



Sustainability



A smart business decision

22 April 2009 7:52 AM
By Hervé Houdré
HotelNewsNow.com columnist



Adopting the triple bottom line of economic prosperity, social responsibility and environmental protection is a smart business decision but, unfortunately, not always recognized as such by the majority of hoteliers, who are still hesitant. They should consider this: One of the numerous advantages of an sustainable development strategy is the relationship it helps develop with hotels' major stakeholders.



Hervé Houdré

Shareholders/owners: trust

Shareholders' and owners' confidence is reinforced by commitments such as transparency, good corporate governance and ethics, which are the pillars of any business involved in sustainable development. Additionally, the strategy answers shareholders' own social responsibility needs. Shareholders will feel proud of their financial commitment to a responsible company. In an age of global communication, companies are scrutinized by the media, and sometimes wrong decisions can lead to serious trouble and a plunging share price. A thorough SD strategy will help grow shareholders' confidence and earn their trust and respect.

Employees: retention

A socially responsible company assures it's a fair employer that treats its staff with respect. This kind of company encourages new and top talent to join. Employees will feel proud of being associated with an industry leader that's at the vanguard of corporate citizenship and will be encouraged to remain associated with such a company for a longer period of time. Employees will be involved in the SD efforts of the company. It's quite common to see them supporting the effort and enticing the company to go further in its endeavors. They're thankful their employer gives them an opportunity to do and be good while taking care of their own professional responsibility. This is true particularly with the younger generation of employees.

Guests: in the know

A hotel that's at the forefront of SD will give its customers a strong sense of being in the know. Choosing a hotel isn't simply based on a good rating; it's about receiving value for money and can be a symbol of status that represents the personal values of the guest. SD can help a hotel win customers over a competitor that doesn't integrate SD in its strategy. It's more common for individual clients and corporations to ask what the environmental and social responsibility efforts of the property are before making their choice. In the current psychological environment toward luxury, communicating its responsible strategy can help a property attract customers in need of additional reasons to stay there. Today, staying in a responsible hotel is better perceived than staying in a luxurious one.

Vendors: win-win-win

It's important to offer our clients a regional experience. Purchasing from local vendors satisfies this objective and supports businesses and jobs for the community around us. Many vendors understand the importance of growing and selling sustainable, green and organic products. It becomes a win-win-win situation: purchasing from local vendors fulfills the environmental goal of incurring less pollution by working with nearby businesses. It also strengthens the image of the hotel as an institution that cares and satisfies clients' quest for local experience.

Financial partners: confidence

Latest Newsletter Articles

- STR posts US results for 17-23 May 2009
- STR posts Canada results for 17-23 May 2009
- What gets measured gets managed
- Spanish hotel association appeals to politicians
- The state of luxury: A special report (Part 1)
- The state of luxury: A special report (Part 2)
- The state of luxury: A special report (Part 3)
- 5 things to know: 29 May 2009

Other Articles Like This

- What gets measured gets managed
- Ocean Properties reaches green milestone
- WTTC announces Tourism for Tomorrow Awards winners
- HD Expo: The green dilemma
- Marriott raises LEED-certified status
- AH&LA launches Green Guidelines challenge
- A smart business decision

Other Articles By This Writer

- What gets measured gets managed
- Four steps to engage staff in sustainable development
- Give up giving up! Go sustainable!
- Sustainability in the kitchen: a glossary
- Coming to terms with sustainability
- Houdré: Implement a 'sustainable' strategy
- Houdré: SD boosts bottom line
- Hervé Houdré: A sustainable wake-up call

Newsletter

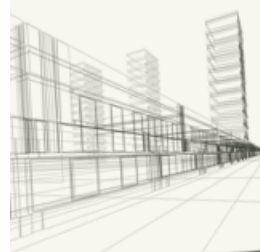
Catch up on news, data and analysis by registering for HotelNewsNow.com's free, daily e-mail newsletter by clicking [here](#).

Archives

Access STR and STR Global press releases, reports and columns by clicking [here](#).



The past, present and future of the hotel industry



Whether you need high-level overviews on existing and future hotel supply or detailed reports on specific markets, STR has your pipeline needs covered.



www.strglobal.com
+1 615 824 8664

FREE Webinar
Inspire Online Travel Shoppers
[>> Learn more](#)
June 4 - 2 pm EST

Events

- 5/31/2009 - New York University International Hospitality Industry Investment Conference
- 6/4/2009 - Webinar - How to Stand Out, Inspire and Motivate the Online Travel Shopper
- 6/10/2009 - Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International's Affordable Meetings West

It's not easy to get financial support these days. A genuine approach to SD is a definite plus in a project that will be submitted to a banker. Bankers aren't romantic people, but they have to ensure their shareholders are satisfied with their decisions. Some banks are lending money only to companies that have a clear sustainable development strategy. No one knows how long the current economic crisis will last, but everyone is convinced there will be more scrutiny of the client companies and the transparency of their projects.

Governments: guarantee

Because of global media attention, governments are subject to immediate criticism whenever they make a decision that doesn't seem to be in the best interest of their constituents. Partnering with a hotel or a hotel company that prides itself on having an SD culture can be a guarantee government officials are making the right decision. It will unquestionably make a difference if one of two bidding companies for a development project has a SD strategy. It's also a guarantee to the government the company has the right values and will strive to deliver its promises.

Conclusion

If the benefits of a triple-bottom-line strategy are obvious, why are many hoteliers still hesitant to adopt one? First, it's a new approach to do business that only appeared in the late 1990s and early 2000s in the hotel industry. Second, SD is still considered a costly strategy when it comes to building retrofit, but it should be viewed as an energy cost-reduction measure. Third, hoteliers haven't seen the positive impact such a strategy can have on the revenue generated by clients in search of responsible hotels. Let's be hopeful the current economic crisis will unveil such benefits.

Hervé Houdré began his tenure as general manager of the Willard InterContinental Washington D.C. in 2004. He is recognized for introducing refinements that impact profit and increase market share. Under his leadership, the Willard InterContinental has embarked on a sustainability program, Willard InterContinental - The Next 100 Years. Houdré, who has written a white paper, Sustainable Hospitality© : Sustainable Development in the Hotel Industry, and his team have put into place a five-year roadmap that defines and quantifies the mid-term SD goals for the hotel. The hotel published its first GRI Standard Sustainability Report available at www.willarddc.com/sd

Comments

0 Comments

[Show All](#)

[Login](#) to post your comment

[Subscribe](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Sponsors](#) | [RSS](#) | [Submit Press Release](#) | [About Us](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Legal Disclaimer](#)

Copyright © 2004-2009 Smith Travel Research /DBA HotelNewsNow.com (HNN). All Rights Reserved.

