton Airport Hotel** to its Canadian portfolio. Scheduled to open this summer, the property will be the first Renaissance Hotel in Alberta.

If you have any noteworthy community contributions, please email the details to Debbie at debbie@emcmktg.com.

Rubbermaid Commercial Products has launched the industry's first-ever BPA-Free commercial foodservice product line, including 174 different items. These containers withstand washing in commercial dishwashers without cracking; are resistant to heat and harsh detergents; break, chip and crack less from dropping or extended use; and have glasslike clarity.

Hyatt Hotels & Resorts' **Group Bill** is a real time billing and tracking system developed with planners' input and needs in mind. It allows meeting planners to track and reconcile costs daily from the comfort of their own computer or workspace. The interactive PDF offers planners a table of contents, general summaries with hyperlinks back to the original charge, distinguishing colours, extra white space to ease eyestrain, multiple levels of billing detail, and a reduction in desk cluttering paperwork.

Lodging Interactive has launched its new **Chatter Guard Lite Social Media Monitoring** tool for the hospitality industry. Chatter Guard Lite is completely web-based and requires no software to install. In addition to an online dashboard, it provides real time email alerts, guest comment sentiment scoring, and the ability to share guest comments with others via email. For hoteliers seeking a more comprehensive

full service solution, Lodging Interactive offers Chatter Guard, a social media management solution that provides guest review management response service on numerous websites.

B4checkin's **Online Checkin (OLC)** is an innovative Cloud-based guest-facing system that maximizes convenience for today's mobile-friendly guests and significantly increases efficiency at the front desk for the hotelier. It automatically extracts information from the property PMS, including guest name, confirmation number, and arrival and departure dates for all arriving guests with a valid email address, the day before arrival. It sends these guests a reminder email or text advising them that they can check in online. Upon receipt of this communication, the guest has the option to check-in online, just like an airline check-in. By doing so, they reconfirm the booking and confirm their arrival time. The hotel is then sent an email notification, so that they can pre-key the guest and express check them in. Upon arrival, the guest's credit card is swiped and the pre-prepared keys are given to the guest, expediting check-in and reducing staff time at the front desk.

Attention: Exhibitors at AHLA's Trade Show

Attract buyers to your booth with an ad in the *Official Show Guide*

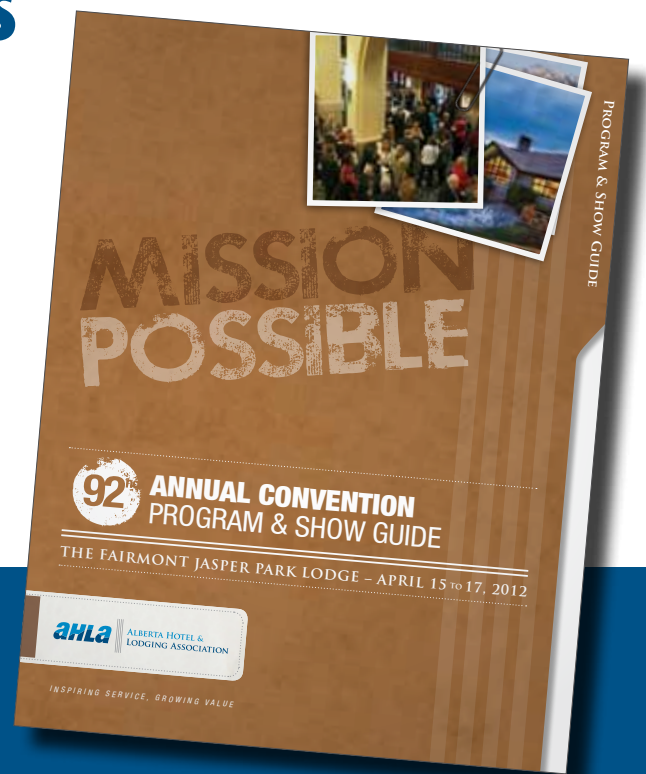
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Property taxes tend to be one of the single largest operating expenses in the hotel and lodging industry. It can be challenging for a municipal assessment department to accurately value a property as there is a business component and a real estate component to consider.

Altus Group's goal is to ensure that your property assessment is correct prior to the release of the roll. Accordingly, we will make every attempt to negotiate the value before the roll is published. This is also important when developing, demolishing, or making changes to the property. Having the value placed on the roll correctly can save countless hours in the appeal process.

Where a value cannot be agreed upon prior to the release of the assessment roll, and based on our review of the year-over-year assessment change, an appeal may be recommended. We then begin a two-phased approach in an attempt to reduce the tax burden and correct any errors in valuation.

In Alberta, one of the key prerequisites for appealing an Assessment Notice is fulfilling your requirement to supply financial information to the assessment body. This is commonly known as a Request for Information (RFI) and it helps form the basis that the assessment body uses to evaluate the entire sector. If an RFI was not filed, in even a basic form, you forfeit your right to participate in the appeal process.

The AHLA and Altus Group are in their third year of working together on reducing property taxes for AHLA members. The results so far have been excellent and over \$160,000 has been saved for AHLA members, from a very small number of participants. We are seeing this number grow as more members participate in this valuable program.

There are no up-front costs to participate. The AHLA has negotiated a preferred contingency rate, with Altus Group being paid 40% of any savings they generate for you in the current tax year.

Phase One - Assessment Audit and Review

Before entering into discussions/negotiations with the assessing authority, Altus Group will complete a thorough review of the site, including tax classifications, assessment records, sales transactions of similar properties, and other items specific to the usage and condition of the property.

Phase Two - Assessment Appeal/Negotiations

Based on our findings, and in accordance with your instructions, negotiations and discussions will be carried out with representatives of the assessing authority. Should these deliberations not form the basis for a satisfactory settlement, we will then prepare to move matters through the formal appeal process. This includes attempting to negotiate the correct value prior to hearing, preparing discoveries, filing submissions, and, in the event that settlement cannot be reached out-of-court, providing expert witness testimony and representing you in the hearing.

Timing of Taxation Cycle

Calgary/Edmonton example used

- Tax assessment notices are mailed in the first week of January
- Review period is 60 days in Alberta.
- This review period is where Altus will review your assessment notice and negotiate with the assessment body.
- If a resolution can be reached, we will get your agreement on the negotiated number and this is carried forward to when your actual Tax Notice is issued in June.
- If we cannot come to a negotiated settlement with the assessment authority, a formal appeal will be filed and Altus Group will prepare submissions and attend hearings on your behalf.
- Most appeals are settled by the end of September, and our consultants will regularly communicate with you on the status of your appeal.

The structure at Altus Group includes several primary areas of expertise. AHLA members can benefit from the following key services:

- Realty tax consulting
- Research, valuation, and advisory
- Cost consulting and project management

For information on Altus Group visit www.ahla.ca, www.altusgroup.com or contact Doah Ozum at 780.930.8316 or doah.ozum@altusgroup.com.

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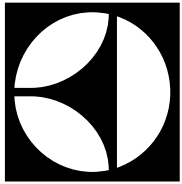


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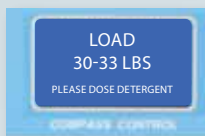
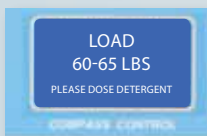


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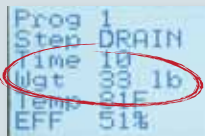
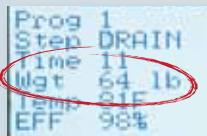
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