

Green is also the Colour of Money

A man in a dark suit and white shirt is reclining on a plush red armchair. He is looking upwards and to the right with a thoughtful expression. The chair is situated on a vibrant green lawn. In the background, a large, semi-transparent dollar sign (\$) is superimposed over a collage of various banknotes, including a Canadian dollar. The overall scene suggests a connection between nature (green) and finance (money).

**Going green is great for the environment
– as well as a hotel's bottom line.**

'Going green' may be the most frequently used term in the hospitality sector today, but it's a loosely defined one. Therefore, hoteliers can do something as complex as conduct an operational audit or as simple as procure biodegradable product packaging in order to lay claim to the designation.

Andrea Myers, director, member programs for the Hotel Association of Canada, says the hospitality industry "is beginning to recognize the value of sustainable initiatives because there's so much money to be saved. But to fully leverage the benefits of taking these initiatives, hoteliers need to communicate to their guests what steps they've taken and why, as well as their cumulative effect. Being transparent in this fashion is healthy for the brand, and it reassures guests that their concerns are being looked after."

Michael Matulick, chief executive officer for Concept Amenities (an Australian-based company whose extensive selection of body liquids, soaps and other toiletries come in packaging that is both biodegradable and fully recyclable), agrees with Myers. “We aren’t aware of any hoteliers we serve around the world who are not at least attempting to go green,” he says. “Similar to a number of leading European markets, the Canadian hotel industry appears to be championing planet stewardship.”

The Hotel Association of Canada has come the closest of any organization to determining the ratio of green hotels to non-green hotels in this country. “We have 8,486 Canadian lodgings in our database, and of these lodging about 1,400 are active participants in Green Key,” she says.

The Green Key Eco-Rating was launched in 1997, updated in 2008 to be North American-inclusive, and has 2,882 members in total from Canada, the U.S. and abroad. The graduated rating system was designed to recognize hotels, motels and resorts that are committed to improving their environmental and fiscal performance. Based on the results of a comprehensive self-assessment (which is accessed

grams and rebates.

Corporate communications advisor Tracy Tang cites two venues – the OPUS Hotel Vancouver and Nelson-based Hume Hotel – as prime examples of how the hospitality sector can benefit from partnerships with energy providers. “OPUS has signed onto our renewable natural gas program, whereby 10 per cent of its natural gas usage comes from methane gas from organic waste that we’ve captured and purified

President Tom Heintzman. Although only a handful of hotels currently use the service, Heintzman is anticipating substantial growth in the near future.

Manufacturers are unified in their claim that there’s money to be saved in going green – especially when it comes to HVAC controls. “INNCOM is the all-encompassing energy management solution that we’ve been providing to hotels for about four years, and demand for the product is dra-



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on line), hoteliers are awarded a one-five Green Key rating and provided with guidance on how to reduce environmental impacts and operating costs through reduced utility consumption, employee training, and supply chain management.

The Green Key program assesses the main operational areas of a property and covers nine areas of sustainable practices, including solid waste management, indoor air quality and building infrastructure. Myers says the program has gotten “very good feedback from the Canadian lodging industry, and many participants are telling guests all about the evaluation process and their rating.”

As Green Key makes clear, opportunities to go green exist in any or all areas of the hotel business, and on the West Coast some hoteliers are going green by enrolling in FortisBC’s numerous energy savings pro-

grams and rebates,” she says.

Meanwhile, management at the Hume Hotel recently decided to replace its central water heater with a high-efficiency system that qualified for a FortisBC rebate – to the tune of \$4,500. “Our natural gas consumption for hot water is actually down a bit,” says Hume Manager Ryan Martin. “And we’ve been so busy this last year that our hot

water consumption has actually increased.” As with energy companies in other provinces, Fortis-

BC offers a long list of mechanical systems from diverse manufacturers that qualify for rebates.

In a similar vein, Bullfrog Power injects green electricity (from regionally-sourced wind and hydro facilities) or green natural gas into energy systems for over 1,200 businesses across the country. “All that’s required is for us to determine a business’s energy usage, and we can inject that amount of energy into the grid,” says



matically increasing because so many hoteliers have zeroed in on operations as the main area where costs must be reduced,” says Arno Ricci, chief operating officer of Gordon R. Williams Corporation, the sole distributor and installer of choice for the full line of INNCOM products in Canada.

INNCOM solutions range from low-cost, stand-alone products to centrally-controlled systems. The solution most sought by Gordon R. Williams’ clients is the INNCOM



Green Key Eco Rating Program was launched in 1997.

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Smart Digital Thermostat with occupancy detection, which accurately determines when to switch to energy-saving setbacks and when to switch back. If it becomes part of a comprehensive INNCOM system, it can contribute to heating and cooling run time reductions of up to 30 per cent. “We’re currently outfitting six Delta hotels with INNCOM, and everything from big chains to boutique venues love the product for its scalability,” says Ricci.

AJM Solutions Group Inc.’s money-saving green solution is a wireless energy management system (essentially a thermostat) by Amana that controls the output of traditional systems. “This add-on is a huge benefit to hoteliers who either don’t have the time or the resources to replace their entire energy systems,” says AJM President Andy Mastroianni, adding that although the efficiency of heating and cooling equipment has taken a quantum leap forward in ten short years, “A large percentage of my business is in the form of add-ons because although hoteliers realize their equipment is costing them a fortune, there simply isn’t enough money in the budget for a comprehensive overhaul. In some cases an add-on can be a very effective short-term solution.”

Water usage is a big concern to hoteliers – and once again a potential source of money savings. “The payback of our Proficiency three-litre toilet is under three years,” declares Sean Kimmons, president of Water Matrix Inc., in reference to the made-in-Canada product that boasts the lowest flushing rate in the world and is helping property owners reduce water consumption by as much as 50 per cent.

Of this savings Kimmons says, “That’s for apartments outfitted with Proficiency toilets. The hotel sector hasn’t yet hopped on the bandwagon, but I have a feeling they will in the near future, what with water rates increasing steadily and more and more new hotels being built to LEED standards.”

Coinamatic, the Canadian supplier and manager of vended laundry systems and services, is also a leading supplier of commercial laundry systems to the long term care and hospitality industries. Coinamatic is assisting hoteliers reduce hot water usage with the introduction of ozone technology. Specifically, the EnvirO3matic Advanced Laundry Oxidization System converts air into 90 percent pure oxygen, which is then electrically charged to split the oxygen atoms. These atoms reassemble to form ozone, which is injected into the wash water at various stages throughout the wash cycle. This allows for greater sanitation of the laundry without the use of hot water, improved cleaning quality while being gentler on fabrics, and Environmatic contributes to overall time and water reduction. “Four years ago ozone was a hard sell for us, but thanks to our system being tested and documented for proven cost reductions by a third party engineering firm, momentum is building, and we are leading the charge on ozone laundry systems throughout Canada,” says Coinamatic Commercial Laundry Inc. Director Mike Pilolli, adding that the 374-suite Fallsview Casino Resort & Casino Niagara saved approximately \$100,000 in operational costs thanks to EnvirO3matic.

Even the most sublime green product has the ability to save hoteliers money, case in point: the towels manufactured by Eden Textiles are luxurious and yet require 35 per cent less drying time. “We spend a lot of effort developing textiles that fulfil the hotelier’s goal of reducing operating costs,” says Chad Ross, Eden’s web and database marketing manager. “Right now we’re working towards fulfilling an emerging trend of hotel customers wanting natural fibres and unprocessed organic cottons — which is a huge challenge, because these materials simply can’t withstand the repeated washings of commercial grade textiles. However, we’re confident that we’ll have a cost-effective solution within a few years.”



The ability to save hotels money can be found in even the most sublime green product.

While going green is still a free-for-all that anyone can take advantage of, Jay Candido, corporate director, marketing and operations, Kruger Products L.P. Away From Home Division, notes that third party certifications are becoming increasingly important because they validate green claims: “It’s one thing to say you’re green, but it’s another thing for an expert or third-party to say it.” Many of Kruger Products’ tissue and paper products are EcoLogo and or Forest Stewardship Certified, EcoLogo being North America’s most widely recognized and respected third-party environmental standard.

Candido believes — now that hoteliers are proactively demanding green products and services “rather than companies like Kruger offering it and having to sell the idea,” — more and more hoteliers will vie for certification. “Measurement is also a concrete way to demonstrate sustainability,” he says. “Setting clear goals and communicating progress, success and challenges — all of this is important.” ●



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