



January 2014

Hospitality Hotline

Connecting the industry through
Advocacy, Education and Partnerships

News from... THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Welcome New Members Allied Member

BSC America
Charles Nichols

Senator Mikulski Meeting

Recently, hoteliers and restaurateurs met with Senator Mikulski to discuss the importance of the J1 Visa program, tax relief and Obamacare. Those in attendance were quite candid and described how their businesses were affected. The Senator noted the J1 program will remain in-tact. As a follow-up, Mikulski asked how she could help navigate changes to current Obamacare policies. The Board noted that it would be most helpful to change the number of days a worker is classified as seasonal from the current 90 to at least 120 and preferably 150.

EmPOWER MD Discussion

While the goal of EmPOWER MD is to encourage energy savings measures through rebate programs, many members have had questions regarding its implementation. Therefore, program implementor, Lockheed Martin, was contacted and is available to offer assistance in navigating the program and its rebates. Jack Gallagher is the local person assigned to this area and can be reached at 301-219-9514 or jack.gallagher@lmco.com. Additionally, he will provide updates at our February dinner meeting.

Comcast Seasonal Service

With seasonal service being removed from Comcast offerings, many of you have been trying to negotiate year-round contracts. Some have had luck getting through and some have not. The representative who has helped some is Joe Houske and he can be reached at 877-577-6851. The Board has invited the Bulk Hospitality Regional Representative to an upcoming Board meeting. Please feel free to share your experience with me so that we may pass along. It would be best to have it in writing, so please email to: susanjones@ocvisitor.com.

Midweek Summer Splash

In an effort to encourage travel during the week, we have developed a promotion called Midweek Summer Splash. This promotion will showcase your deals which can be in any format, provided they are offered Sunday - Thursday. Your special will be uploaded to our Deals page which feeds into www.ococean.com deals. Make sure you send us your offer!



Nick Mautone to speak at January Dinner

The January dinner meeting will feature guest speaker, Nick Mautone. He is a forward thinking hospitality industry consultant, specializing in full business & concept development, rebranding, retooling & upgrading within the restaurant and hotel industries. He has been a contributor to Everyday With Rachael Ray, Cargo and Chow magazines writing about food, beverage and spirits. He has appeared as a guest on 30+ television shows and radio programs talking and educating about food, wine and spirits. Additionally, he has shared his knowledge by teaching classes at the Institute of Culinary Education. Nick is a board member of the New York State Restaurant Association Manhattan Chapter.

Make plans to join us
Thursday, January 16th
Fresco's
82nd St & Coastal
6PM Cocktails, 7PM Dinner



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BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: *Travis Wright*

Chef Travis attended the College of Charleston, in Charleston, SC - which has come to be known as the "new food capital of the south." After graduating, he pursued restaurant work in this culinary destination, and his future began to form. In 2000, he opened the Shark Restaurant (46th Street, Ocean City, MD) with his family. In 2008, The Shark relocated to West Ocean City, on the commercial fishing harbor. This location provided Chef Travis with the unique opportunity to meet the local fisherman, and a new culinary path unfolded for him....offering an education in local sourcing and seasonal ingredients. His education continues every day - through relationships with local fisherman, farmers, cheese makers and regional cattle farmers. Through the ongoing evolution of his culinary career, his commitment remains consistent - to honor real food with real cooking. Travis and his wife (and business partner) Jody Kelly Wright operate the restaurant together, maintaining focus on *making real food from scratch, combined with memorable dining experiences and mindful practices.*



THE DISH: *Restaurant industry trends*

10 TRENDS SHAPING THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY IN 2014

By: Ron Ruggless | NRN

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Menu innovation and older consumers' increased spending are among the top 10 trends shaping the restaurant industry in 2014, according to The NPD Group.

The Port Washington, N.Y.-based market research firm released its list of predictions for the industry in the year ahead and beyond, ranging from the impact of baby boomers and seniors to the effect of prepared meals at supermarkets on market share. "If there is anything that's a common theme here - maybe more so than in years past - it's menu innovation," said NPD Group restaurant industry analyst Bonnie Riggs. "Those that came out with something really different and unique had big hits," she said. "That's what it is going to take to get especially the Millennials and younger folks out of the home and back into restaurants."

However, operators should also closely watch the increased spending among baby boomers and seniors, as this group is "keeping the industry afloat," Riggs added. "Baby boomers' and seniors' usage rate of restaurants is now heavier than younger generations, she said, and many of them continue to delay retirement. "They are the driver of any growth that the industry is achieving," she added. "They tell us they want comfortable seating, less noisy restaurants [and] a menu that is easy to read. We need to pay attention to them."

NPD's top 10 trends it expects to influence the restaurant industry also included:

- **An improving economy.** Real disposable income is forecast to grow, inflation will remain moderate, and unemployment will continue to inch down in the year ahead.
- **Segment strengths.** NPD forecasts indicate that traffic will build for fast-casual restaurants, sub shops and gourmet coffee/donut outlets.
- **Protein prices.** An expected rise in beef prices and

lower chicken prices will be reflected in menu offerings.

- **Population shifts and diversity impacts on menus.** The influence of the growing U.S. Hispanic population is reflected in the increased popularity of fruits, juice drinks and more flavorful spices and seasonings, NPD said. And the growing Asian population carries its influence on menus, as well, with noodles, rice, specialty sauces, and other foods and flavors.

- **Strong baby boomer and senior spending.** Boomers and their older counterparts have been less affected by prolonged high unemployment and the recession, NPD reported.

- **Changing incentives.** Paper coupons gave way years ago to tiered pricing strategies, combo meal offers, sweepstakes and value menu items. With greater online availability, coupons are again popular, NPD said, but loyalty rewards are also increasing.

- **Mobile technology.** Mobile devices continue to grow as important tools for consumers, who expect most of their needs to be met with the devices, NPD said.

- **Healthful menu offerings.** Consumers' interest in healthful meal options is tied to the health needs of boomers and older individuals, the growth in ethnic groups accustomed to fresh food preparation, and greater awareness of the need for and benefits of healthful eating among younger patrons.

- **Fine-dining strength.** "Fine dining, from our view, has fully recovered from the recession and is growing," NPD said.

- **New concepts.** NPD said the industry can expect more innovation from new concepts, such as Houston-based My Fit Foods, with more than 60 units, and Chicago-based Lyfe Kitchen, with four units. Both address the interest in fresh and healthful food, as well as portion options.



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Congratulations to **Helen Ball** of **Mercantile Processing** and her husband on the birth of their son Dylan. Welcome to **Jacob Cohen**, Sales for **Ocean City Today & oceancity.com**. Another warm welcome to **Kristen Poillon**, the new Director of Marketing for **Harrison Group**. Welcome and Congratulations to **Adam Showell Jr. & Leticia Holguin** to the staff at **Castle in the Sand** & on their engagement.

Condolences

Our condolences to **Susan White, IMG**, on the loss of her son. Condolences to the family of **Angela Raso Bollas, Generals Kitchen**. Condolences also to **Earla Conner** & family, **Bonita Beach Hotel** on the loss of George Conner. Condolences to the family and friends of **Anita Pasciullo**, formerly with the **Ocean City Visitors Center**.



REST EASY: *Lodging industry trends*

FULL ARTICLE HERE →

TOP 10 HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY TRENDS IN 2014 From: *Hospitality.Net Robert Rauch*

1. Millennials will become the core customer within the hospitality and travel industries over the next five to ten years. The majority of airlines, hotels and travel companies will benefit from this sector as they enter into their peak earning, spending and travel years. Within this group of GenY travelers, there are many different markets considering the fact that exploration, interaction and experience are the major focus of Millennials. Willing to pay more for a greater experience, "foodies" are a prevalent subset of this market; looking for an overall gourmet experience for a reasonable price will cause the industry to revamp their lobby bars, restaurants and food service.
2. Speed and precision will be a requirement when it comes to accommodating Millennials in upcoming years according to Hotels.com's latest Hotel Price Index report. Fast booking, fast check-in, fast WiFi and fast responses to customer service needs will need to be implemented within hotels.
3. WOW customer service will become even more influential this year. Service today consists of four levels: basic, expected, desired and WOW.
4. Leadership is modeling the way and showing your management team how critical it is to "walk the talk." Each and every employee, including myself, all have something we can work on. Forming a connection with guests can improve dramatically with genuine, individual interaction.
5. Expectation of more international visitors. Average rates and occupancy levels in the U.S. are likely to increase over the next few years, influenced by a very new market. "Leisure demand from abroad, fueled in part by the new Discover America campaign, will stimulate a new demand" according to Arne Sorenson, President and CEO of Marriott Hotels & Resorts. The globalization of travel will prove to be a massive force.
6. Social media and mobile will be inseparable. Social media and mobile already live in symbiosis and we will only continue to see them merge over the course of this year. Keeping an eye out for authentic ways to make use of emerging social/mobile applications will be of great value to those in hotel marketing.
7. Content marketing will replace traditional advertising. Traditional advertising is rapidly losing value as hotel marketing professionals begin to take advantage of effective content marketing. Marketing's new mantra, "Brands must now act as publishers," has come about due to social media and its potential to engage in meaningful conversations with loyal fans and clients alike.
8. Renewed focus on property websites. Finding ways of encouraging direct bookings will be one of the most important parts of a marketing director's job in 2014. Considering travelers are increasingly taking their transactions online, the hotel's own website needs to become the most important avenue for bookings to gain the highest ROI. After American hotels spent an estimated \$2.7 billion on OTA commissions, the rates rose and restrictions tightened. Hotels are looking at any and all ways to increase direct bookings in 2014. This means that hotel websites will need to create incentives through booking with them directly rather than via the OTAs. Fresh content, consistent updates of promotions and rich media will draw in the guests.
9. Review site tactics. In 2014 there is a need to monitor Yelp, TripAdvisor and Google Places reviews and alert management of any low reviews twice a week, comment on glowing reviews to thank them, comment on low reviews and how the property intends to handle future situations, & feature Yelp deals.
10. Reputation Management. There is much anticipation that reputation management will begin to dictate the hotel industry in upcoming years.



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December Dinner Meeting

All photos by **KRR Photography**. Check out their website here.



Courtyard by Marriot Assistant General Manager Spencer Byrd, Director of Sales Toni Franks, General Manager Shawn McMahon, Susan Jones, Newport Hospitality Group COO Wayne West & Courtyard/Captain's Table Lauren Taylor



Bob Borello, Adam Showell, Sr. and Jim Parkinson of Castle in the Sand Hotel



Bob Torrey, Happy Jack Pancake House, Henry Pertman from Micros, Bob's son Zac Torrey, & Carla Dekker from Micros



Joe Perry, Eagles Landing, Pat Ambler-Perry of Boardwalk Hotel Group, Susan Jones & Jeff LeVan, Baltimore Sun



Herb & Judy Schoellkopf, Old Pro Golf