

Stop the Presses: Smoke-free lodgings on the rise

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With the number of smoke-free lodgings growing at a record rate, FreshStay.com sets a goal to grow to 10,000 non-smoking properties before the end of 2009.

A recent exposé from USA Today blew the lid off one of the biggest trends to ever hit the U.S. hospitality market: the incredible growth of 100% smoke-free lodgings.

According to the USA Today's analysis of American Automobile Association (AAA) data, the number of lodgings prohibiting smoking indoors has nearly quadrupled during the past three years.

There are now more than 8,300 smoke-free lodgings in the USA - nearly 6,000 more than in 2005, AAA's figures show.

There are many reasons why hotels, motels, inns and B&Bs are extinguishing smoking at a record rate: growing public concerns over the dangers of second-hand smoke, new laws prohibiting smoking indoors, the growing demand of business and leisure travelers for clean, refreshing places to stay, and the growing desire of hoteliers and their staffs to work in healthy, fresh-air environments.

The USA Today article also quoted Ray Burger, President of Pineapple Hospitality, which operates Freshstay.com - a directory of more than 3,300 smoke-free lodgings - saying that some hotels have not made the change to smoke-free because they might not wish to risk losing the smoking portion of their customer bases.

'But our partners at FreshStay have found, time after time, that eliminating smoking reduces costs and enhances the guest experience,' Burger says. 'Their housekeeping staffs aren't spending hours and hours every day anymore trying to get the smoke smell out of guestrooms and meeting rooms. There aren't any burn marks on linens, upholstery and furniture. And better indoor air quality leads to a good night's rest. All three of these smoke-free benefits also improve customer satisfaction scores, repeat business and referrals, and protect assets while reducing FF&E replacement expenditures.'

'And that's just the economic perspective. There's also the social conscious that goes with keeping both your business, your body and the public in good health,' he adds.

As a leader in the smoke-free movement, and in light of this news, FreshStay is setting a goal to grow to 10,000 Non-Smoking member properties worldwide by Dec. 31, 2009.

'With more lodgings going smoke-free than ever, it's our duty as a world leader to provide the quickest, easiest and most comprehensive listing of smoke-free properties,' Burger says. 'We're targeting to grow FreshStay's membership 25 percent in the next two months alone - not an easy task in this tight economy.'

'But we believe the value we provide to both our partners and to Frequent Breathers seeking better indoor air quality makes this a goal we can all achieve together,' Burger adds. 'We know there are nearly 5,000 potential additional FreshStay members in the United States, so give us a call today, get on the FreshStay bandwagon - because it passengers are en route to increased profitability.'

Fresh Faces

FreshStay will have some big-time help to achieve its lofty goals, as it has named Dave Janicke as CBO - Chief Breathing Officer. FreshStay also brought Ric Anderson aboard as a Strategic Brand Consultant.



Dave Janicke
FreshStay
Chief Breathing
Officer (CBO)

In his new role of CBO, Janicke will provide leadership and management skills to the FreshStay team. Coming fresh off of 30 years as an Information Technology professional for AT&T, Janicke will be instrumental in the development of FreshStay 3.0. The current FreshStay.com version 2.0 featured an expanded-yet-simplified smoke-free lodging search process and added an integrated booking process to drive members' business.

The next step will be to add features, such as noting those hotels that not only are smoke-free, but also provide additional indoor air quality enhancements.

'As both the number of, and interest in, smoke-free lodgings continues to grow, FreshStay.com will continue to evolve to best serve our hotel partners and the public,' says Janicke. 'I'm very proud to be a part of the FreshStay team at such an exciting time in its evolution.'



Ric Anderson
FreshStay
Strategic Brand
Consultant

Anderson has a broad background as a senior executive in merchandising, product development and brand marketing, having experience with such companies as: Harry & David, Saks Inc., Federated Department Stores, Fossil, May Co., and Neiman Marcus. Most recently, Anderson served as the VP/GMM of Footwear for Sears, where he led the team to the best performing Softlines Division for the past two years. As a Strategic Brand Consultant for FreshStay, Anderson will work to enhance the FreshStay brand and will be a major factor in leading its growth.

'Working with FreshStay is a fantastic opportunity to help provide a service that is in great demand from the public,' says Anderson. 'As the hospitality industry continues its rapid transformation it is companies like FreshStay that will play a major role in bringing together customers who desire to patronize businesses that match their values and those lodgings that can meet those demands.'

Though this will be the first time Burger, Janicke and Anderson have worked directly together, they share the same values, the same dedication and, just as important, the same alma mater - all three are graduates of Missouri State University.

'We didn't plan it this way, but there's just no keeping us old Bears down,' jokes Burger. 'But regardless of where we went to school, these two men over several decades have demonstrated innovation and success in their respective professions. I'm very excited to bring their talents and energy aboard FreshStay, and can't wait to see where their ideas lead us.'

Northern Exposure

Further bolstering its goals to reach 10,000 non-smoking properties before 2009 ends, FreshStay has formed a Strategic Marketing Partnership with the Hotel Association of Canada (HAC).

As part of the agreement, FreshStay will be listed in HAC's Green Product Directory and FreshStay will link to HAC's Green Key Program Web site, www.hacgreenhotels.com.

The HAC's Green Key Eco-Rating Program is a rating system designed to recognize hotels, motels, and resorts that are committed to improving their fiscal and environmental performances. Based on the results of a comprehensive environmental audit, hoteliers are awarded a 1-5 Green Key rating and given guidance on how to unlock opportunities to reduce operating costs and environmental impacts through reduced utility consumption and enhanced employee training and supply chain management.

Areas the Green Key program examines include:

Energy conservation,

Water conservation,

Solid waste management,

Hazardous waste management,

Indoor air quality,

Community outreach,

Building infrastructure,

Land use, and

Environmental management.

'We are always looking for ways to assist our Green Key members and bring greater awareness of the program, especially in the United States,' says Andrea Myers, Director - Marketing & Member Services for HAC. 'FreshStay is a good fit for our members because most municipalities have now implemented non-smoking policies for public areas. And part of the Green Key audit asks our members whether their facilities are smoke-free.'

'There are so many people who are allergic to smoke or have chemical sensitivities, that this is a huge concern for them,' Myers adds. 'This partnership will let travelers know that many of our Green Key members provide smoke-free places for them to visit.'

Currently more than 950 Canadian properties participate in the Green Key Eco-Rating Program.

Fresh Testimonials

While FreshStay works its way toward its goal of 10,000 members by year-end 2009, some of FreshStay.com's latest members are already reaping the benefits of going smoke-free.

Fiesta Resort & Conference Center

Josh Kalla from the Fiesta Resort & Conference Center in Tempe, Ariz., says his 270-room hotel went non-smoking in the summer of 2006.

'Arizona became a non-smoking state in May 2007,' Kalla explains. 'Our resort felt that going smokefree was a necessary step to help promote a healthier environment for the guests that stay with us. A majority of the travelers who stay with us prefer a non-smoking environment, and unfortunately there were times when a non smoking traveler had to sleep in smoking room due to the growing demand of nonsmoking rooms.'

'Since we went 100% smoke-free, our cleaning costs have been significantly reduced, as the window covers, comforters, carpets and linens now do not require any heavier than normal cleaning,' Kalla adds. 'Going smoke-free has also has extinguished the complaints of non-smoking guests, who often were offended by stays in our smoking rooms when there were no other rooms available.'

Kalla currently is working on setting up a landing page on the hotel's Web site that will be available to guests who have found the property through FreshStay.com. There will be a discounted rate available, with a link directly on the FreshStay.com site.

'We would like to set an example to the Tempe area, and be proud of the fact that we do all that we can to promote a healthier stay,' Kalla says.

Belltown Inn

The Belltown Inn in downtown Seattle didn't have to make the change to smoke-free. Opened this year, the 174-room Belltown was smoke-free from the start.

'We opened up another property, the Mediterranean Inn, completely smoke-free back in 2002,' explains the Belltown's Regional Director of Sales Stephanie Steadman. 'Back then, people thought we were crazy. But it turns out that it's been great for us, especially as more and more of the industry catches on to the benefits of going smoke-free.'

'So when we opened the Belltown Inn, it wasn't even a question anymore,' she says. 'People tell us that the property just smells so clean, and that's because there's never been smoke allowed in.'

Steadman says that though the hotel has not been open for long, it definitely sees repeat business from happy guests, which she says is at least partially attributable to the smoke-free policies.

'FreshStay is a good partner for us not just from the non-smoking aspect, but because Ray Burger is so pro-active on the green side of things,' Steadman says. 'We have made a real conscious effort to be as environmentally responsible as possible. We truly believe that we only have one planet and it's our duty to take care of it. As hoteliers, we can and should make a huge impact by conserving energy, water and other natural resources.'

About Pineapple Hospitality

Headquartered in Saint Charles, Missouri, Pineapple Hospitality(TM) is The Co-Founder and Host of the ANNUAL GREEN HOSPITALITY CONFERENCE, an EPA ENERGY STAR(TM) partner bringing fresh ideas to hospitality guests' doors and owner/operators' bottom lines - including FreshStay(R) (www.freshstay.com), EcoRooms(R) & EcoSuites(TM) (www.EcoRooms.com) Environmentally Sensitive Amenities(TM), EO(R), Neutrogena(R) and greenSPA(TM) amenities and AVIVA dispensers, Energy Efficient Lighting and Controls, Custom Linen & Towel Re-Use Programs, Green Key Cards, Energy Management Systems and Controls, High Performance showerheads, the Nature's Mist(TM) deodorization system, Zero Odor, and dozens of other products and programs. For more information, please visit www.pineapplehospitality.net, or call us at 636-922-2285.

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