

today's hotelier

September 2022 | todayshotelier.com

Official Publication of AHAIOA

the
**GUEST EXPERIENCE
ISSUE**

Adjusting to
**changing
consumer
preferences**
as the
pandemic
recedes
Page 18

Chico Patel

Co-CEO, Wealth
Hospitality
Page 16

Elevating
the guest
experience
without
affecting your
bottom line
Page 26



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contents

September 2022 | todayshotelier.com



18

Give 'em what they want
Are you adjusting to changing consumer preferences as the pandemic recedes?

by NICK FORTUNA

26

A rising tide lifts all
How to elevate the guest experience without affecting your bottom line

by LARRY and ADAM MOGELONSKY

departments

- 8 5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT AAHOA THIS MONTH
- 11 LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN
- 12 LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO
- 14 ADVOCACY IN ACTION
- 43 TELL ME SOMETHING GOOD
- 46 AAHOA CLUB BLUE, PLATINUM & SILVER INDUSTRY PARTNERS
- 48 AAHOA VENDOR PARTNERS
- 55 AAHOA MEMBERS IN ACTION
- 56 CLASSIFIEDS
- 58 ADVERTISERS INDEX

columns

THE C-SUITE

Meeting expectations: The evolution of guest preferences, a hotel's financial needs, and the middle ground between the two. 16
by CHICO PATEL

LEGAL CORNER

Keep calm and carry on: Responding to a default notice..... 34
by ANDREW M. MALZAHN

FINANCE

Follow the clues: Deciphering the ways capital markets evaluate construction projects to deem them financing worthy..... 36
by RUSHI SHAH

INDEPENDENT HOTELIERS

Perfectly tailored: Creating a custom-fit guest experience 38
by KAMALESH (KP) PATEL

OPERATIONS

Skip the balancing act: Exploring the benefits a BMS provides in managing a hotel and its hot water..... 40
by DALE SCHMITZ

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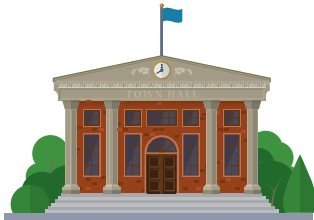
5 Things to Know

About AAHOA This Month

1 LAST CHANCE TO ATTEND AN AAHOA CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT.
 AAHOA's final charity golf tournament is on Friday, September 9, 2022, at the Château Élan Golf Club in Braselton, GA. Château Élan Golf Club features two outstanding 18-hole courses and the one-of-a-kind Executive Par 3 course, an ideal setting to bring together hoteliers and vendors for a full day of networking, education, and deal-making. Don't miss the chance to show off your golf skills and raise money for local causes. AAHOA.com/Golf



3 WOMEN HOTELIERS AFFECT EXTRAORDINARY CHANGE LOCALLY.
 AAHOA is hosting a Women Hoteliers Town Hall on Tuesday, September 27, 2022, from 5 to 7:30 p.m. in Lafayette, LA and another on Thursday, September 29, 2022, from 5 to 7:30 p.m. in Washington, D.C. Meet local women hoteliers and receive updates on how AAHOA is leading the way to ensure opportunities for generations to come. AAHOA.com/Events



2 JOIN US FOR THREE REGIONALS.
 The AAHOA Regional Conference & Trade Shows are happening this month in Elmhurst, IL, Cherry Hill, NJ, and Arlington, VA. Since the year started, AAHOA has hosted 15 regionals and featured a stellar line-up of speakers representing the hospitality, government, and business industries. Mark your calendar and join us this month! AAHOA.com/2022Regionals



4 MEET THE AAHOA TEAM AT THE LODGING CONFERENCE.
 The Lodging Conference is happening September 19-22 at the JW Marriott Phoenix Desert Ridge in Phoenix, AZ. This event brings together the hotel industry's most influential owners, operators, presidents, CEOs, and dealmakers and introduces new strategies to help hotel development, operation, and franchising succeed. During the conference, AAHOA President & CEO Laura Lee Blake and the Officers will speak to attendees on various industry trends and topics. AAHOA will host a reception at the Lodging Conference on Tuesday, September 20, from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at The JW Desert Ridge at The Isle of Capri. You will not want to miss it! Register to attend at LodgingConference.com.



5 AAHOACON23
REGISTRATION FOR AAHOACON23 IS OPENING SOON.
 The 2023 AAHOA Convention & Trade Show is set for April 11-14 in Los Angeles, CA. What does AAHOACON23 promise? A stellar lineup of speakers, educational sessions to enhance your industry knowledge, unmatched networking opportunities, and plenty of deal-making on the trade show floor. Stay tuned for more details! AAHOA.com/Convention

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**NISHANT (NEAL) PATEL,
CHO, CHIA**
AAHOA CHAIRMAN (2022-2023)

“

While you'll never be able to please everyone, doing the best you can with the best of intentions – and with extraordinary relationships – will lead you in the right direction.”

Be the leader you want to be

AFTER SEVEN YEARS IN GIDDINGS, TX, MY FAMILY SOLD OUR PROPERTY, GIVING US enough money to purchase our first franchise hotel in Round Rock, TX – a Red Roof. My parents were, obviously, not fluent in English, so I was the one who handled the deal, signed the purchase and sales agreements, and negotiated with the brand. Mind you, I was 19 or 20 years old at the time.

I can still remember, I went to Columbus, OH, for mandatory management training but never got my certificate because there were two classes – one for housekeeping and the other for maintenance. Those classes were offsite, and ridesharing wasn't around back then, so I had to use a cab to get there.

Unfortunately, I didn't have enough money to get there and back, so I skipped those classes.

Graduation consisted of a class of maybe 15 people. As names are being called, I got pulled to the side where I was told, “Unfortunately, we won't be able to give you the certificate because you didn't complete the classes.”

I thought about signing with a competing brand, but because of the new leadership at Red Roof a few years later, I decided to stay with them.

Because of the relationships I built with certain folks at Red Roof, I got more involved in the brand. Maybe they saw things in me others didn't and gave me the opportunity to be on their Franchise Advisory Council without a management license.

That was one of the happiest moments in my life. I felt like I actually achieved something – like I was part of something big.

I'm always mindful of that situation when dealing with guests. The guest experience is built on relationships. Being hospitable. Treating them like family. I understand people have expectations, and I try to meet those expectations whenever possible.

Around the same time, I joined Red Roof's Franchise Advisory Council, there was another property for sale in Dallas, TX. I really wanted to purchase it, but my dad didn't like it because it had an extra corridor of approximately 160 units.

In the end, I signed the PSA and moved the money without my dad's knowledge. When it was too late, I told him what I did. To my surprise, he was actually proud of me.

He told me he felt like I had done my due diligence, which I did. Within two years, we were able to sell that property for a huge return on investment to augment our growth.

Thanks to immense support from my family – including my younger brother, Sunny – I went from being a broke immigrant teenager, to building relationships with the right people, taking risks, and running the family business. I feel like all my past experiences have molded me into the people-person I am today.

Maybe you want to get your certificate but don't have the money for a ride. Maybe you're not sure who to connect with, but you put yourself out there to network for a chance of getting facetime with the right people. Or maybe you're not sure what the right move is when it comes to what's best for your business or guests, but you take a risk based on what you believe is the right thing to do.

While you'll never be able to please everyone, doing the best you can with the best of intentions – and with extraordinary relationships – will lead you in the right direction. ■



LAURA LEE BLAKE, ESQ.
AAHOA PRESIDENT & CEO

Resurgence of interest in AAHOA's 12 Points of Fair Franchising

“
Together,
we can work
toward a more
sustainable
business
model for all
stakeholders
and for a
better guest
experience.”

IN THIS POST-PANDEMIC WORLD, THERE HAS BEEN A RESURGENCE OF INTEREST IN fair franchising and, more specifically, AAHOA's 12 Points of Fair Franchising. While many presume this is an issue solely between AAHOA hotel franchisees and their franchisors, it's really more about working toward a sustainable business model for all stakeholders and for a better guest experience.

For franchisees to provide an extraordinary guest experience, they need to have viable profit margins that allow them to invest in the business to deliver these high-quality experiences. They also need the options and choices to offer such guest experiences at a fair and reasonable price.

Several of AAHOA's 12 Points of Fair Franchising focus on ensuring there are opportunities for a better guest experience, but let us look explicitly at point 5: Vendor Rebates, Exclusivity, and Affiliated Companies as Vendors.

One might ask how mandated and exclusive vendors could impact the guest experience or argue that a true free market should be efficient at keeping competition strong among vendors for their products and services. The free market should drive competitive pricing, along with the highest quality for those goods and services.

When this free market is disrupted, however, not only do we see higher prices, but we might not get the best quality. When franchisors limit the vendors that are providing products and services, competition is frequently limited.

Further, for many franchisees, discounted pricing on products and services has become one of the biggest myths in the franchise industry. Too often, the total number of vendors for a particular product or service is limited, and the competition among the vendors for which ones will be the mandated or exclusive vendors is won not by those that will provide the biggest rebates to the franchisors. This is hardly the free market as we know it.

It should be noted that not all hotel franchisors engage in these unfair practices, but some do, and AAHOA continues to seek input and data from our members on these points so we can address them. For example, do you have specific examples of paying higher costs for the same products and services through a mandated vendor than what you could purchase from the same vendor elsewhere? How do your prices compare between your franchised hotels and independent locations? If you are experiencing these issues, please contact us directly so we can assist you with achieving fairness.

It is a new day at AAHOA. A new start.

In the business of hospitality, we commend your efforts to provide exceptional guest experiences. But you need the assistance and backing of your franchisors. Together, we can work toward a more sustainable business model for all stakeholders and for a better guest experience. The 12 Points will help us achieve a stronger future for all. ■



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Welcome FTC Commissioner Bedoya

by KEITH MILLER

ALVARO M. BEDOYA WAS NOMINATED BY PRESIDENT BIDEN IN SEPTEMBER 2021, AND AFTER SENATE confirmation was sworn in to serve as Commissioner at the Federal Trade Commission on May 16, 2022. Among the many things the FTC regulates, is the franchise industry, and specifically the Franchise Rule, which is the presale disclosure you see when buying a franchise. They can also investigate entities that engage in unfair or deceptive acts or practices in interstate commerce. AAHOA took some time to get to know Commissioner Bedoya, including where he came from, and who he is today.



Alvaro M. Bedoya,
Commissioner,
Federal Trade
Commission

WHAT WAS IT LIKE IMMIGRATING TO THE U.S. FROM PERU AT A YOUNG AGE?

We moved to upstate New York from Lima in 1987, when I was five. My dad finished his Ph.D. at what was then SUNY Binghamton. We moved from the city to the suburbs, and everything was quite new. I remember thinking that the concrete storm drains were just smaller, American sidewalks. My brother and I also thought the word “ketchup” was hilarious because it consisted of the words “catch” and “up” but was really just tomato sauce. We lived in an apartment; most of our classmates had houses. We never lacked for anything, but the experience of being different and having less than everyone around us stuck with me and helped shape me into who I am today.

WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP, WAS IT ALWAYS YOUR DREAM TO BECOME A LAWYER?

To be honest, I became a lawyer because I was interested in government and wasn't interested in becoming a doctor or engineer – the professions that a lot of other immigrants get steered into. (My brother is a doctor.) It was only later in life that I realized that the United States is one of those rare places where you truly can do almost anything professionally. I have two young children, and I'm keen to make sure that they do whatever they want professionally.

WHAT GOT YOU INTO THE POLITICAL ARENA AND SERVING ON CONGRESSIONAL STAFF?

In law school, I came to understand how critical of a role Congress and the Supreme Court played in righting wrongs. I was particularly moved by the passage of civil rights and voting rights laws in the 1960s. They truly transformed our society. After law school, I wanted to help immigrants in this country and knew that Congress would try to pass comprehensive immigration reform legislation. So, I started interviewing for positions in the Senate. I got a job as chief counsel to the newest senator on the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senator Al Franken. We never were able to pass immigration reform legislation, but the five years I spent on Capitol Hill was an invaluable education in the American government.

WHAT, SPECIFICALLY, GOT YOU FOCUSING ON PRIVACY AND TECHNOLOGY LEGAL ISSUES?

It was a circuitous route. In college and law school, I'd been interested in civil rights, voting rights, and worker rights. In the Senate, I was handed the privacy portfolio largely by default. But, I quickly saw that many of the issues we saw in the areas I was interested in were replicated in privacy. You have consumers, who are largely unorganized and dispersed, going up against very concentrated and organized industry interests. Unsurprisingly, the industry has usually won those debates. The challenge of changing that dynamic fascinated and excited me.

AFTER BEING NOMINATED TO REPLACE ROHIT CHOPRA AS AN FTC COMMISSIONER, AND AFTER A LONG CONFIRMATION PROCESS, YOU WERE SWORN IN AS AN FTC COMMISSIONER ON MAY 16, 2022. WHAT ABOUT THIS JOB MAKES YOU EXCITED TO WAKE UP EVERY MORNING AND GO TO WORK?

This is a dream job. I feel terribly lucky to have it. It's rare to be able to get up most mornings and know that you will go to work and help people in a very real way, often when they are in a very difficult situation. Right now, I'm particularly interested in learning about antitrust. I already spent much of the past year reading on the subject. Now, I'm learning about particular industries. Every day is something new and different

A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF AAHOA MEMBERS ARE FRANCHISEES. IT'S STILL EARLY IN YOUR TERM, AND THE FTC HAS COME UNDER SOME SCRUTINY FOR PERCEIVED WEAK OVERSIGHT OF THE FRANCHISE INDUSTRY. WHAT ARE YOUR INITIAL THOUGHTS AND DIRECTIONS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE FTC TAKE IN RELATIONSHIP TO FRANCHISING?

I think that the Commission's authority to protect franchisees is one of the most critical ones it's charged with enforcing – and that's saying something, because the Commission is charged



I have a lot of respect for the fact that many franchisees have invested their life savings, or retirement accounts, into building a business.”

with enforcing more than 70 federal laws. I have a lot of respect for the fact that many franchisees have invested their life savings, or retirement accounts, into building a business. Often, it's the first business they've ever owned. I know franchisees who have had terrific experiences. I know others who found it to be quite difficult and who traced those difficulties to the power and information imbalance between themselves and their franchisor. I'm keen to make sure that franchisees are treated fairly and have been quickly getting up to speed on the Commission's work in this space.

CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR FAMILY AND HOW YOU BALANCE A HIGH-LEVEL CAREER BUT PRIORITIZE YOUR FAMILY FIRST?

It's a balancing act, but it's nothing that AAHOA members aren't familiar with in running their businesses, often with young families of their own. For me, I make sure I'm home for dinner and to put the kids down. Then I log on for a few hours to read, write, and catch up on email. I'm also limiting my travel to minimize the likelihood of exposing our family to new COVID variants. I very much look forward to not having to worry about that.

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT THE PUBLIC PROBABLY DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT ALVARO BEDOYA, THE PERSON, THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY?

People like me want to hear from people like you. A funny thing happens when you come into an office like this one – people stop telling you things. As a result, you often only hear from seasoned lobbyists. Obviously, that's not a good thing. I'm better at my job if I know what actual business owners are experiencing on a daily basis. ■

Keith Miller, Principal, Franchisee Advocacy Consulting, is an independent consultant dedicated to advancing franchisee causes through engagement and advocacy. He can be reached at (530) 906-3988 or kmiller@franchiseadvocacy.com

Meeting expectations

The evolution of guest preferences, a hotel's financial needs, and the middle ground between the two

by CHICO PATEL

ANYONE WHO HASN'T BEEN LIVING IN A CAVE DURING THE PAST TWO-AND-a-half years should be well aware of the challenges the industry has faced during that time. From pandemic-induced lockdowns to evolving guest preferences and much more, day-do-day operations look vastly different than they did in 2019. But that doesn't mean we're all flying blind.

For example, the evolution of guest preferences mostly has tracked in tandem with changes in available technology. Guests increasingly have appreciated the ability to check in and access their room key using their smartphone – even more so during the pandemic. This streamlines the check-in process, reduces front desk friction, and allows front-desk employees to spend more time assisting guests – all of which leads to a more personalized guest experience.

But there's always a tradeoff, and addressing changing guest preferences sometimes can negatively impact a hotel's bottom line. So, how should hoteliers address the balance between guest wants and profitability?

Well, every guest loves a free upgrade, and you can offer it when the room type is available on a slow night. Late checkouts or early check-ins are always appreciated. Offering bottled water to guests on hot days or hot cocoa on cold days helps to

provide a better guest service experience, and you use items already available at breakfast. These all are simple ways to build guest loyalty by demonstrating that your hotel team values their business – and the cost is negligible. There are many other ways to wow your guest with things already built into the cost per room that they might not have even known existed. It all adds up to happier customers, stronger guest survey scores, and more profit. And your management team can engage online too. Reviews are very important these days and a simple response to each one tells travelers that you care.

TOOL TIME

During a time when predicting business trends is more difficult than ever, it can be tempting to throw our hands up in defeat, but there are tools and practices we all can follow to ensure our businesses are best positioned for growth.

At Wealth Hospitality, we do that by simply focusing on customer needs. And we leverage traditional tools such as STR reports to find latent demand, particularly in high RevPar markets where the economics of higher construction costs can still work. We also look to find new sectors off the beaten path. For example, one of our newest hotels is located in an outdoors-driven market, catering to guests that want to escape busy cities and experience nature. In this way, we sell the guest more than just a room. We provide a personal experience – a locale to breathe in fresh air and enjoy activities that inspire them. Other projects on our drawing board will likewise deliver unique guest experiences, such as romantic getaways for couples that are within their reach. No passport required.

MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS PRIVILEGES

Not incidentally, being an AAHOA Member has greatly helped in our growth, both logistically and strategically. And that involvement has shaped our outlook on the industry as well as our overall approach to day-to-day business. The organization provides valuable information related to market trends, and its importance as an

advocate for the hotel industry cannot be overstated. AAHOA also has helped by providing hundreds of professional development opportunities, whether digital or in person. The exclusive Vendor Partner deals and discounts from many of the top brands help to keep cost low while providing the best quality products and services to our guests. The weekly updates from the AAHOA Industry Partners regarding their latest offers gives our company ideas of even more ways to save.

DEVELOPMENT PIPELINE

We acquired six properties in the first quarter of 2022 and look forward to closing several more later this year. Even though our focus has primarily been on ground-up development, our acquisition pace has picked up sustainably. A key factor was purchasing properties at value pricing post-COVID, with a healthy pipeline of 36 projects during the next 2-3 years. Since the Merger of Fusion and Heritage Hospitality, the combined company, Wealth Hospitality, has become a premier hotel development company in the nation. While many hoteliers are sitting on their development plans due to high construction costs, we at Wealth have decided to move forward aggressively with our development plans in select markets. One of our key advantages at Wealth is that we are our own general contractor, which helps bridge the high costs versus our competitors. ■

Chico Patel,
Co-CEO,
Wealth Hospitality

Give 'em what they want

Are you adjusting to changing consumer preferences as the pandemic recedes?

by NICK FORTUNA

S O MUCH HAS CHANGED SINCE CORNELL UNIVERSITY LAUNCHED ITS HOSPITALITY school in 1922, but in a sense, history is just repeating itself. Then as now, the world had just suffered through a flu pandemic that cost millions of lives and upended the way people interact with each other, a stark reality affecting the hospitality industry and every other business sector.

As COVID-19 gradually abates, hoteliers should recognize that guests' preferences have changed significantly since the relatively carefree days of 2019, according to Dave Roberts, a hospitality professor at Cornell.

Formerly the senior vice president of revenue strategy and solutions for Marriott, Roberts now teaches operations, technology, and information management at Cornell. The university's Peter and Stephanie Nolan School of Hotel Administration is celebrating its centennial this year and is ranked as the top U.S. hospitality school by websites such as College Rank and College Factual.

Roberts said the pandemic greatly accelerated several trends, including consumers' desire to use their smartphones for just about everything. Whereas in the past the



hospitality industry was built around providing a personal touch, today's consumers want to accomplish tasks quickly and seamlessly using technology, and that convenience trumps a friendly smile at the check-in counter, he said.

Roberts points to technological advances in retail stores and restaurants, with consumers now having the ability to order items from their smartphones with just a few clicks or to request drink refills or pay their restaurant bill using tabletop kiosks. Some of these self-service options initially were seen as ways to reduce person-to-person contact and curb viral transmission, but consumers now see them as enhancements to the customer experience and want them to stay, he said.

Research into consumer psychology suggests that people enjoy the feeling of control that comes from doing things themselves quickly and easily, without having to wait for busy workers to get a free moment, Roberts said. It's a phenomenon commonly observable at grocery stores, where some consumers will choose a self-service checkout lane even if the queues for staffed lanes are shorter, he added.

"Guest-facing technology was accelerated enormously by COVID-19 because early in the pandemic, if you didn't have mobile check-in or keyless entry, you weren't getting that booking," Roberts said. "Self-service has become an expectation and a consumer preference across industries. Customers are seeing this in the retail space, and they expect it in hotels, even though it may be harder to deliver in hotels."

Spotlight on amenities

Hotels.com regularly analyzes search data on its website and mobile app to identify the amenities that appeal most to consumers. Here are nine key findings:

- 1 PRIORITIZING SELF-CARE**
At the height of the pandemic, bathtubs were the most frequently searched-for hotel amenity, and searches in 2022 are up 25% compared with 2019. Similarly, searches for hotels with spas are up 35% this year.
- 2 LET'S GO SKIING**
Last winter, searches for ski-in/ski-out hotels were up 50% vs. 2019 levels, and interest in properties with ski shuttles and storage was up 20%.
- 3 HOME-COOKING AT HOTELS?**
Searches for hotels with kitchens are up 15% this year, and early in the summer, kitchens ranked third on the list of the most sought-after amenities.
- 4 WE DIDN'T COME HERE TO WORK**
In a surprising finding, searches for hotels with free Wi-Fi are down 50% from pre-pandemic levels, while searches for properties with business facilities are down 40%. The numbers reflect the consensus that while leisure travel has returned in a big way, business travel hasn't.
- 5 BRINGING THE WHOLE FAMILY**
As families take their first vacations in several years, searches for hotels with cribs are up 65% this year, while searches for properties with childcare are up 45%, and connecting rooms are up 20%. Interest in pet-friendly hotels also has increased 35% this year.
- 6 HITTING THE GYM**
Searches for hotels with fitness centers were down 30% last year, but in 2022, those searches have risen by 65%.
- 7 THE MOST IMPORTANT MEAL OF THE DAY**
Searches for properties with free breakfast are up 75% this year as hotels reopen their hot-breakfast buffets and eschew prepackaged meals, which were seen as a way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 at hotels. Early in the summer, free breakfast ranked as the No. 2 most-important amenity among visitors to Hotels.com.
- 8 DIVE RIGHT IN, THE WATER'S FINE**
During the pandemic, many hotels limited access to communal amenities such as pools, but entering this summer, pools were the most-sought-after amenity at hotels.
- 9 FOCUSING ON FREE PARKING**
Searches for properties with free parking are up 43% this year compared with 2021, which was a record year for road trips, indicating that vacationers were gearing up for summer car travel.



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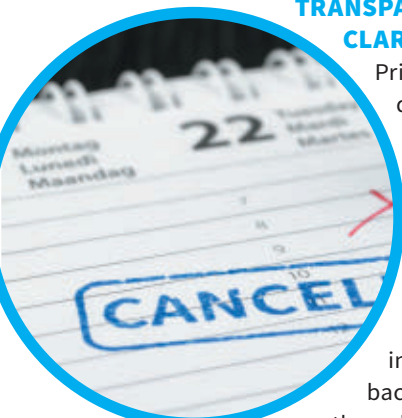
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“

Guests are looking for clarity and certainty, and when they're shopping for a room, they don't want to read a three-page description of what they're getting.”

As hoteliers get ready for the post-pandemic new normal, here are three guest preferences to be mindful of, according to Roberts.

TRANSPARENCY AND CLARITY



Prior to the pandemic, many hoteliers were “becoming fairly aggressive” with their cancellation policies, sometimes billing guests who backed out within three days of a scheduled stay, Roberts said. With

occupancy rates high, it often made sense for hotels to give themselves extra time to sell a room after a cancellation, even if some guests would bristle at a three-day cancellation policy, he said.

During the pandemic, however, hotels had little choice but to relax their cancellation policies. Now that business has picked back up, many hoteliers are starting to get aggressive again, making it vital that their cancellation policies are “crystal clear” to guests at the time of booking, Roberts said.

“Guests are looking for clarity and certainty, and when they're shopping for a room, they don't want to read a three-page description of what they're getting,” he said. “They want to have things like the cancellation policy, resort fees, and parking fees spelled out upfront. That's always been the case, but it's more pronounced now.”

SELF-SERVE EVERYTHING

Roberts points to a recent study by Zebra Global Hospitality that found that 70% of guests want to use their smartphone to speed up the check-in process and requests for services. If guests want more towels or toiletries, or have questions about amenities, they want to be able to handle those issues quickly on their phones using either QR codes displayed in their rooms, a smartphone app, or the hotel's website, he said.

“If I need bedding for a fold-out bed, I should be able to open the app, hit a few buttons, and have it show up,” Roberts said. “What I don't want is to go to the front desk and wait in line for someone to help me. It should be trivially easy. Guests' expectations are higher now because other industries are actually delivering on that, and the challenge for the hotel industry is to move rapidly in that direction in terms of ease of use.”



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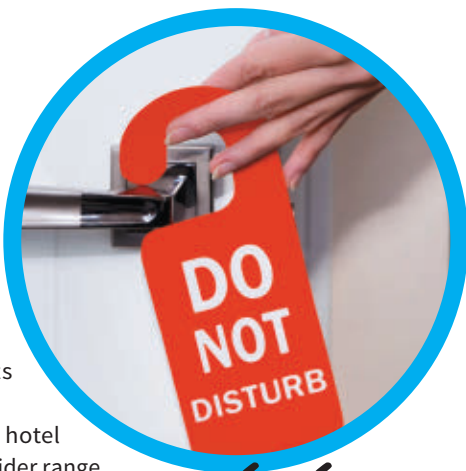
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LACK OF INTEREST IN ROOM SERVICE

The rapid adoption of food-delivery apps such as Uber Eats, Grubhub, and DoorDash has made it harder for hotel room service to compete in terms of menu options, speed of delivery and cost, Roberts said.

In most cities and towns, hotel guests now have access to a wider range of food options from local establishments with positive online reviews. In response, some hotels are making it easy for guests to order outside food by placing information about local restaurants in guest rooms. Placards in rooms display QR codes that can be scanned to access menus and to order online.

Last year, Grubhub made news by inking a deal with Resorts World Las Vegas to become the sole provider of food delivered to rooms or common areas such as pools. The Grubhub app knows if you're at the hotel and has custom delivery options



For hotels facing a labor shortage, rising wages, and increasing costs for food ingredients, such arrangements may offer considerable savings.”

available, according to the hospitality news outlet Skift.

For hotels facing a labor shortage, rising wages, and increasing costs for food ingredients, such arrangements may offer considerable savings. Outsourcing food delivery also allows Resorts World Las Vegas to focus on more profitable areas, such as alcohol sales at its numerous bars.

This trend also ties into the broader movement toward self-service, Roberts said. Instead of room service, guests are showing a clear preference for grab-and-go food options and convenience stores in the hotel lobby, he added.

“Room-service delivery tends to be a money loser for hotels, and it’s increasingly not even that appealing to guests, so I think we’re going to see these trends continue, and fewer and fewer hotels are going to offer actual room service,” Roberts said. “The nuance there is that if you’re at a luxury resort, you don’t want Uber Eats flying through your lobby all the time – that’s not a good look. But at most other hotels, it’s fine, and especially for select-service hotels.” ■

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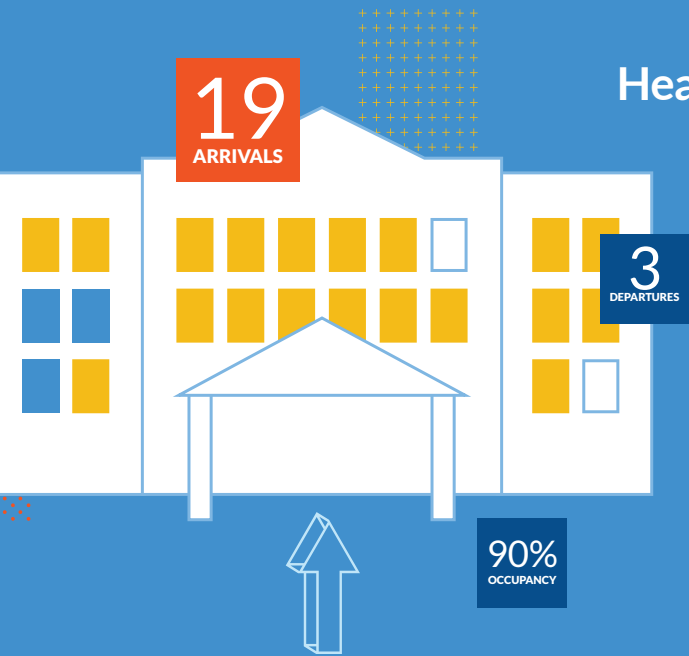
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The advertisement features a variety of utility carts and bins. On the left, there is a large cart with a brown fabric cover and a smaller black cart with shelves holding white linens. On the right, a row of colorful bins (red, purple, brown, green, yellow, blue, red, blue) sits on a wooden pallet. The background is a light, neutral color.

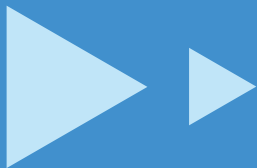


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How to elevate the guest experience without wrecking your bottom line

by LARRY and ADAM MOGELONSKY

IN THIS DAY AND AGE, there really is no excuse for being out of touch with guest needs and wants. Put yourself in their shoes.

Experience your property from hotel research and reservation, through check-in, your actual stay, room cleaning, then check-out, departure, and all the post-stay marketing. Now examine every interaction you would have with a member of the hotel team and identify ways in which they can personalize the experience.

What's important in this discussion right now is that, from the customer's perspective, they're primarily concerned with maximizing their own time. Yes, they're cognizant of

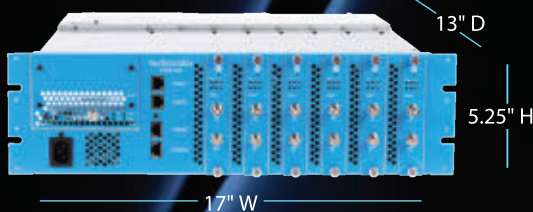
labor issues and global supply-chain hiccups, but that's the property's problem, not theirs. Even with all the post-pandemic bullwhips, they still want service like it's 2019.

So, how can you personalize the entire guest journey without incurring sizeable labor increases? Examples include a short welcome note delivered in-room upon arrival, a thank you note in the room the night before checking out, and a bounce-back coupon attached to the guest's departure folio offering an upgrade or booking discount bonus for the next stay. Three old-school ideas, to be sure, and undoubtedly you can finesse these without a large marginal cost.



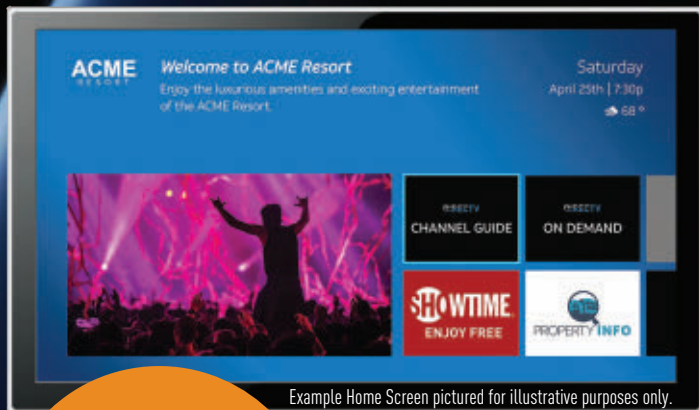
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Example Home Screen pictured for illustrative purposes only.

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ENTERTAINMENT promotional bundle price includes ENTERTAINMENT (\$7.40/room/mo.), local channels (\$1.09/room/mo.) and technology fee (\$0.60/room/mo.). Bundled rate will be listed as three separate line items on customer bill. If local channels are not available in customer market, bundled rate will be listed as two separate line items on customer bill. Additional charge of \$1.99/room/mo. in all units for AEP. 15-room minimum is req'd per property. **IN THE EVENT YOU FAIL TO MAINTAIN YOUR SUBSCRIPTION TO THE REQUIRED PROGRAMMING PACKAGES YOU AGREE TO PAY AN EARLY CANCELLATION FEE EQUAL TO \$15,000 PRORATED BY THE NUMBER OF MONTHS YOU PAID FOR THE REQUIRED PROGRAMMING PACKAGES DURING THE COMMITMENT PERIOD.** Payment is due within thirty (30) days of receipt of a notice of failure to complete the commitment period. **INSTALLATION:** Custom installation charges apply, and installation fee is based on property size. Applicable use tax adjustment may apply on retail value of installation. 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“

Memorable impressions are all part of enhancing the guest experience. Once you cover the basics, whatever you can do that is noteworthy and perhaps a little bit eccentric will lead to positive feedback and improved memorability.”

Here are six specific areas where hoteliers can focus their efforts to improve the guest experience.



AUTOMATION TO THE RESCUE

Technology offers tremendous potential for elevating the guest experience without adding to your staffing component. Today's customer is virtually glued to their mobile device. Growing numbers of properties are implementing a welcome note on a guest's mobile device immediately after check-in, greeting us and asking if there was anything that we needed.

Managed through a trained machine-learning platform with support from live agents and escalation protocols, these programs not only improve service levels, but also free up associates to personalize service in other areas.

But, technology can do much more than deal with guests once they arrive on property. In fact, technological advances should be incorporated into every aspect of the guest's journey through your ecosystem, starting with room confirmation.

Your goal is to embrace the guest before they arrive at your front desk. Apart from understanding their time of arrival and mode of transport, you can encourage additional revenue through prepurchase or

prearrival reservation of ancillary services such as dining, spa, golf, activities, or room amenities. Upselling platforms that can do this now are readily abundant. Rather than looking at this as a merely value-added sales opportunity, most guests will appreciate you identifying both the availability as well as the opportunity to simplify their arrival by making these reservations in advance. Time is more valuable than money, after all.



THINKING THROUGH ALL OPERATIONS

Many properties have a reservations center that operates on a fixed schedule – a common example would be 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. in the local time zone. But what happens when a potential guest calls outside of these hours or when the intake team is already tied up serving other customers? Often that call gets diverted to front desk, goes to voicemail, or is abandoned.

All three results are unsatisfactory from a guest-service standpoint. When the reservations call transfers to a front-office associate, that call often leads to unsatisfactory service for onsite guests at the front desk. The cascading effect is that now you have a dissatisfied customer in house, as well as one on the phone who isn't getting your full attention.

The cost-effective solution here is artificial intelligence to field basic questions hitting an interactive voice response in combination with an outsourced call center service for overflow. New conversational AI systems are so efficient and personalized that it's hard to differentiate them from a human voice. This AI technology often leads to further benefits including streamlined reservations staffing and added sales, not to mention improved customer satisfaction.



GUEST SERVICE STARTS WITH EMPLOYEE SERVICE

Have you ever heard of the saying, “Happy wife, happy life”? The same applies to your property. Happy employees lead directly to happy guests. The days of looking at your staff as expendable are over.

“Our business is simple yet complex,” noted Andrew Carey, CEO of Newport Hospitality Group, a management company with 50-plus flagged properties under management across the Eastern Seaboard. “We are people taking care of people. As leaders, we must nurture our teams with care and respect so they can be energized to take care of guests. Whether it's through

“
 Foodservice
 deserves your
 attention as, for
 most visitors,
 there is little
 differentiation
 between the
 guestroom and
 dining room
 delivery.”

training, employee events, or individual praise, we must show our great appreciation for our team members and their efforts to make every guest comfortable.”

Often, it's the little things that count. Yes, every hourly staff member on your team would immediately accept a substantial raise. That clearly isn't a financial option. More plausible are several smaller initiatives that can go a long way toward creating an environment that reduces turnover and motivates team support for your guest-enhancing activities. Set a luncheon aside each month for birthdays. Announce the celebrations and provide a cake with small gifts. Significant work anniversaries should be both announced and celebrated with a more formal event where spouses are invited. Here, gifts should reflect the individual's desires, possibly selected from a gift catalog. Support your team as you would your family.

On the subject of employee satisfaction, your back of house deserves some attention. When was the last time you entered your property through the service entrance? Does your BOH experience mirror the FOH? What is the level of cleanliness? How cluttered is it? Is there any natural light or revitalizing live plants?

When was the last time it was painted? Remember, your team is conditioned through the environment of their workplace. Respect them and the respect will carry forward through their workday.

Still on the topic of BOH, your employee cafeteria needs attention. When was the last time you had a meal there? Better yet, why not hold your next executive committee meeting there? The days of greasy fries and burgers are over. Healthier food options will be appreciated not just for the long-term health of your team, but they will benefit in the short-term by improving moods, nullifying any refined-sugar-induced postprandial slowdown and improving immune systems to reduce sick days.



SATISFACTION AND SERVICE STANDARDS

Ultimately, what is a satisfied guest? How does this correlate with star ratings? Guest satisfaction means, at a minimum, performing to the expected standard. You should be looking to do something more.

If you operate a select-service property, guest satisfaction might simply imply a quick check-in, a clean guestroom, quiet air conditioning, fast and easy-to-connect internet, a large TV with a good channel selection, ample hot water for the shower, sufficient towels, a comfy bed, morning coffee, and express check-out. Meet all these criteria and you've hit the proverbial home run. Remember, though, that this

is basic delivery. It doesn't elevate the guest's appreciation for your product as it doesn't differentiate it from your comp set.

So, you must look at little tweaks to see what you can do just a little bit better. Think of ways that technology can, for minimal marginal cost, increase guests' time so they have more of it for other experiences. Think seamless and frictionless, like over-the-top casting for your TVs or mobile keys. Even something like ensuring that your HVAC units have noise levels brought to a minimum can help by giving travelers more peace of mind.

THE KEY TO GREAT F&B

For properties that go beyond select service, examine all aspects of your operation to see how they can be improved to enhance guest satisfaction. Foodservice deserves your attention as, for most visitors, there is little differentiation between the guestroom and dining room delivery. In the mind of your customer, the restaurant can meaningfully impact the property's overall performance.

Breakfast is the critical component, and we always recommend that a bed-and-breakfast rate be part of your package offering. At a minimum, your restaurant should be able to deliver breakfast promptly with ample quantities. It costs very little extra to make sure your coffee is hot and contemporary dairy alternatives are available. Now, make coffee service memorable by selecting a local supplier who creates an exclusive blend for you, then be sure to let everyone know about it.





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Speaking of local suppliers, consider moving select items away from national food suppliers. By creating a local element to your foodservice, you further differentiate your restaurant and enhance guest satisfaction. Start small with local honey, jams, and preserves. These can be easily profiled and enhance your breakfast presentation. Re-examine your breadbasket selection to cost-effectively add further points of uniqueness.

Bars are another outlet where local suppliers can create further means to elevate the guest experience. Of course, you've already included several local beers on tap. But why stop there? Explore local distillers for gin, rye, vodka, and rum. As a subsequent step, challenge your bar staff to create custom drinks using these ingredients. It's great for guests and morale.



AUTHENTICALLY LOCAL FOR ALL

Local partnerships can go beyond food and beverage suppliers. Dedicate display cases and walls in the lobby or other public corridors to local heritage recognition. Your tourism bureau will be eager to fill the cases with memorabilia.

Guests always are interested in seeing what your area looked like several decades or a century ago. Photos are available, usually free of charge, from your city archives. Print and mount them or load them onto a

computer and display them on large monitors. Again, the thought here is that you want the guest to relish their experience with you. Even if they don't have time to peruse it all, they will feel the love.

Memorable impressions are all part of enhancing the guest experience. Once you cover the basics, whatever you can do that is noteworthy and perhaps a little bit eccentric will lead to positive feedback and improved memorability. You have the power to make these modest revisions, so why not consider some of them today? ■



Together, Larry and Adam Mogelonsky represent one of the

world's most published writing teams in hospitality, with more than a decade's worth of material online. As the partners of Hotel Mogel Consulting Limited, a Toronto-based consulting practice, Larry focuses on asset management, sales, and operations, while Adam specializes in hotel technology and marketing. Their experience encompasses properties around the world, both branded and independent, and ranging from luxury and boutique to select-service. Their work includes six books "Are You an Ostrich or a Llama?" (2012), "Llamas Rule" (2013), "Hotel Llama" (2015), "The Llama is Inn" (2017), "The Hotel Mogel" (2018) and "More Hotel Mogel" (2020). You can reach Larry at larry@hotelmogel.com or Adam at adam@hotelmogel.com to discuss hotel business challenges or to book speaking engagements.

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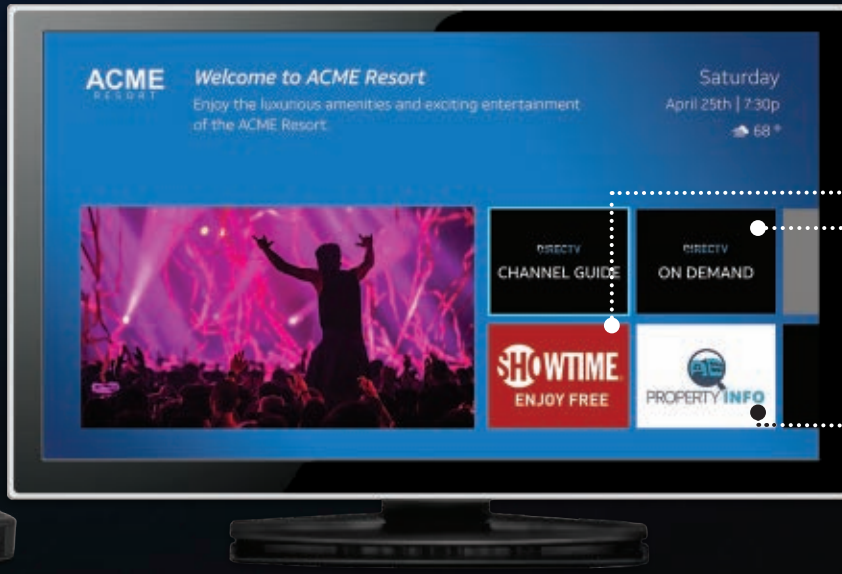
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KEEP CALM AND

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by ANDREW M. MALZAHN

EVEN FOR HISTORICALLY “GOOD” franchisees, there’s always a chance you may eventually receive a default notice from your franchisor. Because each default notice will involve different facts and circumstances, there’s no singular roadmap to follow, but here are **four general rules** that may be of assistance to you.

DON'T PANIC, BUT ACT QUICKLY

The worst thing a franchisee can do when receiving a default notice is to do nothing. Most default notices provide the franchisee with some opportunity to cure, and you don't want to wait until the end of that period to act. Franchisees too often inform their attorneys they received a default notice 29 days ago and have 30 days to cure! Do not wait until the last minute. You will want, and may need, to utilize all the time you are given to resolve the issue in an efficient and effective manner. This will require you to act almost immediately after you receive the default notice.

on

Responding to a
default notice

EXAMINE THE DEFAULT NOTICE AND PREPARE YOUR SIDE OF THE STORY

After receiving a default notice, a franchise-specific lawyer can inform you of your legal rights and assist you in determining the best path forward, which includes doing at least three things.

First, determine whether the default notice is factually accurate. For example, if the default notice alleges that you failed to pay royalties, perform a remodel, or took some other allegedly inappropriate action, is this true? Franchisors make mistakes, and if the default notice is inaccurate, you can generally make the problem go away quickly.

Second, ensure your franchisor is correctly applying the facts to the law. If the default notice states you breached a specific section in your franchise agreement, read that section of your franchise agreement. Has your franchisor correctly applied the facts to the legal obligation it claims you breached, or is there a potential defense you can raise? Likewise, if you or your hotel are in a state with a franchise act, you may have additional rights or remedies. Indeed, franchise acts in several states require franchisors to provide franchisees with advance written notice of the termination as well as a specified number of days to correct the reasons stated for the termination before termination.

Third, develop your side of the story so you can explain why you did, or could, not perform as required or why strict performance should not be required. While asking politely for leniency without any explanation of how you found yourself in default may work in some instances, a compelling story oftentimes goes a long way toward obtaining a favorable resolution.

RESPOND

After you complete this initial three-part review, the next step is to respond. Either you or your counsel – depending upon the situation – can formulate a response, which likely should eventually be communicated in writing so there is a record.

The simplest way to respond to a default notice is to “cure” the default and provide written notice of that cure. If you cure, you do not necessarily need to provide any explanation for why you were in default, although doing so usually is a good idea if you have a good reason for being in default.

Unfortunately, not everyone can cure a default within the franchisor’s required timeframe. If so, you likely should reach out immediately and begin discussing potential options with your franchisor. Again, make sure you’ve prepared your side of the story. You should describe the steps you plan to take to cure and ask your franchisor for anything you might need – e.g., more time to cure, changed terms, a new agreement, etc.. If you can obtain a resolution with your franchisor at this point, it’s important to document the resolution in a written agreement.

Franchisees should also consider whether there are any legal defenses to the default notice or other legal claims to assert against the franchisor to create leverage if your franchisor won’t voluntarily work with you. For example, if the franchise agreement – or an applicable state franchise law – requires the franchisor to act reasonably and in good faith, and your franchisor is not, raise this in your response. While many franchisees are nervous about asserting a legal argument, in sending a default notice, your franchisor is using its attorneys to attempt to enforce its legal rights. You, as a franchisee, have every right to use your own counsel to push back and to enforce your legal rights. As the saying goes, sometimes a good offense is the best defense.

PREVENT DEFAULT NOTICES BEFORE THEY ARE ISSUED

Finally, franchisees should consider whether there are proactive steps they can take before a default notice is ever issued. For example, if you know you’re going to be late refurbishing your property or are going to miss a development deadline, you or your counsel may call your franchisor before a default notice is even issued. Franchisors typically appreciate advance notice of issues before they happen and are can be willing to work with proactive franchisees. Occasionally, franchisors may agree to provide extra assistance to struggling franchisees and help them resolve the cause of the problems (e.g., cash flow issues) rather than simply addressing the symptoms (e.g., missed payments).

Receiving a default notice is never a pleasant experience and is something you should take very seriously, as the consequences for failing to respond or improperly responding are serious. Each default notice and every franchisee’s situation is unique, but, in nearly every case, you should promptly provide a copy to your counsel and begin the process of reviewing the default notice to determine the best way to respond. For everyone’s sake, don’t wait until the last minute to respond. ■

Andrew M. Malzahn is a partner at Dady & Gardner, P.A. in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Andrew has devoted his entire legal career to representing franchisees and dealers nationwide in all aspects of their relationships with franchisors and manufacturers, primarily as a litigator. For more information on Andrew and Dady & Gardner, P.A., visit www.dadygardner.com, call him at (612) 359-5481, or send an email to amalzahn@dadygardner.com.

by RUSHI SHAH

FINANCING PLAYS a major role in maximizing any commercial real estate or hotel development opportunity. Unlike stocks, real estate is an asset class that's dependent on leverage. Since the lion's share of any capital stack is funded by debt, optimizing that debt is one of the most important steps in any successful project. It also can be one of the most challenging, especially when developers move outside of SBA 504 or SBA 7(a) loans. For larger, more

institutional projects of \$20 million and higher, and projects by companies surpassing SBA limits, there typically are two paths to securing financing. The first is through a bank or related financial institution. The second is through a debt fund or private equity fund. No matter which lane a sponsor chooses, the key to a successful construction loan closing is to be realistic about metrics, projections, equity expectations, and what the market can bear in terms of rates and terms for loan proceeds.

BANK ON IT

Financial institutions willing to finance construction projects typically are a community or regional bank with a deep relationship with the sponsor. Just like a grocery store offers

Follow the clues

Deciphering the ways capital markets evaluate construction projects to deem them financing worthy

“

Since the lion's share of any capital stack is funded by debt, optimizing that debt is one of the most important steps in any successful project.”

a sale on milk to get shoppers into the store to buy additional items, most banks approach construction lending as a loss leader. They use the financing to establish new and deeper banking relationships with the sponsor, knowing they'll make money on those more-profitable ancillary products and services. Banks build this knowledge into an internal, relationship-pricing model upon which bankers rely to price each loan. Treasury-management services, amount of deposits held at the bank

(at almost no interest), and projected fees collected for wires, loans, private banking services, trusts, investment management, loan origination, and other bank services are all ways the bank can make up the lost profit on the construction loan and are used as inputs to calculate the customer's overall profitability.

For banks, undrawn commitments cost slightly lower in the form of capital charges from regulators compared to a loan that is fully drawn. This makes banks somewhat ideal to write construction loans. However, along with this preferable capital treatment, comes conservative credit guidelines. As a result, banks tend to be less aggressive on loan-to-cost. They also are hyper focused on their exit strategy and underwrite for how a project will perform once stabilized – usually two years after construction is completed. Many will extend that to year three or four (along with a bit of cushion) to determine whether a permanent loan can be achieved to pay off the construction loan. Banks rely on other professionals like an investment banker or an intermediary to validate that their loan can be paid with a CMBS or other permanent loan exits. If the sponsor's projections are too lofty and the bank can't comfortably underwrite its exit, the bank will need to require recourse or personal guarantees to get credit committee approval for the loan. More often than not, however, recourse alone is not sufficient.

Banks may also ask the sponsor to put more skin in the game in the form of additional equity.

GO PRIVATE

Non-bank private lenders are a bit more sophisticated than banks in their underwriting. These lenders typically focus on triangulating the underwriting metrics among loan-to-cost/loan-to-value, DSCR, and debt yield (net operating income divided by loan amount), to determine the loan amount. They also pay too much attention to exit underwriting and validating sponsors projections to make sure that they aren't over extended.

Although most of these loans are non-recourse, they usually carry completion guarantees. The loan is essentially full recourse during the construction period to ensure the project is completed as advertised. If the project isn't finished as promised, the sponsor is on the hook for the entire loan amount. Loans from non-bank private lenders also have a component of interest reserve built into their sources and uses. This ensures enough interest is capitalized for a smooth debt service during construction and ramp up. During construction, these loans are almost always interest-only. Since the lender isn't really making any money during the loan term (most of the interest income from the loan is a cost of the actual capital), private lenders charge origination fees. Because these lenders are strictly focused on project financials, for a more lucrative project this type of loan can yield higher loan-to-cost

and leverage and lower equity requirements. Therefore, for chunkier projects of \$40 million or higher, private loans often are the only way to make a project work.

NAVIGATING THE OPTIONS

There's an entire industry of construction financing providers that supplement sponsors' local or regional relationships. Some of these construction lenders only operate via the mortgage banking channels to make their business more efficient and leverage the intermediary's knowledge of structuring the deals and ensuring a successful payoff after the construction is complete. In almost every case for larger construction loan projects, it would be advantageous for a developer to scan the capital markets through their preferred intermediary relationships. ■



Rushi Shah is Principal and CEO of the commercial mortgage and real estate

investment banking firm and AAHOA Allied Member Mag Mile Capital. As a leader in hospitality financing, Shah specializes in structuring and placing high leverage, nonrecourse bridge and permanent debt with cash out for full- and limited-service hotels nationwide. Since joining the firm's predecessor, Aries Capital, in 2015, Shah has structured and closed hundreds of millions in financing for all property types. Shah has held previous positions at Northern Trust and has an MBA from the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business.

PERFECTLY

Tailored

Creating a custom-fit guest experience

by KAMALESH (KP) PATEL

ANECDOTALLY, IT often seems like many independent hoteliers eschewed the brand side of the industry because they want to blaze their own trail. Or maybe independents just don't play well with others. Regardless of where you fall, when it comes to addressing the guest experience, independent properties have freedoms and resources at their disposal the brands can only dream of possessing. Incidentally, by the time a brand rolls out a new program or policy, chances are it was first executed at an independent hotel.

Differences aside, though, we all have a vested interest

in ensuring we consistently monitor the evolution in guest preferences and tailor our approaches to best meet those needs. As the old saying goes, "heads in beds bring money," and guests who feel their needs aren't being met will find another bed in another hotel.

As independents, we have virtually unlimited freedom to take the flexible, smart approach to navigate our way through the evolution of the industry. To give some insight and inspire ideas, let's break it down into four key elements where guest preferences and needs are concerned.

1

EXPERIENCE

This is an indispensable aspect of our industry regardless of property location or size. Guests want to feel like they're away from home but comfortable enough to act like they are home. Adding an experience value point could act as the deciding factor for potential guests, and independent hotels often have a leg up in this department as they're more easily able to establish

unique identities. For example, creating a culture where a hotel is perceived as being supremely accommodating helps guest feel relaxed. And it doesn't cost a penny to smile. You can also train the front-desk staff to ask guests questions about their travels. Simply inquiring "How is your day going?" or "Do you have anything interesting planned for your stay?" can help staff connect with guest in a meaningful way and improve a guest's mood during their stay.

A great deal of research has been conducted on the major role colors play in affecting

human emotions. For example, blue and yellow are often associated with waking up, which can be a good option for bathrooms. A blue with a modern matte or light blue can help guests start their day in a good mood. Grey is typically associated with feelings of calm or relaxation, so it's a prime candidate for bedrooms to enable guests to feel comfortable and relaxed. A flat, light grey can bring light in during the day but help ease the guest at night for sleep.

TECHNOLOGY

This vital piece of the puzzle can improve the overall guest experience while providing a budgetary argument for implementing new technology-based tools and services. For example, most PMS systems today have mobile check-in giving the guest this luxury feel without the extra cost of a front desk. Using economical low-commission and user-friendly online travel booking engines helps the guest feel no time was wasted in reserving their stay. Many new OTAs and PMS platforms have two-way communication capabilities so guests shouldn't have to call or go to the front desk. They can communicate directly from their application giving them a dedicated concierge.



As the old saying goes, "heads in beds bring money," and guests who feel their needs aren't being met will find another bed in another hotel."

BUDGET-FRIENDLY

While greater rate flexibility can serve as a key weapon in our arsenal, we must be exceedingly prudent when adding new expenses for experience so we don't sabotage ourselves in the process. For example, when all the brands installed in-room coffee makers it became the new norm overnight and vendors immediately started selling these products in bulk. Generally speaking, the smart option for independent properties is to adopt the new amenity at a measured pace, gradually adding it to the business as needed. So, instead of buying coffeemakers, utensils, etc. for all your rooms, buy them for a small handful of rooms and sell those room at a premium. This allows you to monitor the demand and profit at a slower pace while still being budget friendly on the other room options and adding value to the guest experience.

While we, as independent hoteliers, have a wealth of freedom at our disposal – especially when it comes to catering to evolving guest needs by working on value-added elements like experience, technology, and being budget friendly – we have to be smart while we continue blazing our own trail.



AAHOA Secretary Kamallesh (KP) Patel is the CEO of Aarav Hospitality, LLC, and AKS Hospitality, LLC.

Skip the balancing act

Exploring the benefits a BMS provides in managing a hotel and its hot water

by DALE SCHMITZ

HOTELS ARE COMPOSED of many moving parts to provide guests with the most comfortable and positive experience possible. To provide the best on-demand comforts, the maintenance and management of a hotel's building functions, such as light, heat, or hot water, is of the utmost importance. And with many appliances today being compatible with building management

systems (BMS), controlling a hotel's electrical and mechanical equipment has become a much simpler process. The use of the integrated system creates a holistic approach to hotel management, where learning about guests' data usage via a computer-based control system can lead to a well-functioning hotel.

When looking specifically at controlling and monitoring hot water, for example, it's a highly important part of any business, especially as it's needed to keep a hotel's doors open. There are many offerings for BMS-compatible water heaters, but selecting the right one, such as high-efficiency tankless water heaters, to supply guests with immediate hot water can also provide your business with long-term savings.

MONEY DOWN THE DRAIN

Imagine a guest waking up in the morning, turning on the shower, and waiting and waiting for hot water. This provides an inconvenience to the guest, but the time guests spend waiting for the water to heat up is money running straight down the drain.

Many tankless units offer precise load tracking, so the amount of energy consumed is directly correlated to the amount of water heated at any given time vs. having to heat and re-heat stored water with boilers and tanks. In the case of hotels, multiple tankless water heaters can be installed to provide redundancy. If one tankless water heater is at capacity, this means the next tankless unit will be turned on to provide guests with the hot water they need.

There are variations in the number of units serviceable by one BMS. For example, some more-robust offerings can connect up to 24 units and provide 4.8 million BTUs. An interlinked system like this provides the capability to monitor peak hot-water usage throughout the day. And the usage data that flows in from the BMS allows building managers to meet high demand by monitoring flow rates, operation hours, and more. All these management capabilities ensure your guests have immediate, never-ending hot water.

SHOW ME THE MONEY

Combining as many of the building’s functioning elements into a centralized command system helps manage peak energy demands but also provides cost-efficiencies that save money in the long run. With BMS-compatible tankless water heaters, management can remotely enable and disable units, monitor temperatures, output functions, and receive notifications on any unit errors.

Through all these BMS capabilities, management can determine the appropriate number of tankless units to turn on or off, thereby saving energy and reducing water waste. With a simple error code, the

building maintenance team has a way to quickly locate and diagnose any potential issue with a tankless water heater. And error notifications provide management with the ability to keep the building’s equipment in optimal performance, thus creating longevity of the product and helping hotels reduce the costs associated with replacing or repairing old water heaters, which is often seen with tank units.

In terms of component integration, whether it’s maintaining generators, lighting, heating, ventilation, air conditioning, or hot water, a BMS provides exactly what is needed for an integrated approach to saving money and giving the guest a positive experience. ■

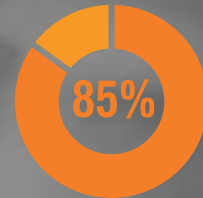


Dale Schmitz is senior marketing manager at Rinnai America Corporation with primary responsibilities for product and service development and launch, strategic planning, market research, advertising and brand management. Dale has been with Rinnai for nearly five years and prior to that worked in marketing and business development for Marvin Windows and Doors and Steelcase Office Furniture. Dale is a graduate of the University of Cincinnati with a bachelor’s degree in economics.



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AAHOA Lifetime Member Prakash Saraf spends life serving the Baltimore homeless community

A **AAHOA LIFETIME MEMBER**
Prakash Saraf knows a thing or two about caring. He works hard to provide exceptional customer service and guest experiences to travelers staying at his hotel in Baltimore. But when he's not busy overseeing hotel operations, Saraf dedicates a huge part of his time to serving his community.

FRIENDS OF SPARSH OPENS TO COMBAT HOMELESSNESS

As founder and president of Friends of Sparsh, a nonprofit organization serving the homeless, Saraf makes essential items like food, clothing, personal hygiene items, transportation, and shelter available to people living on the streets.

Saraf's passion for combating homelessness in Baltimore led him to start Friends of Sparsh in 2018, alongside his son, Neev. The charity created an organized and structured system to channel more help and resources to many more individuals.

"About 13 years ago, I started volunteering at Elizabeth House, a local nonprofit food pantry and soup kitchen, where I learned more about people living on the streets," Saraf said. "I realized there are people who are homeless living in this country. They don't have a place to go. That opened my eyes, and I felt called to give back. So, that's how I embarked on this journey to create hope for homeless people and families."



THE CURRENT IMPACT

Today, Friends of Sparsh provides meals to local shelters, sponsors food banks, and helps transitional families who move on to permanent housing with household items and furniture. Since the charity started nearly four years ago, it has provided about 424,000 meals to the homeless community, including meals in partnership with other shelters.

Amid a two-year pandemic, Friends of Sparsh continued to fight homelessness and hunger.

"When the pandemic started, many volunteers did not feel comfortable leaving their houses. So, for two years,

I picked up the hot meals from the volunteers' homes, then drove 40 miles to 60 miles to drop off the food at different shelters in the Baltimore area every day," Saraf added.

Saraf also knows the homeless residents face additional challenges during the Maryland winter season. Through Friends of Sparsh, last year Saraf and his team gave out about 200 tents, blankets, and sleeping bags, in addition to blankets, socks, gloves, and bus passes to help individuals in need



AAHOA Lifetime Member Prakash Saraf (L) and his son, Neev Saraf (R), deliver furniture to people moving from shelter to permanent housing and drop off hot meals to local shelters.



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Neev Saraf drops off sleeping bags and tents.

stay comfortable and warm during the cold nights.

In two to three years, Saraf plans to open a food truck so he can travel from shelter to shelter, cooking and handing out free hot meals.

Serving the community has created a more profound sense of empathy. Saraf shares that we can be so quick to label a person living on the streets as lazy and not wanting to work. But often, individuals face difficult circumstances and need someone to show nonjudgmental care.

“We all make mistakes. As hotel owners, we make business mistakes, but then we get support from our family and organizations like AAHOA, and we bounce back. Friends of Sparsh restores hope to those not as fortunate in Baltimore,” Saraf described.

OUTSTANDING RECOGNITION

Saraf has been recognized for his efforts to drive real change in people’s lives. In 2019, he received the Mayor Office Award for Outstanding Community Service from former Baltimore Mayor Jack Young. Earlier this summer, Maryland Governor Larry Hogan, Congressman Dutch Ruppersberger, Maryland’s Legislative Assembly, and Baltimore County recognized Saraf for his decade-long service.

Saraf lives out the true meaning of hospitality. That’s why in 2020, AAHOA honored Saraf with the “Outreach Award for Philanthropy.” The association believes we all can make the communities where we do business better and stronger.

For more information, visit friendsofparsh.org. ■

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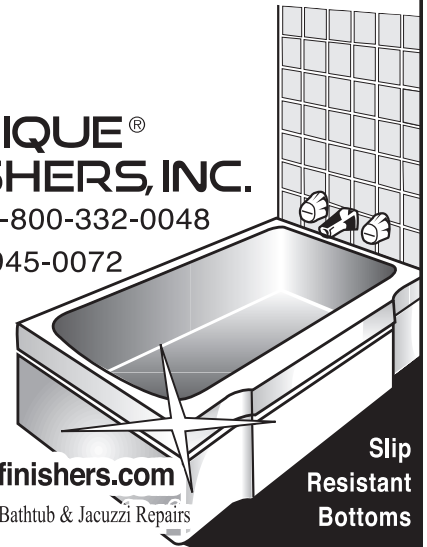
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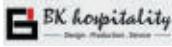
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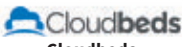
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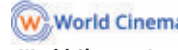
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AAHOA MEMBERS IN ACTION



AAHOA Chairman Neal Patel with female hoteliers at the Mid South Regional Conference & Trade Show.



AAHOA and HFTP successfully co-hosted a Young Professionals reception in Orlando, FL.



The Board explored new ideas and solutions at the May Board meeting.



Left to Right: AAHOA Lifetime Member Maulesh (MP) Patel, AAHOA Vice Chairman Bharat Patel, U.S. Senator Catherine Cortez Masto, and AAHOA Chairman Nishant (Neal) Patel discussed legislative actions to strengthen the franchisee-franchisor relationship.



Left to Right: AAHOA Alabama Local Ambassador Ashok (Alan) Patel, Alabama Restaurant and Hospitality Association President & CEO Mindy Bradford Hanan, and AAHOA Alabama Regional Director Sanjay Patel discussed protecting Alabama hoteliers.



[L-R] AAHOA Lifetime Member Piyush Patel, Choice Hotels International President & CEO Patrick Pacious, AAHOA Lifetime Member Jan Gautam, AAHOA Treasurer Miraj Patel at the 2022 Choice Hotels International Owners Conference.



AAHOA President & CEO Laura Lee Blake, Mid Atlantic Regional Director Mahendra (MZ) Patel, and more than 25 AAHOA Ambassadors and Members gathered in Trenton, New Jersey to support Assembly Bill 1958.



AAHOA President & CEO Laura Lee Blake, Greater Los Angeles Area Regional Director Naresh (ND) Bhakta, local AAHOA Members, and industry leaders spoke in front of the Los Angeles City Council in opposition to an anti-industry city ordinance.

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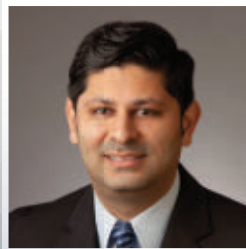


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