

alberta hospitality

The Official Magazine of the Alberta Hotel and Lodging Association

Winter 2011



welcoming chinese guests

- Energy Efficiencies
- Destination Marketing Fees
- Keeping it Clean

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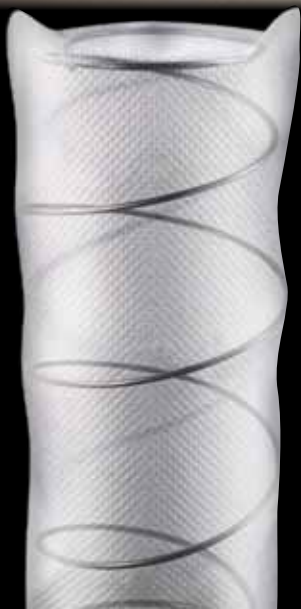
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HOSPITALITY BEDDING



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this issue



6

WELCOMING CHINESE GUESTS

Approved Destination Status
Provides Opportunity for Canada

Over the course of this new decade, China will become Canada's second largest source of tourists, after the US.

in every issue

- 4 Chairman's Report
- 5 President & CEO's Message
- 14 Travel Alberta
- 23 HR Matters
- 23 What's New?
- 28 Names in News
- 29 Member Value Program Review

10 Energy Efficiencies

16 Sandman Signature Hotel & Suites
Edmonton South

18 Destination Marketing Fees

24 Keeping it Clean

27 "Flash Selling" Drives Leisure Travel Sales

30 Medical Tourism

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Building Awareness of Alberta *by Mike Shymka*



As your Chair, it has been my pleasure to attend the Travel Alberta conference and Hotel Association of Canada meeting on your behalf.

Travel Alberta's conference was very informative. I learned that when Travel Alberta interviewed Americans about what they knew about Alberta, they were able to recount surprisingly little. Californians knew about our mountains, West Edmonton Mall, cold winters, and the Calgary Stampede, but New Yorkers knew virtually nothing! In fact, an international survey of the world tourism market found that general awareness of Canada was only slightly greater than 18%. Awareness about Alberta was closer to nil than 1%.

What does that mean about how we market this great country and province?

Honourable Cindy Ady, Alberta's Minister of Tourism, Parks, and Recreation said it best when she told Travel Alberta delegates that "we must start hunting in packs". As an industry, we must influence our tourism partners to work together - from cities and towns all the way up to Travel Alberta and the Canadian Tourism Commission. The dollars we spend must go to the marketing platforms that will have the most impact. We must encourage local, regional, provincial and national tourism marketing organizations to work collaboratively and align their strategies and initiatives with those of their industry colleagues. This includes:

- Destination Marketing Fees (DMFs)
- Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs)
- Tourism Destination Regions (TDRs)
- Travel Alberta
- Canadian Tourism Commission

I am pleased to tell you that this is starting to happen. The CTC has cited Travel Alberta as the most innovative provincial marketing organization in the country. Frankly, I agree! CTC and Travel Alberta are coordinating their marketing efforts to the extent of even sharing office space abroad. This is vital, given the lack of international awareness of Canada and Alberta.

How do we get travellers to Canada if the price of an airline ticket is not competitive?

We can all relate to booking a flight online for a great price, only to discover that the taxes add another 25%. Imagine a potential visitor in India, China, or the UK going through the exact same process. How many stop after they see the total ticket price, including surcharges, federal taxes, and the security levy? How many start comparison shopping, looking at other destinations that are more reasonably priced?

What seems illogical to me is how much has been spent on airport expansions in the last decade, which has had the effect of pricing our product too high. We are increasing our capacity by building new runways, terminals, and parking lots, but we have created barriers to potential travellers because it is too expensive to fly here. Why spend billions of dollars if we are not serious about getting tourists to Canada? We must ensure that taxes and fees do not become the deciding factor in whether to purchase a ticket to get here or not. How much additional tax revenue could be earned by increased traffic if these federal taxes were reduced?

Are we satisfied with the federal government's investment of only \$71 million in the CTC?

The CTC did an outstanding job marketing the Vancouver Olympics. I believe it requires a greater, more secure base of funding if it is to fully leverage tourism marketing around the globe. This year, the CTC has scaled back its US marketing budget to around \$3 million. This is not because they do not believe there is benefit in marketing to the US, but because they have limited resources and they must invest in markets that will garner the largest return.

Nobody else will work on our behalf to ensure tourism is given the attention and investment it merits. We have to ensure our federal Members of Parliament understand the issues and the potential revenue that is created when we import tourists to Canada. The next time you see your local MP, talk to him/her about the impact of tourism in your community!

Destination Marketing Funds in Alberta

by Dave Kaiser



Over the past few years, hotel associations in a number of communities across Alberta have adopted voluntary Destination Marketing Funds (DMFs) to provide sustainable funding to the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) in their region and/or to generate funds to independently market their destinations. The Alberta Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) provides trustee services to five of these DMF organizations and is familiar with five others operating in the province, including two private DMFs operated by Alberta-based hotel chains.

In pursuit of its strategic objective, “To ensure that tourism marketing and tourism product development are funded in a sustainable manner and that efforts to market Alberta as a tourist destination are strategically aligned”, the AHLA engaged Western Management Consultants to conduct a study of the various DMFs operating in Alberta. The purpose of the study was to review and compare the governance, administration and operations, and the marketing alignment of these DMFs. All of the participants who were interviewed for the study were invited to attend a stakeholder meeting sponsored by the AHLA to confirm the results of the study.

The summary finding of the study was that virtually all organizations believed the DMF approach they initiated was accomplishing its purpose, its governance was reasonable,

operations and administration were appropriate, and marketing alignment had been accomplished in a reasonable fashion. However, the study also identified important issues and challenges that should be addressed if these voluntary DMF structures are to be effective and sustainable over the long term.

“Ownership of the Strategy and the Plan” was identified as the key to success in the study. The consulted noted that this was best achieved when there was trust between the key stakeholders i.e. the DMF partners and the DMO. Factors that contributed to building trust included:

- The need for DMF partners to respect the discipline and management of destination marketing and the expertise of professional destination marketers;
- The need for DMOs to respect the DMF as an entity, voluntarily providing funding and expecting accountability; and
- Communication and integrated planning between the DMO and DMF partners.

Issues identified that related to governance structures included the lack of a formal or legal DMF entity in some jurisdictions. This may have implications for the recognition of the DMF as an entity with the potential that any liability may accrue to the hotel association and/or individual hotel participants.

Issues related to administration and operations included contracting and collections, the recognition and reporting of GST, the use of funds exclusively for marketing, and the ability to leverage funds through the Tourism Destination Regions (TDRs). Marketing alignment was also identified as a challenge where there are potentially community DMFs, private DMFs, and DMOs working independently to market the same destination.

An outcome from the stakeholder meeting that concluded the study was a general consensus for the AHLA to provide industry leadership on a number of key issues. Based on the findings of the study, the AHLA is developing recommendations in the following areas:

1. Criteria for the establishment of DMFs
2. Governance best practices
3. Administration - best practices & tax advice
4. Industry position on private DMFs
5. Recommended DMF rate range

The AHLA's recommendations will focus on achieving our strategic objective of ensuring sustainable funding and strategic alignment for tourism marketing in Alberta.

Read more details on this study on page 18.

We look forward to serving you!

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A young woman with dark hair, wearing a blue textured sweater, is smiling and looking towards the camera while holding up her smartphone to take a picture. The background is a blurred night scene with warm lights and other people, suggesting a social or public event.

COVER
STORY

WELCOMING CHINESE GUESTS

Approved Destination Status Provides Opportunity for Canada

by Anthony Pollard

Over the course of this new decade, China will become Canada's second largest source of tourists, after the US. Approved Destination Status (ADS) is expected to boost China's early rate of travel to Canada by up to 50% by 2015, according to the Conference Board of Canada.

Our Chinese guests have high hopes and expectations of our country. We must, therefore, adopt the correct forms of tact and diplomacy, and show ourselves to be most welcoming in our hospitality



In terms of succeeding in our relationships with Chinese tourists, cultural sensitivity with regard to their needs and expectations plays a key role. Aside from having brochures, websites, menus, and leaflets translated into Chinese, we must also take into consideration the customs in China when organizing holiday or leisure activities as well as in accommodating preferences in meals, in-room décor, and amenities.

It is important to note that Chinese social conduct and etiquette differ from those of North America, and those differences should be accommodated in order to achieve a most agreeable relationship with your Chinese clientele.

Chinese Profile

China is the most populous country in the world with a population of 1.3 billion. Simply put, around one of every five people on earth lives in China. Travel and tourism accounts for 9.8% GDP (US\$449.3 billion), and 7.8% of total employment in the country, or 60.8 million jobs, according to 2009 WITC research. The country is expected to be the fastest growing economy in the world over the next ten years, in addition to being the leader of travel and tourism growth.

Demographics

The main age segment of Chinese travellers is between 45 and 59 years, primarily due to China's pensioners being relatively young. Business travellers are usually male, and travel to foreign countries is seen as an important status symbol.

Structure of Trips

It is standard for government employees to have between 7 and 14 days of annual leave. Foreign companies offer up to 15 days a year. Family travel including children usually takes place in July, August, and September. Group sizes vary. Business groups can be between 3 and 20 persons. Package tours can be even larger.

The Chinese seldom use their vacation time to visit beaches, choosing to opt for sightseeing which makes up three quarters of travel. The Chinese only visit what they know or have heard of. Typically they do not try new things. Casino visits and musical programs are in high demand. Shopping is key and brand names are very important to Chinese.

Packed daily itineraries depend on a smooth succession of events with no waiting periods. However, fixed itineraries can be changed at a moment's notice and flexibility is expected.

Chinese groups are almost always accompanied by tour guides due to a lack of experience and language barriers. Chinese guests expect to be lodged in modern hotels and prefer eating Chinese food.

Check-in and Welcome

Breakdowns in communication between people from different countries is often not due to simply language differences, but to varying cultural interpretations. For example, North American culture shows that a lack of eye contact shows lack of interest or honesty. In China, not giving eye contact is considered to be polite and demonstrating proper etiquette.

The tour guide is a key person as she acts as the link between the hotel, the group and the travel agency.

The surname is usually said first when addressing someone in Chinese. "Li Xiānsheng" would therefore be Mr. Li.

The Chinese use the words "please" and "thank you" much less than in western countries. This should not be taken as an insult. Their words are often expressed with friendly smiles and nods.

Much as Chinese tourists are very offended when they are compared with Japanese guests, the Chinese written word is very different from Japanese. They also have their own symbols for numbers, although the Arabic/Latin numerical system is well known.

The Chinese do not bow. They shake hands. Frequent and friendly nodding is very important and is a sign of politeness. Chinese communication

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is generally indirect and frequently meanings are only hinted at. The Chinese take time to evaluate what is being said, often resulting in pauses in conversation. Conventional pauses in North America are often shorter; leading the Chinese to believe there is a lack of thoughtfulness in responses.

Negative subjects should be avoided in conversation, including bad weather. Politics, religion, and sexuality must be avoided, and references to current political situations including human rights and freedom of speech should never be raised. If in doubt, avoid the topic. Avoid humour as well, which more often than not loses its meaning in the translation.

Issues which are considered very personal in the West are often discussed openly in China. It is common place and not impolite for Chinese to ask questions about income, age, marital status, and prices.

Non verbal communication is greatly valued. A staff smile goes a long way in making a guest feel welcome. However, do not take this too far as the Chinese expect restraint at the same time. Staff are seen as servants and should therefore keep themselves in the background.

The Chinese Market

by Kelly Laver

>>> The Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) enjoys a strong leadership role as a marketer in China, which has a powerful and positive image of Canada. This is an opportunity for the CTC to lead and to leverage this strong image of Canada with tourism brand messages.

>>> Stimulus funding has allowed for the growth and development of the Meeting, Incentive & Conventions market in China - one of the fastest growing market segments. Canada is well placed to receive this additional traffic with its outstanding facilities, infrastructure, and cities close to nature for touring opportunities.

>>> Figures from Conference Board of Canada survey indicate a 50% increase in travel numbers to Canada from China by 2015.

>>> By 2020, the World Tourism Organization is projecting that China will have 100 million international travellers, making it the largest outbound tourism market in the world.

>>> The economic momentum is forecast to continue in China, supported by strong domestic demand and GDP growth, reaching 9% in 2010 and 8.8% in 2011. (Source: Oxford Economics May, 2010)

>>> The Chinese outbound market shows continued health, with 47.6 million people travelling outside of China (including traffic to Hong Kong, Macau and same-day travel) in 2009, a 3.9% increase over 2008. (Source: China National Tourism Administration)

>>> China travellers injected \$260.6 million into the Canadian economy in 2009, representing a doubling of export revenues from China since 2000. The trend is overwhelmingly up.

>>> In 2009, Chinese travellers spent on average \$1,634 per person-trip. The average stay was 27.9 nights.

>>> In 2009, Chinese travellers preferred to visit Canada in the summer (35%), while spring was the second most popular season (25%).



To save face is critical and hiding emotions is considered a virtue.

The Chinese rarely show emotion in public. The worst offence could be to lose one's temper. To save face is critical and hiding emotions is considered a virtue. You should never turn your back on a Chinese guest.

Chinese guest complaints will be made by the tour guide directly with the hotel. Complainants will be noticeable; however their annoyance will be displayed in a quiet and respectful manner. In this type of situation it is important for the hotel to have established a relationship with the tour guide and it is even more important to help him "save face". This should involve apologizing immediately, regardless of where the fault lies. A lack of an apology is seen as impolite.

Upon check in each guest should be greeted with individual attention and a big smile. It is the accepted norm to greet the delegation leader first, not his wife. Preferential treatment of women would leave the family feeling embarrassed.

If a Chinese guest offers his or her business card, it should be treated with greatest respect. A business card is offered using both hands with the writing facing the recipient. A business card should always be accepted using both hands.

Allocation of Rooms

Every possible effort must be made to avoid putting Chinese guests on the fourth floor. When pronounced, the number four sounds very familiar to the word "dead". A room number such as 444 should never be allocated. Alternatively, the numbers 8 and 9 are considered to be very lucky. In the Western world, one says it is seventh heaven. In China, it is ninth heaven.

Contrary to the Japanese, Chinese couples share a double bed. At the same time, Chinese have no problem with having only a shower in their room; a bathtub is unnecessary. However, Chinese guests do expect to find a comb, toothbrush, and slippers in their room.

Meals

The Chinese drink great quantities of tea and hot water. Accordingly, kettles should be available in each room. Chinese drink still water, not sparkling, and are very hesitant to drink tap water.

The three daily meals are treated equally by the Chinese, who rarely skip a meal. Agreed upon eating times are strictly followed and breakfast is generally concluded by 8:00am. Hotels are encouraged to supply chopsticks; however, food must be prepared in bite size portions. At breakfast, knives and forks should be provided, along with toothpicks. Cold dishes are rarely eaten by the Chinese. Breakfasts should include soups, eggs, sausages, and bacon. White bread is definitely preferred over whole wheat. Fish and seafood are usually looked upon as delicacies. The most popular meats are chicken and pork and they should be prepared well done. Beef is unpopular due to BSE.

The most popular drink is tea, and hot water should always be available. Coffee is a popular breakfast drink. The Chinese also like beer and sweet red wines.

The Way Ahead

Now is the time to prepare for our Chinese guests. An old Chinese proverb says it best: "A man without a smiling face must not open a shop."

If you don't look after your guest, someone else will. ☞

Anthony P. Pollard was born and raised in Montréal and educated at Concordia University, The University of Western Ontario, McGill University, and Carleton University. He holds a Masters Degree in Political Science with a focus on international politics in Eastern Asia. He has travelled extensively in China. Since 1991, he has headed up the Hotel Association of Canada. Tony Pollard researched and wrote "Canadian Hospitality for Chinese Guests" in response to Canada's Approved Destination Status (ADS) with the Peoples Republic of China.



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FEATURE

ENERGY EFFICIENCIES

by Chris McBeath

“Of one thing we can be sure: energy will be more challenging and more important in the future. Will you, and your business, be ready?”

~ Peter Schwartz, Chairman, Global Business Network.





Energy management is taking the green ethos to new levels. Fueled by an increasing energy demand, diminishing resources and global climate change, technology is reshaping the economies of energy use.

“Based on a year-round operation and 70% occupancy, an average 150-room hotel contributes three tonnes of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere,” says Christina deVries, Director of Marketing of EcoStay, an Ontario-based company whose specialty is sourcing green power and carbon offset opportunities. “That’s the equivalent to driving 200 cars, heating and lighting 100 homes, or taking 5,000 airplane flights.” Add to this the fact that most buildings waste almost 30% of their energy, and you have a good case for considering an energy audit.

Electrifying Results

Accounting for approximately \$1.5 billion in energy expenditures, hospitality ranks as one of the most energy intensive commercial sectors in Canada. However, because energy

utilities are also one of the most controllable costs in a hotel operation, any changes to upgraded light fixtures, heating systems, and electrical appliances can deliver significant results.

Many hotels phase in retrofits over 2-3 years, perhaps changing exit signs to LED (light-emitting diode) lights in year one; upgrading hallway ballasts and lights the following year; and then reworking specialty areas such as entrance canopies. With 13 watt CFLs now able to replace 60 watt incandescent fixtures for equal illumination, the total wattage saved in one year alone translates into considerable savings.

When Alberta deregulated the province’s electricity market in 2001, power became a competitive commodity. Companies such as ENMAX and Epcor entered the fray with new generation plants, distribution, and retail sales opportunities both in electricity and natural gas. Then along came alternative generating technologies such as cogeneration, small hydro, and solar. Albertans are looking to turn everything from straw to garbage to animal waste into energy.

Simple Initiatives for Immediate Savings

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Energy Star appliances and ice machines

20% savings in electrical consumption in refrigerators and 41% in dishwashers

Use of ceiling fans and Energy Star ceiling fans

40% reduction in A/C electricity

Energy Star TVs

30% reduction per unit in electricity

Programmable thermostats

20% reduction in heating/cooling costs

Low flow shower heads

70% reduction in water use per shower

Motion sensor taps, toilets

50% reduction in water use per sink

Source: Planet Energy (www.planetenergy.ca)

The Winds of Change

Nowhere is this better seen than in wind. Already, Alberta is the third largest wind producer in the country, behind Ontario and Quebec, and with provincial support, this energy sector is gaining traction.

Alberta's air currents are not only diversifying the portfolios of Suncor Energy and other oil and gas biggies, but also attracting international investment from the likes of Texas oil billionaire T. Boone Pickens, and Ireland's Mainstream Renewable Power. Wind is becoming Alberta's new gold, and through the Canadian Wind Energy Association and similar organizations, wind technology is even accessible to smaller operations.

Since many properties don't have the acreage or finances to fund their own wind farm, connecting to a wind-supplied grid is the answer. For example, The Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise purchases run-of-river electricity through the non-profit Pembina Institute (www.pembina.org), while the Hyatt Calgary, and The Juniper Hotel & Bistro in Banff have realigned their power needs by teaming up with Bullfrog Power, Canada's only 100% green electricity provider. "After auditing our organization's activities, we found out that electricity usage was a significant contributor to our hotel's emissions footprint," reports James Kendal, general manager of The Juniper Hotel. "By choosing green electricity we're able to reduce our environmental impact, support our local renewable power industry, and offer our guests a sustainable destination." Bullfrog Power provides electricity derived exclusively from renewable sources like wind and low-impact water power, as certified by Environment Canada's EcoLogo™ program, and The Juniper represents the first hotel in Western Canada to green *all* of its electricity requirements.

Harnessing Natural Heat

"The key to future energy efficiencies is the integration of different renewable technologies in a building's mechanical systems," explains Bruce Ganske, a 30-year veteran in the mechanical industry. "Architects and designers are starting to incorporate concepts such as solar thermal and solar photo voltaic designs into new builds. However, unlike BC and Ontario, Alberta has little incentive to develop these technologies, so we're still seeing a preference to use dated technology in hydronic retrofits and new installations." Ganske also notes that solar products offer longer-term durability over traditional systems as well as savings. Solar thermal generates immediate returns while solar photo voltaic offers the opportunity for payback by placing any unused electricity into the grid to earn a credit. "Today, renewables are adaptable to large scale enterprises as well as residential properties; we're right on the cusp of these technologies really making a viable difference to the way we generate energy."

Geexchange technology is proving another viable alternative, which has replaced propane and generators for the remotely located Pacific

"Based on a year-round operation and 70% occupancy, an average 150-room hotel contributes three tonnes of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere."

Ideas at Work

- >>> The Conrad Indianapolis hotel is revamping its steam distribution area: the radiant heat that formally vented out into the street now vents to heat emergency stairwells in the winter months.
- >>> The Conrad Indianapolis also plans to recover hot water condensate that would normally be thrown down the drain to pre-heat its domestic hot water. Initial cost savings are anticipated at \$5,000-\$7,000 per year.
- >>> Guests at The Nature Inn at Bald Eagle in Pennsylvania, can use an in-room monitor to track how much energy was consumed during their stay at the inn
- >>> Hilton's LightStay Program monitors energy used in all utility areas, including electricity, water, and garbage. It keeps a running tab on energy consumption, and provides recommendations/requirements in order to maintain LightStay sustainability level.
- >>> Paris' Hotel Fouquet's Barrière has replaced detergents with water electrolysis, and recycles waste as fertilizer, which it converts into heat and electricity. The hotel also offers guests hybrid limousine service and electric E-Solix bicycles.

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Sands Beach Resort on Vancouver Island. Now, special systems take advantage of the sun's energy stored in the ground, where the earth's temperature remains at about 12°C throughout the year. In the winter, pumps are used to extract heat from the ground or ground water and transfer it into buildings for space and hot water heating. In the summer, the pumps reverse the process, removing heat from the building and returning it back to the ground, thus cooling the building. Geo-exchange heating and cooling is highly efficient - requiring up to 75% less energy than conventional systems. There's also considerable interest in biomass gasification, which creates low-cost heat through a thermo-chemical process known as "starved air combustion". This ultra-clean technology transforms locally sourced wood waste - municipal tree trimmings, mill scraps - into energy.

Resourcing the Resources

The AHLA's new power program with ENMAX Energy allows participants to choose the amount of green power they want to purchase for their properties. Currently, almost 300 members are on the program. To help manage energy consumption, members can refer to the AHLA's StayGreen Alberta manual, *Best Practices Guide in Environmental Stewardship for Hotels, Lodges and Campgrounds*, which is available online at www.ahla.ca.

In most cases, a successful energy program requires a property to make basic changes in the way it uses technology, none of which need be drastic or costly.

First, shop around and weigh in on a regulated service versus a competitive retailer. The latter typically offers fixed price, fixed term contracts that provide rate stability over the term of the contract. To help determine your best option, use the advice and guidelines provided by Alberta's Utilities Consumer Advocate (www.ucahelps.com).

Natural Resources Canada (www.nrcan-rncan.gc.ca/com/index-eng.php), has a hoard of tips and year-round checklists to help staff embody energy efficiencies into their modus operandi. Combined with reduction programs offered by companies such as Planet Energy and HAC's Green Key rating scheme, savings can be significant. Check out www.energystar.gov, too. Although geared to the US market, it's an informative site.

With Expedia and Travelocity both singling out green hotels, and programs such as Hilton's Light-Stay Program (see sidebar), energy management is no longer a behind-the-scenes operational issue, it is an in-your-face consumer preference. And *that's* something to get energized about! ☺



Power Hungry

According to the US Dept of Environment's Annual Energy Outlook Report (2007), world demand for all energy sources over the next two decades is expected to grow by 57%, largely because of Asia's economic and manufacturing thirst. During this time US demand, and similarly Canada's, is forecasted to increase by 31%. In terms of electricity, North American needs are anticipated to grow by at least 40% which, with the demise of fossil fuels (currently coal fuels half of all electrical generation), will necessitate a new power infrastructure equal to nearly 300 power plants.

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Travel Alberta has come a long way in the last year. And what a year it has been!

Economic recovery has been slower than anticipated and consumer confidence is fragile in all our key markets, including here at home. A strong Canadian dollar has been hovering close to parity with the American dollar. This has made outbound travel from Canada much more attractive to Canadians who we are trying to convince to stay in Alberta.

Notwithstanding the many continuing challenges faced by you, and indeed the entire tourism industry around the globe, the worst may be behind us. Many Alberta industry operators are telling us they are encouraged by last summer's results and are cautiously optimistic about what the future holds. So is Travel Alberta as we see many new opportunities emerging.

We began 2010 with the first direct air service between Japan and Alberta in more than a decade. Those Air Canada flights were running at 90% capacity during the season.

A new charter service flight from Korea during the summer performed very well and was 96% full inbound to Alberta.

And in June, China finally gave Canada Approved Destination Status, providing Alberta with direct access to the largest outbound tourism market in the world. This opportunity was further strengthened by Air Canada's recent decision not to charge additional fares to fly from China to Edmonton or Calgary via the Vancouver gateway. We have also secured the same deal for Air Canada flights from Australia this winter. This

puts us on price parity with Vancouver, and on a level competitive playing field.

Travel Alberta's Business Strategy 2010-13 featured 31 key initiatives, and I am proud to say that our team has already put checkmarks against 16 of these initiatives.

Driving and measuring performance it is how Travel Alberta is operating as a modern marketing organization. Every action we undertake is underpinned by this approach. We are operating our business with the same discipline and bottom line focus as you do every day.

As GE's Jack Welch once said: "The efficacy of a strategy lies in its sustainability." I am pleased to say that this is indeed the case with Travel Alberta's strategy as we move towards 2014 with our updated three-year strategy that features an even sharper focus on results that matter. We are simplifying our key strategic initiatives from seven to five. We have narrowed our focus to 15 measurable tactical actions that are the foundation of our 2011-14 Business Strategy.

Launching a unifying tourism brand will be the single most important initiative Travel Alberta will undertake in 2011 and we cannot fail. Our brand, after all, is the platform upon which we will build strong customer relationships with industry. We will bring the brand to life by telling your stories. These are the stories of experiences that you offer visitors to Alberta, stories that will motivate more consumers to book trips to our great province and book rooms in your properties.

And in implementing our business strategy, we will continue to apply a disciplined marketing investment strategy to measure Return on Investment, market by market. For example, our conversion study of last winter's "Stay" campaign generated incremental spending of \$31 for every one dollar Travel Alberta invested in the campaign.

Ultimately, though, Travel Alberta, as a marketing organization, does not have much to sell. What we can do, however, as we have demonstrated, is heavily influence the consumer on the path to purchase and compel them to consider us instead of other destinations. We create an environment that makes it easier for you to put heads in beds. But at the end of the day, after we bring people here, it is you in the hospitality industry that have to close the sales and make your cash registers ring.

I am confident that we have the strategy, the predictable and sustainable resources of the tourism levy and, most important, the people and product in this province to become the number one destination, as measured by growth of our industry.

Less than full occupancy rates may be a result of a weak economy, or it could be because we have been doing the same type of marketing, going after the same customer, as we did 20 or 30 years ago. If we really want to grow tourism in Alberta, we must seek out and attract new customers and ensure the ones who have visited before, come back again. These are the high-yield customers who we are now targeting in our long haul domestic and international markets. We all know these valuable visitors are most likely to book overnight accommodations. These visitors can have the fastest and biggest impact on tourism spending in Alberta.

By being the fastest growing destination in the country and being the pre-eminent tourism marketing agency in Canada, we can, with your continued partnership, become Canada's pre-eminent growth destination. I am looking forward to working with you and our team to make that happen.

Bruce Okabe is Chief Executive Officer of Travel Alberta

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SANDMAN SIGNATURE HOTEL & SUITES EDMONTON SOUTH

Canada's Fastest-Growing Chain Goes Upscale

by Alex Van Tol



Steady Eddie might be an apt description for how the Sandman Hotels Group has evolved. Since the opening of its first 35-room property in Smithers in 1965 to currently having 40 properties across Canada, Sandman is in a growth phase. With projects underway in Langley, Kamloops, and Ontario, it's the fastest growing privately-owned hotel company in Canada, says Regional Director Blair Kennedy.

As the general manager of the new Sandman Signature Hotel & Suites Edmonton South - in addition to his duties as regional director - Kennedy's got a full plate. Having spent 17 years with Sandman "in two different stints", Kennedy brings plenty of experience to the table. "I came from the back of the house," he explains. "At one point I was a Red Seal chef, and started on the F&B side." After a few years in the kitchen,

Kennedy moved to the front of the house as F&B manager, and worked his way up from there. "I received my CHA designation in the late 90s," he notes, at which point he left Sandman to spend some time working for other companies. Kennedy returned to the Sandman fold in 2004 as GM of its Red Deer property. In 2007 he accepted the regional director role. As such, Kennedy oversees properties in Red Deer, Grande Prairie, Edmonton West, and Revelstoke in addition to his general management duties at the Sandman Signature Hotel & Suites Edmonton South.

Part of Sandman's Signature line, the Edmonton South location took about three years to complete. It offers upgraded amenity packages in each of its 198 guestrooms, higher-than-usual thread-count sheets and towels, crown mouldings throughout the property, and European pillow-

top bedding created to Sandman Signature specifications. VIP check-in service is available in a separate area for corporate clients belonging to the Sandman Star Plus program. “We hope to attract some airline business in the future,” reveals Kennedy, adding that in 2011 a direct airport shuttle service will be coming online. “We have 40 suites in the property that have full kitchen facilities, with an apartment-sized fridge, dishwasher, stove, range, and microwave.” Washers and dryers are also included in these fully-furnished suites. “We anticipate some long-term business,” explains Kennedy, “most likely people in the oil and gas industry who are taking training or who are transferring to the area.”



Blair Kennedy, General Manager

New technology has been incorporated throughout the building. All guestrooms feature a minimum of one 32-inch LCD television as well as iPod docking stations that project onto the ceiling so guests can readily see what time it is without having to search around for the bedside radio. Wireless and hard wiring is available throughout the property. A pool, whirlpool, and full fitness facilities will open this month. Five meeting

rooms, including two small studios, two mid-sized rooms that seat 50-70, and one great room seating approximately 150 round out the mix.

In addition to its hotels, Northland Properties also owns close to 50 Moxies restaurants outright. Any Moxies that Sandman doesn't own is a franchised establishment. About 40-odd franchised Denny's restaurants partner with Sandman as well. “Denny's has just partnered with Flying J restaurant too,” reports Kennedy.

The Sandman Signature Edmonton South includes two large restaurants: the Rockford Wok Bar & Grill, which offers Asian fusion items as well as pasta, steaks and sandwiches, and the contemporary upscale CHOP: Steak Fish Bar, which will open early this year. Kennedy explains, “As the hotel, we don't run the restaurant day-to-day. They're run as separate divisions of Northland Properties. But from the guest's perspective, we want them to see a seamless operation. It's not like a leased restaurant.” Having the same owner for both hotel and restaurant makes decisions easier, admits Kennedy. Although he doesn't run the day-to-day operations of the restaurants, Kennedy acknowledges that as general manager overseeing the entire property, he's there should a decision need to be made on the fly. “The catering is run from the Moxies or the CHOP [at the Sandman Signatures],” continues Kennedy. “We sell the conference



with the rooms and the food all out of one office.” The other restaurant, Rockford Wok Bar & Grill, falls under Dencan Restaurants, a division of Northland Properties. There's also a Rockford Wok Bar & Grill in the Nelson Lodge Revelstoke Mountain Resort, at the bottom of the ski hill. The new Sandman Signature in Prince George will also have a Rockford.

Sandman Signature came about when the group decided it wanted to offer a more upscale experience to its guests. “Signatures are our four-diamond flagship properties,” reveals Kennedy. “The first to open was the Vancouver Airport property in 2006/2007. We have some Sandmans in primary markets already, so we wanted to offer an upper-tier product and grow into some new places.” Markets like the Toronto airport, Prince George, and Revelstoke, with its new ski resort, fit the bill.

With a mix of hotels, restaurants, and commercial and residential real estate in its portfolio, parent company Northland Group is well positioned to meet the future. “The company is growing,” notes Kennedy, and as the company continues to grow, Blair Kennedy will grow with it. ∞

DESTINATION MARKETING FEES

Providing Funding for Tourism Marketing

by Kent Stewart

AHLA President & CEO Dave Kaiser has provided an excellent synopsis of the AHLA's review of DMFs in Alberta in his column on page 5. This article will expand on some of his comments and provide detail of some of the findings. The document, *Review: Tourism Destination Marketing Fee Structures in Alberta*, is available at www.ahla.ca or by contacting the office.



Background

Adequate funding for tourism marketing of cities, large and small, has been a perennial battle. Where American cities have access to sales and other forms of taxation, Canadian cities have few, if any, sources of taxation that actually grow with tourism visitation. Tourism, therefore, appears to cities as a cost centre without reciprocal income.

Late in the 1980s, former Member of Parliament and the CEO of Tourisme Montreal, Charles LaPointe, approached the Quebec government to create a unique piece of legislation in Canada. He asked for legislation that would enable the greater Montreal urban community and its hotels to *voluntarily* apply a room levy to hotel rooms, and apply the collected funds to marketing Montreal as a tourism destination. Approximately 10 years later, in 1996, Montreal became the first large city in Canada to apply a destination marketing fee (DMF) to marketing the destination.

Since 1996, many jurisdictions have enabled voluntary room levy instruments to fund marketing the tourism destination. BC, Ontario, and Atlantic Canada have provincially legislated means of collecting voluntary DMFs.

In Alberta, DMFs have taken root without provincial legislation. In 2005, after years of influence by the AHLA, the *Tourism Levy Act* reduced the hotel tax and replaced it with a 4% tourism levy. While funds from the tourism levy were assigned to Travel Alberta to lead in marketing

our provincial destination, the change did not resolve the tourism marketing funding issue at the local level. Business cases were prepared by Edmonton and Calgary, and the provincial government tacitly agreed that cities could occupy the 1% room tax created by the change to the tourism levy. Shortly afterwards, the hotel communities in Edmonton and Calgary created DMFs to fund tourism marketing. Today there are approximately 10 DMFs operating in Alberta, and other communities are still considering whether to create DMFs. The AHLA Board, as Trustee of five DMFs, felt that it was timely after five years of history to take account of where we are and how we are doing.

Western Management Consultants was retained by the AHLA to review the state of DMFs in Alberta with a focus on governance, administration, and operations. Interviews were conducted with senior management of DMF organizations, Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), and executives of the AHLA and Travel Alberta. These executives met in Edmonton in September 2010 at a meeting hosted by the AHLA to review the findings and discuss possible collective actions.

Eight DMF communities - Banff, Canmore, Calgary, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Camrose, Edmonton, and Jasper - were reviewed in this assessment, with DMF rates ranging from 1% to 3%. Two hotel groups operating DMFs also participated in the review. Banff, operating under its Bylaw authority, has identified tourism marketing as an essential service, so Banff's structure and approach is different than the other DMFs.

Governance of DMF Structures: Varied and Informal

Many DMFs are organized as dependent structures, usually committees operating under the local hotel association in their community. In Edmonton, there is no formal structure to the DMF, although there is a strong culture of collaboration that has this DMF operating very effectively. Jasper is organized as a for-profit corporation. Two private hotel groups operate DMFs within their corporate structures and use the funds they collect from their hotels to market the destination.

Most DMF organizations are pleased with their structure, and while they indicate it is early for judgment, the DMF approach is working. Most have:

- Separation of funds from operations;
- Individual contracts with hotel partners;
- Third party audits; and
- In five cases, trustee agreements with the AHILA spelling out respective roles. In most

cases funds are specifically earmarked for destination marketing.

Many organizations intend to formalize their governance models and structures eventually, but are more focused on growth and stabilization in this early stage of development.

Administration and Operation of DMFs

For the most part, DMFs contract destination marketing to the DMO. A key measure of perceived success by the partners is the extent to which the DMO and the DMF plan the marketing strategy and its execution *together*.

DMF organizations do not generally have employees, although some DMFs have retained or are considering contracted services. Hotel contractual compliance is ensured by voluntary committees and peer persuasion, so few properties are out of compliance for long.

Marketing planning is done in conjunction with the DMF for the most part. The healthiest collaborations show strong understanding and support for the professionalism of the DMO

and the DMF partners respectively. While ROI measures have been considered, most respondents felt it was still too early to measure ROI definitively.

Alignment of Marketing

The AHILA measures the benefit of DMFs by how efficiently and effectively funds are spent. For this reason, strong alignment of marketing goals and efforts between partners is essential. Alignment between DMO and DMF was felt to be strong by most stakeholders. While Calgary partners expressed challenges, DMO and DMF stakeholders are working toward greater collaboration and alignment and believe progress is being made.

Alignment with the Tourism Destination Regions (TDRs) was not considered ideal. Concern was expressed by many participants about the lack of uniformity among TDRs, sunset clause requirements, disaggregated approvals of programs, and the need for multiple partners.

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While Banff and Calgary felt that alignment with Travel Alberta was good, other centres felt there was room for improvement and common focus.

The same findings occurred with respect to CTC programs - Calgary and Banff felt well aligned while other communities less so.

Private DMFs

The privately collected and operated DMFs require comment. While they collect funds privately, these organizations hold the funds separately, dedicate them to destination marketing, have a Board that makes decisions, and have audits and compliance commitments similar to other DMFs. They argue that they are leaders in marketing the communities they are located in, are highly flexible and fast moving, are not constrained in terms of what programs or initiatives they are involved in, and do not require leverage commitments from marketing partners. They feel that they act as the de facto DMO for some communities that might otherwise not have a tourism DMO.

Critics of private DMFs argue that if more chain hotels create private DMFs the system will collapse, and more fundamentally, that the “contract” for destination marketing implied on the hotel invoice is not met when the funds are allocated by the private organization.

Keys to Success

Here are a few observations from the research findings about keys to success:

Perceived Joint Ownership of the Strategy and Plan. When DMOs and the DMF groups plan and measure the marketing strategy together, the feeling of ownership increases. When groups jointly own the plan, they focus on improving results, not assigning blame, when initiatives do not work.

Trust Trumps Structure Every Time. Edmonton’s DMF is a good example of the role of trust, operating as they have for five years on handshakes, commitment, joint planning and review, and a strong dollop of mutual trust. If you have trust, you can survive without structure. Structure means little without trust.

Mutual Understanding through Planning Together. DMOs need to understand and accept that DMFs are organizations with responsible leaders committed to appropriate use of funds collected. They must be consulted and they must take an important role in strategy development. DMF organizations increasingly understand and appreciate the depth and professionalism of destination marketers and their organizations, and realize this is a complex and refined discipline. Mutual respect and trust grows by working together.

Key Issues for DMFs in Alberta

Proliferation and the Wild West. If DMFs proliferate in Alberta, and in the absence of regulation or templates, the range of rates and variety of governance structures also proliferates, so there is potential for confusion in the markets. This is not desirable and was called the “Wild West” by some participants.

Directors’ Liability. In the absence of formalized DMF organizations, the local hotel association is the governing organization to which liability may accrue. AHILA is seeking legal opinion on this matter.

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Contracting and Collection. Presently done with peer pressure, will this area become increasingly difficult if DMFs proliferate?

Percentage of Properties Participating. While most DMFs across Canada have around 80% participation in terms of rooms, Alberta DMFs vary from 30% to 80%. Lower participation could create volatility in the program and therefore uncertainty for the marketers.

Exclusive Use of Funds for Destination Marketing. While the commitment is found in most Trustee Agreements, the interpretation of use of funds has varied. In some cases the funds are at least proportionally allocated to other purposes.

Hierarchy of Marketing Organizations. There is an established hierarchy of marketing organizations nationally and provincially – the Canadian Tourism Commission, Travel Alberta, DMOs, marketing intermediaries (travel trade, media, new media, etc.), and tourism suppliers are generally considered to be the core of the marketing system. DMFs working within the existing system and not creating a new, independent level of marketing is considered desirable.

TDR Leveraging. The TDR system is presently being reviewed by the Strategic Tourism Marketing Council. As the present source of leveraged marketing funds for the DMFs, this component of the system is considered very important. Participants in this review are key stakeholders in the system and will have an opportunity to provide input.

When DMOs and the DMF groups plan and measure the marketing strategies together, the feeling of ownership increases.

Strategic Direction - Where To from Here?

Some key questions for members of the AHLA and its board follow from this review:

- Should the AHLA continue to be the Trustee of major DMFs, and thereby foster some commonality among DMFs?
- If DMFs appear to be on the verge of proliferation, should the AHLA suggest templates or tools that will assist them in getting started and avoiding pitfalls?
- Should the AHLA promote formalizing DMF structures by working with governments?
- Should DMF rates be aligned, or can they be highly varied? Should the AHLA have a position on rates?

The meeting of key stakeholders in September 2010 provided excellent insight and recommendations to the Board of the AHLA. On the basis of this input, actions are under way. ☺

Kent Stewart is Director at Western Management Consultants.

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Comfort, Value & Service

Retain Staff with Employee Benefits

by Jill Little

Did you know that group benefit plans have been around since 1665, when a Montreal doctor contracted with 17 families to provide health care for a fixed annual fee?

Group benefit plans are designed to protect employees and their families from financial risks such as drug coverage for some of the de-listed prescriptions. The sense of security that health benefits offer can be a powerful tool for recruitment and retention.

Employee benefits can range from retirement savings to disability income protection or medical and dental coverage. Traditional employee benefits have evolved to supplement the basic protection offered by government programs. Benefits offered by employers have become a significant part of an employee's compensation package. Rising costs, growing government involvement, and changing social demographics are making employers and employees pay close attention to this part of their compensation.

Employees appreciate benefits that:

- Meet their financial needs (make a payment when a medical, drug, or dental expense is incurred);
- Replace much of the income they could lose as a result of an unforeseen event;

- Meet their lifestyle needs (provide medical and dental coverage for young families);
- Are well communicated so that they are easily understood; and
- Are easy to use (claims forms that are easily accessed and completed as well as payments that are made quickly and accurately).

Employers and employees will rarely agree on the level of benefits that a plan should provide. As an employer, you need to balance your employees' needs and the cost to your operations. If you are thinking about offering benefits or reviewing your existing plan, consider:

- Your property's philosophy and business objectives;
- Your total compensation strategy - what else do you offer?
- The needs of your staff - what is important to them?
- Cost and value - to you and your employees;
- Legal requirements;
- Taxation - retirement savings plans can help reduce the amount of tax your employees pay;

- Inflation - what impact will inflation have on your staff, and your benefits plan?
- Competition - offering benefits can help you to recruit and retain good staff, reducing costs associated with turnover and guest dissatisfaction.

Before you decide what to offer, ask your staff what matters to them. Spend some time looking at the demographics of your workforce now and 5-10 years from now. Will your benefit plan stand the test of time? Will it be valued by employees? Will your benefit plan provide the sense of security that will help you keep your most valuable staff?

The AHLA has partners who can work with you to offer benefits that will help you attract and retain staff:

Health Benefits - Scott Stewart, Western Financial Group, 1-800-665-8990 ext. 7287

Retirement Savings - Sid Kinasewich, Kinasewich Benefits Consulting/Manulife Financial 1-888-312-2343. You can find out more about the AHLA's Retirement Savings Plan on page 29.

If you are thinking about offering benefits, take advantage of these AHLA programs. The AHLA's Human Resource Development team can help you build a competitive benefits plan. Call 1-888-436-6112 to find out more!

WHAT'S NEW?

by Debbie Minke

Ingrained Style Furniture Co. has launched their new **Twin-to-King Bed**, a room-revolutionizing system that turns two extra-long twin beds into one king bed. Whether in the king or twin bed configuration, guests enjoy a sturdy, shake-free sleep, while hoteliers enjoy increased profitability by having more room options available.

Custom Amenities has partnered with MFG, a world leader in environmental manufacturing, to offer **ECO Sciences biodegradable bottles**. These bottles are manufactured with

an additive that makes them biodegradable in land, on land, or in water.

Unisource Canada, Inc. announces the release of *It's Time to Clear the Air*, a comprehensive reference guide to green cleaning products and solutions. The guide covers 11 key product areas from cleaning equipment to towel and tissue as well as providing insight into the best way of implementing a comprehensive recycling program. It's available for download at www.unisourcegreen.ca or can be requested by sending an email to sustainability@unisource.ca.

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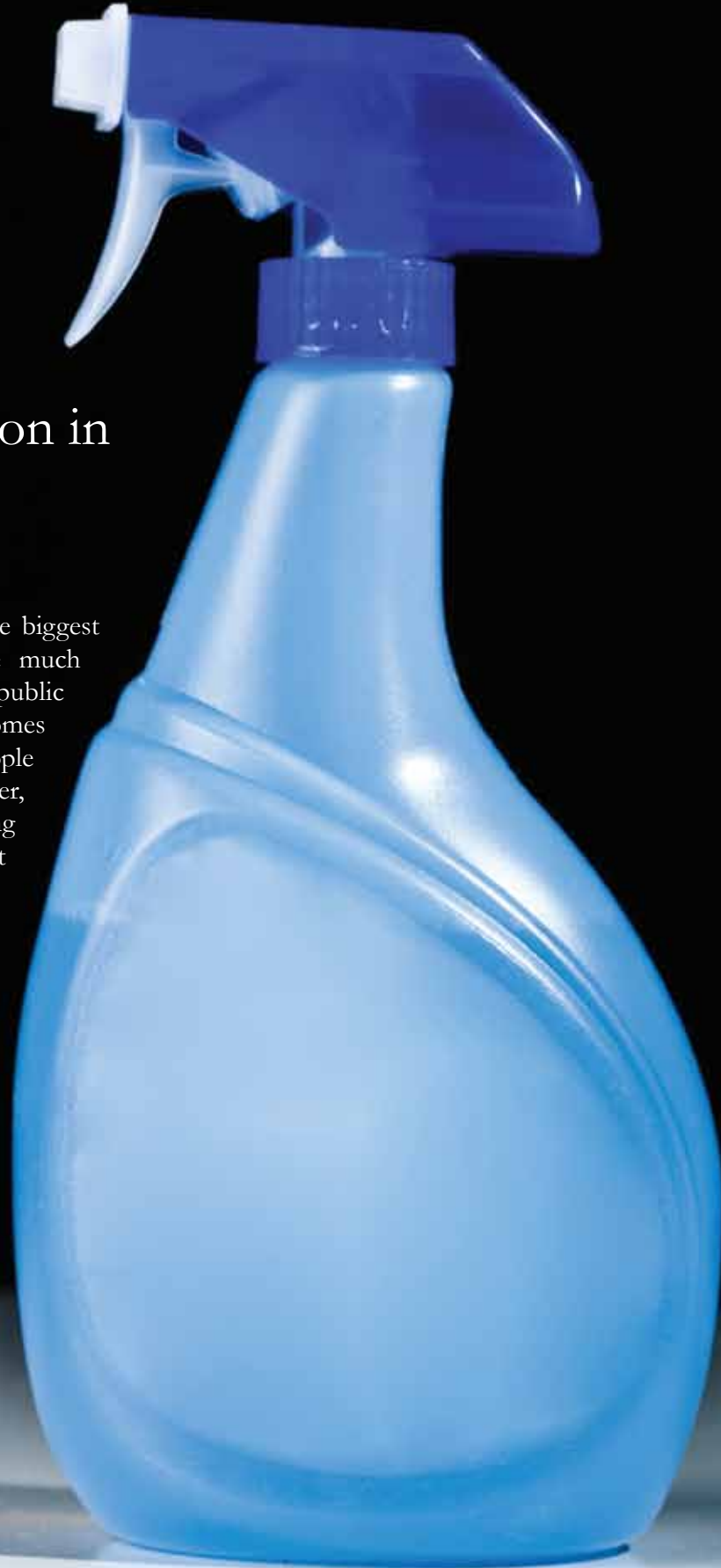
FEATURE

KEEPING IT CLEAN

Improving Sanitation in Your Property

by Alex Van Tol

Maintaining a clean property is one of the biggest challenges facing hoteliers. People have much higher expectations of cleanliness in public facilities - and it's only more so when it comes to hotels. "First impressions count as people come into your hotel," explains John Greer, president of an Alberta-based cleaning equipment and supply company. "If they get a poor first impression as they come in, you don't have a second chance." Make sure your property is clean, well-lit, and litter-free. "Clean glass and well-maintained entrance matting also sets up a good first impression," Greer adds.





Suck it Up - and Wipe it Down

That expectation of cleanliness is even more evident when it comes to the guestrooms. “One of the number one complaints is improperly vacuumed hotel rooms,” reports Greer. No one likes to see - or feel - strands of hair and other carpet muck on the bottoms of their feet. Greer notes it’s critical to use properly designed and maintained vacuum cleaners that include high filtration. You don’t want to be sucking up the dirt only to blow it around again.

“In the washroom area people have high expectations,” Greer continues. “The use of microfibre cloths and a good broad-range disinfectant for surface cleaning are a bare minimum.” It’s one thing to have the right products, he adds, but you’ve got to boost their efficacy by properly training staff, and by having simple, documented procedures for your housekeepers to follow. Wall charts or laminated cards that show step-by-step procedures can be helpful. Think of improving sanitation as a three-step process, suggests Greer: first, train your people through wall charts and other didactic aids. Second, use a good all-around general purpose disinfectant cleaner that will clean and leave behind an odour counteractant. Third, match the correct tool to the job being done in order to get the place spotless.

The AHLA’s Quality Assurance Team has developed free guidelines and checklists to help your housekeeping department understand what they - and your guests - look for in a guestroom. The AHLA’s new “The Housekeeping Edge” seminar can help your staff learn the housekeeping standards and efficient work routines.

Scrubbing Away Cross-Contamination

The secret to excellent sanitation is avoiding cross-contamination, according to Phil Wright, a franchise owner for a janitorial service in Southern Alberta. He reveals that 80% of all public washrooms are washed with the same cloth, from sink to counter to toilet.

But of course there are solutions for every cleaning situation a hotel might face. “There’s nothing that can’t be cleaned,” Wright asserts, even when it comes to using a touch-free approach to cleaning. That’s right: no cloths, no mops, no buckets, and no scrubbing. Wright has developed customized attachments for a touch free cleaning system that can clean everything in your property, including mattresses, upholstery, mirrors, and glass as well as all hard surfaces. The area is lightly moistened with a federally-approved green disinfectant cleaner, and then sprayed with a spot-free rinse, which dries and shines everything in sight. “We do kitchens, washrooms, guestrooms, and public areas from ceiling to floor, including vents, and all interior and exterior equipment, with just two pieces of equipment,” Wright reveals. “This cuts cleaning time by 40% because nothing is done by hand.” While traditional hand-cleaning snails along at a pace of 350 square feet per hour, this new system rocks it at 1,400 square feet per hour.

Bedbugs Be Gone

Proper cleaning is the key to keeping the annoying pests out, and bringing in good mattress covers will minimize their ability to get a hold. If you’re

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not sure of their presence, you can hire a pest control agency to bring in a sniffer dog to confirm your worst suspicions.

What if you're already stuck with them? You've got a few choices, including closing off a room for the morning and steam-cleaning it at high heat (250°C), which kills every bug and egg in the place. Other approaches include sealing a room, bringing in special heaters to raise the temperature to about 55°C, and holding it there for a few hours. The high-heat approach is often preferable to the chemical approach, because there's no odour left behind. Once you've taken care of the bedbug infestation, it's a wise idea to maintain a pest control program to make sure you aren't faced with the crisis again. Oh, and bring your sanitation practices up to speed, too - then the insects can't get a foothold.

Pristine Pools

Experts and guests agree that pools and pool areas have to be clean. "Use a good, broad-range disinfectant and, depending on pool size, the applicable maintenance hardware," recommends Greer. If you've got a poured concrete surround, you should be using a scrub-brush tool. Rough surface? There are mops and brushes designed for that too. Flat mops or auto scrubbers will keep your pool tank clean.

In terms of pool water, some properties are converting from chlorine to salt water. "It's a much softer form of chlorine for guests," explains Brent Miller, a service technician, noting that this is the prime driver for conversions. Miller says there aren't really any differences in the maintenance demands between traditional chlorine pools and saltwater pools. Salt water pools need to have their salt water cells cleaned periodically, and the mandatory controller that senses chlorine and pH levels in the water needs to be tended to as well. However, traditional chlorine pools need their pumps tended periodically, too. Both types of pools require the exact same maintenance in terms of the surrounding area. "In the long run," reveals Miller, "salt water is a money-saver, because it decreases the reliance on special pumps and harsh chemicals."

Going Forward

Selecting the right cleaning solution for your property is the place to start. You can outsource your cleaning, or train your staff in the proper procedures to get your hotel spic and span. Improving your sanitation will impress and satisfy your guests - and that can only mean good things down the road. ☺

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“Flash Selling” Drives Leisure Travel Sales

by Amanda Jackson

One of the more controversial marketing techniques to emerge from the challenging business climate that prevailed in 2009 is “flash selling,” or the blasting of time-sensitive offers to targeted prospects via email. The technique started to be used in the airline business to liquidate unsold inventory on selected routes. Hotel companies trying to pump up occupancy on otherwise slow dates were quick to follow. Even meta search engines now flash selling complete vacation packages.

Flash sales feature offers that arrive unexpectedly and require an immediate response to book the featured promotional fare or rate. For example, the email may announce a 12-hour fare sale on selected routes flown by an airline. Alternatively, it might announce 50% off the entire room inventory at a featured hotel or resort over a forthcoming weekend. In either event, the offer is: 1) generally restricted to individuals with whom the travel service supplier has an established relationship (e.g., members of a frequent flyer or frequent guest program); 2) one that features a compelling discount and/or premium; and 3) one that may only be booked if acted upon within the stated time frame.

Flash selling emerged as a low-cost alternative to other forms of business development used by a growing number of travel service suppliers during the depth of the recession. Not surprisingly, the technique is controversial because it may compromise rate integrity, not to mention raising the ire of meeting planners and/or clients who may be contractually bound to pay higher fares or rates. Nevertheless, the decision about whether or not to launch a flash sale frequently boils down to the expected incremental revenue, oftentimes adjusted to reflect the cost of alienating some existing customers along the way.

According to the results of the new Ypartnership/Harrison Group 2010 Portrait Of American TravelersSM:

- Almost three out of ten (27%) active travelers took at least one “last minute” leisure trip last year;
- One out of seven (14%) purchased a travel service as a result of receiving an unexpected email from a travel service supplier;
- Almost half (40%) of those who purchased a travel service as a result of receiving an unexpected email booked an airfare and/or lodging, while almost four out of ten (38%) purchased a complete vacation package, and one out of five booked either a cruise or car rental.

Millennials (18-30 years of age) and GenXers (31-44 years of age) appear to be more responsive to these unexpected offers than their older counterparts. It is interesting to note that affluent travellers (annual HHI >\$125K) appear to be more responsive to such offers than households with more modest incomes as revealed below:

Purchased a travel service as a result of receiving an unexpected email from a travel service supplier that required an immediate response to book the featured price or offer:

All ages	14%
18-30 years of age	17%
31-44 years of age	18%

45-63 years of age	13%
64+ years of age	7%
Annual HHI \$50K-\$124K	14%
Annual HHI >\$125K	21%

Whether or not flash selling will become a standard component of future travel service marketing programs remains the source of considerable speculation, particularly as demand for travel services continues to improve. Nevertheless, the appeal of the technique in the current market environment is evident.

For more information on the Ypartnership/Harrison Group 2010 Portrait Of American Travelers(SM) please visit the Publications section of www.ypartnership.com.

Ypartnership is America's leading marketing services company serving travel, leisure and entertainment clients. For more information, visit www.ypartnership.com. Harrison Group is a leading market research and strategy consulting firm specializing in sophisticated market strategy, market analytics, survey and forecasting services. For more information, visit www.harrisongroupinc.com.

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Congratulations to the following new general managers: **Jeanne Aldrich**, Northland Lodge, Waterton Park; **Mike Ames**, Noralta Lodge, Nisku; **Murray Anderson**, BCMInns Peace River; **Samson Anifowose**, Days Inn - Calgary South; **Sid Bagai**, Sandman Hotel & Suites Calgary West; **Charlotte Bailey**, MainStay Suites Sherwood Park; **Chris Barr**, Prince of Wales Hotel, Waterton Park; **Jane Barrigan-Jess**, Varscona Hotel on Whyte, Edmonton; **Paulette Bast**, Western Budget Motel (2), Grande Prairie; **Lyda Bertrand**, Devon Lions Campground; **Sid Braaksma**, Shoreline Camping & Fishing Resort Ltd., Boyle; **Lana Brost**, Super 8 Oyen; Art Brown, Haven Inn, Mayerthorpe; **Jean-Pierre Burque**, Nova Inn - Whitecourt; **Linda Buschert**, Stop Inn Motel, Coleman; **Amanda Choi**, Alpine Motel, Rocky Mountain House; **Hubert Choi**, Prairie Haven Motel, Grande Prairie; **Linda Davies**, Strathmore Hotel; **Michael Davis**, Ramada Lac La Biche; **Morgan Denham**, Super 8 Wetaskiwin; **Jagtar Deol**, Westgate Motor Inn & Liquor Store; **Mary Lou Derocher**, Quality Inn Whitecourt; **Hardeep Dhillon**, Parkland Motel, Rimbey; **Andy Doucette**, Ramada Inn & Suites Clairmont; **Grant Dolynny**, Grand Centre Hotel, Cold Lake; **Karen Draper**, Parkway Motel & European Loges, Pincher Creek; **Colleen Dwyer**, Walking Eagle Inn & Lodge, Rocky Mountain House; **Diane Fehr**, Holiday Inn Express and Suites Edmonton North; **Sandy Foster**, Sundre Hotel; **George Goddard**, Henderson Lake Campground, Rosedale; **Chris Goodwin**, Centro Motel, Calgary; **Tami Graham**, EconoLodge, Lloydminster; **Annie Hachac**, Franklin Suite Hotel, Fort McMurray; **William Han**, Battle River Inn & Suites, Forestburg; **Deborah Harmacy**, Days Inn & Conference Centre Edmonton Airport, Leduc; **Drew Hefford**, BCMInns - Fort McMurray; **Crystal Hvidsten**, Ramada Inn & Suites, Airdrie; **Cindy Jaeger**, Garden Court Motel/Suites, Manning; **Rocky Josan**, Quality Inn Airport, Nisku; **Alex Juhasz**, Westlock Inn & Conference Center; **Mukesh Kakkar**, Howard Johnson North Ridge Inn, Edson; **Dan Keller**, Warner Hotel; **Paulie Kern**, Debolt Hotel; **JP Kim**, Ceasar's Inn Hotel, Drayton Valley; **Justin Kim**, Wild Rose Inn, Vegreville; **Otto Kim**, McMurray Inn, Fort McMurray; **Sam Kirsch**, Quality Resort Chateau Canmore; **Dave Knox**, Western Budget Motel (2), Leduc; **Pam Lacombe**, Nova Inn Slave Lake; **Scott Leckie**, Holiday Inn Calgary MacLeod Trail South, Calgary; **Clara Lee**, Hi Valley Motor Inn, Valleyview; **Jin Hoon Lee**, Whitecourt Inn & Suites; **Josh Lee**, Caledonia Motor Inn, Viking; **Gloria LeForte**, Sawridge Inn and

Conference Centre Slave Lake; **Dave Little**, Heritage Inn Hotel & Convention Centre, Taber.

More new general managers include: **Wil MacLean**, EconoLodge, Edson; **Johnny Mahil**, West Edmonton Motor Inn; **Arshad Mahmood**, Days Inn Hinton, EconoLodge Inn & Suites, Hinton; **Selena Martin**, Holiday Inn Express Edmonton International Airport, Nisku; **Dan McGowan**, The Fairmont Palliser, Calgary; **Mangala Medagedara**, Stardust Motel, Camrose; **Ralph Miller**, Claresholm Inn; **Kellie Mitchell**, Holiday Inn Express Red Deer; **Brenda Morgan-Janes**, Guest House Inn & Suites, Edson; **Pauline Morehouse**, Western Budget Motel Cold Lake; **Adolf & Lydia Moritz**, Vauxhall Lions Campground; **Natalie Murphy**, Super 8 Rocky Mountain House; **Markus Nellen**, Best Western Cold Lake Inn; **Jaeyun Noh**, Springs Motor Inn, Wainwright; **Chantelle Nordick**, Super 8 Brooks; **Janette Norwood**, Franklin's Inn, Sherwood Park; **Iqbal Nurmohamed**, Bluebird Motel, Claresholm; **Carla Olson**, Parkside Inn, Grande Prairie; **Frank Pardi**, Heidelberg Inn, Lethbridge; **Darren Pellerin**, Banff Voyager Inn, Spruce Grove Inn, Banff; **Mark Perry**, Merit Hotel, Fort McMurray; **Linda Petryshen**, Motel 6 Claresholm; **Ashley Pinto**, Grande Prairie Inn; **Maria Jose Portela**, Charlton's Cedar Court, Delta Banff Royal Canadian Lodge, Banff; **Jenny Retzler**, St. Michaels Inn, Rycroft; **Holly Riske**, Johnsons Beach Campground, Ponoka; **Peter Savoie**, Junction Inn, Two Hills; **Kris Scranage**, Daysland Golf & Country Club; **John Sheret**, Delta Calgary Airport; **Lorna Sinclair**, Bashaw Golf & Country Club Campground; **TJ & B Singh**, Westcastle Motel, Pincher Creek; **Karen Socha**, Quality Hotel & Conference Centre Grande Prairie; **Bill Squarebriggs**, Banff International Hotel; **Peter Tai**, Our Place Motel, High Level; **Thorn Thann**, Super 8 Medicine Hat; **Michael Tratch**, Athabasca Rivers Edge Campground; **Davetta Trotchie**, Travellers Inn Camrose; **Theresa Vyvey**, Ramada Inns & Suites Drumheller; **Susan Walsh**, The Lodge Motel, Taber; **Sarah Weir**, Lakeview Inns & Suites Brooks; **Georg Wendrich**, Crowsnest Mountain Resort - The Lodge; **Soo Wong**, Howard Johnson Hotel - West Edmonton; **Jin Yon**, Tara Vista Inn, Hinton; **Charlie Yoo**, Grimshaw Hotel; **Kamran Zafar**, Super 8 Slave Lake; and **Dave Zaluski**, Pine Ridge R.V. & Cabins Ltd., Calgary.

Pomeroy Inn & Suites High Prairie is now **Peavine Inn & Suites**. **Canadas Best Value Inn Lethbridge** has become the **Super 8 Lethbridge**. **The Holiday Inn Convention Centre** in Edmonton is now the

Edmonton Hotel and Convention Centre. **The Callaghan Hotel & Convention Centre** has become the **Quality Inn Medicine Hat**. **Stanford Hotels & Resort Red Deer** is now the **Coronation Inn**. **Black Bear Inn** is now the **Econolodge Inn & Suites, Hinton**. **North Hill Inn** has become the **Quality Inn North Hill**. **J's Motel & Suites** in Forestburg is now the **Battle River Inn & Suites**. **The Crooked Tree RV Park** in Red Deer is now called the **RV There Yet Campground**. **The Causeway Bay Calgary Hotel** has become the **Econolodge Causeway Bay**. **The Super 8 Provost** is now the **Canalta Hotel Provost**.

Bellstar Hotels & Resorts has acquired **Ultimate Resorts & Hotels**, adding over 300 more accommodation units located in the resort destinations of Kicking Horse Mountain Resort near Golden, Canmore, and Kimberley.

Al Samji was awarded Howard Johnson Canada's General Manager of the Year Award. The Best Overall Quality Assurance Award and a President's Award were given to his hotel, the **Howard Johnson Inn - Red Deer**.

Brand performance awards were presented to several Travelodge Canada properties at the brand's recent annual conference in Las Vegas, in September. Congratulations to the team at the **Travelodge Hotel Edmonton/Stony Plain**, for winning the 2009 Housekeeping Award of Excellence.

Congratulations to the **Ramada Inn Pincher Creek** for being chosen as one of three Best of 2010 Ramada Hotels in Canada. The Top 8 Award for overall property excellence was given to the **Super 8 Ponoka**, **Super 8 Camrose**, and **Super 8 Kapuskasing**, Ontario.

Coinamatic Commercial Laundry Inc. has been named as the exclusive Canadian distributor for Lavatec Laundry Technology GmbH. Lavatec equipment delivers the highest levels of design, function and process engineering, and represents an investment in lowering operating costs and improving profitability.

Hotel Equipment and Supply moved into a brand new building in December that features a boardroom built as a walk-in cooler, a scullery set up for education and demonstrations, a full cooking line for displaying equipment as well as a servery.

Eleven of Alberta's twelve craft breweries have again collaborated to create an amber ale named **Unity Brew 2010**. Packaged in 650ml bottles, it is now available in specialty liquor stores and some brew pubs. Profits from Unity Brew 2010 will be donated to the Kidney Foundation and a number of local charities.

Group Registered Retirement Savings Plan

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Kinasewicz Benefits Consulting can help you create a plan that meets your property's goals for the program. Offering matching contributions to your employees' RRSPs can help attract and retain employees, and shows you care about their future.

To find out how your property can benefit from the AHLA's Group RRSP program, contact Sid Kinasewicz at 1.888.312.2343 or visit www.getbenefits.ca.



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MEDICAL TOURISM: Canada Chosen as Top Medical Tourism Destination

by Amanda Jackson

Medical tourism, the phenomenon whereby people who live in one country travel to another to receive medical, surgical, or dental care for either personal or financial reasons, is of growing interest to American travellers as revealed in the results of the Ypartnership/Harrison Group 2010 Portrait Of American Travelers (SM).

Fielded in February 2010, the study details familiarity with the medical tourism concept, the reasons for considering this alternative to domestic care, and countries in which US citizens would be most likely to seek this type of care.

Fully one-half (50%) of leisure travellers are now familiar with the concept of medical tourism, and one out of six (17%) would consider having a medical procedure done outside the US, assuming it is perceived to be of comparable quality. Another one out of five (22%) is “not sure,” suggesting they would also be open to considering this as an alternative to treatment at home if certain conditions were met.

Given the rapidly escalating cost of major medical care in the US, interest in exploring the benefits of medical tourism comes as no surprise. Among adults who would consider travelling outside the US for major medical care, 84% cite the lower cost as the primary reason why (the cost of performing major surgical procedures can, in some instances, be up to 70% less than in the US). Two-thirds (66%) mention comparable or a better quality of care, while 43% cite access to medical treatments or procedures that are not covered by their insurance at home or shorter waiting periods to access care (41%). Another one out of five (22%) cites access to experimental or non-FDA approved treatments and/or concerns about privacy (20%).

Among countries measured in the survey as possible medical tourism destinations, Canada reigns as the number one choice. The top ten countries include:

- Canada (42%)
- United Kingdom (32%)
- Germany (31%)
- Sweden (28%)
- France (24%)
- Mexico (13%)
- India (11%)
- Singapore (10%)
- Costa Rica (9%)
- Brazil (7%)

For more information on the Ypartnership/Harrison Group 2010 Portrait Of American Travelers(SM) please visit the Publications section of www.ypartnership.com.

Ypartnership is America's leading marketing services company serving travel, leisure and entertainment clients. For more information, visit www.ypartnership.com. Harrison Group is a leading market research and strategy consulting firm specializing in sophisticated market strategy, market analytics, survey and forecasting services. For more information, visit www.harrisongroupinc.com.

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