



September 2018

# Hospitality Hotline

Connecting the industry through  
Advocacy, Education and Partnerships

## News from... THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### Feedback Requested

Governor Hogan established the MORE Commission (MD Outdoor Recreation Economic Commission) last fall to develop strategies and make recommendations to strengthen the state's outdoor recreation industry and help ensure increased investment in our state's outdoor recreation resources. The Commission members are now traveling throughout the State to speak with business owners to determine how to better support small business and market outdoor recreation. They will be on the Eastern Shore in mid-September and will specifically be discussing ocean/bay recreation. To learn all the details regarding the Commission, check out this site: <http://dnr.maryland.gov/pages/more/home.aspx>. If you have thoughts or ideas you'd like me to share, please send your thoughts our way!

### Mark Your Calendars

As we approach the fall, please take a moment to add our dinner meetings to your calendars. It is always a wonderful time to reconnect, see old friends and make some new ones!

Dates are:

November 8 - Carousel Resort Hotel

December 13 - Clarion Resort  
Fontainebleau

January 17 - Dunes Manor Hotel

February 21- MadFish

April 11- Harborwatch

### MD Travel & Tourism Summit Approaching

Goodbye summer, hello fall! One of our favorite fall gatherings is the MD Travel & Tourism Summit where industry colleagues from around the State come together to network and learn. This year's dates are November 14-16 and it will be held at the Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay. Now is the time to submit award nominations. All the details can be found on: [www.mdtourism.org](http://www.mdtourism.org).

## Fall Restaurant Week



Fall Restaurant Week is rapidly approaching and we invite your business to participate in this FREE promotion! This promotion garners a lot of interest and we've

already had visitors calling about it. Running October 14 – 28, Fall RW features great deals and/or price fixe menus ~ your choice! With October being Shore Craft Beer month, we encourage you to pair menu items with craft beers, or create menu items utilizing craft beer. By doing so, you'll receive extra promotion on the Shore Craft Beer site. If you already have specials during this time, we can utilize those on our site under the "Great Deals" – but, you need to send them to us so that we can list them correctly. An official participation form is being mailed next week, or feel free to send us an email that you'd like to participate!



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## THE DISH: *Restaurant industry trends*

By: Megan Wenzl, Uncorkd Blog

### WHAT RESTAURATEURS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ONLINE REVIEWS

Online reviews posted by consumers on sites like Yelp, TripAdvisor, Google, and Facebook have changed not only the ways diners search for and discover places to eat, but also how restaurateurs today market to their audience.

This underlines the need for executives to keep customers' needs at the forefront in order to build a community of loyal patrons. Sure enough, winners and losers in the industry will be determined by their ability to manage and monitor online reviews, harness customer feedback, and deliver 5-star-worthy guest experiences.

Let's dive into some of the ways online reviews and ratings are shaping restaurant-going behavior.

#### Consumers really depend on restaurant reviews

Online reviews are particularly influential in the restaurant industry. According to the National Restaurant Association, more consumers (61 percent) have read online reviews about restaurants than about any other type or category of business.

Moreover, almost twice as many consumers reported reading restaurant reviews compared to doctor and dentist reviews, the second most popular category.

#### Star ratings matter, even to the hungriest of diners

When diners search online for a restaurant, they're keeping an eye out for something more than mouth-watering Instagram food photos or business-card-in-a-fishbowl loyalty programs. They are assessing places based on star ratings.

According to research, 33 percent of frequent restaurant-goers stated they would not eat at a restaurant with an average rating of 3 stars out of 5 on review sites. And findings from an online reviews survey found that 80 percent of consumers say the star ratings they trust the most are 4.0, 4.5, and 5 stars.

#### Facebook is the fastest-growing review site for restaurants

Yelp and TripAdvisor are not the only review sites worth monitoring. A social media giant is among the top of the list, too.

Customer feedback software company ReviewTrackers

analyzed online reviews of 250+ restaurants over a 6-month period and found that, among major restaurant review sites (including Yelp, Google, TripAdvisor, Zomato, and Foursquare), Facebook reflected the highest growth rate in reviews, with new reviews coming in at a pace that's 4 times faster than on other restaurant review sites.

#### Responsiveness matters

A restaurant's methods of engagement with diners shouldn't stop after they leave the restaurant. Engagement should extend to cover the entire customer journey, which means that execs must stay responsive on platforms where customers are sharing their feedback.

According to ReviewTrackers, 53.3 percent of customers expect businesses to respond to their online review within 7 days. This marks an increase from 51.7 percent in 2017.

But there is a gap between review response expectations and reality, with 63.3 percent saying they have not heard back from the business they reviewed.

#### Tech is shaking up the industry, but hospitality remains paramount

The explosive growth of online reviews is part of an overall trend in which customers are embracing technology before, during, and after the dining experience.

- Diners believe that customer-facing technology offerings like menu software, online ordering, and digital loyalty programs should be high-priority items for restaurant companies.
- 7 in 8 consumers routinely turn to technology to discover dining destinations, and 86 percent regularly check out menus online before they eat out.
- People are 25 percent more likely to consult reviews from other diners than from professional critics.

More than ever, the end-to-end guest experience — from research and reservations to ordering, delivery, consumption, and payment — can now happen in a handful of screen taps or mouse clicks. But technology is simply expanding the range of crucial touchpoints. At the every restaurant's strategy should be making a fierce commitment to the dining experience, and to meeting the evolving demands and expectations of today's customers.



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*Museum Hosting New Historic House Tour*

This October the Ocean City Museum Society will offer a new event. A Historic House Tour will take place on Saturday, October 13th from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. This event will allow those that have an interest in local history to step into the past as they tour some of Ocean City's oldest homes, hotels and other iconic sites. An interpreter will be at each site to discuss the unique history of the building. Some of the sites available for touring are; An Inn on the Ocean B&B, The Walker Cottage, The George Bert Cropper House, and St. Mary Star of the Sea Catholic Church.

The Historic House Tour is a fundraiser that will help strengthen and grow the George and Suzanne Hurley Scholarship Fund. This scholarship is open to Stephen Decatur High School graduates who plan on furthering their education at Salisbury University, Wor-Wic Community College, or UMES. Annually, the Museum awards one student, who can effectively demonstrate through essay, the historical significance of a community member, landmark, or event.

**WOR-WIC COMMUNITY COLLEGE – HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

By: Dr. George Ojie-Ahamiojie

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



Do you know that Wor-Wic Community College hospitality program has courses that can enhance your career development in the hospitality industry? If you are not aware of this, here are some of the culinary courses we offer and what you will learn by taking these courses:

**American Regional Cuisine:** You will learn cuisines from across the United States ranging from southwest to New Orleans, southern cooking, and across the America's heartland.

**Baking and Pastry:** This course will introduce you to basic baking techniques such as the science of bread and pastries production, ingredient measurement, and proper evaluation of recipes.

**Garde Manger:** This course will familiarize you with cold food production in commercial operations. Exposure will include preparations in marinade, cold sources, forcemeats, mousses, hot and cold d'oeuvres, sandwiches and proper buffet set-up and presentation.

**International Cuisine – Asia:** This course exposes you to cuisines from different cultures, religion and geography, and historical perspectives from countries like Vietnam, China, Korea, Thailand, Mongolia, India, Middle East, and Africa.

**International Cuisine – Continental:** This course exposes you to cuisines from different cultures, religion and geography, and historical perspectives from countries like Greek, Spain, Scandinavian, Russia, Switzerland, British Isles, and other countries.

**International Cuisine – Latin:** You will be exposed to cuisines from

Mexico, Central and South America. Exposure will also be in tradition recipes, herbs and spices, and cooking techniques.

**Sanitation and Safety Systems:** This course will introduce you to public health issues such as disease transmission, improper food handling, cooking safety and regulations, and personal hygiene. All the ingredients used in our kitchen to teach our students are all made from scratch.

We also offer academic courses like:

**Customer Service:** You will learn the art of providing clearly outstanding customer service in a competitive environment. You will learn the art of providing "Customer Experience" from companies like Walt Disney, Four Seasons, and Ritz-Carlton.

**Event Planning and Meeting Management:** You will learn the art of planning, organizing and coordinating events such as wedding, meetings, catering, family reunions, and many more.

**Healthy Menu Management:** In this course, you will learn how to respond to individuals with dietary and special needs. You will also learn about essential and nonessential nutrients, balanced cooking and menu.

As you can see, we have array of courses in our program. If you need more information, please reach out to me at 410-572-8719; or email me at [gojie-ahamiojie@worwic.edu](mailto:gojie-ahamiojie@worwic.edu). You can also reach out to Chef Suplee at 410-572-8717; or email him at [psuplee@worwic.edu](mailto:psuplee@worwic.edu). Until next time, let the muzik play.....



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## REST EASY: Lodging industry trends

By: David Eisen

### WHICH DIRECT BOOKING INCENTIVES ACTUALLY WORK?

Whichever direct booking incentive you choose, remember that success hinges upon creating perceived value to stimulate bookings. You don't need to reinvent the wheel at your hotel to do it—you can showcase proven, every day offers and amenities—as long as you spotlight those perks across all your direct channels, these offerings are often perceived by guests as exclusive to the direct channel, which may make the crucial difference when competing for bookings. Remember: OTAs have to manage thousands of properties, its difficult to impossible for them to keep up with every offer at every hotel.

Looking across our diverse portfolio, we evaluated which book-direct benefits have a low cost, but a high perceived value to guests.

Here's what we found:

#### 1. Enhanced On-Property Experiences:

Many properties offer differentiated on-property services and experiences to direct bookers, such as club-level access, room upgrades or late checkouts. These are powerful differentiators that hotels can offer, but OTAs cannot.

#### 2. Enhanced Digital Experiences:

Big brands now offer loyal consumers greater control of their digital travel journey right from the start, with features like the ability to pick their own room, check-in by phone and even use their phone to unlock their room, if they use the brand's mobile app. These advanced functions—not available to guests who book on third-party sites—are highly effective at driving direct bookings, especially among time-starved, tech-centric, road warrior business and "bleisure" travelers.

#### 3. Loyalty Rates & Points;

According to hotel loyalty marketing expert David Feldman, loyalty programs can do many things, such as:

- Preventing customers from switching / defecting to competitors;
- Provide insights into consumer preferences;
- Drive incremental spend and increased demand;
- Increase share-of-wallet;

So its no wonder this is the largest and most common of the direct booking incentives used by hoteliers.

A study found that the net average daily rate (ADR) of discount loyalty rates was 8.6% higher than the net ADR of rack rates on OTAs. Loyalty memberships—stimulated in part by points—are also a crucial overall provider of direct bookings volume, with four to six of every 10 room nights

booked at upper midscale, upscale and upper upscale hotels driven by loyalty members, according to the report. Loyalty contribution rates appear to be directly linked to growth in loyalty membership, which the study says increased 30% to 40% from 2015 to 2016.

#### 4. Fear:

Rather than showcasing tangible incentives or discounts, some properties choose instead to remind consumers of the dangers of booking anywhere else but direct.

This can be highly effective, too, since many consumers (especially older ones) have preexisting concerns about third-party bookings and fear that one mishap with an OTA could completely disrupt their long-awaited travel plans.

To leverage this effective emotional/psychological edge, hotels should remind prospective guests at every opportunity (are you listening call center managers?) that their direct websites and call centers are 100% dedicated to handling the needs of their property. Meanwhile, you can honestly explain to customers how OTA booking engines and their call centers are servicing tens of thousands of properties, including your competitors.

#### 5. Best Rate Guarantees:

Best Rate Guarantee badges are nice, but many consumers have become desensitized to those innocuous graphics and believe OTAs vast array of hotels guarantees lower prices.

Savvy hotel marketers are talking things to the next level: advanced tools that display OTA rates on your hotel website (and inside your direct booking engine) have become a popular and effective method of deterring shopping cart abandonment and inspiring direct bookings. Widgets like TripTease are a wonderful addition, yet they still lack the connectivity to actually change your direct rates when a lower rate is detected on an OTA. Instead, TripTease simply reports the disparity to you and then requires you to track down and resolve the OTA disparity.

#### 6. Thematic Destination Incentives:

This is a great opportunity to offer book-direct benefits that correlate with the hotel's unique story, geography or theme. Smart hoteliers are also positioning themselves as the authentic epicenter of their destinations, by offering curated city guides/maps (and in some cases, actual tour guides!) to direct bookers. Such direct-booking benefits work because they are relevant to the typical guest persona and they reinforce the hotel's theme and/or geography.



# HMRA OCEAN CITY, MARYLAND

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### Member highlights

Thank you to **Chik-Fil-A, Pizza Tugos, WaWa and Castle in the Sand** for their donations to **Surfers Healing**. Welcome to **Katie McMillan**, who joined the team at **MPI** as the Director of Sales. Welcome to **Jill Douglas**, the new General Manager at the **Commander Hotel**. **Michael Hayes** is now the General Manager at the **ALOFT**. Happy retirement to **John Klakamp** at **Encore Construction**, and welcome to **Joe McCafferty**. **Sunset Grille** donated \$3,200 to the AGH Campaign for the Future, raised by their Annual Pink Party in honor of Hope Palmer. Welcome to **Chelsea Jones**, the new General Manager at the **Hampton Inn & Suites Bayfront**.

### Condolences

Condolences to **Jeannie Powell**, formerly with the **Town of OC Visitors Center**, on the loss of her husband and former Mayor, **Roland Fish Powell**. Condolences to the **Centerplate** family on the loss of **Miss Sarah**.

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[WalktoEndEpilepsyMD.org](http://WalktoEndEpilepsyMD.org)

**Trick or Tee Golf Tournament**  
Thursday, Oct. 25  
GlenRiddle Golf Club

Sponsored by  
The Dough Roller  
Ocean City, Maryland Downtown Association

All Proceeds go toward purchase of Holiday Lighting  
Information: [downtownassociation.net](http://downtownassociation.net) or call 410-289-1413

Please join us in our commitment to the community by making a donation to our silent auction or gift bags, monetary donation or sponsoring a golf team for this year's Trick or Tee Golf Tournament. The Downtown Association's mission is to help ensure the continued success of our ever-changing Ocean City area. Years ago, the downtown area was the hub of holiday festivities, however, over the years the holiday activities migrated to North Side Park. By restoring holiday festivities throughout town, and the downtown area, many more businesses would be able to stay open and benefit from the extended season. 100% of the profits from the tournament will be used to purchase holiday lighting for Light Up OC. Please contact Kevin Gibbs or me if you have any questions.

Thank you,  
Heather Lowe  
Fundraising Coordinator  
Trick or Tee Golf Tournament  
443-223-2246



## 10th ANNUAL BREWS ON THE BEACH

LONGEST RUNNING CRAFT BEER FESTIVAL IN OCEAN CITY --The best party at the beach - on the water in OCEAN CITY --12.30 pm - 4.30 pm on September 8th. Join us at the oldest craft beer festival in Ocean City. This year, the festival will feature over 30 locally made craft beers from LOCAL BREWERIES ONLY. There will be live music by Opposite Directions. Vendors galore. Food for sale at the Caboose at Hooper's Crab House. If you buy your tickets online in advance, you will save money. \$35 online + \$2 fee or \$40 at the door.

### ADMISSION

12:30 - 4:30 taste all the beer you like. Enjoy the music and pair your beers with the food trucks. The first 600 General Admission ticket holders in the door will get commemorative glasses. Designated Driver tickets available also.



Ruth Waters, Director of Sales for the Harrison Group, Donna Abbott, Director of OC Tourism, Susan Jones, OCHMRA Executive Director, Melanie Pursel, OC Chamber of Commerce Executive Director, Secretary Mike Gill, Maryland Department of Commerce, Lisa Challenger, Director of Worcester County Tourism, celebrating the arts and tourism at the Art League of Ocean City.



The first meeting of the reinstated Hospitality Sales and Marketing Partnership at the Residence Inn.



Susan Jones, OCHMRA, Melanie Pursel, OC Chamber, Liz Walk OCHMRA at the MD Tourism Coalition Soiree at the Grand Hotel & Spa.

PO Box 340 • Ocean City, MD 21843 • 410-289-6733 • [www.ocvisitor.com](http://www.ocvisitor.com)



## *Remembering Roland "Fish" Earl Powell*

Roland E. "Fish" Powell 89 of Ocean City passed away peacefully on August 29, 2018 at his home surrounded by family. He was born in Ocean City on September 5, 1928 and was the son of the late Earl Powell and Minnie Savage.

He is survived by his devoted and loving wife of 31 years Jeannie and his children son, Bill Powell and wife Colleen, daughter Susan Wenzlaff and husband Mark, son Jimmy Powell and wife Christy and daughter Kim Mourlas and husband Jimmy. He was also blessed and very proud of his eight grand children Matt, Kelly, Dan, Sara, Kaitlyn, Hannah, Chris and William and his wife Elise and his great grand daughter Evelyn. Fish was preceded in death by his wife of 33 years Blanche, his brother Isaac Powell and his two sisters Julia Mazcko and Kathrine Newell.

Raised on Dorchester Street, Fish attended Ocean City School and graduated from Buckingham High School. After graduation he enlisted in the Merchant Marines and then in the Coast Guard and served for six years. After being honorably discharged, Fish and his wife Blanche headed up the Beach Highway and built their home along with building and operating Sandswept Cottages. Fish and Blanche lived and raised their children there for many years.



Photo from Town of OC

As a young boy Fish spent many a day at the docks on Dorchester Street. As a young man Fish worked as a charter boat captain for Talbot Bunting, running the boat Mar-A-Mor from 1952 to 1962. In the winters after fishing was over he was a guide down the bay at Bob-O-Del gunning club. Fish always enjoyed trout fishing in the fall and Tingles Island in the winter with his friends and family.

As Ocean City grew, he began a career in real estate with Jim Caine and Bob Bounds. Fish always was very community minded and in 1968 ran for and won a council seat and then later became Council President for the town of Ocean City. He then served as a Worcester County Commissioner from 1974 to 1985 and during his tenure served as Commissioner President. In 1985 Fish became Mayor of Ocean City and he served as Mayor for eleven years. As Mayor his dedication and service was unmeasurable. His easy but firm personality was an asset to the town of Ocean City. As Ocean City's Mayor he worked very well with all levels of government leading to his most important accomplishment which was the beach replenishment program.

Of all his accomplishments, his first love was the Ocean City Volunteer Fire Company. As a member he served along the side of many of Ocean City's finest for sixty-five years with twenty-seven years as an active member. As a member of OCVFC Fish also served as Fire Chief for nine years and was a Gold Badge Member #74. Additionally, he was a member and past President of the Marlin Club, a member of the American Legion and a member, Master Mason, of Evergreen Lodge #153. It is without question that his dedication to his family and his commitment to the community will be forever remembered.

A "Celebration of Life" will take place at the Roland E. Powell Convention Center on what would have been his 90th birthday, Wednesday, September 5, 2018. Visitation will take place from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and the Service will begin at 1 p.m.

The family would like to extend their sincere gratitude to Annie Ayers, Tammy Timmons and Germeka Timmons who were his dedicated caregivers and the caring and devoted staff of Coastal Hospice. Memorial donations can be made to; The Roland E. 'Fish' Powell Memorial Fund in care of The Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore 1320 Belmont Ave, Salisbury, MD 21804, Coastal Hospice, 604 Old Ocean City Rd, Salisbury, MD 21804 or The Ocean City Volunteer Fire Department, P.O. Box 27 1409 Philadelphia Ave. Ocean City, MD 21842. Letters of condolence may be sent via: [www.burbagefuneralhome.com](http://www.burbagefuneralhome.com). Arrangements are in the care of the Burbage Funeral Home in Berlin.

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DOORS OPEN AT 5:30 P.M.