

Fresh Impressions

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Many hotels listed on FreshStay.com(R) are finding success by going beyond providing smoke-free environments and offering guestrooms, meeting rooms and public spaces with Indoor Air Quality IAQ enhancements

You never have a second chance to make a first impression. The first impression many guests have of their hotel choices is how the properties smell - because 'the nose knows,' and it enters properties first every time! Whether it's smoky or stagnant, a foul air impression sets the tone for an uncomfortable stay, and 0 repeat business/referrals.

That's why many hotels listed on FreshStay(R) are working to make sure their guests' first impressions are fresh ones. FreshStay (www.FreshStay.com) is an online directory and integrated booking process for more than 3,500 non-smoking lodging facilities in the United States, Canada and around the world. FreshStay is dedicated to promoting the improvement of Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) for 'Frequent Breathers' worldwide who seek fresh air accommodations at resorts, hotels, motels, inns and B&Bs.

'Though being 100-percent smoke-free is a great and necessary place to start, there's so much more that a hotel can do to improve its Indoor Air Quality, and consequently, the satisfaction of its guests,' says Ray Burger, President of Pineapple Hospitality, which founded and operates FreshStay. 'Guests are looking for rooms with Indoor Air Quality improvements for the same reasons they choose non-smoking rooms and hotels. The rooms feel cleaner, healthier, safer for allergy sufferers and, quite simply, they can sleep better and feel more refreshed the next morning.'

From 'Ick' to WOW'

Guests are noticing a change in the air at the Annapolis Marriott Waterfront Hotel in Maryland. The hotel is offering guestrooms and meeting rooms with air that has been treated to remove allergens.

By all accounts, the program has been a smashing success.

Tom Kammerer, Managing Director for Thayer Lodging, a private hotel real-estate investment firm in Annapolis, Md., that runs the Annapolis Marriott, said that a four-month trial to purify rooms at the hotel was so successful, Thayer is converting about 10 percent of the rooms at each of its 13 hotels into PURE Rooms by the end of this year.

Kammerer says there was an 180-percent return on investment on the 10 rooms of the 150-room hotel that were converted to PURE Rooms. And the PURE Rooms are running at full occupancy, even with a 5-percent to 10-percent premium for the service.

'There is a lot of repeat business for PURE Rooms,' Kammerer said. 'People love them.'

The growing trend toward PURE Rooms is partially for allergy sufferers, but it is also for anyone who wants clean, comfortable stays without having to think about the guests (and pets in some cases) who may have stayed there before them.

'We call it the ick factor,' says Kammerer. 'The whole thing is geared toward 'What about the guy before me?' That's why we have encasements over our pillows and mattresses. The natural human body sheds 150,000 cells a day. We're trying to cut down on breathing in other people's stuff.'

'Being clean and smoke-free isn't necessarily enough to separate yourself in the marketplace anymore. We kind of expect those things now,' Kammerer says. 'We're looking for things in our hotels that are extraordinary. We're going from the 'ick factor' to the 'wow factor.''

Thayer's hotels soon also will offer rooms with steam showers, aromatherapy and 'chromo,' or light, therapy. Rooms also will have free spa minibars, with samples of organic body and skin products. 'This is cutting edge now,' Kammerer says, 'but it will become the standard shortly. People will come to expect this too.'

The PURE Process

The PURE feeling at the Annapolis Marriott and many other lodging facilities is come from PURE Solutions, NA.

PURE Solutions' PURE Process:

Starts with the cleaning and sanitizing of air-handling unit that service rooms. Tea Tree Oil cartridges then are placed in the units - an extract from the Tea Tree in Australia that's a natural antiseptic that keeps mold and bacteria from re-forming in the air handling systems.

Includes carpet and upholstery cleaning with the patented PURE Clean Solution.

Encompasses a one-time, High Ozone Shock Treatment that eliminates nearly all of the mold and bacteria in every nook and cranny of guestrooms.

Mists on a one-time application of Pure Shield a bacteria static barrier, to all room surfaces.

Also comprises Allergy Friendly Bed Encasings and much more.

Installation of an air purifying unit in each room, which has been shown to kill 94% of fungus, 98-100% of bacteria, and up to 100 percent of more-dangerous viruses.

'Guests are becoming more and more particular about the environments they are in,' says Brian Brault, CEO of PURE Solutions. 'Since the number of people traveling is on the rise, more people with allergies, asthma or simply a heightened sense of comfort are checking into hotels. Hotels are starting to realize that nice beds, high-speed Internet access and flat-screen TV's are the norm in the industry. The ability to differentiate by the quality of the air guests breathe while staying at hotels is much more substantial.'

According to a Cornell University Survey Research Institute study, 31 percent of the travelers surveyed either have allergies, or regularly traveled with people who have them. That is nearly one in three people checking into a hotel.

'Improved Air Quality greatly increases the likelihood that guests will wake up refreshed, without being congested or having scratchy, puffy eyes,' adds Brault. 'With PURE Rooms, the purifiers used are registered by the FDA as Class II medical devices. This means that between 98-100% of bacteria and viruses have been eliminated from the air.'

Similarly, the Cornell survey found that 83 percent of travelers prefer to stay in properties treated to remove airborne allergens - with 60 percent saying they would pay extra for the fresh air.

'We receive quite a bit of feedback that guests love the rooms and ask for their guest profiles to reflect their preference for PURE Rooms,' says Brault. 'One guest, Tim Daggitt, indicated that a night's stay in an Annapolis Marriott PURE Room was 'great,' and that he 'didn't have any of the normal allergy symptoms that he usually battles.' He was happy to pay the \$20 premium, and said 'frankly, I would have paid more.' From a business perspective, we have several hotels that are making quite a bit of money with the PURE Rooms by charging a premium.'

FreshStay Partner

Another PURE success comes from the Seaport Hotel in Boston which has been smoke-free since it opened in 1998.

Director of Rooms Matt Moore says, 'We believed from the onset that providing a smoke free environment would appeal to a number of travelers and provide us with an advantage over our competitive set. In hindsight, we were correct in our assumption that we could improve our Indoor Air Quality without alienating our guests. This non-smoking policy has been further validated as many of the national chain hotels have followed our lead and are now 100% smoke free.'

In 2007, the Seaport went one step further and added four PURE Allergy-Friendly Rooms as an option for guests who suffer from allergies or respiratory problems. The Seaport was the second hotel in Massachusetts to offer this type of amenity.

'It's been great,' Moore says. 'We don't field guest complaints regarding smoky rooms. We receive praise from first-time guests for keeping a smoke-free property. The introduction of the PURE Allergy-Friendly Rooms also has been well received. The program will only become more popular as more guests realize thanks to FreshStay.com that they have more options and begin to choose hotels based on a variety of amenities like 100-percent smoke free environments and allergy-friendly rooms.'

Moore says he is glad there are resources like FreshStay.com to reach out to travelers who increasingly prefer to stay in cleaner, fresh, non-smoking hotels, and that have taken additional steps to protect guests' and employees' health by investing in Indoor Air Quality upgrades.

'FreshStay.com allows us to reach a broader audience than we could reach as an independent hotel,' Moore says. 'I believe they will continue to be used as a worldwide reference for Indoor Air Quality in our industry, directing more prospective guests to us.'

About Pineapple Hospitality

Headquartered in Saint Charles, Missouri, Pineapple Hospitality(TM) is an EPA ENERGY STAR(TM) partner bringing fresh ideas to hospitality guests' doors and owner/operators' bottom lines - including FreshStay(R) (www.freshstay.com), EcoRooms & EcoSuites (www.EcoRooms.com)

Environmentally Sensitive Amenities(TM), the greenSPA(TM) luxury amenity and dispenser system, Custom Linen and Towel Re-Use Programs, Guestat(TM) programmable thermostats, high-performance energy- and water-efficient showerheads, the Nature's Mist(TM) deodorization system, and dozens of other products and programs. To get a taste of Pineapple's sweet planet-friendly solutions helping thousands of hotels bolster business and cut costs, please visit www.pineapplehospitality.net, or call Ray Burger at 636-922-2285.

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