



December 2015

Hospitality Hotline

Connecting the industry through
Advocacy, Education and Partnerships

News from...

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Welcome new
ALLIED Members**

Unlimited Restoration
Painting by Pearce

Hospitality Roundtables Return

In an effort to help our members remain informed about the latest trends in hospitality, the Board voted to have Susan organize hospitality roundtables. These will be scheduled throughout the upcoming months. Topics to be covered include how to use social media more effectively; revenue management basics and beyond; how to implement a rewards program; understanding google analytics. If there are any other topics you'd like to see covered, please feel free to let us know!

Save the Date

Our 42nd Annual Spring Trade Expo returns on March 6 & 7. The equally entertaining and informative economist, Anirban Basu, will be a featured speaker at this year's Expo. Educational sessions are being planned and include effective eradication of bedbugs and making TripAdvisor work for you. If there are topics you'd like to see covered, let us know. Exhibit space is currently being sold and selling fast, so if you are an Allied Member, this beats going door-to-door and cold calling ~ get your exhibit booth today!

Another Successful MD Travel & Tourism Summit

Ocean City was well represented at the recent statewide gathering of tourism professionals. Worcester County received an award for the Best Destination Guide and the County and City won an Eastern Shore DMO partnership award with the other Eastern Shore counties. Shore Craft Beer, our Association, the County and the City won the Visionary Impact Award for helping expand the craft beer industry. The City and both Worcester and Wicomico Counties won the State Partnership Award for their joint sports marketing effort.

For a complete list of winners, [click here](#).

Economist Anirban Basu opened the Summit noting the economic gains are in hands of a few due to the stock pricing comeback. Additionally, he said younger workers aren't accumulating assets due to their mortgage sized student loans, which is also leading to more apartment and condo rentals versus home ownership. Fortunately for tourism, we are in a consumer led recovery and this is evidenced by job growth in the service sector.

Continued...

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Next, National Geographic Digital Nomad, Andrew Evans, left the audience in awe as he spoke on tourism marketing. Most notably, he mentioned the importance of telling your story through visual pictures and through depicting what makes you authentic. He also suggested giving a sense of depth to our destination through use of stories and telling others what makes people fall in love with us.

We also learned that travel trends continue to be experiential, culinary, multi-generational and authentic. Finally, a motivational speaker enlightened us noting that to get a new behavior, we must influence others hearts and minds. Also of note, we must not let anyone else or our situation control our behavior; we always have the choice in how we respond.



PAST PRESIDENT SPOTLIGHT:

Sally Frame Rutka grew up in Ocean City, and was one of the few locals who attended the elementary school when it was located in what is currently City Hall. Her family roots trace back to her grandmother being an OC local. Sally left the beach to attend college in Connecticut, but the sand between her toes pulled her back. Upon her parents retirement, she purchased the Lankford Hotel and was the 3rd generation to operate the landmark property. At first, when "Hotel Impossible" producers entered her life, she was a little leery. But, in walked host, Anthony Melchiorri, and she soon realized he was there to help and not criticize. Sally stated, "With his help and vision, the hotel is prospering, and my needlework shop is where I spend most of my time, when I do work."

Sally proudly served as HMRA President in 1989-1990 and volunteered at numerous tradeshow helping with registration and all the office details. She has spent her life working in the business she loves, raising a family and now loving semi-retirement. Her notable achievements are what many aspire to ~ "raising my family, seeing my children become responsible adults with their own families and both of them taking part in the business is my greatest achievement, and the most rewarding experience I've had," stated Sally. Being a grandmother and doing her needlework are what interest Sally most these days.

The Electric Vehicle Institute (EVI) was founded on the ideal that Electric Vehicles (EVs) should be made a working reality on all levels. As such, EVI has allocated funding, materials and staff with extensive knowledge to deploy EV charging stations throughout the state of Maryland.

We believe in partnering with local communities, institutions and businesses, to not only accomplish this deployment, but also assist with EV and electric vehicle support equipment management as well as informational media tools to enhance stakeholder awareness. Through this model, EVI would like to offer at no cost to the members of the Hotel Motel Restaurant Association (HMRA), Level 2 EV Charging Stations and Installation.

If interested, please contact the project manager by the information below:

Zach Wade, Vice President of Strategic Planning and Partnerships

Direct: (410) 685-1109, Mobile: (202)-725-5435 zwade@ev-institute.com



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*Good communication + Cultural acknowledgement
= Excellent Customer Service!* By: Dr. George Ojie-Ahamiojie,

Department Head and Associate Professor, Hotel-Motel-Restaurant Management, Wor-Wic Community College

Globalization of business environment in this century is expanding with inclusion of people from different cultures, religions, race, and ethnicity. For this simple reason, it will take good communication skills to reach across these many people and cultures. As business professionals, we have to do everything to attend to these guests and customers from these different backgrounds that frequent our establishments.

As you may also know, the hospitality industry is an evolving industry with many moving parts and elements. Customers come and go, guests check-in and check-out, employees move on, yet we have to continue to provide excellent service to our diverse clients, from different parts of the world, irrespective. People will always respond to courtesy and respect, and will remember their positive experiences. This provides you the opportunity to ask your customers questions about your services and the products that you offer. Customers will always remember good experiences, but they will never forget the bad experiences they encountered in any establishment.

So, it is important to make people feel comfortable; to be effective at doing so, consider some of the following, but not necessarily in this sequence:

1. When speaking to people from different culture, speak slowly to allow them the time to interpret what you are saying.
2. Be concise and unambiguous in your words. Use simple words and enunciate them clearly.
3. Keep your sentences short and succinct to the point; thus allowing your listeners to absorb and decode the information.
4. Avoid using slangs that are not understood in other cultures and languages. Even more importantly, completely avoid the use of hand gestures and symbols.
5. Avoid using humor. While humor might be a good icebreaker, it can also be misunderstood and can backfire. An acceptable humor in one culture may not be acceptable in other cultures.
6. Always ask for feedback. Most people may not provide feedback as a result of their cultural beliefs, but asking for feedback may help facilitate a two-way communication street.
7. Remember that respect goes two-ways. Acknowledge the difference in culture and maintain simple courtesy.

Since the hospitality industry caters to people from all different religion, culture, race and ethnicity, it is necessary not to make any assumption and hide any biases; essential to summarize what the customer has said; important to ask for understanding; and crucial to make sure that when the customers leave our establishment, they leave with positive experience and willingness to come back.

The hospitality industry is all about passion and desire to serve. Have fun doing your work, and enjoy your interactions with your guests and customers with the following acronym for "CUSTOMER" in mind:

- C**ustomize your service to each group separately.
- U**nderstand that each cultural group is important.
- S**how your customers that you care about needs.
- T**rain all your employees to make every customer feel comfortable.
- O**mit preconceived bias, notions, and stereotypes.
- M**eet and exceed each customer's expectations.
- E**valuate and act on how your customers want to be served.
- R**espect every customer, irrespective of differences.

Until next time, let the muzik play.....



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Condolences

Condolences to **the Schiffman family** & the team at **Foodservice Monthly** on the passing of **Sterling Schiffman**.



Warm wishes to **Jim Lavrich** on his retirement from **H & M Wagner**. Congrats to **Spencer Byrd**, the new General Manager at **Courtyard by Marriott**. Congratulations to **Annemarie Dickerson**, **Francis Scott Key**, who was appointed to MD Economic Development Commission. Welcome to **Donna Moran**, the new classified manager at **OC Today**.



THE DISH: Restaurant industry trends

9 STRATEGIES TO SELL MORE GIFT CARDS

By Liz Barrett

Is your restaurant currently selling one of the most popular holiday gifts, second only to electronics? Use the following nine tips to boost your holiday cash flow.

1. Offer holiday-themed cards. Alex Rafter, spokesperson for Square, which offers gift cards that integrate into Square's POS, says that gift cards are easy to customize. "A custom gift card with a neat design always seems more personal than something basic."

2. Sell gift cards online. According to the Adobe Digital Index "2015 Holiday Shopping Predictions" report, Americans will spend upward of \$83 billion online this holiday season (November to December), 11 percent more than they did last year. Besides being convenient for last-minute shoppers, the option to purchase your gift cards online will also help sell immediately to those you promote to via email and social media.

3. Run a Cyber Monday sale. "We have an online ordering system, so we sell a good bit of gift cards online," says Liz Lancaster, marketing, promotion and event planning manager at Mangia Bene Restaurant Management Group in Jackson, MS.

4. Put cards on display. Customers expect to see gift cards, especially around the holidays, so take them out of the drawers and place them where they can be seen—countertops, tabletops, a hanging display on the restroom door.

5. Promote, promote, promote. You can't sell many gift cards if no one knows you have them. Beyond placing them in displays throughout the restaurant, promote them in your marketing materials and online. "Social media is a great place to spread the word," says Rafter.

6. Give a gift with purchase. Everyone likes a free gift, even when they're shopping for others.

7. Host a giveaway. One of the fastest ways to spread the word is through a gift card giveaway contest. "Announce your contest through a marketing email or on social media," says Rafter. "If people are adding their name to the pool, there's the added bonus of building your customer directory so you can target them with future marketing messages."

8. Create a fun video. Videos are one of the most watched media online, so why not create one to promote your gift cards?

9. Make cards reloadable. A growing trend in gift cards is the option to make them reloadable. Adding this option to your own card offers a number of bonuses. "If you treat the gift card as a reloadable 'club card,' customers can have access to exclusive deals," says Cohen. "It allows them to be recognized as regulars who get perks."



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HOLIDAY NEWS

Tuesday, December 8

Holiday Wrappings Luncheon & Fashion Show- acsholidaywrappings.org

Friday, December 25

Old Pro Golf Indoor (68th St. Location Only)- Free to play on Friday 11AM-5PM, a gift to the residents of Ocean City from the Schoellkopf family.

November Dinner Meeting



Above: Deb & Tom Carven, APPI Energy, Hannah Miller, Delmarva Public Radio



Above: Jay Warrington, Northeastern Supply, Wajih Allam, Dunes Manor, Dr. George Ojje-Ahaiojie, Wor-Wic Community College, Marge Steele and Erin McLaughlin, Dunes Manor

Right: Amy Rohrer, Maryland Hotel & Lodging Assn, Kelly Groff, Visit Montgomery, Liz Fitzsimmons, Director of Maryland State Tourism



See all the pics here!