



**January 2017**

# Hospitality Hotline

**Connecting the industry through  
Advocacy, Education and Partnerships**

*News from...*  
**THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
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Applied Equipment Solutions

**Worcester Economic Summit**

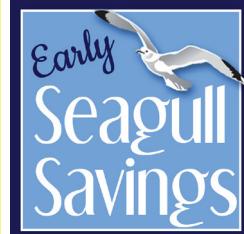
If you didn't have a chance to attend the Worcester Economic Summit, you missed an entertaining and enlightening presentation from Economist Anirban Basu. Fortunately for Ocean City, he stated that consumers are contributing significantly to the economy's growth and therefore, lodging, restaurant and retail stand to gain from this. For the full presentation, click [here](#).

**Welcome Back MD's Promo**

Now that schools will begin after Labor Day, the Board voted to work with the City Tourism office to develop a special promotion to thank Maryland residents. More details are forthcoming, but the premise is anyone showing a MD license the last week before Labor Day will be able to get special deals and discounts. Stay tuned!

**Roundtables Coming Soon**

Our Association has always been about connecting people and sharing ideas. So, a couple new roundtables are being planned. By connecting, communicating and collaborating we will help each other succeed and we will also help the destination continue to grow as a premier resort. A GM roundtable for best practices will be held in late March early April as well as learning more about terrorism awareness.



## **Free Promotion- Seagull Savings**

Last winter the Town of Ocean City tourism office ran a successful campaign to encourage early bookings. This promotion was named "Early Seagull Savings" and it is coming back! Advertising will begin on January 16 and run through March 5 encouraging visitors to book their summer stay before March 31st to get the best deals. If

you haven't already signed up and you'd like to participate in this free promotion, please send us your offer. Make sure you include any black-out dates and/or restrictions. These deals will be posted on [www.OCVisitor.com](#) Deals page as well as [www.ococean.com](#) Deals link.

## **Sara Evans to perform in OCMD**

Multi-platinum selling country singer and song writer Sara Evans is coming to the OC Performing Arts Center **Friday, February 10th**, show time 8pm. Sara Evans has been called "one of the most compelling vocalists of her generation." She's had five #1 songs, including "Suds in the Bucket," "A Real Fine Place to Start," and "A Little Bit Stronger," four others appearing in the top 10, two #1 Billboard Country Albums and numerous awards. Her newest single "Slow Me Down" is her biggest first week Country radio added single ever and was named by Billboard as one of the "10 Best Country singles."



Sara Evans will be joined on stage by special guest Jackie Lee. With his hits "She Does," "Headphones" and his newest single "Getting Over You" adding to this exciting show.

Make plans now to enjoy an evening of country music you won't want to miss. For tickets visit the OC Box Office located inside the Convention Center on 40th street, call Ticketmaster 1-800-551-SEAT or click the link below. For additional information call 1-800-OC-OCEAN.



## **Also Coming Soon...**

Under the Streetlamp delivers an electrifying evening of classics from the American Radio Songbook, bringing their unique blend of tight harmonies and slick dance moves to your favorite Doo Wop, Motown and old time Rock 'N' Roll hits. Under the Streetlamp is composed of former leading cast members of the Tony Award winning sensation Jersey Boys proving that retro never sounded so now. **Thursday, May 18, 2017** at 8pm in the Ocean City MD Performing Arts Center.



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## OCHMRA SPOTLIGHT: JAYNE SAWYER

Last month, you got to read a little about our Association, now we'd like to let you get to know a little more about the faces behind the scenes. We'll start with the fabulously friendly voice behind the phone - Jayne Sawyer.

After vacationing in OC as a child, Jayne moved here from Baltimore in 1973. Her first job was as a waitress at Bob Harman's (Shawn's father) Sea Scape Motel. She went on to meet a good 'ol local boy, Pete Sawyer, who was born and raised here and they ended up being married. Jayne went on to work at Nationwide Insurance until a computer automated her job, at which time she joined 2nd National Bank as a loan processor, mortgage officer, loan originator and Assistant Vice President until it was shut down. Advertising was in her blood and many of you may remember her as your sales person with the old Eastern Shore Times, Resorter Magazine, MD Coast Press or the Beachcomber. Jayne has been a part of the OCHMRA family since May of 2003. In her free time, she enjoys crafting, painting glassware and making wreaths.

Welcome back to Ocean City **Terry Luzius**, who is the new Banquet Manager at the **Dunes Manor**. Welcome to **Alex Hambleton**, who is now part of the team at **Vista Graphics**. A big congratulations to **Kevin Hughes, Sysco**, who won the companies Presidential Award. Congrats to **Brooks Trimper, Trimper's Rides**, and **Jeannette Beatley, Sysco**, on the birth of their son, **Maxwell Garratt Trimper**. Welcome **Devanna Young**, who is joining **Real Hospitality** as a revenue optimization consultant. Welcome to **Jamie McNelley**, who is on the sales team at **New Wave**.



### Condolences

Condolences to **Kevin Hughes, Sysco** and **Kyle Hughes, Next Wave Studios**, on the loss of mother and grandmother, Winfred Hughes.



## THE DISH: Restaurant industry trends

We are happy to announce that once again, the State is supporting our efforts to promote FeBREWary as Craft Beer Lovers month. This year, however, they have added \$25,000 to promote the effort.

Last year, the Shore dominated the State's site with events, hotel packages, and more. This is a Maryland effort, but Shore Craft Beer will promote ALL craft beer related events and activities in our region.

We are working to get those bars, restaurants, breweries, and hotels that see the value in our promoting this region as a craft beer destination to help us make the Shore dominate this February tourism effort once again.



Shore Craft Beer will be promoting "FeBREWary" stories:

- Love stories that revolved around craft beer
- Kitchy beer names with a love or hate theme
- Events featuring craft beer
- Food and beer pairing events
- Love On Tap at Seacrets - an event co-produced by Shore Craft Beer and Seacrets. (breweries need to let me know if you want to participate.)

The Ocean City Office of Tourism as well as the Maryland Counties will also be promoting these events and activities. We will ensure that everybody gets information including the State.

Please send anything you are planning to do in February as quickly as you can get it together. The State wants information in EARLY January.

Thanks so much and Happy Holidays!



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## REST EASY: Lodging industry trends

### HOW TO JUMPSTART YOUR HOTEL'S DIRECT BOOKINGS THROUGH SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING

More than 25% of direct online revenue for hotels comes directly through Search Engine Marketing (SEM) initiatives, making these paid placements in the search engines an especially critical piece of a property's digital marketing budget. With 61% of leisure travelers saying they use a search engine for planning travel online (Google), and hotel SEM campaigns typically reaching people closer to the "I want to book it" phase of their travel planning journey, allocating the right amount of budget and resources to SEM is important for getting in front of the right travel consumers, at the moment they are ready to book.

As we continue to see an acceleration of travel and hotel queries on Google (20% YoY in July 2016), there's never been a better time to jumpstart your hotel's direct bookings through SEM. Here are our recommendations on how to get started.

1. Take advantage of the newest ad formats available to ensure your strongest marketing messages are presented to travel consumers. With the character limitations of traditional SEM ads, it can be challenging to craft marketing messages that communicate a hotel's value proposition while also prompting a sense of urgency. To help marketers overcome this, Google has introduced a new version or Ad copy format. This new form of expanded text ads displays two headlines that are both 5 characters longer than traditional headlines. This format allows hoteliers to not only promote their brand name, but also include a focused call to action. If you haven't started yet, begin transitioning copy now to prepare for a total transformation in 2017.

2. Understand the big picture by tracking behavior across devices AND channels.

Mobile activity has been on the rise, and more than half (52%) of total travel bookings in the U.S. involve either mobile or multiple devices (Google). Providing an optimized mobile booking experience is key in securing critical revenue, and properly tracking results can help alleviate unwarranted decisions to pause ads or lower budget spend that might be driving a significant share of revenue through the voice channel.

3. Deliver a consistent message along the travel consumer's planning and purchasing journey.

It is important to ensure that at each time your brand is exposed to the user that they are met with the same consistent message. Your website, SEM ads and digital marketing messages across campaigns should be personalized to the user as much as possible and also align with one another. Having a singular brand voice keep your message focused while reaching a wide audience.

By: Mariana Safer and Carmine Fischetti

4. Listen to your guests to align your marketing messages with the travel consumer's perception of your property.

Search can be one of the most eye-opening information sources for a hotel. Listening to what terms your customers use to look for a property like yours can speak volumes as to how you are failing or succeeding in promoting your brand. You should optimize and evolve your search program based on the volume of traffic coming into your website and the performance of certain search queries.

5. With stiff competition from the Online Travel Agencies, budget appropriately and prioritize direct bookings.

Competition is pretty fierce in the hospitality space, and with supply predicted to exceed demand next year, increasing direct bookings and lowering distribution costs will be the key to saving your property's bottom line in 2017. Hotels need to budget appropriately for SEM, strictly monitor rate parity, and strongly communicate the value of booking direct across the property website and throughout all digital marketing initiatives.

6. Use the tools available to communicate your value proposition and stand out from the crowd.

Travel consumers in general are very price-conscious, and coupled with a competitive landscape in the hospitality industry there is often a sense of urgency among hoteliers to lower rate in order to secure a booking. If you have unmatched, top-tier suites or if the experience you provide is extraordinary, why keep that information hidden and only promote the lowest-quality inventory? Price extensions in ads help communicate a variety of different price points and value-adds, and speak to your different audiences in the same ad.

7. Capitalize on opportunities to talk to existing guests AND new potential guests.

Reaching users through paid search is a highly qualified form of advertising. If set up properly, a hotel's SEM ads can engage a property's most loyal audiences and engage new ones by balancing past-guest data with Intent data or in other words, through Smart Data Marketing.

8. Think Inside the InBox with Gmail Ads

Email targeting is a great way to take advantage of Google's targeting options and to attract new potential guests. Email targeting provides the opportunity to capitalize on an existing email database by following up with each user as they navigate through the GDN, which will increase the chances of an eventual conversion. Additionally, the inverse works as well.

Read the whole article & final 2 tips here



## Governor Larry Hogan Announces Common Sense Paid Sick

December 7, 2016

Balanced Approach Will Benefit Maryland Workers and Job Creators

ANNAPOLIS, MD –

Governor Larry Hogan today announced plans to introduce legislation in the upcoming session of the Maryland General Assembly to provide common sense, balanced paid sick leave benefits that have the potential to cover nearly all working Marylanders without placing an unmanageable burden on job creators. During his remarks at a State House press conference, the governor reaffirmed his commitment to common sense policies that will make Maryland a more business-friendly state while ensuring a strong and healthy workforce.

"For the last few years, there has been a great deal of discussion and debate around the issue of paid sick leave in Maryland," said Governor Hogan. "While all of us agree that more workers need sick leave in Maryland, it would be irresponsible to put a law on the books that unfairly penalizes our state's job creators. It is clear that, in order to move forward, we must strike a balance between the needs of Maryland's employees while not hurting our small businesses and continuing to foster a more business-friendly climate in our state."

"A strong majority of Marylanders want to see the state address this issue in a common sense way that benefits our workers while also protecting our small business job creators. We look forward to working with legislators on both sides of the aisle to reach an agreement on a balanced, fair, and common sense approach to paid sick leave."

The Hogan administration's proposal contains important provisions to protect Maryland's small business community. Businesses with 50 or more employees will be required to offer paid sick leave totaling at least 40 hours per year, with the ability for employees to roll over a maximum of 40 hours each year. The proposal also calls for part-time employees to be covered after a minimum of 30 working hours. If a company already has a general leave policy that meets these minimum requirements, the state will not interfere. In addition, the state will honor existing collective bargaining agreements with unions. The 50-employee threshold matches current federal standards under the Family Medical Leave Act and the Affordable Care Act.

Maryland small business job creators with fewer than 50 employees that choose to offer paid sick leave will be eligible for tax relief incentives closely modeled after the top recommendation of the Augustine Commission, a bipartisan panel that identified strategies to improve Maryland's business climate. These small business owners will be able to exempt the first \$20,000 of their income from taxes. The legislation will also provide protection for seasonal industries by exempting workers employed for less than 120 days in a 12-month period.

Governor Hogan is committed to giving Maryland workers the support they need without interfering with the policies of small businesses or putting jobs at risk. The Hogan administration's common sense proposal would institute a fair and flexible statewide policy that would apply to all 24 jurisdictions and supersede existing policies to ensure consistency and ease of compliance for job creators across the state.



This site is a powerful online job seeker/workforce services system, accessed as a website on the Internet or an Intranet at a OneStop Center. It was specifically designed for job seekers, students, case managers, employers, training providers, workforce professionals, and others seeking benefits and services.

Employer users will find the following features helpful:

- Define skills and post job orders to find potential candidates
- Research labor market information on salaries and economic data
- Set up a Virtual Recruiter search agent to automatically find candidates within the system that match the job skills of the job order
- Communicate with job seekers, case managers, training providers, and others within the system email and message center.

Click here to see how the Maryland Workforce Exchange can help your business!



## DECEMBER DINNER MEETING 2016

Photos by KRR Photography

[Click here for all the photos!](#)



Mayor Meehan, Katy Durham, Judy Tremellen, Princess Royale, Sheryl Mitrecic, Jon Tremellen, Princess Royale



Tracey Adkins, Bruce Jones, Gregory & Associates, Cindi Wilde, BEST Motels, Michele Ford, Gregory & Associates



Craig McElroy, Gregory & Associates, Jackie Ball, Conners Beach Cafe, Heidi & Jaime McNeeley, Worcester Warriors Against Opiate Addiction



James, Melora Olexo, Zack Hanna, Dunes Manor, Suzanne Jackson, The Commander, Linda Robinson, Sysco Guest Supply



Meredith & Minor Chacon, Marie-Noelle Sayan, John Cretu & Monica Marian, King Charles Hotel



Lindsay Jones & Instructor Caitlin Evans, Worcester County Technical High School