



November 2014

Hospitality Hotline

Connecting the industry through
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News from... THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Welcome New Members

Alarm Tech Solutions
Fisher Architecture
Stillwater Provisions

Mother's Day at Springfest

Once again, Mother's Day will occur during Springfest and as you know, this typically softens the weekend. We have participated in joint discussions with the Town Special Events and Tourism Departments to develop ideas to try to create a buzz and build up the weekend. Ideas included creating a free kids zone with bounce houses, scallop shell painting, sand art, face painting, hula hoop contests, etc. Hopefully, once these programs are developed we can work together to develop overnight packages. Stay tuned.

A Real Senior Week

Another topic of discussion with the Town Special Events and Tourism was to develop a real Senior Week targeted at the 55+ crowd. The idea would be to generate additional second season traffic with the concentration on low impact tourism. Ideas are currently under discussion and all thoughts are welcome. Our Board of Directors felt that this would be a natural fit for the September/October time frame. Once these ideas are flushed out, we will be contacting you to develop packages and promotions around the event. Again, stay tuned!

November Dinner Meeting

Thursday, November 20th • Princess Royale

Cocktails at 6PM

Dinner at 7PM

\$40 per person (inclusive of tax & gratuity)



Special Guest Speaker
Margot Amelia

MD State Director of Tourism



Keep an eye out for your formal invitation in the mail!

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Best wishes to the **Tomasellos of Fresco's** in their West Ocean City endeavors! Congrats to **Nina Railean**, who is now the Associate Market Manager at **Expedia**. Welcome **Tara Wancowicz** to the **Crab Bag**. **Insurance Management Group** has welcomed **Tim Swartz** as VP & COO. **Colleen and Matt Brown, New Wave**, have welcomed Michael Donovan Brown to the family. **Henry Pertman** will be joining the team at **Cohn Reznick** as Director of Hospitality Consulting. **Melissa Bunting, Captains Galley**, on her new addition, Reece. Congrats to **Matt Bayline, Duffy's Tavern**, who recently got married.



REST EASY: Lodging industry trends

By Joe Haydn

ARE YOU LINKEDIN? 5 WAYS HOTELS & DESTINATIONS CAN USE LINKEDIN TO DRIVE GROUP REVENUES

Ever watch the competition land a big event while you're stuck at a 60% occupancy rate?

You know their rooms are full. Their restaurants are hoppin'. And all you can do is scratch your head and hope that meeting planner calls you next time.

Fortunately, that's not all you can do.

You can build a LinkedIn marketing plan that puts you in front of thousands of meeting planners.

In a moment, I'm going to give you some specific tips on building your LinkedIn plan, but first let's get you in the LinkedIn mindset. Remember that it's social media... not "sales media." Professionals log on to gain business insight and connect. Everyone knows you have something to sell.

So, you can ease off the sales pitch and just be helpful. Work it like you would a networking event—not too pushy, friendly and professional.

Now, that you've got the LinkedIn mindset, let's get to those 5 simple action steps...

1. CONNECT WITH MEETING PLANNERS IN GROUPS:

Imagine you could pull thousands of prospects into one room and talk shop. A nice dream, but tough to pull off, right? Luckily, there are LinkedIn groups that do just that.

Professionals join groups to share content, ask questions, and get answers. You're allowed to be in 50 groups at a time. In one Event Planning & Event Management group, there are currently 211,894 members and 18 subgroups. You could be active in a group like this every day.

2. CONTENT PUBLISHING:

LinkedIn now allows you to publish your own helpful content directly on the site. This can be especially useful if you struggle to reach a business audience.

Use LinkedIn publisher to write directly for event planners. You could give tips on choosing the right room configurations or feeding a group in a tight time space. Or you can tell stories of past successes.

3. COMPANY PAGES:

Besides personal profiles, LinkedIn allows hotels to create company pages. Your company page is an important part of your branding. You can use it to promote blog posts, announce changes, and position your hotel as a leader in your area.

4. SEEK PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL VENDORS:

LinkedIn has over 187 million users and 40% check it daily. Why limit yourself to direct connections with planners? Join local business groups. Send InMails and personalized connection requests to synergistic local vendors. Remember, it behooves them to connect with you, too. This can be one of the easiest ways to grow your network.

5. KEEP AN EYE ON THE COMPETITION:

What if your competition got that big event because they're already active on LinkedIn? If you're not active, you'll never know what the competition is doing. And they'll continue to fill up while you continue to miss sales targets.

It's time to get LinkedIn.

Now that you have a plan, it's time to log on. Join a few groups. Think about what you could publish. Connect with other locals.



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You're Invited: Beer Talk & Tasting

Without a doubt, craft beer has become quite popular throughout the US. Many destinations are designing promotions and packages around this culinary travel. Check out what Asheville, NC is

doing at this site: <http://www.exploreasheville.com/foodtopia/beer-scene/>. We would like to invite you to explore the idea with us, call it a brainstorming happy hour. On **Monday, November 10th from 4:30 – 6:30pm**, we will meet at Burley Oak Brewing to talk about how to turn Ocean City into a Craft Beer destination.



During the event, we'll review the State of Craft Beer and take a look at the history of craft beer revolution, the trends and the demographics. You will also have an opportunity to listen and understand why local is better. So far, Brewmasters Tom Knorr, Evolution Brewing, and Bryan Brushmiller, Burley Oak have been lined up to talk about the sales potential, profitability and the impact on the community. We'll also hear about the goals, philosophies and seasonal options of local breweries.

This is our opportunity to partner and build tourism. Visitors want experiences ~ this is a great way to bring together local businesses, to create a movement and give the visitors the experiences they are looking for.

Please join us for this networking happy hour brainstorming session.

RSVP to inquire@ocvisitor.com or 410-289-6733



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BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: *Malcolm VanKirk*

Past President 2010-2011, Malcolm VanKirk, surely has sand in his toes as he was born and raised in Ocean City and hasn't left since. Upon graduating from Worcester Country School (now Worcester Prep), he graduated from Salisbury State University, knowing early on that the hotel business was where he'd like to be. Malcolm made his entry into the hotel business at 14 years old working for the Wilde Family at the Beachmark Motel. He continued his career in hospitality at the Flamingo Motel working for Rose Brous from 1989-2003. In 2003, his family purchased the Bay Sails Inn on

60th Street, and then in 2006 the Sea Bay Hotel. Also in 2006, he bought the Best Western Hotel and Suites. Malcolm and his wife Kristin, have 2 daughters, Lexie, 15 and Payton, 17. In his free time, you will find Malcolm spending many hours on the lacrosse and soccer fields & basketball courts with his daughters.



THE DISH: *Restaurant industry trends*

By Brandon Hull

SETTING GOALS FOR YOUR RESTAURANT SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

If you're really going to accomplish anything with your restaurant's social media marketing efforts, it's gonna happen because you've got a gameplan for what you want to accomplish digitally and what it's going to deliver in-location.

Let's talk about setting goals for your restaurant social media marketing.

We won't give you a template, as every brand has a different degree of resources (time, money, and people) to leverage, but we'll give you some important points to consider.

Your first and most important decision.

Believe it or not, decision #1 is to identify which platforms makes the most sense for you based on time, money, and people. Just getting started? Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest deserve your attention.

This doesn't mean you're going to be posting all day every day on these four; it just means you're establishing an outpost there — a place where you can communicate and connect with customers.

Once that's out of the way, you'll want to think through like a true marketer, and imagine your series of possible calls to action. A call to action is what you want a reader to do once they've seen your message.

Visiting a location shouldn't be your only call to action.

The most obvious call to action you'll ever use is to visit a location. But that's not the only one you'll ever want to use.

You can establish a following by influencing people to follow you here or there, to engage with your brand in this way or that way, without a call to action to visit a location. THAT is how you

begin to build a brand.

With that said, here is a starter set of goals you'll want to address and/or questions you'll want to ask yourself:

Setting activity goals:

How much time can I dedicate to this each week? (You'll want to dedicate time to three specific activities listening to your followers and monitoring mentions of your brand, posting new content, and replying/commenting on others!)

How many non-promotional posts can I commit to each day or week?

Who am I willing to let post on our behalf?

When will I catch up on replies and launch or schedule retweets and comments on others' posts? How many can I manage per day, maximum?

How many new people will I follow each day or week?

What promotions will I run via social media? When will I run them?

Setting results-oriented goals:

How many new email subscribers do I want to add via social?

How much measurable traffic will I drive (as determined by offer redemptions and check-ins)?

What kind of average check size should I see via social media promotions?

How does our social following compare to the same period last year? More followers? More engagement? More measurable revenue?

You can view social media as a communication channel, but it is a viable marketing channel just as much. You just want to be careful not to constantly broadcast your offers.

Setting the right kind of social media goals can help you stay on-target in getting the most from your restaurant's social media marketing efforts.