

Fall 2011

Message from the President

I am sure that most of you are happy to see Irene behind us and are planning ahead for a prosperous and warm fall season. The mission statement of HMRA is "The Ocean City Hotel-Motel-Restaurant Association is an advocate of the Ocean City Hospitality Industry, and is a tourism activist. A private, non-profit organization, OCHMRA is dedicated to building Ocean City's economy and positive image through tourism and destination marketing." Very little wording of that mission statement has been changed and now, more than 40 years later, it is still relevant.

Over the summer, we have worked with the Mayor and Council, through our representation on the newly formed *Tourism Advisory Board* (TAB) to find new avenues to build Ocean City's economy and image through tourism and destination marketing. Joining HMRA in this effort are representatives from the Greater OC Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Committee. Together we have met with the City's ad agency, MGH, to brainstorm new ideas for the Rodney campaign and other promotions. At the Annual Season Summary in October all hospitality members will be enlightened on coming events and asked to share viewpoints from this past season.

In our quest to keep our members on the forefront of technology and abreast of the latest trends, we welcome any ideas that you may have. I encourage you to contact Susan or Amy to offer your opinions and advice or just to stay in touch.

We shall continue to work hand-in-hand with Town of Ocean City, Worcester County, and State of Maryland officials and local civic organizations to promote our clean, safe, affordable family-oriented beach and free activities!

Best Wishes for a great fall,
 Mary Eastman
 2011-2012 President

NEW OCHMRA PROJECT...

In-Room Concierge Book Slated for Spring

We are pleased to announce our newest project, "*Inside Ocean City*", the **Official Concierge of the Ocean City Hotel- Motel-Restaurant Association**. This will be an annual, hardbound coffee-table book that delights readers with a savvy insider's view on the resort. Currently, our partner on the project, Sandy Phillips is selling ads and the book will be published for spring of 2012.

Through gorgeous photography, by Kyle Hughes of Next Wave Studios, and insightful articles, *Inside Ocean City* will be designed so that visitors will be compelled to pick it up. They will want to linger over its modern, eye-catching designs and innovative layout. *Inside Ocean City* will offer useful information that helps visitors decide where to go, what to do, what to eat, what to buy and what attractions to visit during their time in our resort.

Inside Ocean City will offer rich content and editorialized layout for advertisers, offering them the opportunity to share the scope of their business as opposed to a snapshot. In addition to the level of quality and information provided by this book, our Association is the designated beneficiary of the new book, and will benefit in a royalty from advertising sales. Therefore, we have created an environment that is affordable for advertisers. Ad rates range from a quarter page at \$750 to a two-page spread at \$3,000. To place an ad, contact Sandy Phillips at 410-726-7334.

On behalf of our Board of Directors, I invite you to participate by either purchasing an ad or placing these books in your rooms for the summer of 2012. *Inside Ocean City*, the Official Concierge of the Ocean City Hotel- Motel-Restaurant Association will benefit our organization and support our efforts to build a stronger tourism market for us all. BUT, WE DO NEED YOUR HELP.....please let me know if you would like to place the Association's publication in your rooms. There is no charge for this service and it is an excellent way to help support your Association. Simply contact our office and let us know if you'd like to receive a copy for the 2012 season.

**SAVE THE DATE
 for OCHMRA's
 upcoming
 Dinner Meetings
 Locations to be
 determined**

***November 17th
 December 15th
 January 19th
 February 16th
 April 19th***



Welcome new members

ACTIVE

Osborns Westside Grille

12513 Ocean Gateway
West Ocean City
410-213-7166
www.osbornsgrille.com

ALLIED

Royal Pest Management

302-322-3600
www.Royalpest.com

MOBILE APP DEVELOPMENT: 10 TIPS FOR SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

By: Scott Gerber - www.mashable.com

To help you maximize your mobile potential, I asked a panel of successful young entrepreneurs what to expect during the app development process, what features are best for your business, and the pitfalls to avoid.

1 DEALS AND DIRECTIONS - Have a location-based discount feature — customer has to check in at your location via your app to unlock special pricing. Have a “directions” feature so that they can get to your location no matter where they are.

- **Devesh Dwivedi, *Breakingthe9to5Jail.com***

2 CREATE SPECIAL PROMOTIONS - One way to get more sales is by creating an in-app system that rewards people who use the app well and often. Offer them special deals, discounts, and such. This will help increase loyalty and engagement while also boosting your sales.

- **Danny Wong, *Blank Label Group, Inc***

3 FORGET ABOUT IT - I think in the vast majority of cases, this is not an investment that will pay [off] unless you can provide massive value through the app and invest significant money in on-line marketing to drive downloads. Instead, I would focus on partnerships with local Groupon and LivingSocial-type sites, Facebook Places, Google Places, DealMap, and LevelUp.

- **Matt Mickiewicz, *99designs***

4 DOES IT SOLVE A PROBLEM? - Make sure when you create an app that it somehow solves a problem and serves a niche. People like to use apps that serve a purpose whether it's information driven, makes them laugh, helps with productivity, etc. When creating an app, think about what you would want out of the app if you were the customer.

- **Ashley Bodi, *Business Beware***

5 MOBILE PAYMENTS ARE THE NEXT BIG THING - Mobile payments are going to be huge and you have the opportunity to let customers pay with their smart phones before your competitors do. Check out Square and Intuit GoPayment to see how mobile payment processing works and whether it's right for you.

- **Natalie MacNeil, *Imaginari.us***

6 SOCIAL MEDIA-FRIENDLY APPS - I would recommend including social media engagement where real-time interaction is built into the app. This could include live Facebook or Twitter streams. Also strive to build an app that creates real community amongst your fan base. Allow them to meet each other virtually and build stronger brand evangelists to not only use your app but spread the word about your business!

- **Kris Ruby, *Ruby Media Group***

7 GIVE THEM MAGICAL POWERS - Before you start building an app, make sure you're not just summarizing your webpage. Rather, give your customers some kind of magical power to interact with your business with only a few taps. For inspiration, check out how Starbucks lets you interact with Starbucks loyalty cards, while Chipotle lets you almost instantly place an order for pickup.

- **Jeffrey Powers, *Occipital***

8 MAKE IT SHARE WORTHY - An app isn't very effective if only a handful of people are using it. Build in benefits and features that inspire sharing. People are inclined to share things that are useful.

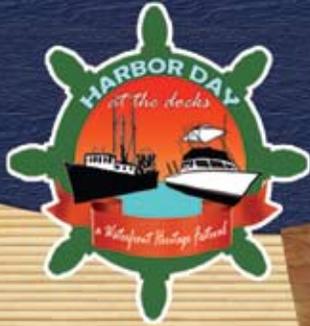
- **Lisa Nicole Bell, *Inspired Life Media Group***

9 FOCUS ON YOUR AUDIENCE'S NEEDS - Ask yourself : What's in it for my customer? Why would they want my app? Does it give them coupons, specials, discounts, behind-the-scenes access, exclusive opportunities? If so, now we're talking. Reward them, and they shall reward you with their presence.

- **Adam Gilbert, *My Body Tutor***

10 PREPARE FOR THE WORST - First things first, you need to assume your app will get denied and plan an extra two to three months in the approval process. This isn't a joke. Your app should be dead-simple to use, should be intuitive to any user and if possible, let them share their experience with friends. One-click purchasing, send to a friend and push notifications for new updates are key features for any good retail app.

- **Jason Sadler, *IWearYourShirt.com***



4th annual

HARBOR DAY at the docks

A WATERFRONT HERITAGE FESTIVAL

Free Admission

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2011

10AM-4PM

*rain date Sunday, October 2nd

Catch of the Day
Fishing Displays
Local Artisans
Tales of the Sea
Food
Free Kids Activities
Family fun
Live music
& much more!



Catch the free Francis Scott Key shuttle from the West OC Park 'n Ride!



OCHARBORDAY.COM

On the Commercial Fishing Harbor
West Ocean City

Ocean City Restaurant Week is Back!

..... OCTOBER 2-16

Fall is just around the corner and that means it's time for Ocean City Restaurant Week!

Participating restaurants will offer either 2 courses for \$20 and/or 3 courses for \$30. In addition, many are using locally sourced ingredients in their menus, so this is a great chance to taste the local flavors of our area.

If your restaurant would like to be a part of restaurant week, please fill out the sign-up form included in this mailing or call us at 410.289.6733.



FROM THE BAY, FOR THE BAY...A CELEBRATION OF MARYLAND SEAFOOD

For a week in October, participating restaurants from Philadelphia to Northern Virginia will be featuring fresh, locally caught Maryland Seafood for their guests. This will be an excellent way to support our local watermen, while enjoying the best seafood the region has to offer.

Each of the participating restaurants is donating \$1.00 for every Maryland seafood



dinner that is sold during this week to the Oyster Recovery Partnership in Annapolis, a non-profit organization that works to replenish the population of our native and treasured Chesapeake Bay oyster.

If you are interested in participating in this promotion feel free to contact Steve Vilnit and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (svilnit@dnr.state.md.us) for more information.





TRENDS TO WATCH in the lodging industry



GUESTS FOR LIFE....Ways to keep guests coming back.

source: June 2011 Lodging Magazine

Paul Ruby, vice president of operations for Shodeen Hospitality shares rules from The Herrington Inn & Spa for ensuring guests are happy with the service provided by the hotel's employees and come back for more.

* **When "No means no"** and when it means an opportunity lost. Giving the guest options of what you can do is always better than telling them what you can't do.

* **Adversity creates opportunity.** Solving a problem is often the greatest opportunity to exceed a guest's expectations and create a guest for life.

* **Is hospitality in your blood?** While training is imperative to great service, find naturally hospitable people rather than simply well trained robots.

* **Never leave guests to do something when you can do it for them.** Always end an interaction with "Please let me know if I can be of further assistance," or "Is there anything else I can do for you at this time?"

* **Know how to make a guest feel special.** Value each guest as if he or she were the only guest.

More rules at LodgingMagazine.com

POOL & IN-GROUND SPA DRAIN COVER RECALL

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission has announced a voluntary recall of pool and in-ground spa drain covers due to incorrect ratings. If the drains in your pool or spa meet any of the following criteria, they are NOT the subject of the recall:

If your drain covers were installed before December 2008, your pool or spa is NOT affected by this recall.

If the drain in your pool is a "channel drain"—it is in the shape of a long and narrow rectangle, (typically 3 or 4 inches by 30 or 31 inches or longer) or if the drain is

24"x24" or larger—it is NOT affected by this recall.

Hot tubs (often referred to as portable spas) are NOT affected by the recall, whether they are free standing, placed in the ground or surrounded by a deck.

Swimming pools, aside from built-in wading (kiddie) pools, or in ground spas, that have one pump and more than one drain or a gravity drainage system are NOT affected by this recall. If you are unsure, please call the Drain Cover Recall Hotline at (866) 478-3521.

5 CRITICAL TRENDS HOTEL MARKETERS NEED TO KNOW

①

Consumers believe other consumers, not you

②

Too much online chatter causes confusion, missed opportunities

③

Consumers making last-minute switches based on online reviews

④

Negative reviews are directly correlated with lower revenues

⑤

Real-time web makes delayed responses ineffective

Paolo Torchio, Sabre Hospitality Solutions.
Source: hotelmarketing.com



Hospitality Highlights

Baby News...

Congratulations to **Jeff & Ashley Gibbs** of **Dough Roller Restaurants** on the birth of their daughter, Addison. Proud grandparents are **Bill & Julie Gibbs**.
Congratulations to **Amy Winston (Maryland Hotel & Lodging Association)** and husband, **Chris Rohrer** on the birth of their son, Bradley Dean Rohrer.

Promotions and Awards

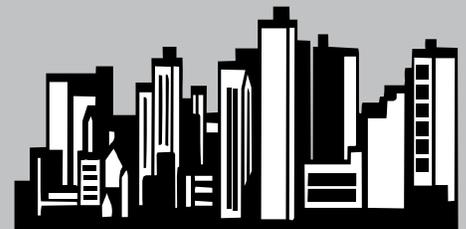
Kudos to **Kyle Morgan** of **Mercantile Processing Inc**, on winning the SBA Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award for Delaware.
Congratulations to **Michael James & Hospitality Partners** on their recent acquisition of the **Atlantic Oceanfront Inn**. In addition to several other properties, they also own and operate the **Carousel Oceanfront Hotel**.

Business News...

Best wishes to **Phillips Seafood** on their new location, the former Power Plant building in Baltimore's Inner Harbor.
Congratulations to **Nicole Brushmiller (Atlantic/Smith Cropper & Deeley)** and her husband **Bryan** on the opening of their new business, **Burley Oak Brewery**...located in Berlin.
Save the Date! April 22, 2012...**Inaugural Susan G. Komen Ocean City Race for a Cure**, www.komenmd.org

Thank you...

Thank you to **Castle in the Sand, DaVinci's By the Sea, Papa John's Pizza, and Sons of the Beach** for all your generosity to the **Surfer's Healing** event. Surfer's Healing pairs professional surfers with autistic children to take them surfing. It is a wonderful cause and would not be possible without our wonderful local businesses.



CONDOLANCES

Our sincere condolences to the following families on their loss...

THE PHILLIPS FAMILY (Phillips Seafood Restaurants) on the loss of pioneer and father, **Brice Phillips**

MALCOLM VANKIRK & FAMILY (Sea Bay Hotel & Best Western Hotel & Suites) on the loss of his grandfather, **William S. Jones Sr.**

JOHN GEHRIG (D3 Corp.) on the loss of his mother, **Angie Frederick**.

SENATOR JIM MATHIAS & FAMILY on the loss of wife, **Kathy Mathias (Town of Ocean City)**.

MARK LEINER & FAMILY (Bonfire Restaurant & Candy Kitchen) on the loss of his mother, **Patricia**.

Free Shakespeare at the Beach

Brown Box Theatre Project brings Shakespeare's **Twelfth Night** to the beach with several performances scheduled in our area, September 18-25. Local resident, **Kyler Taustin** directs. For more information, visit www.brownboxtheatre.org

Sept. 18th • 1pm
Historic St. Martin's Church

Sept. 19th & 21st • 6pm
White Horse Park

Sept. 22nd • 6pm
Indian River Life Saving Station

Sept. 23 • 6pm
Castle in the Sand

Sept. 25th • 1pm & 7pm
Sunset Park



TRENDS TO WATCH *in the restaurant industry*



SOMETIMES A MARKETING PROBLEM IS REALLY A PRODUCT PROBLEM

By: John Jantsch - Founder, Duct Tape Marketing

Many times when organizations find themselves struggling with getting or increasing sales they turn to marketing. Don't get me wrong, I've made a career out of loving all things marketing, but sometimes that's not the problem. The problem might be that nobody actually wants your junk. While that may sound a bit harsh, it's a fact that a lot of businesses attempt to sell things that they think people should want. No amount of brilliant marketing is going to help people understand that they need to buy from you. This fact has been greatly amplified with the onset of social media. We've all seen what seemed like great products and companies fail. The thing is, these days the best products and services have a voice, and that voice is YouTube and Twitter. So how do you know if you've got a product problem? (Oh, and you can just as easily substitute service, brand, people or business problem).

Talk to your customers. This obvious tactic is so entirely overlooked by businesses that I could fill pages with the value of doing it routinely. Survey your customers, but also sit down and interview them. Ask for feedback in as many ways as you can and jump for joy when someone hammers you in a thoughtful way – that's the best way to get better.

Focus on all parts of the experience A ton of good buzz is lost in the third and fourth contact you have with a customer. How often do you follow up with a customer to measure the value they received from your product or service? When was the last time you surprised a customer?

Play with pricing Most marketing books will address pricing as a marketing issue, and it is, but it's also a customer issue that is often decided upon in a vacuum. Go out and test your pricing with customers. Tell them you're not sure what the best price or package is and let them help you decide, even if it means getting really creative about your profit model. Take note, I'm not talking about dropping prices. In fact, if you focus on the customer experience, you'll find you can charge premium prices. Price is a function of perceived value and as buzz increases, so does perceived value.

Let them build features

I can't tell you how often I've come across businesses that build features and processes for themselves and not for the customer. This is the quickest way possible to create something people don't want. Often the single greatest reason something doesn't sell well is because it's either not described in a customer centric way or not packaged and delivered in the way they want it. Remember this: you sell what the customer thinks they get from your product, and not your product itself. Let them build features, and continuously ask how you could make a better product.

Measure your referrals

The easiest way to measure if your problem is a product problem is to determine the number of customers that make referrals, spread the word or offer up testimonials. You can always do marketing related things to ramp up referrals, but if you're not already receiving a significant amount, you've got a product problem. Think about installing a way to measure and improve the number of referrals you receive after you focus on becoming more referable.

DCCA Culinary Competition at Parkside High School November 19th and 20th 2011

Competition Categories: K1-K9, Modified Student Skills, Cold Food Platters A-D and F/1

Lead Judge: Michael Morgan
Show Chair: Tony Hilligoss, CCE
(443) 614 1083 thilligo@wcboe.org
Co-Chair: Charlene Zinnel, CCE
(210) 837 1653 czinnelcsc@yahoo.com

All entries must be received no later than October 15, 2011. For an application and additional information contact Salon Chair: Chef Tony Hilligoss, CEC at thilligo@wcboe.org or (443) 614-1083





Susan Says...

Are you doing everything you can to keep your guests happy? It's

hard work to nurture happy customers, but surely worth the effort. It is much cheaper to have repeat guests than to find a new customer. Make sure you regularly review what your guests are saying about you. Take a moment to check sites, such as **TripAdvisor.com, YouTube.com, Travelpost.com,** etc., or simply sign up for **Google Alerts** and you'll automatically see reviews in your inbox. It is important to respond to comments as potential guests, and also as current guests, will see that you are committed to serving guests rather than ignoring them. Quick tips for responding include thanking the guest for taking the time to write, if the guest is right, apologize, assure guests that you are taking every possible step to review the situation. For more details, check out <http://ehotelier.com> and search for **"best practices on monitoring hotel review sites"**.

Do you provide an opportunity for guests to give you feedback? If you have not done so, develop a system to stay in regular contact with your guests. Ask them what they like, dislike and how you can improve. Ask them why they chose your property and if they would recommend you to their friends.

Finally, ask your front desk agents or concierge what are the most frequently asked questions. Then provide a quick Q&A sheet for easy reference to post or give guests at check-in. This is a sure timesaver when there are other guests waiting.

31st Annual

Maryland Tourism and Travel Summit (MTTS)

November 2-4, 2011

We know you receive many requests for Silent Auctions but... **THIS ONE IS DIFFERENT...IT BENEFITS OUR INDUSTRY!**

This year's conference will be held at the Marriott Inn and Conference Center, University of Maryland University College. Due to this exceptional venue and an excellent educational program, the attendance at the summit is expected to be high. This auction is a prime opportunity and an inexpensive way to help spread the good news of tourism to the summit attendees and MTC membership about what you have to sell or share and tell people about it.



Now, get creative, help the industry you love and make your item stand out. If you would like to donate, please contact Susan at susanjones@ocvisitor.com or 410.289.6733.

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING Tuesday, September 20th at 7:00 pm Council Chambers, City Hall

Pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 110, Zoning, of the Code of the Town of Ocean City, Maryland, notice is hereby given that a public hearing will be conducted by the Planning and Zoning Commission in the Council Chambers of City Hall located at 301 Baltimore Avenue in the Town of Ocean City, Maryland.

The Town of Ocean City is updating its **Hazard Mitigation Plan** as required by Federal Law 44CFR Section 201. The Plan describes hazards affecting Ocean City and how the Town plans to react and prepare for each hazard. The Plan shall be revised and submitted to the Mayor and City Council following this public hearing. A draft plan can be reviewed on the town's website by going to: http://ocean-citymd.gov/Planning_and_Zoning/fema-hazard.html

Job Well Done!

Kudos to the Seasonal Workforce Committee, specifically Lisa Dennis, Carrie Linch, and Madalaine How as well as the Town of Ocean City Emergency Services on the work they did to evacuate the J-1 students during Hurricane Irene. They were able to move about 2200 students to 3 shelters in Baltimore and then return them safely to Ocean City on Sunday, following the hurricane. The students were so grateful for the whole process and felt that Ocean City really took care of them.



1 **Add social media share buttons**

Adding social share buttons such as facebook and twitter to your website is a quick and effective way of boosting traffic to your site.

2 **Monitor your site loading time**

Optimising your website loading time is essential for keeping visitors on your site and not on your competitors'.

3 **Booking engine**

Every hotel website should have a booking engine. If you don't have one you will lose guests to your competitors.

4 **Remove broken links**

A website with broken links looks unprofessional. Broken links also have negative effects on search engine rankings so check your website regularly to ensure there are none.

5 **Have a clear brand image**

Let potential guests know who you are and don't overcomplicate things. Include a prominent hotel logo in the top left of the site at all times and always link it to the homepage.

6 **Improve your landing pages**

Improving your landing pages is one of the easiest ways to improve your conversion rate. Once you've got the potential customer to your site, your landing page needs to convince them to stay on your site and ultimately make a booking. Remove anything that's not needed and keep it simple and focused.

7 **Analyse site statistics**

Without analysing your site statistics, it's impossible to improve your website. Familiarize yourself with the terms used to describe website traffic including - visits, hits, page impressions, unique views, etc. You will be able to find out which pages are the most successful, which search engines people use to reach you and much more. Google Analytics is a great way to check your stats.

8 **Keep it above the fold!**

Web users spend 80% of their time above the fold - the upper half of the webpage before a user has to scroll down. Make the most of the top of your page. Include prominent calls-to-action in this space as well as an appealing photo.

9 **Be consistent**

Make sure your website is consistent, clean and uniform in every way. Avoid bold, highlighted and underlined text as well as excessive use of capitals and exclamation marks. Be consistent with your site navigation.

10 **Use Google maps**

Use Google maps to identify the location of your hotel. Show places of interests, restaurants, bars and tourist attractions on the map to show the proximity to your property.

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act but a habit.

--Aristotle

Staff

Susan L. Jones, Executive Director

Amy S. Tingle, Event Manager

Jayne Sawyer, Sandy Patrick; Part-time Tourism Coordinators

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