

[IMAGE]

Ratings Advice - Design For The Future - By Harry Nobles

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We get calls regularly from owners, developers, architects, and designers asking for AAA/MOBIL ratings advice and assistance on projects scheduled to open in 2-4 years.

Our advice is always the same: 'design and build for the long- term'. In previous articles, discussions with clients, and at seminars, I have often addressed the ever increasing physical and guest service standards. For many years the changes have been steadily rising. In my opinion and experience, the 4 or 5 Star/Diamond rated property of just 3-4 years ago often earns only a 3 Star/Diamond rating. The pace of change now is even more rapid. The changes apply to both the physical facilities and the level of guest services expected. Like new cars or computers, a new hotel or resort can be almost obsolete when it opens.

In our attempt to continue providing the most current and useful advice, we have found that meeting, or even exceeding, current standards is no longer sufficient. We now work with clients to anticipate what the standards will be in 3-4 years, and design and build for that time frame. Designing and building according to current guest expectations and ratings almost guarantees that a new or renovated property will be approaching obsolescence very quickly.

We have also seen that trying to play catch up can be very expensive. Clients and other industry 'experts' tell us that designing for the future is usually more cost effective, owners and operators, the 'real experts', confirm this.

As I have said for years, my experience shows that earning a 4 or 5 Star/Diamond rating is often the easier part of the equation, maintaining that rating for the long-term is usually more difficult. You cannot do that with short-term planning.

We therefore always urge all who are building, designing, or renovating a property with aspirations for the higher ratings and maximum guest satisfaction to seriously consider planning for the future not just next year. Your designer, architect, or an outside consultant can help you get off on the right foot.

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