

Non-Smoking Independent Hotels Love Their FreshStay(R) Links

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The non-smoking trend in lodging is growing up and is quickly growing out. As the number of guests seeking better indoor air quality in lodging soars, the range of their expectations is increasing as well.

According to the latest J.D. Power and Associates 2006 North America Hotel Guest Satisfaction Index Study, '79 percent of hotel customers prefer a smoke-free environment that exceeds the boundaries of their guestrooms.'

Independent hotels can commit to this emerging market by becoming smoke free and joining www.FreshStay.com's online network of 100-percent nonsmoking properties. **FreshStay(R)** allows travelers to search for smoke-free options that meet their needs. By designating themselves as smoke free, independent hotels can get a competitive edge online.

'Independent properties are always seeking ways to enhance awareness on-line and keep guests coming back. Going 100-percent smoke-free and joining **FreshStay(R)** is just the ticket for these types of properties,' said Ray Burger, president of Saint Charles-based Pineapple Hospitality, and creator of **FreshStay(R)**.

Clean Air!

If you ask Stefan Mühle, General Manager of The Orchard Hotel in San Francisco, why the independent property decided to be smoke-free from Day 1, his response will total just two words: 'Clean Air!'

'Our valued guests and associates have embraced our decision to be 100-percent smoke-free from Day 1,' Mühle said. 'Their responses across the board have been extremely positive. There has been no 'push back' whatsoever.'

The Orchard Hotel's housekeeping department is one group in particular that really appreciates the clean indoor air environment.

'Naturally, there are less irritants, and the rooms are easier to clean and stay fresh longer,' Mühle added. 'And, our housekeeping department consistently scores very high with guests.'

The property's owners find significant ROI in the hotel's ability to instantly differentiate itself, and command higher guest satisfaction and repeat business and referrals due to its smoke-free status.

'Being smoke-free also helps us protect our assets - our guests and employees as well as the building and its contents,' Mühle added. 'The potential business we lose by not accommodating those smokers who feel they must stay in smoking rooms is far less than the money we save by not having to deep clean our drapes, curtains, carpets, etc., so frequently.'

Mühle said smokers will stay at The Orchard Hotel.

'Smokers like and appreciate our clean air atmosphere,' he added. 'They just smoke outside.'

When it opens in October, The Orchard Hotel's sister property - The Orchard Garden Hotel - will be the Golden State's first hotel built to the nationally accepted standards for green buildings developed by the U.S. Green Building Council. The 86-room hotel followed the Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System to earn the coveted LEED certification. The independent boutique property's other green practices will include chemical-free cleaning products, recycled paper, soy-based inks, in-room energy management systems and, last but certainly not least, a 100-percent tobacco-free environment.

Mühle said being connected to such a sister property, and other smoke-free lodging destinations via **FreshStay(R)**, is a boon to independent-minded properties such as The Orchard Hotel.

Dynamic Duo

TradeWinds Island Resorts has two 100-percent smoke-free properties on the island of St. Pete Beach that are members of **FreshStay(R)**: TradeWinds Island Grand, a four-diamond, family friendly resort, and TradeWinds Sandpiper Hotel & Suites, which is more intimate and designed for tranquility.

TradeWinds Sandpiper went non-smoking Jan. 1, 2006, after completing a \$12 million renovation. TradeWinds Island Grand went completely smoke-free Aug. 1, 2006.

'We went smoke-free for a number of reasons, but I think the most-important one is the wear and tear we were incurring in our smoking rooms,' said Tara LaSalla, Internet administrator of TradeWinds Island Resorts. 'We also went smoke-free because so few people nowadays choose to stay in smoking rooms. Approximately 90 percent of all requests are for non-smoking rooms.'

'Lastly, habits have changed,' LaSalla added. 'People are trying to lead healthier lifestyles, and parents want their children to have healthy lives as well.'

LaSalla said the marketplace welcomes the moves.

'There are many individuals who have some sort of respiratory illness, and they are very glad to have non-smoking rooms available' she added. 'Parents who have children with asthma without a doubt are the most-appreciative of our smoke-free environment.'

'Housekeepers and other employees also absolutely appreciate our fresh air environment,' LaSalla said. 'Cleaning and maintaining smoking rooms can be very time and labor intensive. And, just like our guests, our employees truly appreciate not having to breathe in the stale air of smoke anymore.'

What's the ROI?

'I do believe we will net more repeat stays and referrals because we're smoke-free,' LaSalla said. 'Being a completely smoke-free property is a competitive differentiator. Currently, we are the only two properties on this island that are completely smoke-free.'

Why connect with the **FreshStay(R)** network?

'The benefits of participating in an online directory such as **FreshStay(R)** are numerous,' LaSalla added. 'This is a great way to receive positive exposure about your properties. We are seen as leaders and innovators, instead of followers.'

'**FreshStay(R)** also is a great way to promote a healthy lifestyle for our guests,' she said. 'Our goal is for all guests to have great experiences, as well as healthy, smoke-free stays.'

The Honeymooners

The Golden Arrow Hotel in Lake Placid, N.Y., debated for about a year whether to go 100-percent nonsmoking - but then a couple gave the hotel a kick in the pants over to the smoke-free side of life.

'In 2001, this very sweet honeymoon couple stayed with us and complained about a smoky smell in their room,' said Jennifer Holderied, the independent property's owner and director marketing. 'The room did in fact smell. We cleaned it, shampooed the carpet and aired out the room, but the smell persisted. We couldn't figure out where it was coming from. Finally, we discovered that the people staying in the room directly below the honeymooners had been smoking an unearthly amount.'

'The room below the honeymooners literally was cloudy when you entered it, and the smell was ungodly,' she added. 'We ended up having to replace all of the furniture and carpeting. It was disgusting. That was the straw that broke the camel's back. We went smoke-free Jan. 1, 2002.'

Holderied said 100-percent of employees and 98-percent of guests are 'thrilled' and completely behind the property's smoke-free policy.

'We're pretty strict - you have to be 50 feet from the building to light up - but even most non-smokers are pleased with the policy,' she added.

The property offers a smoking cessation program for employees.

'After all, you can't boast the fact that you are a smoke-free resort, and then have a maid who reeks of cigarette smoke cleaning your guestrooms,' she said.

Holderied said the window of opportunity is closing on this competitive differentiator.

'When we first went smoke-free, it was a huge differentiator because we were the only hotel in the area to do so,' she said. 'Now, many of our primary competitors have followed suit. The good news is because we were the first to do so, people think of us first when they are looking for a smoke-free resort in Lake Placid.'

About Pineapple Hospitality

Headquartered in Saint Charles, Mo., Pineapple Hospitality(TM) is committed to providing 'Fresh Ideas for Hospitality.' Pineapple's solutions include products, programs and services that Enhance Guest Satisfaction, Reduce Environmental Impact and Increase Profitability. For more information, visit www.FreshStay.com, www.PineappleHospitality.net or call Ray Burger at 636-922-2285.

Smoking 101

œ Cigarette smoking has been identified as the most-important source of preventable morbidity and premature mortality worldwide.

œ Smoking-related diseases claim an estimated 438,000 American lives each year, including those affected indirectly, such as babies born prematurely due to prenatal maternal smoking and victims of secondhand exposure to tobacco's carcinogens.

œ Smoking costs the United States more than \$167 billion each year in health-care costs including \$92 billion in mortality-related productivity losses and \$75.5 billion in excess medical expenditures.¹

œ Cigarette smoke contains over 4,800 chemicals, 69 of which are known to cause cancer. Smoking is directly responsible for approximately 90 percent of lung cancer deaths and approximately 80 to 90 percent of COPD (emphysema and chronic bronchitis) deaths.

œ About 8.6 million people in the U.S. have at least one serious illness caused by smoking. That means that for every person who dies of a smoking-related disease, there are 20 more people who suffer from at least one serious illness associated with smoking.

œ Among current smokers, chronic lung disease accounts for 73 percent of smoking-related conditions. Even among smokers who have quit chronic lung disease accounts for 50 percent of smoking-related conditions.

œ Smoking is also a major factor in coronary heart disease and stroke; may be causally related to malignancies in other parts of the body; and has been linked to a variety of other conditions and disorders, including slowed healing of wounds, infertility, and peptic ulcer disease. For the first time, the Surgeon General includes pneumonia in the list of diseases caused by smoking.

œ Smoking in pregnancy accounts for an estimated 20 to 30 percent of low-birth weight babies, up to 14 percent of preterm deliveries, and some 10 percent of all infant deaths. Even apparently healthy, full-term babies of smokers have been found to be born with narrowed airways and curtailed lung function.

œ Neonatal health-care costs attributable to maternal smoking in the U.S. have been estimated at \$366 million per year, or \$704 per maternal smoker.

œ Smoking by parents is also associated with a wide range of adverse effects in their children, including exacerbation of asthma, increased frequency of colds and ear infections, and sudden infant death syndrome. Secondhand smoke causes an estimated 150,000 to 300,000 cases of lower respiratory tract infections in children less than 18 months of age, resulting in 7,500 to 15,000 annual hospitalizations.

œ In 2004, an estimated 44.5 million, or 20.9 percent of, adults were current smokers. The annual prevalence of smoking has declined 40 percent since 1965.

œ Males tend to have significantly higher rates of smoking prevalence than females. In 2004, 23.4 percent of males currently smoked compared to 18.5 percent of females.

œ Secondhand smoke involuntarily inhaled by nonsmokers from other people's cigarettes is classified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a known human (Group A) carcinogen, responsible for approximately 3,000 lung cancer deaths annually in U.S. nonsmokers.

œ Workplaces nationwide are going smoke-free to provide clean indoor air and protect employees from the life-threatening effects of secondhand smoke. Nearly 70 percent of the U.S. workforce worked under a smoke free policy in 1999, but the percentage of workers protected varies by state, ranging from a high of 83.9 percent in Utah to 48.7 percent in Nevada.

œ Employers have a legal right to restrict smoking in the workplace, or implement a totally smoke-free workplace policy. Exceptions may arise in the case of collective bargaining agreements with unions.

œ Nicotine is an addictive drug, which when inhaled in cigarette smoke reaches the brain faster than drugs that enter the body intravenously. Smokers not only become physically addicted to nicotine; they also link smoking with many social activities, making smoking a difficult habit to break.

œ In 2003, an estimated 45.9 million adults were former smokers. Of the current 44.5 million smokers, more than 32 million persons reported they wanted to quit smoking completely.

œ Nicotine replacement products can help relieve withdrawal symptoms people experience when they quit smoking. Nicotine patches, nicotine gum and nicotine lozenges are available over-the-counter, and a nicotine nasal spray and inhaler, as well as a non-nicotine pill, are currently available by prescription.

œ Nicotine replacement therapies are helpful in quitting when combined with a behavior change program such as the American Lung Association's Freedom From Smoking (FFS), which addresses psychological and behavioral addictions to smoking and strategies for coping with urges to smoke.

Source: American Lung Association, March 2006

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