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INTRODUCING ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY VIDES PĀRVALDĪBAS IEVIEŠANA VIESNĪCU NOZARĒ

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Summary: This article presents a case study of the introduction of environmental management practices and systems in the hotel industry to provide an answer to the environmentally sustainable tourism challenge. It describes the approach learned in replicating the approach to resorts around the world are now adopting environmental management systems as a means of improving resource use efficiency, reducing operating costs, increasing staff involvement and guest awareness, and obtaining international recognition in the travel and tourism marketplace. This article examines the cost savings and performance improvements possibility at hotel properties that were among to adopt an environmental management system (EMS).

Hotels and resorts around the world use large amounts of water, energy, chemicals, supplies, and disposable items. They also generate lots of waste such as wastewater and solid waste. Because of this, small efficiency gains can lead to large cost savings and environmental performance improvements.

The use of resources (e.g. water, energy, materials, chemicals, etc.) and pollution generation produce the main environmental impacts of the hotel industry. Therefore indicators of sustainability for the hotel industry should include indexes of the consumption of these resources. In addition, resource use constitute a significant portion of hotel operating costs, thus this type of indicators allow hotels to closely monitor expenses associated with the inefficient use of resources, and take corrective measures when necessary.

Environmental management is a systematic approach to finding practical ways for saving water, energy, and materials, and reducing negative environmental impacts. A proactive environmental management program is a three win proposition because it can help a property save money, get recognized for environmental leadership, and preserve and protect unique destinations.

1. Save money. Environmental management reduces operating costs and improves profitability. Most hotels can quickly achieve substantial cost savings with a modest investment in simple, low-cost technologies and practices, and has realized an annual return on investment (ROI) of 100%.

2. Get recognized for environmental leadership. Adopting environmental best practices can help hotel stand out from the competition and be recognized through certification programs, awards, tour operator programs, and other special promotions. Getting recognized for your commitment to environmental management can enhance your property's image with environmentally conscious guests and tour operators.

3. Protect and preserve destinations. Each year millions of tourists go rest to experience the natural and cultural treasures that the region has to offer. The hospitality industry, while a critical engine for economic growth, also puts a tremendous strain on the natural "assets" such as beaches, reefs, rivers, and forests.

Identifying opportunities for cost savings and improved environmental management is best achieved through an all-encompassing and step-by-step process that addresses all aspects of hotel operations and facilities.

An environmental management program is based on practical steps to conserve water and energy and minimize waste. Typical strategies include:

- Water conservation devices such as efficient shower-heads and faucet aerators;
- Energy-efficient lighting and lighting controls
- Weather-stripping and insulation of hot water pipes, refrigerant lines, and air-conditioned areas.
- Timers and occupancy sensors for lighting and A/C equipment

In addition to engineering "fixes" and efficient equipment, a property can get a quick start by implementing key operational measures such as:

- Adopting an Environmental Policy;
- Appointing an Environmental Officer;
- Establishing a "Green Team";
- Establishing a preventative maintenance program;
- Adopting best practices (staff procedures) for conservation and waste minimization in hotel operations;
- Developing a utility monitoring program.

After implementing the initial steps outlined above, a property may decide to take additional steps to achieve greater cost savings and environmental improvements. This typically involves 1) an Environmental Assessment of hotel, 2) the adoption of an integrated tool known as an Environmental Management System (EMS), and 3) seeking third party certification by a recognized program such as Green Globe 21.

Although improving the efficiency of hotel facilities and equipment is essential to becoming an environmentally-friendly hotel, "engineering fixes" alone are only part of the puzzle. Hotel staff is the other part.

Some of the most significant water, energy and materials savings are achieved not by installing new equipment, but by improving standard operating procedures and training and motivating staff to use resources efficiently. Most of these measures have a very low implementation cost and a payback period of close to zero!

An EMS is a framework that helps management assign responsibilities, motivate staff, implement best practices, and monitor performance. It typically involves a set of activities, led by a core group of staff that includes meetings, planning, training, incentive programs, utility monitoring, and reporting progress.

Certification programs can be thought of as an official "stamp of approval" of environmental program. These programs require that hotel has a third party (an accredited "auditor") come in and evaluate it against an established set of criteria. Getting certified can help current hotel stand out to environmentally-conscious travellers by "proving" to them that you are as green as you say you are. Because today's travellers and tour operators are increasingly aware of environmental issues, this could emerge as an important competitive advantage in today's fast-moving marketplace.

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