GREEN Hospitality

Taking an environmentally friendly approach in business is fashionable, notable and often cost effective. Through implementation of the three Rs—reduce, reuse and recycle—firms are able to conserve energy consumption, minimize inventory waste, and be thrifty, all in the spirit of being eco-conscious. Over the past several years, specific efforts in the hospitality industry have provided the basis for some firms gaining a competitive advantage through enhanced imaging based on conservation and sustainability initiatives. Aspects of the hospitality industry are being impacted by this movement as evidenced by Web sites and directories promoting green travel destinations, green hotels, green eateries, green meeting facilities, green convention centers, as well as green suppliers. In fact, each of these industry segments presents an opportunity for domestic and international certification and award recognition.

It is difficult to argue against a healthier environment and workspace; many hotel and restaurant properties have renewed interest in building materials, interior decorating schemes, and waste management strategies, but have not given much thought to the area of information technology. The recent focus on implementing green IT in other industries is causing hospitality organizations to research energy reductions, cost containments and sensible recycling with respect to hardware, software and netware.

Being Green

What does being green mean? Although the term has become a popular descriptor, there is no standard definition for green beyond its attachment to an eco-friendly business. Given the many building industry guidelines and the proprietary systems some hotel companies self-developed, being green can range from encouraging guests to reuse towels, to waste recycling, to installing wind turbines, to using wind electricity, to cooking with organic foods, to reducing carbon emissions, to installing rooftop solar panels. Compliance with various benchmarks can result in applying a green label.

The traveling public appears to be increasingly interested in patronizing hotels investing in environmentally friendly buildings, equipment, processes and techniques. In fact, some hotels have adopted an environmental checklist that must be adhered to by company-operated properties and franchised locations alike. U.S. government agencies have a policy guideline that requires environmental performance data be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency for hotels and convention centers seeking to do business with the agency. Similarly, the Association of Corporate Travel Executives (ACTE) values environmental performance when choosing hotels to host its meetings. The ACTE, active in more than 50 countries, prefers to conduct its events at venues with strong environmental programs. In fact, the group requires candidate hotels to include an environmental considerations addendum indicating its green practices. Not only does being green mean being environmentally friendly but it is also includes sustainability—a concept implying an effective operational plan of five to 10 years.

Green Management

Improved technology can make gains in energy efficiency more easily attainable. Lodging properties can establish credit toward LEED certification in the use of electricity by implementing a renewable energy program through the use of wind power, run-of-river power, solar power, window tinting and other techniques designed to contain and/or reduce energy consumption and related expenditures. Some hotels have sought benefits in this area by interconnecting the hotel’s energy management system with its property management system to ensure consumption reduction when a room is unoccupied. The linking of energy use and room occupancy presents a natural synergy for conservation. At the time of checkout, all non-critical equipment in a guestroom can be automatically controlled or turned off. Items such as alarm clocks and refrigerators would not be affected, while thermostatic controls, television sets, select room lighting and related components might well be subject to a power-down condition.

Related areas of compliance include a re-lamping campaign involving replacement of incandescent light bulbs with fluorescent lighting (with a possible 75 percent savings), installing energy-efficient laundry equipment, digital thermostats and a reduction in clear air-circulating equipment resulting from a smoke-free policy. In addition, energy efficient guestrooms can also be beneficial. Some properties are even drying laundered items in the sun. Capturing waste heat from power generators, using geothermal energy, transitioning to renewable energy sources, as well as applying solar energy when appropriate will significantly contribute to overall energy efficiency.

Water conservation and recycling are key components of an effective water management program. Among hospitality industry practices in current use are collecting rain water, placing water meters in guestrooms to track usage, and grinding guest soaps to use as laundry detergent for hotel uniforms. Reduction in the amounts of garbage generated combined with the ability to donate savings to community and school projects also lead to environmental friendships.

Techno-myth?

True or false: turning a computer off when it is not in use and powering it back up when needed causes power surges harmful to internal components? While it is a fact that leaving a computer powered up at all times is a wasteful practice, the results from alternating power-on an power-off are not as conclusive. According to the Web site GoodCleanTech.com, there is some truth
to the assumption that a power surge presents a potential danger to the device, but there is also a degree of urban myth. First, completely powering up or down a computer will not damage its internal components (e.g., power supply, mainboard, RAM and others) as they are designed to handle power jolts. However, there may be wear and tear to the hard drive from frequent boot-ups and downs, but most experts perceive this to be negligible. Industry practitioners claim the best solution may be a compromise employing low-power that avoids hard drive shock caused by on and off switching. By pre-programming an automated device to progress to an automatic time-out condition—sleep or standby mode—the system avoids the sudden activity associated with powering up while also minimizing energy requirements. Experts warn that even in a time-out mode, the device still draws a small amount of wattage that over time may total a significant sum.

Green IT

While green lodging opportunities include efficient energy management, earth-friendly cleaning products, water conservation, quality indoor air, waste reduction and product recycling, the requirements for technology are not as straightforward. How much should hospitality practitioners be concerned about the eco-friendliness of installed information technology? Are hospitality firms willing to pay more to gain eco-centric benefits? Are firms willing to switch to a vendor with more green technology? More than half the respondents to a recent Forrester survey claimed to want environmentally friendly products, but of those willing adopters, only 12 percent were willing to pay more for a greener solution. What can be done to make hospitality technology applications more environmentally friendly? Well, the answer to this question involves a complex set of inter-related engineering design elements, operational procedures and presentation of results.

Green information technology (IT), sometimes referred to as green computing, is a term used to describe the application of automated resources in an efficient manner. Green IT originates with system manufacturers producing environmentally friendly products and encouraging users to adopt eco-friendly practices such as reducing paper usage through minimal printing, operating more efficiently with power management, and exercising proper recycling habits. Although the field of green technology is in relative infancy, it encompasses a continuously evolving toolbox of methods and materials, including alternative energy sourcing. As global information technology environmental standards continue to expand, it is highly likely that guidelines governing product life span, power consumption and recyclable resources will be in the forefront.

Green IT Concerns

Sustainability—continuous creation of innovative products and programs to enhance development and expansion of initiatives; involves meeting present needs without compromising the ability to meet future needs.

Recyclability—changing cradle-to-grave scenarios to cradle-to-cradle by incorporating products that can be reclaimed and reused; most agree that computer parts are among the easiest technology items to separate through a process termed demanufacturing.

Resourcability—technology products appear to have a planned obsolescence (short life expectancy) that often leads to a continuous pattern of production-consumption-discarding and when devices are constructed of difficult-to-recycle materials, the problems are exacerbated.

Powerability—the amount of electricity (AC or DC) required for computing can be a significant contributor to cost and global warming.

Viability—creating activity around technologies and requisite products that benefit the environment.

Trim costs. Automate AP.

we understand your industry, we know if you don’t automate and measure it, you can’t control it. that’s why we offer single and multi-property solutions that identify ways to leverage your buying power, control spend and automate your procure-to-pay process.

Birchstreet

see you at HITEC

www.birchstreetsystems.com
IT Products

In July 2007, for the first time, Energy Star specifications establishing green criteria for automated devices went into effect. These specifications apply to a variety of IT products including desktop and notebook computers, hand-held devices, game consoles, integrated computer systems, desktop-derived servers and workstations. Qualified products must meet energy use guidelines in three distinct operating modes: active, standby and sleep. Only the most energy-efficient computing products are awarded the Energy Star label.

The Energy Star approach ensures energy savings when a device is active and performing a range of tasks, as well as when in a standby mode. By requiring efficiency savings across operating modes, these specifications are expected to produce significant cost savings while also helping control greenhouse gas emissions. Hospitality operators are encouraged to seek the Energy Star label when purchasing electronic equipment (see qualified product list at: www.energystar.gov/ia/products/prod_lists/computers_prod_list.xls).

eWaste

The technology industry is largely self-regulated. To date there is no federal law that addresses the issue of end-of-life electronic equipment management and disposal. Current e-waste legislation includes tax incentives that encourage recycling.

Green Hotels

Many hospitality industry observers claim that an eco-friendly campaign should include reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, carbon neutrality, recycling and organic gardening. Green properties are encouraged to capture waste heat from power generators, use renewable energy sources, and educate guests relative to environmental issues impacted through lodging-related operations. Hospitality properties should seek to reduce energy, water usage, and solid waste by installing energy-efficient lighting, low flow fixtures and participating in recycling programs.

The objective of a certification program is to identify those hospitality businesses that exhibit an awareness of sustainability and achieve balanced excellence in at least three critical areas: economic development, social responsibility and stewardship of the natural environment. One of the many state and national programs available to the hospitality industry for environmentally friendly certification is the Green Hotel Association (GHA).

The GHA (greenhotels.com) encourages, promotes and supports ecological consciousness in the hospitality industry. GHA defines a green hotel as an environmentally friendly property whose management is eager to institute programs that save water, energy and reduce solid waste in an attempt to preserve and protect the earth. Two of the association’s better-known strategies include publication of the “Catalog of Environmental Products for the Lodging Industry” and promotion of sheet changing cards that requests guests consider reusing linens more than once. While there are many hospitality properties that participate and practice green initiatives, here are a few of the more celebrated programs.

The Ambrose, Santa Monica, Calif.

As stated on the property’s Web site, “We reduce, reuse and recycle. We compost. We continue to search for the most environmentally friendly alternatives in production and clean our guestrooms with the most ecologically responsible products on the market. We support our neighbors and local merchants and do our best to promote the use of products for the Lodging Industry” and promotion of sheet changing cards that requests guests consider reusing linens more than once. While there are many hospitality properties that participate and practice green initiatives, here are a few of the more celebrated programs.

The Ambrose, Santa Monica, Calif. – As stated on the property’s Web site, “We reduce, reuse and recycle. We compost. We continue to search for the most environmentally friendly alternatives in production and clean our guestrooms with the most ecologically responsible products on the market. We support our neighbors and local merchants and do our best to promote the PC Magazine created a suite of standards leading to green certification based on the following criteria.

Performance efficiency—candidate devices undergo a series of passive energy-usage tests that include an idle state, sleep state and system-off state. Energy usage in such passive states is measured as energy passes through the device’s power brick, an intermediate device located between the PC and its external power source. In addition, an active state measuring energy consumption during complex data processing is also conducted. Recyclability—manufacturer-prescribed steps required to reduce waste and to recycle computerized devices. Eco-Standards—each device is tested against external compliance Standards leading to an overall evaluation score. It is important to note that RoHS and Energy Star testing are requirements of the European Union and US government. GreenTech rating—a combination of the above factors, plus an index for intangibles such as general impression, provides the basis for an overall green rating. A machine earning a PC Magazine GreenTech rating is certified as energy-efficient and amenable to recycling (see list at: www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2275503,00.asp).

While the scope of information technology prevalent in a hotel, restaurant, casino or club is extensive, a few of the more common components are:

Desktop/laptop PC. Energy-efficient desktop PCs were introduced some time ago that, based on construction and operation, consistently use less power than legacy machines. Recent efforts by manufacturers have focused on building devices that are more energy-efficient, have lower operating expenses, and are easier to recycle. Nearly all PCs have been assigned an Energy Star rating.

POS/kiosk terminal. Instead of allowing transaction technology (kiosks, POS terminals, kitchen display units, receipt printers, scanners, readers, etc.) to remain active during low volume or downtime periods, the devices should be automatically configured to transcend into a standby or sleep mode.

Minibar device. Minibars and in-room refrigerators represent an opportunity to reduce electricity costs through expert installation and online monitoring (inventory tracking, temperature alerts and energy costs). Units that operate only when conditions dictate, typically receive a more favorable Energy Star rating (e.g., Dometic Zigbee, Minibar’s SmartCube, IHC NuvoPro and MicroFridge).

Copier/fax/scanner machines. Copiers, scanners and fax machines are among the most energy-intensive office equipment since they tend to remain on for long periods of time (24/7). Energy Star certified imaging equipment is expected to deliver quality performance at a 25 percent higher level of efficiency. Devices that power down when not in use will use about half of the electricity of standard models. In addition, products that print double-sided pages reduce both copying and paper costs. Certified products also run cooler (air conditioning) and last longer (reduced maintenance).

UPS (uninterruptable power supply). Newer UPS models are energy efficient and designed to protect the power going to PCs at a cost that is offset by energy savings. Effective UPS devices are also capable of powering down idle devices for further energy conservation.
Green Factoids:
- Research indicates that switched-off devices may account for nearly 40 percent of the energy consumed by electronics in the average workplace.
- Extra heat generated by automated equipment increases temperature conditions in an office, thereby increasing dependency on air conditioning and HVAC components.
- By 2011, more than 400 million PCs will have been purchased as replacements for current home and office computers. Recycles.org provides a listing of agencies that use old equipment.
- Recycling 100 million cell phones would recover 3.4 metric tons of gold—gold that would not have to be mined. PCs contain gold too: 1.2 tons of gold.
- As much as 50 percent of the power used in growing garbage is wasted in the U.S. and is the fastest-growing garbage segment.
- A survey by Staples in November 2007 indicated that only 23 percent of U.S. residents recycle electronics.
- E-waste makes up 2 percent of solid waste in the U.S. and is the fastest-growing garbage segment.
- As much as 50 percent of the power most desktop computers use is wasted as heat jettisoned by fans on the power supply.
- If all commuters worked from home just one day a week, we could save 5.85 billion gallons of oil each year.

Kimpton’s The Muse, New York – The mission statement of the Kimpton hotel chain is: “Support a sustainable world by using non-intrusive, high quality, eco-friendly products and services at all Kimpton hotels.” All its properties are expected to adhere to strict corporate policies governing such things as environmentally friendly cleaning supplies, in-room designer recycling bins, complimentary organic beverages, guest towel and linen reuse program, energy conserving lighting, flow-restricting water conservation and organic food and beverage honor bar items. In addition, several Kimpton properties, including The Muse, offer hybrid car incentives for guests driving to its hotels, as well as arranging pedicabs as eco-transportation alternatives for local guest commutes. Kimpton Hotels has made a strong commitment to environmental responsibility and strives to continuously introduce new initiatives, products and practices through its EarthCare program. [kimptonhotels.com]

Seaport Hotel and World Trade Center, Boston, Mass. –This property is composed of a hotel, meeting and exhibit space, and a special function facility. Through an award-winning initiative entitled “Seaport Saves,” this independently owned entity states its interests this way, “In a world of limited natural resources, we are committed to reducing the carbon footprint of our operation. Seaport has created Seaport Saves, a groundbreaking environmental program dedicated to increasing sustainability and conservation throughout all aspects of the organization. This philosophy allows us to continually source and execute innovative ways to improve our operation in an environmentally responsible manner. We encourage our guests, team members and vendors to embrace and practice an environmentally sensitive lifestyle as well. It is possible to coexist in a delicate balance with the natural world while providing world-class service in a luxurious setting.” As a result of this dedication, the property adheres to such eco-friendly practices as: allergy/asthma-friendly rooms, green cleaning products, ozone-gas laundry services, resource and in-room recycling, biological decomposing, smart thermostats and transportation subsidies. A unique offering is the company’s green wedding packages. This package plan includes a collection of environmentally sensitive elements. [seaportboston.com]

NOVEXSYS is “The New Standard in Property Management Systems.” It is Web-based software that is sold as a service (SaaS) and operates on any current Windows operating system.

Built on the Microsoft.NET Framework, NOVEXSYS requires no new hardware be purchased. It is easy to buy, easy to install, easy to maintain, easy to train and easy to use! See us at HITEC, Booth 540.

www.brandstandproducts.com 1-877-843-3681

- Essential PMS Functionality
- Multi-Property Capability
- Low Cost of Ownership

(972) 793-1730 www.novexsys.com
Green Meetings

Marriott Hotels claims that by 2017, it will have installed solar power in as many as 40 hotels, while expanding its recycling program. While 90 percent of its hotels currently recycle, only a few of them are recycling in-room guest trash. Marriott is also updating design guidelines for its hotels to meet the U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED standards. The company is also pressuring its suppliers to provide greener products. The company said it will order 47 million of the greener BIC pens a year. It is also buying one million room-ready towels, which eliminate the initial wash cycle, saving 6 million gallons of water a year. Marriott is also looking into recyclable carpet and key cards that turn to compost. Next month, Marriott plans to introduce a green meetings concept which will feature recycled paper and responsible packaged water, among other things.

Green meetings, green hotels, green convention centers, green suppliers and international awards for being green affect all aspects of the hospitality industry. Environmentally conscious meetings are also a growing trend. The greening of a meeting can be accomplished in many ways; including not pre-filling water glasses at banquet tables, collecting name tags and badge holders for reuse, providing recycling areas inside exhibition areas, and using compostable cups instead of water bottles. Often meeting planners insist on biodegradable and recyclable materials being used by host sites as part of the selection process. Many industry observers do not consider green events a fad, but rather a long-term perspective. The way organizations are doing business, with resources becoming rare and expensive, there is an increased attention to support eco-friendly meetings. In the tourism sector, green (ecotourism) is considered a source of profitability. Research indicates that more than 60 percent of meeting planners deliberately avoid a destination or venue with a poor environmental record. In 2003 IMEX introduced the Green Meeting Award and recently partnered with the Green Meeting Industry Council to launch the Green Exhibitor Award and Green Supplier Award. Green meeting leaders claim that being green is not only right for the environment, but actually saves businesses money.

By definition, a green meeting incorporates environmental considerations throughout all stages of the meeting in order to minimize the negative impact on the environment. Basically, a green meeting supports a green initiative and is expected to save money while improving the environment. The Convention Industry Council (CIC) Green Meetings Report is the reference for the meeting planning industry, while the EPA’s It’s Easy Being Green document stipulates mandatory requirements for green meetings. Sustainable Travel International works with such industry leaders as InterContinental, Marriott and Leading Hotels of the World to reduce their carbon footprint. Recently, Virginia, California, Michigan, Florida and Vermont initiated their own certification program for green hotels. The bottom line is that people have become more environmentally aware and have begun basing business decisions on environmental factors as well as logistics. The State of Florida is a case in point.

The Florida Green Lodging Program was established in 2004 by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) with the intent of recognizing and rewarding environmentally conscientious lodging facilities in the state. Through this rapidly growing program, DEP has encouraged the lodging industry to conserve and protect Florida’s natural resources. This program is unique and specific to the Florida environment.

The EPA anticipates that its Green Meetings Program will have a positive impact on the hospitality industry. The assumption that the cost to comply with green upgrades can be more than offset by long-term savings remains to be documented.

AH&LA Initiatives

Superior energy management leads to improved financial performance. Starting with low-cost/no-cost opportunities, hoteliers can save up to 10 percent of energy costs with little or no capital investment. That’s significant when one considers that those savings are equivalent to increasing the average daily room rate by $1.35 for full-service hotels and $.62 for limited-service hotels. Additional measures can save up to 30 percent. The last result is clean air.

The AH&LA Good Earthkeeping logo and related outreach materials make it easy for participants to communicate energy savings in terms of environmental leadership to guests. With 43 million environmentally minded travelers, a boosted ecological stewardship image translates into additional profits.

Global Initiatives

The Global Green Hospitality Consortium (GGHC) was founded to provide the hospitality industry with the resources needed to implement sustainable standards and practices offered by various green associations at the local, state and federal levels, including such programs as EPA Green Partnership, Energy Star and U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED certification. GGHC works with a hotel property to develop practical tools and skilled assistance to facilitate the implementation of sustainable initiatives and compliant standards. The group’s certification program includes recognition for green best practices. GGHC is wholly owned by the Global Green Energy Consortium (GGEF), a non-profit organization registered in the state of Delaware. [www.globalgreenhospitality.org]

Hospitality’s Role

The hospitality industry plays a significant role in ecotourism, and therefore the American Hotel and Lodging Association has proclaimed the greening of the hospitality industry as its top priority for 2008. The AH&LA recently established a Green Task Force to develop a comprehensive sustainability initiative for existing and newly constructed properties. By year-end, the Green Task Force is charged with creating a hotel-centric LEED building certification program, in conjunction with the U.S. Green Building Council.

Most industry observers maintain that while going green is the right thing to do, staying green after the spotlight has faded may well be a bigger challenge.

Michael Kasavana, Ph.D., NCE, CHTP, is a NAMA Professor in Hospitality Business for the School of Hospitality Business at Michigan State University. He can be reached at kasavana@msu.edu.