



May 2016

Hospitality Hotline

Connecting the industry through
Advocacy, Education and Partnerships

News from...

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Welcome New Members

Active

- Big Peckers
- Bourbon St. on the Beach
- Full Moon Saloon
- Hooked
- Plaza Tapatia
- Ky West

Associate Members

- Uber Bagel

Allied Members

- Comcast Business
- Hilyard's Business Solutions
- MoldStoppers of MD
- Pocomoke River Canoe Co.

Paid Sick Leave

Many thanks to those of you who voiced your opinion in opposition to the proposed paid sick leave bill. Fortunately, it did not pass the Senate committee; however, this topic will return so we must prepare. We will be sending out a survey shortly to gather your input. Stay tuned.

MGH Season Kick-off

Recently, we were able to view the plans for the upcoming season's advertising. If you missed the meeting, we are happy to share the info. Simply give us a call at 410-289-6733 or inquire@ocvisitor.com.

2016 Installation of OCHMRA Officers

On April 21, Tourism Director, Donna Abbott installed the new Officers and Board of Directors of the OCHMRA. Approximately 220 members gathered for this annual ceremony.

Mark Elman of the Clarion Fontainebleau Hotel was installed as the new President, **Will Lynch** of the Commander Hotel was installed as 1st Vice President and **Gary Figgs** of Seacrets will serve as the 2nd Vice President. **Shawn Harman** of Fishtales/Bahia Marina, continues as Secretary -Treasurer. The 3-year Directors installed include, **Tom Tawney** of Cayman Suites, **Danelle Amos** of the Beach Walk Hotel and **Karen Tomasello** of Sello's. 2-year Directors include **Austin Purnell** of OC Motels, **Spiro Buas** of OCRooms, and **Rebecca Taylor** of Captain's Table and 1-year Directors are **Caryl Cardenas** of Park Place Hotel, **Dave Robinson** of Boardwalk Hotel Group and **Brian Mushrush** of Phillips Seafood Restaurants.

Outgoing President, **Bob Torrey** of Happy Jack Pancake House was presented with a plaque in appreciation of his hard work and dedication as HMRA President.

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REST EASY: Lodging industry trends

By: Patrick Mayock

5 WAYS TO IMPROVE RESPONSES ON TRIPADVISOR

It's funny observing the disparate number of policies hoteliers employ regarding reviews on TripAdvisor. Company A insists on responding to every comment, while Company B tells its managers to reply only to the bad. Company C takes a different tact entirely: It doesn't respond to any.

Those are the broad buckets. Nuances and further variation exist at each stage along the spectrum. And each company that employs them insists theirs is the only and obvious approach.

Some variety might be warranted. One hotel is often not like the other, so I understand a degree of unique plans that appeal to unique bases of demand, product offerings and location types.

But clearly there are some hoteliers who, despite their best intentions, are engaging with guests on TripAdvisor in a manner that could prove potentially harmful to further review rankings and thus future bookings.

In cases such as these, I find it's best to go straight to the source for the prescribed best practices. In this case, that would be TripAdvisor—or more specifically, Heather Leisman, business VP of industry marketing.

This topic was top of mind for her. TripAdvisor recently released a report which examined why travelers write reviews. The top reason? "To share useful information with others" and because "they find reviews helpful, so they want to give back." (Who knew the TripAdvisor online community was so altruistic?)

The three most important things travelers look for in reviews are: a concentration on facts; a lot of detail; and timeliness (i.e. the review recounted a recent experience). Understanding what motivates travelers in the online review sphere informs some best practices for hoteliers, Leisman said.

"The key takeaways for hoteliers are that travelers want the facts when reading reviews and they respond well to balanced views," she told me via email.

Leisman also offered five tips to make responses more effective:

1. Respond in a timely manner: "It's important to check often for new reviews," she said. "In fact, 60% of global business owners who responded say that they check their reviews 'whenever a new one comes in.' When they do come in, write a thoughtful response as soon as possible."

2. Thank them for their feedback: "It's always important to let them know the hotel appreciates their feedback."

3. State the facts: "Provide a detailed response and explain the hotel's side of the story just as if they are at the front desk," Leisman said.

4. React, if appropriate: "Take action to make necessary changes to your property or service if reviews are consistently highlighting the same issue. (Seventy percent) of surveyed businesses (globally) say they have improved their services as a result of a review."

5. Write with TripAdvisor's 340 million visitors in mind: "Other travelers will read your response, so it's important for the hotel to make a good impression."

As to that age-old question (in Internet terms, of course) as to how many reviews hoteliers should respond, Leisman offered this guidance:

"The key is to make responding to traveler reviews a habit and to respond to both negative and positive reviews. This shows travelers that the hotelier cares about guest service," she said.

Leisman cited data from a Phocuswright poll of the TripAdvisor community of travelers that found 84% of U.S. users agreed that an appropriate management response to a bad review "improves my impression of the hotel." Six of 10 users (62%) said seeing hotel management responses to reviews generally "makes me more likely to book it (versus a comparable hotel that didn't respond to travelers)."

Give it to us straight, Leisman.

"I don't think hoteliers have to respond to every single review, but potential guests want to see that hotels care about their guests' experience and are actively engaging with other travelers online on a regular basis."

There you have it folks. Rewrite the TripAdvisor policies and let's get on the same page. If nothing else, Company A, stop wasting time responding to every review. And Company C? You better get started.

Read the whole article here!



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Congratulations to **Richard Davis**, who is the new General Manager at the **Monte Carlo**. Congrats also to **Paul "Speedy" Tracey**, who is the new **M.R. Ducks** manager. Congrats to the OCHMRA members nominated for Restaurant Association of Maryland distinctions: **Pizza Tugos Taproom**, Craft Brew Program of the Year, **Bull on the Beach**, Favorite Bar or Tavern, **CohnReznick – Greg Remeikis**, Allied Member of the Year, **Shenanigan's Irish Pub & Grille**, **Greg Shockley**, Hospitality Hall of Honor. Congrats to **Horizons Oceanfront Restaurant's** Prime Rib, Crab Legs & Seafood Buffet that was named one of the Top 5 All-you-can-eat Buffets in America by the List. **Planet Maze** is holding 2 fundraisers, one for both the OC Rec Boosters (Friday, May 6, 6-9pm) and Refreshing Fountain Ministries (Sunday, May 15, 2-6pm)- you can purchase tickets at the organization office or at the door.

Condolences to **Frank Cascio, Fager's**, who lost his father, **Frank Allen Cascio**.



THE DISH: Restaurant industry trends

Instagram Photography Tips

Since Instagram is a visual social media platform, your photography matters. (tweet this) Does that mean you need to go out and buy an expensive camera or hire a professional? No, but it does mean you have to think about your photos.

- Change up the angle in your photography. Consider some photos from the side and shoot some from above.
- Keep the rule of thirds in the back of your mind. This means you should keep the subject of your photo in only about one third of the frame.
- Be careful with filters. While they are popular on Instagram, they aren't always right for food shots.
- Take lifestyle photos, too. This means photographing people. This gives your followers something and someone to engage with.
- We encourage you to spotlight your staff, including your kitchen staff and your chef. Set these photos apart by taking them in black and white. This sets your food photos apart because they are full color.
- When it comes to lighting, natural light is best. You'll end up with truer photos, especially the lights and whites.
- Photos with red and orange colors do well on Instagram. This works especially well for restaurants.

Now that you've got a few tips to work with, let's talk about some ways to use Instagram to boost your website traffic.

Boost Website Traffic with a Link

The easiest way to use Instagram to drive traffic to your website is by putting a website link in your bio. You can add a clickable link in your bio, so use your website's URL. Go to Edit profile and type it in the appropriate place.

Use a Call to Action to Boost Traffic

Grab your favorite photo editing program and add a call to action and your website address onto your image. You can then use the caption for your photo to drive traffic to your site. You can tell your followers to click on your link in your bio. You will encourage interaction on Instagram with a call to action. (tweet this)

HOW TO USE INSTAGRAM TO BOOST YOUR WEBSITE TRAFFIC

restaurantengine.com

Boost Website Traffic with Specials

One way to boost site traffic is by posting a photo of your daily special. You want to send it out at the right time, so pay attention to when your followers are online. How does this work? Let's say you are offering a free appetizer with the purchase of a burger. Your customers have to visit your website to get the coupon. You post a fabulous looking photo of a burger with a link to your website. Imagine doing this right before the lunch or dinner rush. You'll boost website traffic and business inside your restaurant.

Drive Traffic with Video

Instagram videos are big. You should be using them. And, when you use them, you should include a text link to your website as an overlay. Give your followers a reason to visit your website, and you'll increase the likelihood that they'll stop by for a visit. This could be a contest, coupon or reward offer.

Use Your Blog Photo to Generate Visits

Share your main blog photo on Instagram advising your followers of your new blog post. Again, consider adding text over the image with a call to action. Tease your Instagram followers encouraging them to visit your blog page.

Purchase Instagram Ads to Boost Traffic

This is a great way to get more website visitors. Be creative and design ads that really deliver. Take advantage of the option to include a website link to increase the number of new hits on your website.

To Conclude

Start a visual conversation on Instagram, and you'll soon be on your way to boosting your website traffic and growing your leads and your sales. Instagram is the perfect place for restaurants to market their food. Beautiful food photos shared at the right times can drive customers to your website and your restaurant.

Monitor your results, tweak your photos and your text and watch your website visit count rise.



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BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: DANELLE AMOS



Danelle Amos was raised on a farm in Freeland, MD which is a small town in Northern Baltimore County known as "The Hereford Zone." As a frequent visitor to OC, she got the fever of owning a hotel from watching her friends, Dennis and Ronda Trager, during their time of ownership of the Surf Villa Hotel. Dennis led her to Mrs. Conner who was selling an inn on 10th Street and the rest is history. Renamed, the Beach Walk Hotel, Danelle refers to the hotel as "her 16-yr old" because in the beginning, it kept her up all night as she walked the halls making sure everyone was quiet. Now, it is a "matured, well-oiled machine and she only sleeps with one eye open." Danelle spends free time fishing and with her husband Michael and 2 daughters Mariah and Saylor. Mariah will graduate from the University of South Carolina in May, and Saylor will be going into the 5th grade in the fall. Saylor's full name is Saylor Elizabeth Amos -- initials SEA! Granville

Trimper liked to call her "one of us!" as Saylor is the only Amos to be born here in Ocean City.

ADOPT YOUR BEACH

Schools, families, businesses and community groups adopt beaches in Ocean City to conduct litter removal and monitoring. Adopters work with the Ocean City Surf Club to locate a beach to adopt, log the information they gather into our online system. We will be providing the data to Ocean City Coastal Legislative committee and Maryland Coastal Bays. It will be used for pollution prevention, educational purposes and to make real-world improvements for our beaches. We will be providing the data to Ocean City's Green Team and Maryland Coastal Bays. Each and every one of you can make a difference!



Feel free to contact ecox3284@gmail.com for more information.



Community Health Fair

30th Annual Community Health Fair - Tuesday, May 3, 2016

Free and Open to the Public - 8am to 12:30pm

Free screenings: carotid, respiratory, bone density, foot checks, hearing, clinical breast exams, blood pressure, skin cancer, lab draws - lipid panel & blood glucose (12 hour fast is required), and more! Special Visitor: Sherman the Shorebird

For more information, contact Melvin Friedman at 410-524-1177 or Dawn Denton at 410-641-9268.

RELAY FOR LIFE OF NORTH WORCESTER COUNTY

MAY 6, 2016 - 6:00 PM

Relay For Life is a family-friendly walking event for the entire community which raises funds and awareness in the fight against cancer, while honoring survivors and those lost. Make a difference by forming a team and fundraising, signing up for our Cancer Survivor Reception and Lap, sponsor or make a donation, or just drop by Frontier Town Campground and have fun (open to public 6 pm – Midnight).

Click to learn more.



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April Dinner Meeting

[Click here for all pics!](#)

Photos by

KRR Photography



Dr. Lenny and Kari Berger,
Clarion Fontainebleau



Jeremy Brown, Mercantile Processing Inc, Matt Banks,
OC Floor Gallery, Tori Cross, Taylor Bank, Joya Mattie,
Greater Ocean City Chamber of Commerce, Justin Noble,
Mercantile Processing Inc.



Jeb Vetock, Harrison's Harborwatch,
Rick Goodwin, 32 Palm

2016 Board of Directors:

Front Row L to R: Brian Mushrush, Phillips
Restaurants, Spiro Buas, OCRooms, Danelle
Amos, Beach Walk Hotel, Karen Tomasello,
Sellos Italian Oven, Rebecca Taylor, Captains
Table Restaurant, Austin Purnell, OCMotels
Back Row L to R: Will Lynch, Commander
Hotel, Gary Figgs, Seacrets, Mark Elman,
Clarion Fontainebleau, Shawn Harman, Fish
Tales

