

## **Nobody Asked Me, But... No. 25**

### **Guestroom Design & Amenities, Get a Human, Best Luxury Hotels in the U.S., Turnpike, The Pineapple as Symbol of Hospitality, Fair Franchising, Quote of the Month**

**By Stanley Turkel, MHS, ISHC**

1. Guestroom Design & Amenities- In the September 1912 issue of *American Homes & Gardens*, writer and futurist Harold D. Eberlein presented his predictions of the impact of air travel on American cities. Eberlein foresaw a proliferation of roof gardens on top of large hotels to provide pleasing views for guests. He also predicted that travelers could expect to find “clerks and bellboys posted on the top floor ready to attend to the immediate wants of tourists who have just arrived by airplane. “Aerial taxicabs” will circle like vultures over the hotel, “he wrote, waiting for a doorman to signal one of them to alight and pick up a departing guest.”

Eberlein’s fanciful but inaccurate prediction of the future shows just how difficult it is to guess about the impact of technological innovations on hotel design and operations.

Wireless high-speed Internet access, that ubiquitous service that has taken the hotel industry by storm; has been or will be installed in most hotel guestrooms as well as public spaces, in economy as well as luxury hotels. Other hotels are installing net-based platforms that control everything from the concierge’s wireless headset to water pressure; 40” LCD screens that do quadruple duty as a 5.1 virtual surround-sound theater, computer screen, satellite radio and digital art studio; touch-screen VoIP phones that schedules wake-up calls, retrieves your car from the valet, orders breakfast and checks your flight status. While the hotel industry is connecting with wireless technology in a big way, there are still certain basic shortcomings in the average hotel room that can be corrected without additional technological breakthroughs.

Here is a description of the shortcomings of a one-bedroom suite in a large convention hotel where I stayed recently while attending a conference. It’s unfortunately true that these shortcomings are also present in many hotel rooms in the United States.

- The suite failed the Turkel blindfold test in that it looks just like every other guestroom, in a Marriott, Hyatt, Westin, Sheraton or Hilton hotel. There were no distinctive design elements to distinguish it from the competition.
- The blackout draperies were inadequate to protect against the morning sunrise and allowed a “halo” of light to penetrate the periphery.
- The two telephones were on the night table and on an end table next to the sofa. In either case, guests are forced to sit uncomfortably to make calls.
- A low-quality clock-radio alarm was located on the night table. Today’s guests care about the quality of music available. Incidentally, the alarm clock was difficult to program.
- The lighting in the suite was totally inadequate with too few lamps and low-wattage incandescent bulbs.
- The bathroom amenities (shampoo, conditioner and lotion) had print so small that you needed a magnifying glass to read them.
- There were no hand-holds in the bathtub/shower and no curved shower curtain rod.
- There was no filtered air and no filtered water.
- There was no opportunity to skip daily linen changes.
- There was no refrigerator or microwave.

2. Get a Human- Want to talk to a real person when you dial customer service? Before dialing visit <http://gethuman.com/us/> for shortcuts on how to bypass those automated operators and forever-on-hold telephone calls at various business calling centers. This website, staffed by volunteers and fueled by reports from more than 1 million consumers, offers specific phone numbers and instructions on how to reach living, breathing customer support workers at scores of companies providing goods and services. It also allows you to report your own “on hold” time. The site is updated weekly, but be aware that company telephone information can change without warning.

3. According to TripAdvisor, the ten best luxury hotels in the United States are:

1. Sofitel New York, New York, NY
2. French Quarter Inn, Charleston, South Carolina
3. Four Seasons San Francisco, San Francisco, California

4. Omni San Francisco Hotel, San Francisco, California
5. Reunion Resort & Club of Orlando, Celebration, Florida
6. J.W. Marriott Las Vegas Resort, Las Vegas, Nevada
7. Four Seasons Resort Maui, Wailea, Hawaii
8. Four Seasons Resort Lana'i at Manele Bay, Lana'i City, Hawaii
9. The Beverly Hills Hotel, Beverly Hills, California
10. Embassy Suites Hotel Portland Downtown, Portland, Oregon

4. Do you know that the word “turnpike” came from the practice of placing a pike or staff across a toll road. One side of the pike was imbedded with spikes. When the toll was paid, the pike was turned spikes down so the traveler could pass. The first turnpike was built between Philadelphia and Lancaster in 1792.

5. The Pineapple as a Symbol of Hospitality- In order to understand how the pineapple became the symbol for hospitality, we must return to Newport, Rhode Island in the 17<sup>th</sup> century founded in 1639 by settlers seeking religious freedom. Newport's majestic schooners participated in the infamous Triangle trade: ships would sail to western Africa to pick up slaves, continue to the Caribbean to trade the slaves for sugar, molasses and sugar and then back to New England. Along with these commodities, captains would bring home pineapples whose exotic nature and sweetness made them a rare delicacy in the colonies. Before emails or cellphones, sea captains would place the pineapples on their gate posts or over their doorways to inform neighbors that they had returned. Colonial hostesses would set a fresh pineapple as a centerpiece of their dining table when visitors joined their families in their homes. Later, carved wooden pineapples were placed over the doorways of inns and hotels to represent hospitality. The practice has continued to the present and frequently one sees the pineapple icon in hotels, restaurants and homes to signal an atmosphere of hospitality and welcome.

6. Fair Franchising is Not an Oxymoron- As every franchisee should know, franchise agreements developed by the legal departments of major franchisors are presented as boiler plate documents. There is little or no practical room for negotiation unless the franchisee is a major company. The greater the clout of the franchisee's company, the more likely it will receive serious consideration of beneficial adjustments to the franchise agreement. The most important

contract elements are territorial protection and termination clauses. These are the most difficult to negotiate especially with the largest franchisors which have the most one-sided licenses.

However, there are other important clauses in the typical franchise agreement which hotel owners should negotiate: choice of law clause, statute of limitations, arbitration, no-jury clause, sales/assignment/ transferability, merger & integration clause, right of first refusal, etc.

There may be no better way to negotiate a fair franchise agreement than to take the following two steps: 1) select a franchise company who believes in fair franchising  
2) retain an experienced franchise lawyer who understands the important implications of these provisions.

Contact me for help with both of these steps.

#### 7. Quote of the Month

“It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to change.”

Charles Darwin

Stanley Turkel, MHS, ISHC operates his hotel consulting office as a sole practitioner specializing in franchising issues, asset management and litigation support services. Turkel's clients are hotel owners and franchisees, investors and lending institutions. Turkel serves on the Board of Advisors at the NYU Tisch Center for Hospitality, Tourism and Sports Management. He is a member of the prestigious International Society of Hospitality Consultants. His provocative articles on various hotel subjects have been published in the Cornell Quarterly, Lodging Hospitality, Hotel Interactive, Hotel Online, AAHOA Lodging Business, Bottomline, New York Times, etc. If you need help with a hotel operations or franchising problem such as encroachment/impact, termination/liquidated damages or litigation support, don't hesitate to call 917-628-8549 or email [stanturkel@aol.com](mailto:stanturkel@aol.com).