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FORWARD THINKING

INCOMING AH&LA CHAIR JIM ABRAHAMSON HAS A VISION TO MAKE LODGING STRONGER

BEST YEAR EVER

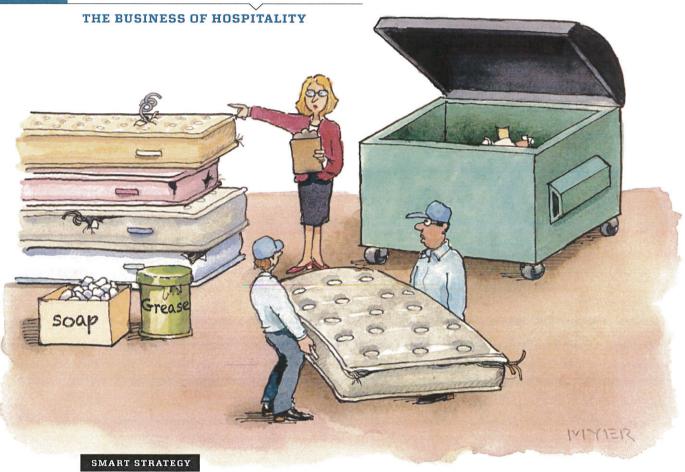
EXPERTS OFFER A **BLOCKBUSTER** FORECAST

GROW PROFITS

THE NEXT HOT HOTEL MARKET

> JIM ABRAHAMSON CEO, INTERSTATE HOTELS & RESORTS

OWNER'S MANUAL



Trash Talk

TRIMMING YOUR PROPERTY'S WASTE OUTPUT CAN BENEFIT THE ENVIRONMENT — AND YOUR BOTTOM LINE BY JOLYNN TUMOLO

TRASH PILES ARE SHRINKING across the United States as a growing number of hotels are opting to divert waste previously destined for landfills. Adopting greener waste-management practices offers a handful of benefits. It aligns your property with state and local waste-reduction laws that, if not enacted in your area yet, likely will be soon. It demonstrates a commitment to environmental responsibility, which can be an appealing draw for socially conscious clients. And it can yield significant savings when done right.

"Diverting waste from landfills is a growing concern in our industry, and it's smart business," says Randy Gaines, vice president of engineering, housekeeping, and laundry operations, Americas, Hilton Worldwide. That's because diverting waste often results in bottom-line savings for a hotel. A few years back, Hilton Worldwide switched from delivering complementary print copies of *USA Today* to every room to instead offering digital editions of the newspapers automatically available on guests' smartphones and tablets. Lower subscription costs aside, fewer newspapers in the garbage across all 12 of the company's brands means much less waste and a subsequent slash in disposal costs.

Beyond offering e-newspapers, hotels have more \rightarrow





→ opportunities than ever to taper the amount of trash targeted for landfills. As the nation as a whole pays more attention to reducing waste, organizations are cropping up to help businesses-hotels included-dispose more wisely. By working with such partners, Hilton Worldwide slashed its waste output across its property portfolio by more than 26 percent between 2009 and 2013 (exceeding a 20 percent goal the company had set). Combine that with additional reductions in energy use, water use, and carbon output, and the brand saved a staggering \$388 million over four years. "We are saving a tremendous amount of money," Gaines says.

If you're looking to make a dent in your own property's disposal costs, food waste is a good place to start. Because of its weight, food waste can be pricey since disposal fees are based on tonnage. Rerouting it strategically can cut costs significantly. That's why so many full-service hotels, especially those with large banquet facilities, partner with local soup kitchens and shelters to donate unused yet perfectly edible food for people in need. Hilton donates used cooking fats from its kitchens to local farms, which use it for animal food. Many rendering companies also have an interest in such waste, which they also convert into animal food as \rightarrow

EXPLAINER

BUYING BETTER

Fundamental to good waste management is information. Having a solid understanding of your hotel's waste flow (what goes in, how it's disposed of what the associated costs are) can generate savings through more effective decision making at the front end: purchasing. When Hilton Worldwide hired a company to help analyze the economics of its waste flow, it discovered it was often paying extra to dispose of items categorized as hazardous waste, specifically, mercury-containing lightbulbs and oil-based paints.

"So we decided to change how we do things," says Randy Gaines, vice president of engineering, housekeeping, and laundry operations, Americas, Hilton Worldwide. "We said, 'Let's buy differently. Let's stop using some of this stuff." The company made the move to environmentally friendly bulbs that were easily recyclable. It also replaced oil-based paints with recyclable paint with low VOCs, or volatile organic compounds.

BioHitech America offers a picture of a hotel's food waste situation through smart technology available in its digester. Customizable to a hotel's needs, the BioHitech Cloud can provide data on everything from the type and amount of food introduced to who is introducing it and when. So, for example, if every day at 10 a.m. someone in the kitchen is disposing of a pound of chopped meat, management can receive that information and adjust its purchasing accordingly.

"Reducing waste is truly the greenest alternative," says Frank E.
Celli, BioHitech America CEO. "And it offers our customers the most economic benefit."

well as cosmetics, soap, and other products. Some provide storage barrels and free pick-up for hotels willing to donate.

Food waste that can't be repurposed or donated can be composted on-site or even mechanically "digested" using an environmentally friendly food digester. Machines like the Eco-Safe Digester from BioHitech America convert food waste primarily into water, which can be flushed through standard sewer lines. BioHitech America offers its digester via lease or purchase; the cost varies depending on a hotel's specific size requirements. "In some areas of the country, waste transportation and disposal costs can be in excess of \$100 per ton," says BioHitech America CEO Frank E. Celli. "So a larger facility using one of our units can eliminate enough food waste to save up to \$100 a day, which over time is fairly substantial. On that savings alone, our customers are sometimes capable of achieving paybacks in one and a half or two years. So it offers a pretty attractive return on investment.'

Bulky, heavy mattresses—which, by the way, never decompose—can be recycled. In fact, mattress recycling is now mandatory in two states: Rhode Island and Connecticut. (California is set to make it three in July.) After a mattress is collected and filleted, the steel from its springs can be made into construction items, the foam into carpet padding, and the cotton into insulation. Wood from the box spring can be chipped for mulch or burned for biofuel.

Since 2009, Hilton Worldwide has diverted more than 20,300 mattress and box springs from landfills through its partnership with Global Sustainability Solutions in Manassas, Va. Hotels embarking on renovations may see substantial savings by recycling mattresses rather than trashing them. "Nine times out of 10, we can beat the cost to landfill," says Jessica Stracener, president of Global Sustainability Solutions.

Because landfill costs differ by region, the company provides cost analysis proposals to hotels interested in its recycling services, which—if clients prefer—include the installation of new mattresses as well as the removal of old. In its cost analysis for Hilton Worldwide, the company found it could recycle mattresses and

CONNECT the **DOTS**

Hoteliers don't need a degree in environmental science to reduce waste and save money. Evadne Giannini, principal of Mountaindale, N.Y.-based Hospitality Green, offers a few simple tips for properties.

FIND THE RIGHT

If you just stick a plain brown box outside a door, nobody will think that's a recycling bin. Buy the standard, clearly marked containers to place around the hotel.

CHECK THE FREQUENCY OF TRASH COLLECTION

Most haulers make a contract based on 100 percent occupancy. "If you're at 40 percent capacity, why do you want them to show up at your door every day," Giannini says.

EASE UP ON SINGLE SERVINGS

Do you really need to have individual creamers during breakfast service? "Could you go to a small pitcher?" she asks.

STOP THE STYROFOAM

Forgo these non-recyclable cups in the employee breakroom. "There's no reason for it," Giannini stresses. Instead, suggest staff members bring in their own coffee mugs.

PLACE ORDERS SENSIBLY

Plan out food and office supply orders so you don't get a giant cardboard box with just two heads of broccoli or a couple notebooks.

box springs for an average \$20 per set versus the \$50 average it would cost to landfill them. "Also by using our services, you establish yourself as an eco-friendly property," Stracener says, "which generates consumer interest and improves your brand image."

Every day in the United States, hotels discard 2.6 million partially used bars of soap. By collecting your property's soap stubs and sending them to a nonprofit recycling organization like Global Soap or Clean the World, you can not only whittle away dumpster waste but also help combat hygiene-related illnesses, which claim more than

1.7 million lives a year globally. These soap recyclers convert used bars into new full-size bars, which they then send to developing countries or disaster areas where soap is scarce. Global Soap estimates that 1.4 million deaths a year could be prevented through simply handwashing with soap.

By forwarding soap scraps, hotels stand to benefit, too. "Hotels reduce their trash bills by diverting a considerable amount of waste from the trash bins each month. Then, by sending the soap and amenities to Global Soap, they're able to take advantage of a couple of tax deductions as well," says Executive Director Samuel Stephens. "The first deduction is any cost that a property incurs in getting the soap to our factory in Las Vegas—it's considered

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a deductible charitable contribution. In addition, the soap itself is considered an 'in-kind' donation, which is also deductible."

Since 2009, Marriott International has donated more than 271,000 pounds of soap and 175,000 pounds of bathroom products through its Clean the World partnership. These have been recycled into thousands of hygiene kits that help children in impoverished communities around the world live healthier lives.