



Sustainability & Environmental Issues in the Hospitality Industry

April 16, 2019 – Ocean Shores, Washington

Event Wrap-up and Review

Attendee
Ranked

Rank your top 5 business challenges: (with #1 being your top challenge)

#3

Water usage -- This is a big one! Many resorts and hotels have a lot of water waste from long guest showers and huge pools. In restaurants, they use water for dishes and often the machines are not efficient at saving water.

Energy usage -- This impacts all organizations in the hospitality industry. This includes the electricity of restaurants, hotels, and resorts, as well as the gas used by tourism, from ski lodges to beach front resorts, and more.

Food waste -- Often foods are not reusable and are then thrown away. This creates problems for the environment, both in the action of throwing out the food and the demand it places on the environment to produce more.

Pollution -- This is an issue anytime there are high outputs of oil, natural gas, gasoline, or coal. Whether these are used for energy or they are used for transportation, the amount of pollution caused by organizations in hospitality can be a big problem.

#1

Garbage/waste -- This becomes important because items that are not recyclable will eventually clog up the environment and create trash. Anything from cups to the way a company prints agendas and maps, can either increase or decrease the trash produced, which can litter the environment.

#2

Education – Whether for staff or guests, education into the value of sustainable practices and the logistics of enabling their successful participation is a challenge. From signage to policy to incentives, figuring out how to “Lead that horse to water – and making s/he ‘drink’ (from the Kool-Aid of environmental suitability)” is an ongoing challenge.

Thoughts on Environmental Sustainability in the Hospitality Industry:

People are becoming increasingly sensitive to environmental and social issues. A respondent said that this "has to be considered in branding, but beware of green-washers: consumers are now well-aware that window-dressing exists, and they will not buy it."

“Social responsibility is a moral and an economic obligation.”

The impact of global warming can today be considered a major risk for both corporations which may lose in revenues and profits and society as a whole. It is thus critical for governments but even more so for corporations to become more sustainable: "not just green, but real sustainable business models".

OCL's approved "GeoTourism code of Good Conduct" <https://www.olympicculinaryloop.com/blog/2019/01/29/good-news>

Cases for corporate social responsibility (CSR) addressing environmental sustainability include:

Cost savings - Cost is always a driving factor and reducing operating costs provides a compelling incentive for hoteliers. Cost reduction and efficiency strategies can be achieved by investing in better operational procedures and emerging environmental technologies. Many hoteliers now employ a variety of strategies to reduce, reuse, and recycle waste. Other emerging areas include sustainable procurement, indoor environmental quality (focusing on air quality and chemical/cleaning product use), and staff training programs (which can facilitate improved performance and higher levels of employee satisfaction/retention).

Economic incentives - Our government has enacted a variety of economic incentives to encourage the development of environmental retrofits and the construction of “green” buildings. These benefits include tax write-offs, financial grants, insurance premium discounts and expedited regulatory permitting.

Regulatory affairs - Current environmental regulations targeted toward the hotel sector are largely focused on facility operations such as storm-water management, hazardous materials handling, and environmental health and safety. However, a wide range of present and future legislative activities will impact hotel design, construction methods and operational approaches.

Guest experience - A greater number of hoteliers understand that investments in environmental technology can have a direct positive impact on guest experience. Where the rubber meets the road, however, is what the guest thinks and feels about their hotel experience. More than ever, guests want to stay at properties that don’t feel like hotels—they want an “at-home” feeling. Lighting, furnishings, cleaners and other front-of-house products combine to leave an impression with the customer, which can affect both occupancy and ADR.

Corporate brand image - Adopting a sustainable corporate culture can provide a distinct advantage in terms of attracting and retaining talent. According to Shelton Group, 55% of the U.S. workforce would choose to work for a socially responsible company, even if they made less money—that number jumps to 76% for Millennials. Furthermore, 70%—83% of Millennials—would be more loyal to a company that helps them contribute to social and environmental issues. These statistics make it clear that sustainability—and a company’s commitment to it—is top of mind for employees.

Brand image - Most major hotel brands have incorporated some level of sustainability platform into their brand definition. Several brands have been repositioned to cater to a younger generation of more environmentally and socially active customers. But companies really need to put their plans into action: According to Forbes, younger generations “take pride in knowing which brands aren’t just talking the talk, but are walking the walk.” Having sustainable business practices will lead to an enhanced reputation and brand image, which translates to great hotel profits in the long term.

Success Stories!

Doubletree Portland, Oregon - Centrally located near the Oregon Convention Center and Rose Garden Arena, the Portland, Oregon Doubletree Hotel & Executive Meeting Center-Lloyd Center leads the Portland hotel industry with its environmentally sound green practices.

In addition to an extensive recycling program, including the recycling of over 90% of all cardboard, paper, plastic and glass, the Doubletree uses fully compostable, corn-based plastic products, uses no styrofoam products and purchases in bulk to reduce packaging waste.

The hotel also realized a 33% reduction in energy units consumed over a five-year period, thanks to various water- and energy-conservation programs, such as closing entire guest floors during low occupancy, purchasing CFL light bulbs and implementing programs to turn off lights when not in use.

Marriott Green Meeting Alternatives - With a green meeting policy already in place, Marriott added to its environmental strategy to continue decreasing its eco-footprint. The average three-day meeting at a Marriott hotel attended by 1,000 people can create more than 12 tons of trash, use 200,000 kilowatts of power, and consume 100,000 gallons of water. To help counter these numbers, Marriott launched a number of new initiatives, including:

- The use of 100 percent post-consumer fiber writing pads;
- Purchasing pens made from recycled and biodegradable materials
- Placing recycling containers in or near meeting rooms in many of the hotels;
- Setting meeting rooms with water service in pitchers or coolers rather than plastic bottles;
- Using lunch containers made of recycled content and biodegradable cutlery kits and napkins;
- Using organic, sustainable and natural F&B options in many hotels;
- Offering the option for organic flowers;
- Offering linen-less banquet buffet tables made of 49% recycled aluminum and 99% recyclable;
- Donating to programs that gives food to America's Second Harvest's network of food banks.

Next Steps:

1. Identify. Pick 1-3 challenges.
2. Start! ("This week I will...", "Within 30 (or 90 days), we will...")
3. Measure – Review, Refine, Repeat

Resources:

"The Importance of Sustainability in the Hospitality Industry" By Tracy Stottler, June 11, 2018 In the trade journal "Hospitality"

<https://www.danacomunications.com/importance-of-sustainability-in-the-hospitality-industry/>

AHLA's Green Guidelines: Recycling Program primer,

<https://www.ahla.com/resources/green-guidelines-recycling-programs>

AHLA's Green Products & Programs listing

<https://www.ahla.com/resources/green-products-programs>

"There's a great future in plastics (recycling) - Chemical companies turn to microwaves, enzymes, to create virgin resin", By JACK KASKEY, Tuesday, April 9, 2019, Bloomberg News

<https://www.sfgate.com/business/article/These-companies-are-trying-to-reinvent-recycling-13753361.php>

2018 Olympic Peninsula Tourism Summit – including Learning Lab notes *"Practical Steps for Sustainable Tourism on the Olympic Peninsula"*, <https://olympicpeninsula.org/tourism-summit/>