

Cracker Barrel 2019

Personnel/staff management:

Creative recruiting and retention tactics: with unemployment at an all-time low and new luxury projects popping up all over the place, what are we doing to recruit and retain the top talent.

- Hotels with season needs can share staff with hotels on opposite calendar (i.e. those needing more help in summer could share staff with properties needing more winter seasonal staff). There may be a way for SIA to help expedite this.
- Housing is issue; Disney building dorm-style accommodations; hotels have leased apartments for workers, but practice has lots of pitfalls, including liability
- provide transportation from outlying areas
- H2B workers must have start and end dates. Expensive as transportation, housing, and legal/paperwork are costly. Employees sometimes arrive too late for peak season. Funds might be better used to incentivize local workers.
- J1 employees available through Alliance Abroad. Mexico has J1 culinary program

Best practices for on-boarding new associates with indoctrination, along with any practical In-House staff training methods utilized.

- Day 1 orientation
- interactive scenarios for front of house staff (3 weeks)
- lots of turnover in first months
- Buddy program: beyond workplace, orient new employee to area, discuss problems (this is particularly effective with H2B and J1 workers); use mid level managers from another department
- 30 day touchpoint
- Coffee talks in which employees submit topics
- part-timers add flexibility in scheduling and increase retention
- Millennial-Friendly Culture important. Offer 2-day leadership summit for them; want compassionate management; need to "feel loved". Building this culture cut turnover in half at one property

Current labor market, including increased wages due to minimum wage and competition for good talent. Also, rising benefit costs.

- Bonus for bringing in new hires: \$250 at 90 days, \$250 more at one year retention.
- Signing bonuses for new staff
- 1/2 price shares in company
- Profit sharing bonuses
- Drug testing: some have stopped doing it. Especially problematic in culinary

- SAS model is impressive; offers unique benefits and appreciation incentives
- 100% Healthcare coverage from day 1 really helps retention, especially in slow season. Concern is lack of control of costs of insurance plans. Could explode and make 100% coverage impractical

Also what does that effect of rising labor costs and acquisition costs have on typical margins and what are owners/management companies saying and expecting?

- Topic was not really addressed separately

Marketing:

Digital Marketing Space- What avenues, companies, tactics are you all finding the most valuable and providing the best ROI in terms of generating rooms, both transient and Group.

- put **value** on first page of online promos
- one property spent \$150K on online marketing to combat seasonal slowdown. Results were not outstanding

Leveraging PR opportunities. What are properties doing to “rise out of the pile” to be unique, relevant and in the news stream?

- Wellness tourism is big, especially in Europe/Asia, with properties offering full-spectrum experiences. In some countries governments are promoting wellness tourism
- Expedia commissions: could these be reduced for week-day stays?

Market share capture:

How properties may be combatting VRBO and other distribution channel creep (especially those with a residential component)

- when on-site housing is offered by both hotel and other outlets, competition can be challenging
- rental houses appeal to a different market than hotel rooms
- make the benefits of renting in resort rental pool clear: transportation, use of resort amenities
- promote legislation to ensure that Air B&B and VRBO pay bed tax (county by county)
- hotels have advantage over Air B&B in areas like safety, security, privacy, 24-hour accessibility

Environment/financial management:

Best sustainable practices utilized to save on Electric, Water and Natural Gas expenses.

- One property removed fan coil units
- Updated lighting
- Update laundry equipment. Jensen tunnel washer saved \$1million/year in electricity
- water reclamation saved a property \$150K/year. System paid for itself in 8 months

ADA Compliance:

- important to ensure website compliance, as “drive-by” lawsuits are becoming prevalent