



ISHC Washington DC Meeting

Saturday November 1st 2008

“What’s Green Got to Do With It?”

Panel

Roger Cline (Moderator)

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Issues List

1. Is there a competitive advantage to be had from a green strategy and if so, what is it?
2. The U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification system has gained traction with nearly 14,000 member companies and organizations supporting the Council's efforts. Is this system destined to dominate the scene in the U.S. and should we assume that the hospitality industry will need to adopt its standards?
3. A good portion of what some businesses hold out as “corporate social responsibility” or “environmental friendliness” is more to do with PR than policies that are really making a difference. Is this any more true in hospitality than in other industries? And do we have examples where these issues are truly embedded in the business and are influencing key decisions?
4. If selling green to both investors and consumers is relatively hard work, will it be seen by managers as a luxury that can be foregone given the current economic downturn?
5. Environmentally sustainable, green, socially responsible....these labels undoubtedly mean different things to different people and to different businesses. They may be code for something quite simple such as companies and hotels meaning to be good or seeming to be so. Is there clarity within the hospitality industry and us consultants who serve it, as to what these labels mean and whether they are used too loosely?

6. What do you see as the top three business benefits of a corporate social responsibility strategy for the typical hospitality company in order of importance?
 - Better brand reputation
 - Better long term decision making
 - More attractive to potential and existing employees
 - Responding to the ethical standards of customers
 - Revenue higher than it would otherwise be
 - Others?
7. HVS tried to launch a certification program some years back but they were ahead of the curve and it didn't gain traction. The program involved five categories: environmental commitment, solid waste management, energy efficiency, water conservation and preservation, employee environment education and community involvement. The firm is updating the program and apparently plans to re-launch it in the U.S. soon. Will they still be ahead of the curve or is the industry ready for an “industry-specific” set of standards?
8. If the green movement is widely adopted by the hospitality industry, those who pursued green initiatives early on will likely lose their first-mover advantage leaving the benefits to those with the best execution. Which are the best examples of the companies or hotels that currently appear to have the best execution?
9. Where in the organization is it most effective to house those responsible for sustainability and green initiatives and why?
10. Is it fair to assume that most consumers would choose a “greener” hotel provided it doesn't cost more, is at least as good as the alternative and is associated with a trusted brand? And if so, is there any research to prove this? And further, are greener hotels able to establish price premiums reflecting the value of their greenness to consumers?
11. The LEED operations and maintenance certification for existing buildings targets savings through cost-effective, environmentally sustainable operations and maintenance programs, and sustainable purchasing practices that can be quickly and conveniently implemented. Which are the most notable of these programs and practices that have proven effective within hotels?
12. In the past the cost of “going green” was deemed to be too high for those focused on the bottom line. How is this changing in terms of both sentiment and reality, if at all?

13. For existing hotels, the capital expenditures required to retrofit outdated windows, replace dated HVAC equipment and change wasteful plumbing fixtures in order to achieve environmental certification is high. What advice should we be giving the owners and managers of such properties?
14. A retailing giant in the U.K. figures that British consumers divide into four broad groups. About one in ten is passionately green and go out of their way to shop accordingly, one-quarter are not interested and in-between are those who care but want green consumption to be easy, and those who are vaguely concerned but don't see how they can make a difference. In other words, about three-quarters of British consumers are interested in the green theme in some way. With such a strong interest, you'd assume that the hospitality business is all over this subject – is it? And if not, what will get it there?
15. How is performance in environmentally sustainable activities being measured in hospitality, if at all? How are such measurements being used both operationally and in the marketing context? And do such measurements have credibility with investors and consumers?
16. Some cynics observe that it is irresponsible to sacrifice the maximization of a financial bottom line for the sake of some perceived greater good. This is particularly so when the “do-good” initiative is seen more as corporate image making rather than the result of a sound business-case. How can such views be mitigated?
17. “Greenwashing” is a term that has been coined to describe use of green marketing where consumers are misled by a company regarding its environmental practices. Is there much of this going on within the hospitality industry and how does a company avoid getting caught up in this?
18. What are some of the “quick wins” for hotels in the field of “going green”?
19. What is the current and likely future role of organizations that “rate” the industry such as AAA and Mobil in terms of their intent to provide consumers with any form of rating concerning hotels' greenness? And what about marketing organizations such as Leading, Preferred, Best Western and others that provide consumers with indications of quality and positioning?
20. There is apparently a significant gap between what most companies aspire to accomplish in being socially responsible and what they actually accomplish. Why is the walk not matching the talk and how should hospitality businesses try to close the gap?
21. One argument designed to foster corporate social responsibility and environmentally sustainable activities is that they help to create value. Is this proposition being proven and if so, how are such proofs being developed?