

Increase Revenue, Reduce Costs - Go 'Green', And Market Your Commitment - By John R. Hendrie

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Tree Huggers, Hippies, woodchucks, back to earth, planet earth - the derogatory labeling is staggering. How about savvy, successful Hospitality business people?

We can talk about diminishing natural resources and responsible stewardship of the environment. The Northeast has experienced warm winters, absence of snow, and acid rain. The world knows cruel weather and natural disasters. We can watch Detroit try to dig out of their automotive hole. We can bemoan the huge profits of the oil companies, or witness the airline industry further contract. We can curse the increase in our own personal energy usage and cost, and all go purchase cardigan sweaters. Washington will not act upon the known. Oil, Greenhouse effect, landfills, emissions, protected species, toxic waste, even Consumer Products - you name it, we live with it.

Our attention span is short, while other growing countries and economies, such as China, now challenge us in massive consumption competition. So, let's just simmer and tough it out. Complacency is a worthy strategy. Or, perhaps we should harness the 'Green' movement, actually reduce our operating costs, and market our commitment to that attentive consumer (per TIA, over 75% of travelers support the movement) and the growing trend which exists with the ECO-Tourists. We could actually make some money, while being good citizens, too. What a concept!

As you know, the cost of energy is your greatest expense; this will not decline. Also, the Hospitality Industry is a huge waste maker. The move to 'Green' is simply good business sense, and the benefits far exceed our typical short term perspective. Fifty years ago one was considered 'fringe' if they were outspoken in their commitment to the environment and conservation. Then, technologies, systems and products were very expensive. Now, we are at greater risk, and we do have the means to act. You do not have to be a scientist or engineer to understand this.

Not to oversimplify the obvious, yet discuss the 'Green' basics in lay terms, and draw upon extensive information from the Internet and a source I have been following, CERC, let's consider the following:

œ **ENERGY EFFICIENCY:** What would happen if you reduced the light bulb wattage in the Guest Room, or even switched to another type of bulb? How about restaurants and hotels promoting the benefits of linen reuse or alternative limited service? All Caribbean Islands and much of the Southern US could be using solar panels with the rest of us looking for renewable energy sources, like wind and micro-electric to slash our costs.

œ **CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION:** A banner twelve months plus for Hospitality growth, actually a Boom! What did we consider in our bold investments - modular units, paints and adhesives with low volatile organic compounds, materials with recycled content, or options for reuse of computers, furniture, and fixtures? Hopefully, we have good insulation.

œ **WATER CONSERVATION:** Flush and splash. States which have drought, islands with little rainfall, desalinization plants, sewage treatment, and the Water Works. Significant savings spring from toilet tank fill diverters and environmental shower heads. This surely beats the old brick in the toilet trick or the 'Navy Shower'.

œ **SOLID WASTE:** We are up to 230 million tons a year of which two thirds reside in land fills or incinerators. Recycling is key, and even restaurants can participate in food rescue and composting programs.

œ **ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED GOODS:** It begins with packaging, mostly designed for consumer delight but becomes deadly serious with an environmental impact. Styrofoam is still with us. Recycled paper products are a must. Why, beyond squeezing the toilet paper, must we expect four ply? There are fine companies who represent environmentally sound amenities. Advertising should be recycled to better serve the consumer.

œ **AWARENESS:** This is where it starts - for the consumer and the provider. Tell your Guests and Visitors exactly what you are doing on their behalf. They will not be shocked or disappointed; rather, they will consciously acknowledge your role and theirs.

We have a shared responsibility and a knowing public. 'Green' is not a new movement, merely one whose time is dramatically now. And, remember, Green is the color of currency - the money you save and the revenue you produce from a thankful Guest, who probably practices conservation at home. This is not about the check-in kiosk in the Lobby, the curved shower curtain rod in the bath, or the mood lighting in the restaurant. It is about a Guest Experience which is sustainable! Hospitality is typically slow to take a leadership role, but your Consumer has spoken. Advantage the obvious - Go 'Green'!

The author believes that Remarkable Hospitality is the portal to the memorable Visitor Experience. He is a former 'long hair', who grew up and understands the challenges. Please visit the web site at: www.hospitalityperformance.com.

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