



It's all in the DETAILS...

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A Word from Bill...



I am delighted to be able to write this piece for the re-launch of 'Details'. I always enjoyed the involvement when we relied on a printed format for distribution and it is very gratifying to me to see the newsletter return in this electronic format.

The publication re-enters in turbulent times economically and we at FreemanGroup have had to react to the challenges in much the same fashion as the travel and tourism industry has reacted: looking for more recession resistant markets, reviewing our rate structure, diversifying and bundling services to create better value in the offerings, offering more attractive payment terms and streamlining our costs where we see opportunities.

Clearly, we have seen a decline in our training revenues, but interestingly not in all sectors; Europe continues to be strong as, does Latin America. We are also finding that not all of the quality initiatives we are involved with domestically have been cancelled or postponed, unlike September 2001, when across the board there was a broad base fall off in virtually all of our programs. Measurement business remains robust, with more opportunities for new business on the horizon and our renewals remaining strong. There is also strong interest and overall support for our new Guest/Employee feedback system. These are positive trends to build on and certainly tell me that there is a strong belief out there that quality service matters and must not be compromised, particularly now.

We, like everyone else, are having to navigate through a difficult time, but the encouraging aspect of the world as we see it, is that within the business orbit that we operate there seems to be a more solid realization than there was seven years ago...to have any hope of attracting what business is out there and to have any chance of weathering this economic storm, quality service at the right price must be a given. The trend we are seeing gives us at FreemanGroup renewed commitment to our clients and renewed belief in ourselves. We believe that the only way through the extraordinary times we are in is to believe in the product and believe in the delivery of that product, the rest seems to take care of itself.

Thank you for taking the time to review this first electronic issue of 'Details'. I look forward to ongoing contributions and I wish you good fortune in the future.

New FG Clients

All of us in the FreemanGroup family would like to extend our sincerest appreciation and a warm welcome to our new clients.



FreemanGroup In The News

CST International and FreemanGroup Cement Partnership	AH&LA EI and FreemanGroup announce Partnership	Hotel Association of Greater Dallas Recognizes Thirteen Top Performers

Trainer Detail

Train Staff to Handle Guest Complaints with Confidence

Your employees probably dread hearing a complaint from a guest, but they should consider themselves fortunate to have the opportunity to address a guest complaint. Many dissatisfied guests never tell anyone at the property that they have a problem. They simply leave and never return, or worse yet, tell other people about their negative experience.

In contrast, guests whose problems are solved to their satisfaction are likely to return to your property, and may even tell others about the great service they received. It's in the best interests of both the guest and the staff to handle complaints with confidence.

Of course, in an ideal world employees would be constantly on the alert for potential problem situations and small annoyances, and would handle them before they had a chance to escalate into major issues.

But it's not an ideal world. Sometimes a problem can't be avoided, and sometimes a guest is having a rough day and even the smallest problem is all it takes to open the floodgates of complaint. Do your employees know what to do when confronted with a complaining guest?

First, make sure that they realize that a guest complaint is not a personal attack. It is a call to make things right, made by someone who is paying to have a problem-free experience. It's important for the employee to remain calm and rational, even if the guest is neither. Quite often, when the guest sees that a tirade is not fazing the employee, they begin to calm down and express their complaint more reasonably.

Next, employees should use the LAFF method to deal with the complaint. LAFF stands for Listen, Apologize, Fix It, and Follow Up. Here's how it works:

Listen. Give the guest your undivided attention. Let the guest express his or her feelings. Don't interrupt. Ask questions to determine the problem. Describe the problem yourself to make sure you fully understand it. Take notes if necessary. This will assure the guest that they are being heard and taken seriously.

Apologize. Apologize for the inconvenience or disruption, no matter how unreasonable you think the guest is. Thank the guest for taking the time to bring the matter to your attention. Tell the guest what you can do, and ask him or her to choose an option. This gives them control over the situation and makes you and them partners in solving the problem. Tell the guest when the problem will be resolved. Be very concrete about what you will do.

Fix It. Take care of the problem personally if you can. If not, contact the appropriate person to correct the problem, and explain that it needs to be corrected right away.

Follow Up. Monitor the progress being made on the problem. When the problem is resolved, ask the guest whether he or she is satisfied with the solution. If not, continue to work on the problem until they are happy.

In training sessions or pre-shift meetings, conduct role plays in which employees have an opportunity to practice LAFF-ing. You may want to use actual scenarios from your property's log book in order to see how different employees will handle the situation. By doing this, your employees will be able to respond with confidence when they are faced with an actual complaint.

American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute

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Winning FG Clients!

AAA Honors Hard Rock Hotel San Diego

Automobile Club of Southern California (AAA) has awarded Hard Rock Hotel San Diego the prestigious Four-Diamond Award less than a year after the hotel's grand opening.



CNBC Recognizes Bimini Bay

On October 3, The 2008 CNBC International Property Awards—in association with The New York Times – honored Bimini Bay Resort with two prestigious awards for Best Development and Best Marina Development in the Bahamas.



Condé Nast Traveler & Lodging Hospitality Acknowledge FG Clients

Congratulations to all sixty-three FreemanGroup clients honored in the Condé Nast 2008 Reader's Choice Awards. Another congratulations to the eleven FreemanGroup clients named as TOP Performers by Lodging Hospitality.



2008 HOSPITY Awards

FreemanGroup was proud to be the title sponsor of the Hotel Association of Greater Dallas's 2nd Annual HOSPITY Awards Gala held on November 1st. We have also agreed to sponsor the event in 2009 and 2010. We are very excited to be a part of these awards recognizing outstanding performers in the hospitality industry in North Texas.



FreemanGroup Products and Services

- Standards of Performance Manuals
- Job Descriptions
- Train The Trainer Seminars
- On-The-Job Skills Training
- Customer Service Workshops
- Internal Trainer Certifications
- Mystery Shopping
- Guest/Visitor Satisfaction Tracking
- Employee Opinion Surveys
- New Property Opening Programs
- Tourism Management/Destination Programs

About FreemanGroup

"Providing customer service solutions to the hospitality and tourism industry since 1985"

FreemanGroup offers an entirely integrated consulting service, a comprehensive range of service solutions, and exceptional quality support to the hospitality and travel industry worldwide. The firm's clients include major hotels and resorts, restaurants, casinos, destinations and ports of entry worldwide. FreemanGroup services are comprised of hospitality management and line level training, mystery shopping, guest/employee feedback, customization of standards of performance/job description templates, and new property openings.

Founded in 1985 by Bill Freeman, FreemanGroup is based in Dallas, Texas. The firm also has offices in London and Costa Rica. For more information, contact the Dallas office at 972-479-1345 or visit www.freemangroupsolutions.com.

To remove your name from our mailing list, please contact awoodall@freemangroup.org. Questions or comments? E-mail us at awoodall@freemangroup.org or call 972-479-1345