

# intouch

SUPPORTING YOUR BUSINESS

**PLUS...**

**TOP WINE PICKS FOR 2014**

**INTERVIEW WITH  
TOM KERRIDGE**

**FRESH START**  
**NEW YEAR, NEW BEGINNINGS**

# Informed...

## Window stickers for 2014



You will have recently been sent the Hotel, B&B and Gold Star 2014 window stickers featuring the cover of the 2014 *Hotel/B&B Guide* or *Gold Star/s* and highlighting the AA.com and available mobile apps.



## Annual classification certificates

By now, all establishments will have received, where applicable, their annual classification certificates for 2014-2015. Please direct any queries regarding your certificates to [HotelServicesCustomerSupport@theAA.com](mailto:HotelServicesCustomerSupport@theAA.com) or call 01256 844455.

## Enter the AA Hospitality Awards 2014



### AA Chefs' Chef of the Year



A popular and coveted title, this unique award offers all AA Rosette-awarded chefs the chance to decide which of their peers deserves this respected recognition of their performance over the past 12 months, and their continued commitment to the profession.

The AA's inspectors have chosen the nominees based on the recommendations of our chefs, and the winning chef will feature in the 2014 edition of the *AA Restaurant Guide*. The winner will receive their award at the AA Hospitality Awards, to be held on Monday 22 September at Grosvenor House, A JW Marriott Hotel.

**Download the nomination form at [www.aahospitalityawards.com/awards](http://www.aahospitalityawards.com/awards). The deadline to submit your nomination is Friday 11 April**

### AA Eco Hotel and Eco Group Hotel of the Year



The AA Eco Hotel awards acknowledge one independent hotel and one hotel group that have both demonstrated a clear commitment to sustainability.

Eligibility for the award must be proven through good practice and policy in a variety of areas that include improving efficiencies in

consumption, waste and recycling to make a positive contribution to reducing the impact on the environment. The winner will receive their award at the AA Hospitality Awards, to be held on Monday 22 September at Grosvenor House, A JW Marriott Hotel.

**Download the nomination form at [www.aahospitalityawards.com/awards](http://www.aahospitalityawards.com/awards). The deadline to submit your nomination is Wednesday 7 April**

### AA Spirit Award



Introduced this year, this award will recognise the professional promotion, education and service of spirits in the hospitality industry. It is open to any AA-recognised establishment that serves spirits. The award seeks to highlight a hospitality business that really champions spirits through its product offerings and service, promotes customer awareness and knowledge and is passionate about both pre-dinner and after-dinner guest experiences. The winner will receive their award at the AA Hospitality Awards, to be held on Monday 22 September at Grosvenor House, A JW Marriott Hotel.

**Download the nomination form at [www.aahospitalityawards.com/awards](http://www.aahospitalityawards.com/awards). The deadline to submit your nomination is Friday 11 April**

### AA Wine Award

*Matthew Clark*

All AA Rosette-awarded chefs can enter for the Wine Awards. Send us a copy of your current wine list to be entered. The winner will receive their award at the AA Hospitality Awards, to be held on Monday 22 September at Grosvenor House, A JW Marriott Hotel.

**The deadline for entries is Friday 14 March. If you would like an editable nomination form, email [Awards@theaa.com](mailto:Awards@theaa.com)**

### Housekeeper of the Year Awards



Do you have an excellent housekeeper? For the seventh year, AA Hotel Services, in partnership with Northmace & Hendon (designers and manufacturers of professional hotel bedroom products) with customers in more than 100 countries worldwide, will be awarding the title of AA Housekeeper of the Year to one individual. The award recognises outstanding commitment and performance, identifying a housekeeper who goes above and beyond the call of duty.

**Download the nomination form at [www.aahospitalityawards.com/housekeeper-year](http://www.aahospitalityawards.com/housekeeper-year). The deadline to submit your nomination is Friday 28 March**

## Contact details

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**Fax** 01256 491647

**Email** [HotelServicesCustomerSupport@theAA.com](mailto:HotelServicesCustomerSupport@theAA.com)

**Web** [AAhotels.com](http://AAhotels.com)



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Comments from the AA



Comments from Caterer

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# Welcome notes

Welcome to our first edition of *In Touch* for 2014, your quarterly magazine produced in conjunction with *Caterer and Hotelkeeper*. As we look forward to another busy year for the hospitality industry, the magazine is full of articles that we hope will both inform and help you and your business.

We have various awards now open for nomination and application and I would encourage you to enter. We are delighted to announce a new award this year, the AA Spirit Award, in partnership with the Balvenie, which seeks to recognise those establishments who really champion the service and education of spirits.

On 18 March our wine partner Matthew Clark will be holding its excellent annual

wine tasting in London. A comprehensive range of 350 wines will be on show, plus lots of different workshops aimed at helping businesses improve. There is an open invitation to all AA establishments, so I hope you can find time to attend.

Finally, we feature the fantastic new Employee Assistance Programme launched by Hospitality Action, the benevolent charity for the hospitality industry. We all recognise the importance of looking after the team of people working in your business. Whether you employ a couple of people or hundreds, this programme provides an invaluable support system. I urge you to speak to Penny Moore or one of the team at Hospitality Action.



**Simon Numphud**  
Head of AA Hotel Services

Some spring! As this edition of *In Touch* went to press, broad swathes of the country lay under water with record rainfall and lashing storms causing widespread flooding and major disruption to the country's utility and transport networks.

As the waters rose and power failed, many hospitality businesses were forced to close. Even those situated on the dry side of the sandbag walls saw bookings fall off as wary guests chose not to travel.

The sun will no doubt return in the coming weeks, and the waters will recede, but for those operators affected, the damage to their properties and their profits will take a long time to rectify.

Neither the AA nor *Caterer and Hotelkeeper* can change the weather, but we can offer support to businesses in the eye of the storm – and indeed, to all hospitality operators looking to raise their game and build a better business.

This supplement contains a wealth of information that will give your business an edge over your competitors. And the AA, through its publications and its awards systems, can help you stand out from the crowd and attract greater footfall.

I hope you find this publication valuable – and I wish you a happy, prosperous and flood-free 2014.



**Mark Lewis**  
Group Editor  
*Caterer and Hotelkeeper*



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# TOP HOSPITALITY STORIES

Each week, *Caterer and Hotelkeeper* and [www.catererandhotelkeeper.co.uk](http://www.catererandhotelkeeper.co.uk) bring you the most important news from around the hospitality industry. Here's a selection of stories about AA members from the past three months

## ISLE OF ERISKA HOTEL TO ADD LUXURY LODGES



The five-red-AA-star, 23-bedroom Isle of Eriska hotel in Argyll is to expand with the addition of two self-contained luxury lodges.

Due to be built with 360° views over Loch Creran, the contemporary one-bedroom lodges will each feature floor-to-ceiling glass walls and cedar-lined walls with en suite bathroom, kitchen and sitting room, plus a deck and a hot tub.

## CROWNE PLAZA LONDON AND SISTER PROPERTY REBRANDED AS TAJ HOTELS

The Crowne Plaza London – St James has been rebranded as a Taj hotel.

Owned since the 1980s by Taj Hotels, Resorts and Palaces – part of the Indian conglomerate Tata – the 340-bedroom hotel in Buckingham Gate, Victoria, will become known as the St James' Court, A Taj Hotel.

Its adjacent sister property, 51 Buckingham Gate, which features 86 suites, is also to be rebadged as the Taj 51 Buckingham Gate Suites and Residences.

The hotel, which includes the Michelin-starred Quilon restaurant, has been run under the InterContinental Hotels Group's Crowne Plaza brand for nearly 20 years.



Gary Goldie

## GOLDIE SPREADS WINGS AT FOUR-STAR OBAN HOTEL

Former Scottish Chef of the Year Gary Goldie is to open a new restaurant at the Queens hotel in Oban.

Goldie will be in charge of all food and beverage operations at the four-star Best Western hotel, which currently has a single AA rosette, and will also open a restaurant called Gary Goldie, based on foraged food. The chef previously headed up the kitchen at

Ardanaisig, Loch Awe, where he built a strong reputation for his use of wild food and won three AA rosettes.

Goldie told *Caterer and Hotelkeeper*: "I worked at the Queens hotel in November to December and started doing some interesting, slightly off-the-wall food, mostly wild with pickles and smoke, with the chefs taking the food out. I do need to run the busy bar also, but have a very strong

head chef, Will Hay, coming to help.

"There won't be anyone in Scotland doing food like it, and I doubt anywhere in the rest of Britain will be focusing on wild food as we will be."

## 'STRONG' 2013 FIGURES FOR UK HOTEL INDUSTRY

The UK hotel sector has been dubbed "strong" as it ended the past year with significantly increased room yields, new figures from 2013 showed last week.

Room yields in 2013 increased by 9.9% year-on-year (up to £35.56 compared with £32.35), due to a rise in room rates and a 5% rise in occupancy from 59.9% to 62.9%, according to preliminary figures from accountancy firm BDO LLP.

Robert Barnard, partner at BDO LLP, said: "This is a strong and encouraging set of results with which to end the year. Growth in the regions seems to be leading the sector out of recession."

## HOTEL GUESTS WANT PERSONALISED STAYS, SAYS INTERCONTINENTAL REPORT

Modern travellers are demanding personalised hotel stays thanks to the rise in technology, according to research from InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG).

Consistently good service, a reflection of local trends and customs and stays tailored to their own personal preferences were consumers' top three most-desired factors, according to the report: *Creating Moments of Trust: The key to building successful brand relationships in the Kinship Economy*.

## HOTELS LOOK FORWARD TO POSITIVE TRADING IN 2014

The hotel industry in the UK and Europe is facing a positive 2014 with increased demand from both leisure and corporate guests, improving transaction activity and finance becoming more easily available, according to hotel consultant HVS London.

Some 360 hotel projects, which will add an extra 60,000 rooms, are active across Europe – many of which will open this year. A further 450 hotels (70,000 rooms) are at the planning stages, with the majority of projects taking place in the UK, followed by Russia, Turkey, Germany and France.

Some 45% of the new rooms under construction are in the upscale sector.



St James' Court, A Taj Hotel

# GRAPE EXPECTATIONS

Should you stock up on Pinot Grigio or Pinot Noir for 2014? We ask four wine experts what impressed them in 2013 and which wines will be on trend this year

**CHRISTINE PARKINSON**  
GROUP BUYING MANAGER,  
WINES AND NON-FOOD, HAKKASAN



My star wine of 2013 was an unashamedly personal choice: a fab 1958 Boal Madeira from Pereira D'Oliveira. Birth-year wines aside, Madeira has been on a bit of a roll, and I've loved tasting some delicious older wines. They are good value, and we're in the process of choosing one to list at Hakkasan.

#### What to look out for in 2014

This might be controversial, but I have to say sake! Interest in Japan's national drink is rocketing, and with some great distributors now selling sake to non-Asian restaurants, I predict sommeliers will follow bartenders and start listing junmais, daiginjos and umeshus.

I reckon we'll start to see Albariño from countries other than Spain. I've tasted lovely examples from New Zealand and California, and the popularity of this grape makes it likely that New World examples will break through.

Portugal makes great Alvarinho too, and I think we'll see plenty of it in modern-style Vinho Verde blends. These have modest alcohol, crisp acidity and lovely fresh fruit.

**XAVIER ROUSSET**  
DIRECTOR/CO-FOUNDER, TEXTURE AND 28°-50°



Last year I really enjoyed both whites and reds from Galicia in Spain. There are some tremendous Godello and Albariño, which we're more

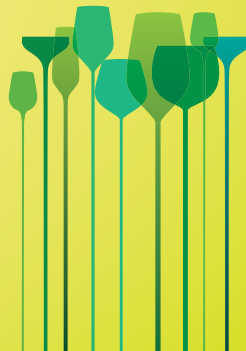
familiar with, along with great reds such as Mencía. They have fantastic acidity and are very good food wines. They're easy going, simple wines, which are affordable right now.

#### What to look out for in 2014

I think both red and white Burgundy will command even higher prices than

ever. Pinot Noir is really in fashion at the moment. We go through buckets of it. We secured a pallet [600 bottles] of Pinot Noir for 28°-50° from New Zealand and went through it in two months. I love the German Pinot Noir, too. It will never be in fashion, but it's a great wine.

I think the trend will continue towards lighter wines with more acid, less oak and less alcohol. These wines are a little more food friendly. If you're looking for affordability, I'd say try South Africa, where there are many young winemakers doing great things. The Chenin Blanc is better than ever, and there is also some Viognier that is of excellent quality.



**RONAN SAYBURN**  
WINE CONSULTANT



I have been to New Zealand a couple of times this year and visited Te Whare Ra vineyard in Marlborough. It's a small, 11-hectare biodynamic property in Renwick that was planted

in 1979, so the vines are more than 30 years old. They are mainly planted with white aromatic varieties with some Pinot Noir. The whole range of wines is superb, especially an off-dry Riesling called 'M' (for Medium) that rivals some of the great Mosel Rieslings in terms of delicacy and purity.

#### What to look out for in 2014

My favourite Te Whare Ra wine is the blended wine – made from equal parts Riesling, Gewürztraminer and Pinot Gris – called 'Toru', which is a Maori word meaning three. This wine is off-dry, rich, spicy and complex, with a host of floral and tropical fruit flavours. It's really a food wine; a wine that deserves to have a chef and sommelier create something special specifically to suit its characteristics. It is the type of wine that, if given some thought and served in the correct way with the correct food, can be an instant success.

**ROGER JONES**  
OWNER, HARROW AT LITTLE BEDWYN



My wine of 2013 was Viognier Domaine Gerovassiliou, 2012 Epanomi, Greece. The country has been hitting the headlines, but because of the

Assyrtiko grape, mainly from the Island of Santorini. Here we have an exciting wine made from the Viognier grape.

This is a very modern, vibrant Viognier of the New World style, which has enthralled and fooled even a few Australians. It has honeycomb, kaffir lime and Golden Delicious apples on the nose. It has a classic French Viognier

impact with a modern New World twist. It is great as an aperitif and available for £12 (Hallgarten).

I cannot overlook Nyetimber Demi Sec Sparkling, £26 (Liberty), which delivers an astonishing Champagne, rich in style and brilliant with sashimi.

#### What to look out for in 2014

Tasmania will be the buzzword for 2014. Look out for Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from Dalrymple Vineyard (Negociants) and Tolpuddle Vineyard (Liberty). The cooler temperatures of Tasmania are perfect for food-friendly wine full of elegance, purity and freshness.

### Who is your greatest inspiration?

Like a lot of chefs my age, Marco Pierre White and the *White Heat* cookbook was a real eye-opener and the doorway into the exciting underworld of kitchen life. But the person I have learnt the most from is Jon Bentham, a chef at Stephen Bull's restaurants for Gary Rhodes, who I worked with for about four years. I took as much knowledge from him as I could, and he has an incredible energy and world food knowledge.

### What are your top tips for an aspiring chef?

To prepare to work hard and start at the bottom. Every job, no matter how monotonous or mind-numbing, is there for a reason. The learning process of not only how to cook but how to be a 'chef' is a long one and, although it's not always fun, if you keep your head down and push on, the end results of your hard work will pay off.

### If you weren't a chef, what career would you have chosen?

I'd like to think that I would be coming to the end of my Premier League football career, but the reality is that I would have probably been a baker or fisherman or in some kind of food-related job.

### What is your favourite ingredient?

Salt and water are two of the most underrated ingredients and well respected in my kitchen. I find the understanding of water temperatures and high seasoning really important, if perhaps a little boring.

### What would be your last supper?

Fish and chips and a can of Lilt. And if I could go back in time, they would be from Danny Dyke's chip shop in Gloucester, but sadly it's no longer there.

### Where do you eat on your night off?

I'm very fortunate to live near Marlow, where we have a huge choice of great places to eat, including the Waterside Inn, the Fat Duck, the Hinds Head and the Royal Oak on Paley Street. Also, there are a couple of great curry houses – I love a curry!

### What's critical to success in running your own business?

There are so many elements that need to be right to make a business a success. They are all tiny little pieces, but if they are put into the right place, with the help of the gods and if the stars are aligned, it can lead to success.

First, I think it is the vision, drive and commitment of an owner who then surrounds themselves with like-minded staff who care about the business as much as they do. The team is the most important thing to long-term success, and if you add a good location, an understanding of the clientele, repeat custom, value for money and, of course, a bit of luck, you might have a chance of a successful business.

### What are the next trends in British cooking?

I think the pub scene is a huge growing market – it's a more relaxed and informal way of dining, but with great food. For me, British



INTERVIEW WITH...

# TOM KERRIDGE

*We catch up with Tom Kerridge, chef-patron of the Hand & Flowers in Marlow*

chefs and ingredients really are on the up and the British public are becoming more and more supportive and understanding of how great the dining scene is in this country.



**You're the AA Chef's Chef of the Year, you've written a book and filmed a TV programme – what's next?**

We are working on a second book and talking about a follow-up to the TV show, but the focus, as always, is on the Hand and Flowers and maintaining that upwards drive and staff motivation.

**What was your best meal last year?**

I ate at The Ledbury [in London's Notting Hill] and I was blown away by such great cooking. It was some of the best British food I've eaten in a long time, cooked by an Australian! Brett Graham is a phenomenal cook and the Ledbury is fully deserving of all of its accolades.

[www.thehandandflowers.co.uk](http://www.thehandandflowers.co.uk)

# ARE MANAGERS LIABLE FOR INJURIES ON THEIR PREMISES?

Companies booking special seasonal entertainment should ensure their building – and the performers – are up to the job, says *Peter Forshaw*

## THE PROBLEM

I am the manager of an independent hotel looking to provide live entertainment for hotel guests over the Christmas period. I would like to hire a portable theatre group to perform a pantomime on the hotel's premises, but I am concerned about adhering to health and safety regulations. If a pantomime performer was injured on the hotel premises – as a result of falling down a ladder or tripping up on the stage, for example – would I be liable?

## THE LAW

As the 'promoter' of the event and the occupier of the premises in which the entertainment is performed, the hotel will be bound by the Occupier's Liability Act 1957 to take such care as in all the circumstances is reasonable to ensure its visitors (which will include both the audience and the company performing the panto) are reasonably safe. However, in appropriate circumstances the hotel may be able to rely on certain defences within the Act, namely:

- Occupiers are entitled to rely on visitors protecting themselves against special risks ordinarily related to their activity.
- Occupiers will not be automatically liable if the danger was caused by an independent contractor where it was reasonable to engage such contractors and the occupier has taken reasonable steps to ensure that the contractor was competent and had worked properly.

## EXPERT ADVICE

Pantomime productions continue to increase in popularity, and competition for audiences is so intense that companies are under pressure



to push the "spectacular" to new heights. But with spectacle can come risk.

Perhaps more than any other type of theatrical production, each of the components of a successful pantomime can, if not planned properly, incur health and safety risks. For example, unpredictable pyrotechnic effects can cause burns or damage to costumes; elaborate costumes can restrict movement and visibility; being the back end of a pantomime cow is no fun when you can't see where you're walking or you're working in such close proximity to a volatile individual. Slapstick scenes with buckets of slosh create a slippery floor which can lead to performers slipping and injuring themselves, and throwing sweets and other objects into the audience can, in extreme cases, injure audience members.

While an injured panto performer may be regarded as accepting some risk, they are

**"If a performer is injured due to the state of the hotel's premises – for example, tripping over a fraying carpet – then the hotel would probably be liable"**

still entitled to assume that certain safety checks are in place and that the premises are safe.

Consequently, if a performer is injured due to the state of the hotel's premises – for example, tripping over a fraying carpet – then the hotel would probably be liable, whereas if they were injured in an inadequately planned panto, their employer (the panto company) would probably have to accept the blame.

It is also not unknown for certain published (not necessarily 'adult') pantomimes to contain material which some may find offensive.

## CHECKLIST

- Scope out the space and any potential hazards in your premises that could harm both those performing and watching the pantomime.
- Know what the panto company has planned. Ask to see a copy of the script or any footage of the performance. Request any changes to anything you are uncomfortable with.
- Satisfy yourself that the panto group is reputable (have they been used by others?) and have appropriate employers' liability/public liability insurance.
- Ensure that both the pantomime performers and audiences are made aware of fire exits in the hotel.

## BEWARE!

Unless hotel managers take the time to properly select a company and satisfy themselves in respect of the risks involved, they and their insurers could be liable for thousands of pounds in compensation if accidents happen.

## CONTACT

Peter Forshaw is partner at national law firm **Weightmans LLP**  
[peter.forshaw@weightmans.com](mailto:peter.forshaw@weightmans.com)



SPOTLIGHT ON...

# THE MERCHANT HOTEL *Belfast*

Belfast's only AA five-star hotel is a luxurious haven, boasting bespoke decor in every room

The Merchant hotel, Belfast's only AA five-star-rated hotel, was recently awarded AA Hotel of the Year for Northern Ireland at the AA Hospitality Awards 2013-2014.

Commenting on the award, the Merchant hotel's general manager, Gavin Carroll, said: "We are absolutely thrilled and honoured to have won this prestigious award from such a well-respected organisation as the AA. It further demonstrates the leaps and bounds that the city of Belfast has taken in recent years, and it is currently enjoying a huge boom in tourism."

This magnificent hotel is situated in a stunning grade A-listed building in the historical Cathedral Quarter of the city centre, which has been lovingly and sensitively restored to reveal its original architectural grandeur.

In 2010 a further 36 rooms were added to the existing 26, as well as a luxury spa, rooftop gymnasium, a dedicated meetings and events floor and a jazz bar. The hotel is also home to Harper, an exclusive fashion boutique and Northern Ireland's only stockist of Valentino, Celine and Christian Louboutin, as well as a luxury nightclub, Ollie's, and The Bar, a classic, multi-award-winning cocktail bar.

The hotel's accommodation facilities are outstanding – each room, whether art deco or Victorian in style, features bespoke furnishings

and original works of art complemented by the very best in 21st century technology. Luscious velvets and silks, specially designed rich wool carpets, spacious en suites and a host of in-room amenities all add to the feeling of comfort and opulence.

The Merchant hotel is also recognised for its fantastic dining facilities, including the crown jewel of the hotel, the Great Room Restaurant.

This is a sumptuous space evoking timeless grandeur, situated in the former main banking hall of the building, where afternoon teas are prepared daily for discerning guests.

The hotel also hosts Berts Jazz Bar, which encapsulates the sleek elegance of the art deco era, complemented

by the very best in live jazz, fabulous cocktails and mouthwatering food. Here, guests can find themselves transported back to the chic, intimate jazz bars of 1930s New York as they enjoy French bistro-style cuisine.

For those who prefer something a little more casual, the hotel's public bar, the Cloth Ear, serves comforting, home-made favourites created using the best locally sourced, seasonal produce.

Its prime location and wealth of five-star amenities make the Merchant hotel the ultimate luxury experience in Northern Ireland.

[www.themerchanthotel.com](http://www.themerchanthotel.com)

**“Each room, whether art deco or Victorian in style, features bespoke furnishings and original works of art**





# BIG IDEAS FOR SMALL SPACES



Warings Furniture created built-in tables for London café Damson & Co. The challenge was to plan the space to fit 20 covers, which meant crafting furniture to the millimetre to ensure a perfect fit



A few clever tricks with furniture and layout can make a small space feel much larger

If you're operating a business in a small venue, you know how important it is to make the best use of every square inch. Your staff need to be able to work efficiently in limited space and your customers need elbow and leg room to enjoy their drink or meal.

Making the most use of small venues and creating the illusion of a bigger space takes imagination, planning and savvy design. Size does matter, but small spaces are not a barrier to workable, comfortable, stylish and profitable venues.

So whether your venue is tight on space or you're simply looking to make the most of the room you have, there are a number of tips to consider when planning your layout and choosing your furniture.

**Stuart Smith is a director at Warings Furniture**

## FOUR WAYS TO MAXIMISE THE SPACE YOU HAVE

### SIZE

Table and chair size are key to creating a workable venue. There are big variations between chair frame sizes, so get advice from an expert on which chairs have a small footprint. Smaller, stackable chairs can still offer comfort and style while giving you the flexibility to use your space wisely.

Consider the size of table you need. This depends on what you're serving your customers and how you're serving them. If you have space limitations, think about placing fewer tables in the room rather than creating an unpleasant experience for your customers and additional problems for your staff.

There is no industry standard for the space you must allow per diner, but depending on the type of restaurant or bar, a customer may need more or less room for their meal. Fast food restaurants, cafés and coffee shop dining may need less space than some menus, such as those in fine dining, Italian and Mexican restaurants, which require a larger

space for place settings, utensils, condiments and serving platters.

The best advice is to create tables using to-scale cardboard cut-outs. Lay out your 'table' with plates, cutlery and condiments, trying out various layouts and combinations. It's a simple way to discover the dimensions that will work for your customer.

### SPACING

Customers' sense of personal space should be factored in when considering spacing between and around tables and chairs, so don't feel the need to squeeze people in even though the venue is small.

Keep in mind that you're better off setting up an additional table in another room, or leaving it out all together, rather than crowding a dining room with a large table and too much furniture, making diners feel uncomfortable.

### STYLE

The style of furniture you choose must be suited to your customers' needs. The best bet is to offer

**“There is no industry standard for the space you must allow per diner”**

variety in seating: a bar and high stools for people dashing in and out, tables for large families and booths for intimate couples and friends.

Remember that furniture with legs looks like it takes up less space than pieces that sit directly on the floor. It is far better to have centre pedestal tables in small spaces so diners do not have any obstructions to get in and out of their seats.

### BESPOKE

In a small venue you should make good use of every corner. If there is an odd-shaped nook in the layout, get furniture designed to fit that space and work with designers to create small pieces that fit the scale of the venue to make it feel bigger.

# FUEL'S GOLD

Operators have been forced to look for significant savings in energy usage as prices continue to rise above inflation. But using the best technologies is the easiest way to save money and reduce your carbon footprint, says *Ross Bentley*

With energy prices set to continue to rise above the rate of inflation for the foreseeable future, it's simple good business sense to continue to search for power usage savings.

The debate has moved on. Whereas a few years ago 'green' technology was a nice-to-have, now the need to save money makes it a business necessity for operators.

"They understand a commercial proposition that not only reduces a carbon footprint but, crucially, delivers quick, significant and continued savings," says Mark Sait, managing director of hospitality consultancy SaveMoneyCutCarbon.

"Saving money and being green are two sides of the same coin. Using technologies to cut energy and water consumption is a triple win for the hospitality sector. Hotels, bed and breakfasts and restaurants making the move

will cut energy bills, reduce carbon taxes and cut their carbon footprint."

Here are 10 tips to help you reduce your energy consumption.

## 1 HVAC MATTERS

Heating, cooling and ventilation (HVAC) is the biggest energy drain in any commercial building, but especially in the 24/7 operations of the hotel environment.

A range of technologies are available to enable hoteliers to automatically manage in-room controls so they can be turned down to a minimum default setting when guests are not in their rooms.

Consultancy SaveMoneyCutCarbon uses a combination of wireless infrared body heat sensors and entry door monitors to

tell if a guest is at home. If they are not, the controls are switched to a money-saving, energy-saving mode after 30 minutes.

## INTELLIGENT GUEST CONTROL

Radisson Blu Hotel Cardiff commissioned SaveMoneyCutCarbon to install and monitor an intelligent control system in its 215 guest rooms to reduce energy consumption. In the first three months of the trial the hotel cut guest room HVAC energy use by up to 45%.

The hotel expects to achieve a saving of £35,000 a year and to recoup the cost of installation within 14 months.

Financial controller Martin Perkins says: "The project is a no-brainer – we need to save on consumption to help protect the bottom line against the ever-increasing energy prices and new levies being introduced."

## 2 MONITOR USAGE

By using energy management software, operators can see where energy is being used in a hotel at any point in time. This detailed information allows them to manage electricity consumption and cut wastage.

Hotel management company Redefine BDL uses a web-based system that takes half-hourly electricity billing data and converts it into a graphical profile to identify power consumption over a 24-hour period.

According to group property manager Mark Dempsie, the system costs £1 a day and payback is normally within the first month.

Managers at the DoubleTree by Hilton Dundee hotel have been trialling this software over the past year, and consumption savings of 10% have been recorded consistently throughout the year.

## 3 DON'T JUST LOOK AT UP FRONT COSTS

Trevor Burke, managing director of Exclusive Ranges, urges operators not to focus entirely on the up front cost of a product, but also to consider the cost of using it across its entire lifecycle.

He says it is often the case that sophisticated, energy-efficient kit can be more expensive initially, but that operators will claw back this money as they save on day-to-day energy costs.

The company supplies high-end cooking equipment to restaurants such as Caprice Holdings, and Burke says that induction-powered products are far more energy efficient than conventional gas or electric hobs.

"If you are buying a quality product, such as induction-powered equipment, there will be a higher up front cost, but you are committing yourself to making an investment to reduce day-to-day running costs," he explains.





Radisson Blu Hotel Cardiff

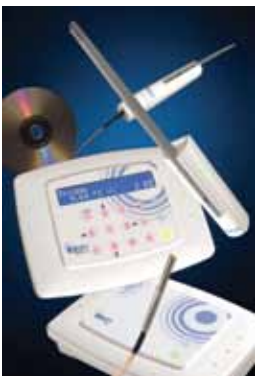
#### 4 EFFICIENT REFRIGERATION

The chilling cost of inefficient refrigeration has been laid bare by the Carbon Trust, which estimates that up to 20% could be shaved off energy bills by paying closer attention to good practice and regular maintenance.

Considering that refrigeration can account for up to half of a caterer's total energy use, that equates to significant savings.

What's crucial is having the data to pinpoint weak points. A growing number of catering operations are turning to temperature monitoring technology, such as the IMC Group's IceSpy range.

According to business development manager Gordon Muscat, they are primarily driven by the regulatory pressures to



ensure safety and quality, but an additional benefit is the ability to identify where excessive energy is being used, either due to a technical fault, unstable fluctuations or because the temperature has been set unnecessarily low.

#### 5 OUTSOURCE IT SYSTEMS

By outsourcing IT systems to cloud hosting providers such as Amazon Web Services (AWS), Google and Salesforce.com, hotels and hospitality companies of all sizes can benefit from hosting their IT in the most technologically advanced facilities in the world.

Co-founder of IT consultancy Cloudreach, Pontus Noren, says because of the giant scale of their infrastructure, these large providers benefit from economies of scale that allow them to have the most advanced, energy-saving systems available. That enables them to pass these cost savings on to their clients. Noren adds: "Just as very few hotels generate

their own electricity or filter their own water supply, it doesn't make sense for them to produce or support their own computing infrastructure."

#### SUCKING UP ENERGY IN THE CLOUD

Hotel management group Kempinski has a portfolio of more than 70 five-star hotels across more than 30 countries. In early 2010, the company put together a five-year plan to streamline IT within the business and, working with consultancy Cloudreach, decide to move its corporate and shared applications to a hosted service managed by Amazon Web Services.

While there are no figures for savings to energy consumption yet, Kempinski's senior vice-president for IT, Jeremy Ward, calculates that over the whole five-year plan, there will be 40% saving over the costs of a comparable solution using a traditional IT model.



#### 6 BOILER EFFICIENCY

Hotels can also save energy through technologies that improve boiler combustion, resulting in lower fuel consumption and a substantial decrease in their carbon footprint. These no-maintenance solutions are installed without the need to shut down a boiler system and can deliver proven energy savings.

Boiler fuel conditioning uses ceramic magnets attached to fuel pipes that ensure that the amount of unspent fuel is minimised and that combustion efficiency is maximised.

#### 7 WATER MANAGEMENT

Water is one of the best targets for rapid energy savings.

Eco shower heads, eco taps and tap aerators, such as those produced by manufacturer Hansgrohe, may not be the most sophisticated of technologies, but they can be money-saving miracles. They work by mixing water with air but make sure not to affect quality.

Some hotel showers can use 35 litres of water per minute, which can be reduced to 9 litres per minute. Hot water tap flow rates can be reduced from 18 litres to 5 litres per minute. That means savings in



◀ water heating and the cost of water itself if a property is metered.

### FLUSHED WITH SUCCESS

The 21 hotels within the Puma Hotels' Collection have achieved savings of £100,000 inside eight months from a £65,000 investment in water-saving technologies. Equally importantly, no impact on guest satisfaction rates has been reported.

The company chose taps and shower heads from Hansgrohe, installed by consultancy Save-MoneyCutCarbon, and these resulted in a 50% reduction in water use and heating costs.

Financial and commercial director at Puma Hotels Paul Nisbett says: "The most satisfying part is the fact that after recouping our investment, we will continue to save money month on month."

### 8 PUMP IT UP

Pumps that circulate hot and cold water around a property are top of the energy-saving list as they run continuously. When uncontrolled, pumps typically operate at 100% around the clock, but their energy usage can be tempered by installing a level of intelligence to the motor or pump.

This can help by reducing the amount of electricity required to power the pump and also regulate the pressure the pump is working to by responding to demand rather than just running in 'off' or 'on' mode.

The load on a pump can also be reduced at low points in the day, such as the early hours of the morning, when fewer guests are likely to want to use water.

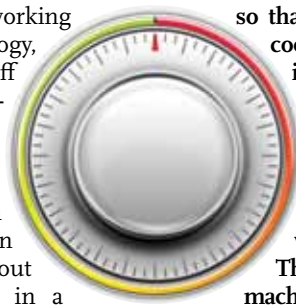
### 9 KITCHEN KNOW-HOW

According to the Carbon Trust, around 25% of the energy used in catering is expended in the preparation, cooking and serving of food. By far the largest proportion of this energy is consumed by cooking apparatus, and much of this is wasted through excessive use and poor utilisation.

In a busy kitchen, staff have little time to think about energy saving, but some technologies can help improve working practices. Control technology, which automatically switches off or turns down cooking equipment that is not being used, can help.

Pan sensors are available for gas and electric hobs that turn the hob off or down after pan removal. These can save about 5% of the cooking energy in a typical kitchen, says the trust. You can also minimise oven door openings by fitting easily visible oven thermometers, which also help with accurate cooking times.

Induction hobs, combi-steam/convection ovens, microwaves and efficient deep-fat fryers can all help cut energy usage.



### FANS OF ENERGY EFFICIENCY

There's the potential to cut energy usage wherever you look in a commercial kitchen.

Demand Controlled Ventilation (DCV), such as the Cheetah system by Quintex, has the ability to achieve savings of up to 80% in fan energy usage. The system uses sensor technology to detect cooking activity levels and lower ventilation fan speeds accordingly, so that extract rates are matched to cooking demands, hence optimising energy use.

At DC Warewashing, a firm that produces commercial dishwashing machines, they point to their premium range, which has double-skinned and insulated wash tanks to reduce heat loss.

The tanks are smaller than typical machines, and the firm says they could save up to 13,000 litres of water a year compared to traditional wash tank models.

At Exclusive Ranges, managing director Trevor Burke espouse the virtues of induction cooking.

He says that up to 70% of the energy used to boil a pan of water on a conventional cooker

is lost, whereas an induction cooker uses 90% of its energy. He calculates that a kitchen will see a reduction of energy use of 30-40% with the introduction of induction equipment.

### 10 SHINE A LIGHT ON ENERGY SAVINGS

LED lighting technology has made massive strides over the past five years, with a wide range of quality long-life, low-maintenance solutions for hotel and restaurant environments – from energy-saving bulbs to spotlights, tubes and capsules.

Philips remains a market leader and the company continues to invest heavily in research and development to ensure the best quality of light while delivering energy reductions of up to 90%.

Mark Sait, managing director of Save-MoneyCutCarbon, says: "For 24/7 areas of a property, LED lighting is a no-brainer and can be enhanced further with smart controls such as motion sensors, daylight sensors and occupancy sensors."



# Cateys at 30 Conference

Some of the leading lights in the hospitality industry – and past *Caterer and Hotelkeeper* Catey award winners – were brought together to share their invaluable experience at a conference last November. Here is their best advice



## HOW TO INSPIRE A TEAM

**I**gnite your enthusiasm. Get up in the morning with a purpose. Your energy levels dictate the success of the day. People work for people and stay for inspiring leaders.

**N**avigate the course. Have a compelling vision as to where you are going with your team and what it will look like when you get there.

**S**ell the benefits. Celebrate success and reward people for their contribution.

**P**aint a picture. Have a clear set of values. Communicate what you stand for and what your team needs to deliver.

**I**nvite participation. Hire people for their brain and make sure they contribute.

**R**einforce optimism. Keep positive through thick and thin. We're going through tough times but as an inspiring leader you have to stick with it. Be consistent with your mood.

**E**ngage potential. When you're hiring people don't just think about their job today, consider their potential for tomorrow and how they will add value to your business.



**By Sean Wheeler, area director of human resources, the Dorchester, Coworth Park and 45 Park Lane**

## THE BLUEPRINT FOR A SUCCESSFUL HOSPITALITY BUSINESS



### Remember the three Ps

Product, people and PR. Make the product the best it can be at the right price point, invest in and develop your people and tell your customers what you're doing, through PR.

"It's as much about how you treat the dustman as the article in a glossy magazine."

**Think about training** Does today's chef de partie need to know 36 ways to cut a carrot? Perhaps it's more important to source and choose the right carrot in the first place.

**Tell a story** Give journalists something to write about. But also nurture your relationships with the press; don't just contact them when you want something.

**Be confident** Today's guest wants confident, intelligent, understated service.

**It's not complicated** There are a million details to get right; the question is choosing the right ones to concentrate on.

**By Robin Hutson, CEO and chairman, Lime Wood Group and Home Grown Hotels**

## FIVE WAYS TO BUILD A BUSINESS

- Analyse your financial performance over the past five years to see if the business is in good shape.
- Benchmark your business with your main competitors.
- Do an audit of all the basics of good hospitality – listen to your customers and staff.
- Identify what is unique or special about your business.
- Invest in the fabric of your business, even when times are tough.

**By Phil Howard, chef and co-owner, the Square; Paul Milsom, managing director, Milsom Hotels and Restaurants; Harry Murray, chairman, Lucknam Park**

## CREATE A PROFITABLE PRODUCT

- Present a clear identity for your offer. If people aren't sure what you're about, they will get confused and won't return.
- Get to know your regulars and visit often. "If you're there, you'll understand why a product isn't working," said Rousset.
- Cost everything, and make sure it adds up – if not, even the most "winning product" will fail.
- Don't forget the decor and design. As Atherton said: "People expect the design to deliver as much as the food."
- Listen to what your customers want, and always offer value for money.

**By Jason Atherton, chef-restaurateur; Simon Rogan, chef-restaurateur; and Xavier Rousset, co-proprietor, Texture and 28°-50°**

## TIPS FOR CONTROLLING COSTS

- Plan for success from the start.
- Review prices – go back to suppliers every three months and renegotiate.
- Recognise and reward managers and chefs on their gross profits.
- Use technology management tools to turn off equipment when they're not needed.
- The top line is important but it means nothing if the bottom line is unhealthy.

## Questions to consider when seeking investment

- Is your business a passing fad? Investors are interested in long-term growth.
- Do you have good like-for-likes? What is the break-even? How fixed are the fixed costs, what are the wages and what is the rent to sales ratio?
- How expensive are the central costs and what are the real cash-on-cash returns?
- How much do the founders earn?
- How realistic is the growth plan? Most businesses can sustain 10% per annum.
- What is the cost of capital?

**By Will Smith, co-owner, Arbutus; Debrah Dhugga, managing director, Dukes London; and James Horler, chief executive, 3Sixty Restaurants**

Matthew Clark



# DISCOVER THE UNEXPECTED WITH MATTHEW CLARK WINES

We are delighted to invite AA establishments to the Matthew Clark annual London Wine Tasting on 18 March. Matthew Clark will again be supporting the AA wine awards in 2014.

This great tasting event is aimed at helping establishments improve their wine lists and grow their margins. The colourful and interactive tasting will be made up of different 'zones' in individual rooms, creating the feeling of a series of smaller, more intimate and focused tastings, allowing visitors to plan their day based on their

particular areas of interest. There will be a focus on education and the sharing of expertise, with Matthew Clark specialists on-hand to offer one-on-one advice.

One of the largest zones will be devoted to Spain – Matthew Clark's leading region. Matthew Clark has taken significant steps in recent years to develop and grow its Spanish portfolio, and this expertise is reflected in the large number of awards its Spanish range has won over the past few months.

Buyers and producers will be available to talk customers through

the wines, and tapas will be served throughout, with dishes selected to match with the wines on show.

Among a line-up of more than 350 wines from all corners of the world will be almost 100 new wines, each reflecting the ethos of the Matthew Clark buying team to seek out wines that 'over-deliver' against their respective price points and offer real value to customers.

Elsewhere, a 'Building Blocks' zone will house a series of themed flights to demonstrate how understanding various styles and price points can make all the

difference when influencing consumer choices.

The focus of these flights will vary from popular and commercial to diverse and quirky wine styles, representing the full spectrum of consumer tastes and with the aim of helping customers make the most of these trends.

Among other highlights there will also be commercially relevant masterclasses hosted by external experts running throughout the day, as well as a fully merchandised bar area and street food vans to make sure that no one goes hungry.

**18 MARCH 2014 10AM-5PM**  
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**VISIT [WWW.THEEXPERIENCEMATTERS.CO.UK](http://WWW.THEEXPERIENCEMATTERS.CO.UK)**  
**TO REGISTER YOUR ATTENDANCE**

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# HOSPITALITY ACTION UNVEILS INDUSTRY'S EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME



**H**ospitality Action, the benevolent charity for the catering and hospitality sector, has unveiled its own Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), designed to support the three million people working across the industry by providing expert help and assistance to those in crisis or need.

The scheme, which has been gradually rolling out since April 2013, has already attracted some of the biggest names in the industry, including Red Carnation Hotels, Calcot Manor, Carnegie Club and the Vineyard at Stockcross, as well as Whitbread and Ed's Easy Diners. More than 70,000 employees from 30 companies are now able to access specialist and confidential advice 24/7, 365 days a year. In the first 10 months of the programme, more than 1,500 hospitality people have benefited from the EAP's advice, expertise and support.

As the industry charity for 175 years, Hospitality Action is uniquely placed to understand and help resolve the issues that affect our people, at work and in their personal lives.

The EAP service is a fully supported, confidential scheme that includes advice and help sheets, web chat and a telephone helpline, personal counselling, legal information and guidance, financial planning and debt advice, addiction support for alcohol, drugs, gambling or other addiction issues, hardship grants, a confidential whistleblowing service, critical incident debriefing and mediation.

Penny Moore, chief executive, Hospitality Action, says: "Personal issues can have a major impact on the way people work, and this can become a business cost due to a decrease in productivity and an unbalanced working environment. Our experience shows that many small problems, if nipped in the bud, can be prevented from escalating, and this is exactly what the EAP has been designed to address.

"We already have some fantastic companies on board with the scheme, and I look forward to seeing new signatories joining up in the coming weeks and months."

Richard Ball, executive chairman, Calcot Hotels, says: "We adopted the EAP for all three of our hotels and outdoor catering business – some 400 employees. It provides an invaluable support system for a range of challenging personal issues – many of which require more expertise than we can expect our managers and HR team to have. It also goes some way to showing proper duty of care in these difficult areas that are never very far below the surface for many people in our industry."

**If you would like to find out more about the EAP, contact Camilla Woods on [cwoods@hospitalityaction.org.uk](mailto:cwoods@hospitalityaction.org.uk)**



Richard Ball



Penny Moore

## THE PROBLEM

With top-end hotels, where the world's hyper-wealthy are among the guests, the value of guests' property can be millions of pounds. In the event that this property goes missing, to what extent are hotel proprietors liable and what can they do to limit their liability?

## THE LAW

Hotel proprietors are strictly liable to make good the loss of a guest's property unless they can prove that the loss was caused as a result of the negligence of the guest. This duty is set out in s.2 (3) of the Hotel Proprietors' Act 1956 (the Act). Liability is restricted to those guests who have purchased sleeping accommodation only. In addition, payment for property loss is limited to £50 for a single item and £100 on aggregate.

Hotels must display a prominent sign confirming the extent of their duty held under section 2 (3) of the Act in order to benefit from the low payment limits.

## EXPERT ADVICE

The issue for hotel proprietors presents itself when the loss of guests' property is caused by the negligence of the hotel proprietor or its employees, or where the property is lost after being deposited with the hotel for safekeeping, or where the hotel refuses to accept the property for safekeeping.

Such circumstances are problematic for hotel proprietors as the loss of guests' property in these circumstances does not afford them the protection of the payment limits set down in the Act. This can leave hotels exposed to liability for the full value of any property lost. This is of obvious concern should very valuable items go missing.

Thankfully, hotels can seek to limit their exposure under the Act by ensuring that security is of the highest level. Hotel proprietors are also entitled to refuse the safekeeping of items of "exceptional character". Very valuable items are believed to fall within this ambit, however this has yet to be tested by the courts. The question that hotel proprietors should ask is whether they have a reasonable excuse for refusing to accept valuable items for safekeeping.



# WHO IS LIABLE IF A GUEST'S PROPERTY GOES MISSING?

Hotels should ensure the correct signage or even security is in place, as claims for lost property can run into millions of pounds, says *Rebecca Gibb*

They should assess whether an item is so valuable that to accept it would be to leave the hotel exposed to a high degree of expenditure should it be lost. In these circumstances the hotel should be entitled to refuse acceptance of the item.

Hotel proprietors may also seek to exclude their liability under the Act by inserting a limitation clause into the booking contract. This would limit their liability to make good the loss of high-value items caused as a result of the scenarios set out in section 2(3) of the Act. It remains to be seen, however, whether the courts will enforce such contractual clauses given that the Act is designed to confer strict liability on hotel proprietors. Such clauses will also be subject to consideration by the courts in respect of their

**“Hotel proprietors are entitled to refuse the safekeeping of items of ‘exceptional character’”**

compliance with the Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977.

## CHECKLIST

- Ensure a sign is erected in the hotel's entrance or at reception confirming the hotel's liability under the Act.
- Provide quality safes within guests' rooms and encourage guests to use them to help prevent theft.
- Have safety deposit boxes available offering a high level of security.
- Train and monitor employees to help prevent theft.
- Refer requests for

safekeeping of guests' property to the hotel proprietor before items are accepted.

- Insert a limitation clause into the booking contract, which avoids liability for high-value items, ensuring that it is drafted by a lawyer.
- Have a sufficient level of insurance cover in place in respect of guests' lost property.

## BEWARE!

If these steps are not taken, hotel proprietors risk claims running into thousands if not millions of pounds. Such claims will be difficult and costly to defend due to the strict liability conferred on hotel proprietors by the Act.

## CONTACT

**Rebecca Gibb is a solicitor at Weightmans**  
[rebecca.gibb@weightmans.com](mailto:rebecca.gibb@weightmans.com)





## FUTURE TALENT

You can't ignore it... even if it is only just audible, the low hum of economic optimism is in the air. If the gloom really is lifting, then hospitality employers will face fresh challenges as the job market starts to shift in earnest. Woe betide any employer who isn't already preparing the ground to cope with increased staffing demands when things really start to move. So, are you planning ahead?

Perhaps now more than ever, customers expect not just a good service, but a truly great experience. "Good enough" simply isn't good enough any more. It's the outstanding hospitality businesses that work hard to attract and retain staff who can deliver on that expectation. These tend to be the best employers in the industry too, and candidates know it.

There has and perhaps always will be a painful skills shortage in the sector, but successful hospitality employers understand that the talent is absolutely out there for those who think carefully

about how to engage with it. As the economy starts to warm up slowly, employers need to move fast to position themselves as the best in the business.

At Caterer.com, we work closely with all sizes of hospitality business to assist them in recruiting quality candidates, enabling them to communicate the right messages through their campaigns with us. Without fail, the employers with the most effective recruitment campaigns are those who have done the groundwork, really thinking about what makes them the best employers they can be.

Inside their company, these employers encourage a pipeline of young managers within the business through development schemes. They invest time (if not budget!) in meaningful training. They have considered what makes the best talent stay with them... or leave.

Looking at their organisation from the outside in, these businesses think about their

employer brand and know what makes them a great place to work, clearly showcasing this in their advertising and communications. They define what makes their top employees tick and then target their advertising at similar candidates. They understand what their future talent wants from an employer and they work hard to provide it.

Alongside this, top employers understand the value of employer awards such as the Great Place to Work in Hospitality survey or Caterer.com's own Best Employers in Hospitality Awards, and benchmark themselves on improving their scores year on year. And they work towards and showcase their business accolades, such as AA rosettes, which draw quality, relevant candidates towards their job advertising.

The great employers in the business think creatively about where their future talent will come from; skilled candidates already working within the industry are not the end of the story. Students,

women returners and those working in other sectors are just some of the groups they consider. These employers are often involved with the many wonderful organisations that reach out to these audiences on behalf of the industry.

As we look ahead through 2014 and beyond, we can be certain of one thing; the demand for great staff will be higher than ever. Large or small, the most successful hospitality businesses will have positioned themselves well to recruit and retain the top talent in the industry, not just this year, but way into the future. Now is the time to plan and take action. Where's your future talent coming from?

To find out more about how Caterer.com can help you recruit quality, relevant candidates for your business, contact our team of experienced account managers now on 0845 877 0064 or visit <http://recruiters.caterer.com>  
**Neil Pattison is Sales Director at Caterer.com**



# THE ROLE OF A PURCHASING ORGANISATION – PROFIT VS PRICE

Purchasing specialists such as Beacon offer hospitality businesses the opportunities to maximise their buying power across a whole range of products and services, including utilities and services, food and drink, equipment, disposables and consumables.

But is it all about price? Beacon, the purchasing partner to AA hotels, shares how a professional purchasing organisation can really improve your bottom line and help you deliver a better guest experience.

Running a profitable hospitality business in the current economic climate is challenging – with pressures to increase occupancy levels, optimise room rates and improve your guest experience.

But could outsourcing your purchasing to an organisation like Beacon help you to achieve your strategic aims more effectively?

Paul Connelly, director of operations at Beacon, says: “There is a common misconception that price is the only factor a purchasing organisation focuses on. But any good purchasing specialist will offer much more than that. They can work with suppliers to provide improved terms of service, support from experts in their field, and apply collective influence that will afford greater traction with supply partners.

“For instance, instead of managing payments across numerous suppliers and all the paperwork that entails, the

provision of a service like Beacon’s central billing system means that payments can be consolidated in one bill, saving both transaction charges and administration.”

Historically, purchasing consortia were perceived as being solely about price, but the more enlightened providers can take care of service contract notifications, ensuring contracts don’t overrun into expensive tariffs; and can also assist with recruitment, insurance and HR issues – all time-consuming tasks that can distract from the day-to-day running of a business.

Some operators may view purchasing organisations as a route to better pricing, and a broad range of suppliers – in the capacity of an ‘introducer’ role only – are perhaps

not reaping the full benefits of a purchasing partner by continuing to expend time and resources by managing suppliers and outlet-specific pricing at a local level.

Businesses who truly work with the purchasing organisation as an extension to their team can save not only money, but time and resources. These savings, coupled with accessing professional support and advice around the formulation of an effective purchasing strategy, is how the optimum relationship with a purchasing organisation is achieved.

**To find out how Beacon could help improve your business’s profitability, please visit [www.beaconpurchasing.co.uk](http://www.beaconpurchasing.co.uk) or call 01904 695 588**

# HOW TO DESIGN YOUR HOTEL

Great hotels offer an experience that permeates a guest's whole experience, says *Tina Norden*

Once, impressing hotel guests was easy: all you needed was a colour television, room service and a trouser press. People didn't have these at home and they were innately exciting as a result. But not any longer.

Hotel design today is about a point of difference; something unique and memorable. Hotels are about the experience and the atmosphere, both of which are carefully designed to create a destination with a very distinct character.

Today's guests are savvy, well-travelled and their expectations are high. To attract them, hoteliers must offer an all-encompassing experience that permeates everything, from the style of service and the names of the cocktails to the choice of books on the shelf. There is no right and wrong – consistency of message is key.

Defining this attitude will result in a clear concept for the design, the offer and the service style. For example, if you run a hip, urban boutique hotel, trainers and a T-shirt may be an appropriate uniform.

It is important to be specific about the target guest and very clear on their tastes, needs and requirements. Try not to please everybody, as the end product will inevitably be diluted.

Intelligent design will communicate this attitude to the guests and shape their experience. Function is as important as form to achieve this, as seamless service is an integral part of the overall package.

Naturally, the room is a large part of the guest experience and getting it right is fundamental, but the public areas also set the tone of the hotel. They are the first experience of a hotel



## SEVEN STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL HOTEL DESIGN

### Identify your target customer

Who are your guests and what do they need? Even more importantly: what are their aspirations? Painting a picture of who you want to walk through the door will allow you to define your concept clearly.

### Define the concept

What is the big idea for the project? What is the attitude of the operation and its style? Is what you're proposing a new idea, or has someone done it before? What's your point of distinction?

### Clever technology

Guests may say they want to get away from it all, but these days up-to-date technology is a virtual must. One important point is that technology must be genuinely clever, easy to use and integrated from the start – nothing is more annoying than not finding the right light switch in a hotel room.

### Create an experience

Designers and operators have to work very closely in developing the overall experience for the hotel. It should inform the layouts, finishes, bathroom

fit-outs and restaurant menus, as well as the choice of staff and the way they behave. Personality is key.

### Keep up appearances

Maintenance is not the most exciting subject, but keeping everything looking as it was on day one is important to keep guests coming back. A key part of achieving this is getting the specification right in the first place, so the design stands the test of time.

### Tell people about it

A well thought-out PR and events strategy is a must. Before reaching out to press and bloggers, ask what makes your hotel interesting for them to write about. The answer may be informed by your events plan: will you hold wine tastings, DJ nights or art installations? Make sure you're telling people about it on your own channels, too – a tweet that captures the spirit of the hotel may be the final clincher for a would-be guest.

### Stick to the concept

The concept should become part of the DNA of the hotel, informing every interaction and every stay. Never lose the big idea!

a guest has, and should make a clear statement about the hotel's personality.

Long gone are the days when hotel restaurants were a last resort if you couldn't be bothered to leave the building. Increasingly, food and beverage

offers attract non-staying customers or form the main reason guests choose to stay at a particular hotel. A lively bar or a packed restaurant brings an obvious benefit in terms of the bottom line, but also brings that elusive buzz that turns

a hotel into a destination. A great atmosphere and a discernible vibe will make a hotel memorable and bring people back again and again.

**Tina Norden is associate director at Conran and Partners**

# Let us help you unlock your revenue potential.

**BRIEFYOURMARKET.COM**

We asked Louise Wright, Group Sales Director at Cedar Court Hotels for her experience in how the powerful BriefYourMarket.com multichannel marketing tools have benefited her team and customers so far...



## **So Louise, how did you hear about BriefYourMarket.com?**

Jill contacted The Cedar Court Grand, after discussions we felt this system would benefit the whole of the group.

## **Can you tell us a little bit about you, your hotel and what do you do?**

I'm Director of Sales and Marketing at Cedar Court Group, we have five hotels in Yorkshire - three West Yorkshire Hotels in Wakefield, Huddersfield and Leeds/Bradford, one in Harrogate and the only 5\* hotel in the centre of York.

**Who are your customers?** Our West Yorkshire hotels enjoy corporate guests and conference business whereas the two in North Yorkshire are more leisure led with a high weekend occupancy. We attract lots of weddings and plenty of guests looking to explore Yorkshire.

**So how were you communicating with your customers before BriefYourMarket.com?** We used an e-marketing system but it was very restrictive, we had been looking for a solution that was more responsive to client preferences, their booking history and patterns. We wanted to take a more strategic view to intelligently target our customers and found the response rate from the old system was very low.

**Louise you run a very successful group of hotels what were your main issues in keeping in regular contact with your customers?** The data we had available to us was limited and we were utilising an old PMS system. We now use Multiproperty PMS which gives us the ability to target our customers in a smarter way. Originally our customers had no way of telling us what they did and didn't want to hear about, with

BriefYourMarket.com we are able to send them material that engages them specifically.

**How did you find our set up process?** The set up process was relatively quick and easy, within a couple of weeks we had the Cedar Court templates set up and then just had to transfer our data into the system.

**At BriefYourMarket.com we pride ourselves on offering added value and a great customer experience, did you feel that the training was comprehensive and what were our team like to deal with?** The training has been excellent! We needed various sessions across different groups of people and the team have happily provided this so we feel competent and comfortable using the software.

**Louise did your team find the products easy to use?** We are still in the early stages and learning to use the system, but after our training we feel equipped to start sending regular communications. It's a very straight forward product to use, the time consuming bit is planning in all of your strategies. Jill at BYM has been very helpful with that too!

**Which features have you found to be most useful?** So far Newsletters, Single Mailers and the Direct Marketing tool have extensive capabilities and scope. The next step is to integrate into our PMS system so we don't have to manually transfer our data, and then set up triggers for different customer types. The ability to be able to communicate with our customer base intelligently, offering them pre and post-sale offers is a great tool and will capture additional revenue and repeat business.

## **What are the main benefits to The Cedar Court Hotels and your valued customers?**

The scope and benefits are endless, planning targeted customer campaigns are key. If we get the right offer to the right people it gives us the potential to massively increase bookings through our own web-site and cut down commissions through third parties. Brand awareness is key, with access to a database of 43million households we can now target customers further afield than Yorkshire. BriefYourMarket.com SMS technology supports other revenue streams as well as accommodation, we plan to use this for late spa availability and in house dining promotions. The direct mail feature is incredibly cost effective, sending a high quality A5 mailer including postage and buying the data for around 60p is great value especially bearing in mind how targeted you can be to who receives the mailer!

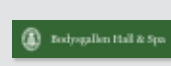
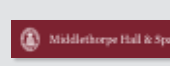
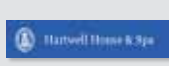
**What value has the BriefYourMarket.com system added to your marketing initiatives?** It will be our main stream of all marketing activity for 2014, we anticipate it will add considerable value.

**And lastly would you recommend BriefYourMarket.com to fellow hoteliers?** Absolutely!

If you'd like to experience the same types of benefits that Louise and The Cedar Court Hotels Group are enjoying then please contact us on **0844 800 84 24** or visit us online to receive a demo of our products and services. Please quote AA InTouch Feb in your communication.

For an online demonstration call a member of our expert team today on **0844 800 84 24** or visit [www.BriefYourMarket.com](http://www.BriefYourMarket.com)

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