

TWO HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE:

A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO HOTEL SUSTAINABILITY



Prepared for:



Prepared by:



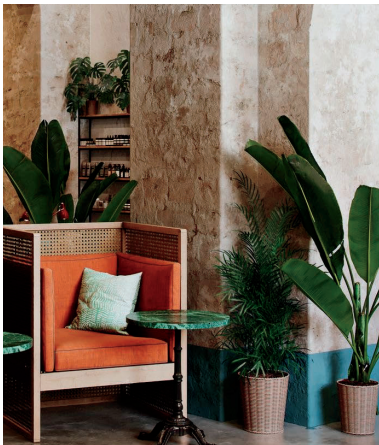
Two Heads are Better than One: A Collaborative Approach to Hotel Sustainability

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Introduction – A Collaborative Approach Towards Sustainability

In recent years, the hospitality and tourism industry has increasingly shifted its focus towards sustainable practices, recognizing that the future of the industry depends on it. However, improving operational sustainability is not an easy task for hotel managers and requires the engagement and participation of various stakeholders. In this white paper, the authors explore a collaborative approach to improving sustainability in hotels by engaging both employees and guests.

By prioritizing sustainability, hotels can differentiate themselves from their competitors, attract environmentally conscious guests, and create a more positive work environment for employees. Therefore, implementing a sustainability strategy based on engaging both the hotel's employees and its guests is not only a responsible choice, but also a smart business strategy.



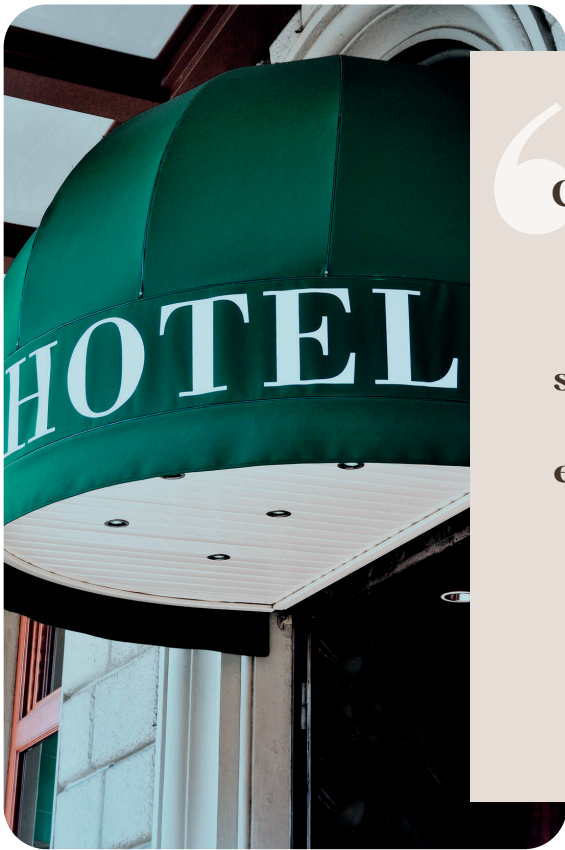
“Realize that employees and the customers both have to be engaged, at the same time, to move your business forward for sustainable success.”

— Robert G. Thompson, Author of *Hooked on Customers*.

Background – Two Heads are Better Than One

A collaborative approach of engaging both employees and guests is a more effective strategy for improving hotel sustainability than focusing on just one of these stakeholders. By working together, employees and guests can bring a diverse range of skills, experiences, and perspectives to the table, leading to more innovative and effective solutions.

The employees have a direct impact on the daily operation of the hotel and interact closely with the guests, making them a valuable resource in sustainability efforts. By involving employees in sustainability initiatives, hotel managers can tap into their expertise and gain valuable insights on how best to improve operational sustainability. Moreover, employees also play an important role in implementing sustainability initiatives and promoting sustainable practices among guests.

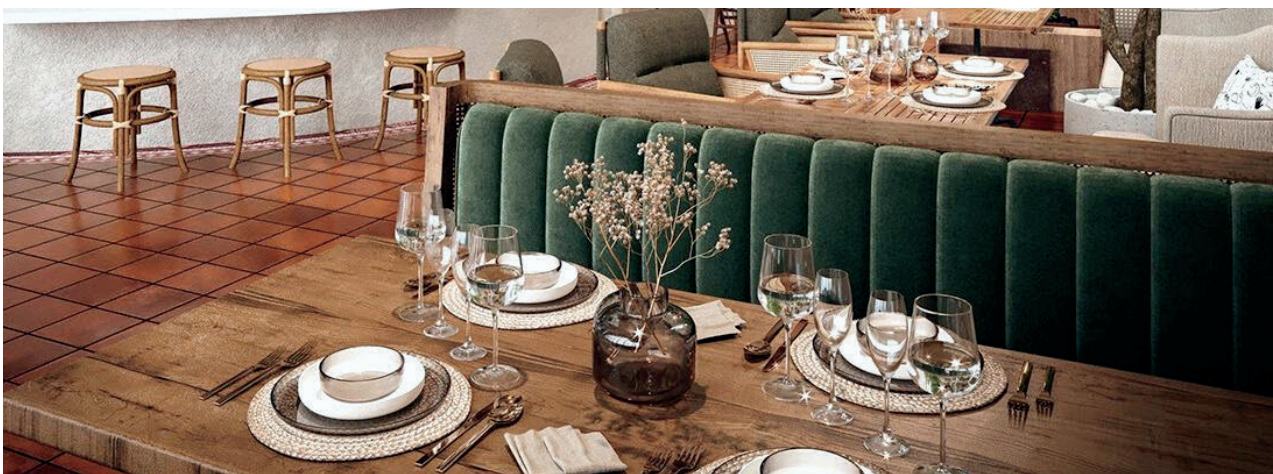


Green service innovative behavior [of employees] contributes to hotels' fulfillment of social responsibility by mitigating environmental impacts of services and meeting customer needs for eco-friendly services, thereby enhancing customer loyalty as well as organizational reputation and performance"

– Luu Trong Tuan, Senior Lecturer,
Swinburne University of Technology

Conversely, guests are an integral part of the hotel ecosystem and can also play a key role in promoting sustainability. Guests are the primary consumers of resources, producers of waste and are also the decision makers in their interaction with the the hotel's employees. Moreover, guest feedback and suggestions can also provide valuable insights into how the hotel can improve its sustainability efforts.

As such, this strategy brings together the strengths of both employees and guests, leading to a more effective and efficient use of resources. Specifically, employees can provide technical expertise and hands-on support, while guests can provide a fresh perspective and valuable feedback. By working together, employees and guests can create a culture of sustainability that drives continuous improvement and reinforces the importance of sustainability in all aspects of the hotel's operations.



Advantages of Engaging Employees

Involving employees in a hotel's sustainability efforts not only benefits the environment but also offers several other advantages. Firstly, employee engagement in sustainability efforts can lead to increased job satisfaction and improved employee morale. This can result in a more productive and motivated workforce, leading to improved hotel performance overall. Additionally, a positive work environment, where employees feel valued and appreciated, can result in lower turnover rates, lower operational costs as well as an improved reputation for the hotel. Specifically, the advantages of engaging employees are as follows:



A. **Increased Job Satisfaction and Employee Morale:**

When employees are given the opportunity to participate in sustainability initiatives, they feel a sense of pride and ownership in the efforts of the organization. This increased engagement can lead to higher job satisfaction, increased motivation, and a stronger sense of purpose among employees. When employees feel like they are making a difference and contributing to a larger goal, it can have a positive impact on their overall job satisfaction and morale.

B. **Positive Work Environment and Lower Employee Turnover Rates:**

A positive work environment where employees feel valued and appreciated is crucial to reducing turnover rates. When employees are involved in sustainability initiatives, they feel that their contributions are valued and that they are an important part of the organization. This increased sense of involvement and investment in the organization can lead to higher employee retention rates and therefore a more stable workforce.



Besides the financial benefits that sustainability practices like energy conservation provide, studies have found that employee retention, productivity, and overall engagement all go up.”

– Paul Polman, CEO of Unilever

C. Positive Image for the Hotel (Internally & Externally): Hotels with employees who are actively working to reduce their impact on the environment and who promote the sustainable practices of the hotel, are more likely to be seen as responsible organizations. This positive image can help to attract more environmentally conscious guests and can enhance the reputation of the hotel overall. Additionally, promoting sustainability within the hotel can help to create a unique brand identity that sets the hotel apart from its competitors.

D. Cost Savings: Implementing sustainable practices, such as reducing energy and water consumption, can result in lower operating costs for the hotel. Involving employees in sustainability programs, can help to identify additional opportunities for cost savings and provide a fresh perspective on how to approach sustainability initiatives. This can help to ensure that the hotel is operating as efficiently as possible and that resources are being used in the most sustainable way possible.

E. Integration of Sustainability into Daily Operations: Employees are ultimately the actors responsible for the implementation of the sustainability efforts that are decided upon by management. This can help to ensure that sustainability initiatives are integrated into the daily operations of the hotel and that sustainability is a part of the hotel's culture. When employees are actively involved in sustainability efforts, they are more likely to follow through with the initiatives and to ensure that they are implemented effectively.

F. Employees as Ambassadors for Sustainability: When employees are knowledgeable about the hotel's sustainability initiatives and are actively involved in promoting eco-friendly behaviors, they are well positioned to educate guests about these sustainability efforts. This can help to encourage guests to participate in the initiatives and adopt sustainable behaviors during their stay. When employees serve as sustainability ambassadors, it can therefore help to create a more holistic approach to sustainability, ensuring that both these stakeholders of the hotel are working together towards the common goal of environmental responsibility.



“Ensuring your workplace has sustainability in both its mission impact statement and day-to-day duties has been proven to improve recruitment, retention, and morale of employees. Employee have shown to have an increased sense of loyalty, pride, and satisfaction in working for a company that has strong ethical and environmental leanings.”

– Georgina Lavers, Editor of Open Skies

Advantages of Engaging Guests

Guests play a crucial role in the sustainability of any organization. By engaging guests and encouraging them to adopt sustainable behaviors, organizations can help to reduce their environmental footprint and promote a culture of sustainability. This can bring multiple benefits to the hotel including cost savings, increased guest satisfaction, better brand image, improved environmental impact, positive guest engagement, increased loyalty, better communication, and increased employee engagement. Specifically, the advantages engaging guests are as follows:

- A. Cost Savings:** Encouraging guests to adopt sustainable practices can help hotels to reduce their energy and resource consumption, leading to lower costs. For example, guests can be encouraged to reuse towels and sheets to reduce water and energy consumption for the laundry. This can also reduce the use of detergents and other cleaning products. Moreover, guests can be encouraged to turn off lights, electronics and the thermostat when they are not in the room, as well as keeping windows closed when the HVAC system is in use. Additionally, hotels can provide guests with information on the benefits of energy conservation and offer incentives for guests who participate in energy-saving programs, such as choosing to forego daily housekeeping services. Finally, By educating guests on sustainable food practices and encouraging them to reduce food waste, hotels can also reduce the cost of waste disposal.



B. Increased Guest Satisfaction: Guests are increasingly looking for hotels that operate in a manner that is more environmentally responsible. By engaging the guests in their sustainability efforts, hotel managers can enhance the guest experience and increase guest satisfaction by working towards the goal of becoming more environmentally responsible together. Moreover, by making guests feel like they are also making a positive impact on the environment, they will be more likely to have a positive experience and return to the hotel in the future.

C. Better Brand Image: By engaging guests in sustainability their efforts, hotels can build a better brand image and differentiate themselves from other hotels that may not be as environmentally conscious. By actively working to reduce their environmental footprint, hotels can therefore demonstrate their commitment to sustainability and enhance their reputation as a responsible corporate citizen.

D. Lowering of the Environmental Impact: By engaging guests, hotel managers can help to lower their hotel's environmental footprint - reducing waste and conserving resources, as well as promoting more environmentally responsible behaviors. For example, by providing information on recycling programs, guests can be encouraged to recycle their waste, which can help to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfills. Additionally, by reducing water and energy consumption, the hotel can minimize its impact on the environment and reduce its carbon footprint.

E. Positive Guest Engagement: Engaging guests in sustainability efforts can also foster a sense of community among the guests and employees. By working together to reduce the hotel's environmental impact, guests and employees can feel like they are part of a larger effort to create a more sustainable world. Additionally, by encouraging guests to adopt sustainable behaviors, hotel managers can help guests feel like they are making a positive impact on the environment, through their contribution.



“83% of global travellers think sustainable travel is vital, with 61% saying the pandemic has made them want to travel more sustainably in the future.”

– Booking.com’s Sustainable Travel Report, 2021

“70% of global travellers say they would be more likely to book an accommodation knowing it was eco-friendly, and 55% of global travellers report being more determined to make sustainable travel choices.

– Booking.com’s Sustainable Travel Report, 2019



F.

Increased Loyalty and Positive Word-of-Mouth:

By making guests feel involved in the sustainability efforts of the hotel, hotel managers can increase guest loyalty and repeat business. By creating a sense of community among guests and employee and encouraging guests to adopt sustainable behaviors, guests are more likely to return to the hotel as well as recommending it to others. Additionally, by demonstrating their commitment to sustainability, endorsed by other guests, hotels can attract environmentally conscious guests who are looking for hotels that share their values.

G.

Better Communication:

Engaging guests in sustainability efforts can improve communication between guests and employee and help build a better understanding of the hotel's environmental goals. By providing information about the hotel's sustainability efforts and encouraging guests to participate, hotels can create opportunities for guests to ask questions and provide feedback on their environmental performance. Additionally, by involving guests in sustainability efforts, hotels can improve communication between employee and guests and help build a stronger sense of shared values.

H.

Increased Employee Engagement:

When guests are involved in sustainability efforts, employee are more likely to become engaged in the process and take ownership of the efforts, which can lead to increased employee engagement and motivation. By involving guests in sustainability efforts, employee can feel like they are part of a larger effort to create a more sustainable world, which can help to increase their motivation and engagement. Additionally, by engaging guests in sustainability efforts, employees can learn from guests and improve their understanding of the environmental challenges facing the hotel.

Engaging Employees to Raise Sustainability Standards

To effectively engage employees in sustainability efforts and reap the benefits of a more sustainable workplace, hotel managers can implement a variety of strategies. These strategies can range from educating employees about sustainability to incentivizing eco-friendly behavior and creating opportunities for employees to get involved in sustainability initiatives. Ten specific strategies that hotel managers can implement to achieve these outcomes are as follows:

1.

Employee Training and Education

Provide employees with information about the importance of sustainability, the impact of their actions, and how they can contribute to the hotel's sustainability initiatives.

2.

Green Teams

Form teams of employees who are passionate about sustainability and give them the resources and support they need to implement sustainable practices throughout the hotel as well as empowering them to make these decisions.

3.

Employee Recognition and Incentives

Recognize and reward employees who make significant contributions to the hotel's sustainability efforts.

4.

Sustainability Goals and Metrics

Establish sustainability goals and metrics to measure progress and hold employees accountable for meeting those goals.

5.

Sustainability Policies and Procedures

Develop policies and procedures that guide employees in their sustainability efforts, such as reducing energy and water usage, waste management, and promoting eco-friendly behaviours.



6.

Engagement of all Departments

Ensure that all departments, from housekeeping to maintenance, are involved in the hotel's sustainability efforts and understand the role they play in achieving the hotel's sustainability goals.

7.

Collaboration with Suppliers and Vendors

Work with suppliers and vendors to ensure that the products and services used by the hotel are environmentally responsible. Moreover, encourage employees to suggest other suppliers and vendors who also share these values.

8.

Sustainability Based Appraisals

Incorporate sustainability goals into employee performance evaluations and bonus structures.

9.

Sustainability Reporting

Report on the hotel's sustainability efforts and progress to employees, guests, and the public.

10.

Continuous Improvement

Continuously evaluate the hotel's sustainability efforts and prompt employees to identify further opportunities for improvement, making changes as needed to achieve the sustainability goals of the hotel.



“Encourage employee to think creatively and make suggestions. For this, the hotel needs a clear communication channel for new ideas to make it to the right decision-makers. And if an individual goes above and beyond as a sustainability champion, be sure to recognize and celebrate them.”

– Scott Samuels CEO & Founder,
Horizon Hospitality Associates, Inc

Engaging Guests to Raise Sustainability Standards

To reap the advantages of engaging guests in the hotel's sustainability efforts, hotel managers can encourage guest involvement in numerous ways, such as educating guests about the hotel's sustainability strategy, providing guests with information about ways in which they can be more environmentally responsible during their stay, and rewarding guests who adopt sustainable practices. Ten specific strategies that hotel managers can implement to achieve these outcomes are as follows:

1.

Energy-Saving Programs

Implementing energy-saving programs and educating guests about reducing the use of lighting and air conditioning when not in the room, can help to reduce energy consumption, lowering operational costs.

2.

Water Conservation

Installing low-flow showerheads, toilets, and faucets can reduce water consumption, thereby further reducing costs. Moreover, by providing guests with information on water conservation, managers can also encourage them to further conserve water.



3.

Recycling Programs

Implementing a comprehensive recycling program that includes all guest rooms and public areas can help to reduce waste and improve the hotel's environmental impact. Providing guests with information on the recycling program and placing recycling bins in convenient locations can encourage them to recycle.

4.

Green Purchasing

Incorporating sustainable purchasing practices such as buying locally sourced and organic products can help to reduce the hotel's environmental impact and promote sustainable consumption by guests.

5.

Eco-Friendly Amenities

Offering guests eco-friendly amenities such as reusable water bottles and environmentally friendly toiletries can encourage them to adopt sustainable practices and reduce waste.

6.

Carbon Offsetting

Offsetting the hotel's carbon emissions through initiatives such as planting trees or investing in renewable energy projects can help to minimize the hotel's environmental impact. Providing guests with information on the carbon offsetting program can also encourage them to participate in these efforts.



7.

Communication

Encouraging the communication between guests and employees in order to help in building a better understanding of the hotel's environmental goals. Moreover, improving communication between employees and guests could also help to build a stronger sense of shared values.

8.

Community Outreach

Inviting local environmental organizations to also participate in sustainability events and initiatives can help to engage the local community and to promote environmental awareness among the guests.

9.

Social Media

Promoting the hotel's sustainability efforts through social media can help to build a positive brand image and attract environmentally conscious guests. Providing guests with information on the hotel's sustainability efforts through social media can also encourage them to participate and adopt sustainable practices.

10.

Continuous Improvement

Regularly monitoring and assessing the hotel's environmental performance can help to identify areas for improvement and ensure that the hotel's sustainability efforts are effective and efficient. Encouraging guests to provide feedback on their experience and suggestions for improvement can also help to identify areas for improvement and ensure that the hotel is meeting its sustainability goals.

“One of my favourite programs that Shade Hotels has been a part of for the past three years is Plant With Purpose, where we plant a tree in your honour for each night you forgo housekeeping.”

– Michael Zislis, Owner of luxury boutique Shade Hotels

Examples in the Industry

The largest hotel organizations have already begun engaging both employees and guests as part of their broader strategies and programs aimed at raising their sustainability standards. Some specific examples of such sustainability programs include:

"Travel with Purpose"

- **Hilton Hotels & Resorts**

Key features: Reduction of carbon footprint, water usage and waste generation, as well as the engagement of both guests and employees through environmental awareness programs.

"Planet 21"

- **Accor S.A.**

Key features: Reduction of carbon emissions and water usage, support for local communities, eco-friendly practices in food and beverage operations, engagement of guests through sustainability awareness programs.

"Green Engage System"

- **InterContinental Hotels Group**

Key features: Energy-efficient lighting and HVAC systems, water conservation measures, recycling and composting programs, training for employees and guests to promote sustainability awareness among them.

"Global Care & Cleanliness Commitment"

- **Hyatt Hotels & Resorts**

Key features: Implementation of eco-friendly cleaning products and practices, reduction of water usage and energy consumption, employee training programs on sustainability, community engagement and support for local environmental initiatives.

"Sustainability Partnership Program"

- **Fairmont Hotels & Resorts**

Key features: Use of renewable energy sources, support for local communities and sustainable agriculture, reduction of waste generation and water usage, employee training on environmental best practices, guest engagement through sustainability-focused programs and amenities.

“At Fairmont, each one of our hotels and resorts is intertwined with its community, continuously evolving how we do business, and engaging our employees, customers, partners and community members to create stronger, more sustainable futures for our local environments and economies.

– Sharon Cohen, Vice President, Fairmont Hotels and Resorts

Insights from Singaporean Hoteliers

Research conducted by the authors highlights that there is generally support for the collaborative strategy explored in this whitepaper.

A survey, consisting of six questions, was completed by 72 hotels managers in Singapore. Specifically, the survey was aimed at understanding the extent to which Singaporean hoteliers consider customers and employees as part of their sustainability initiatives and if they have considered incentivizing their participation.

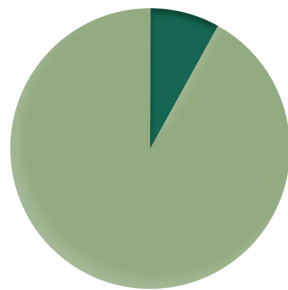
As seen in the following pages, the results indicate that while some managers have not considered such a collaborative approach in their sustainability efforts, the majority of the hotel managers surveyed see the value in such a strategy and would reward their employees and guests for their participation.

Overall, the managers indicated that such a collaborative strategy could significantly improve their sustainability efforts, lending industry support to the strategies outlined in this white paper.



Employee Engagement for Improving Sustainability

In terms of employee engagement, it can be seen below that the hoteliers surveyed all see the value in engaging their employees, with 92% of the respondents attesting to having considered it and only 8% not having considered it. In terms of rewarding their employees, again all the hoteliers see the value of this and 89% have considered it, with only 11% not having done so. Finally, in terms of whether they believe that their employees could significantly improve their sustainability efforts, 78% agreed that they would and none that they wouldn't. However, surprisingly, 22% of the managers believed that there would be no value in it.

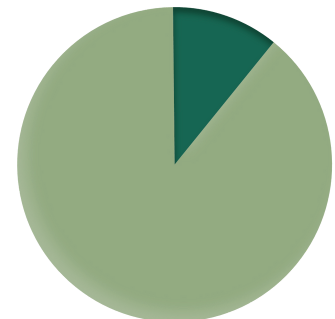


Have you considered including your employees in your sustainability practices?

- 92% Yes
- 8% No
- 0% Don't see the value in it

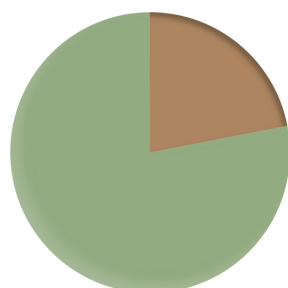
Have you considered rewarding your employees for their participation in sustainability efforts?

- Yes 89% ●
- No 11% ●
- Don't see the value in it 0% ●



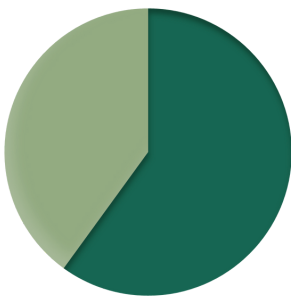
Do you think that involving your employees in your sustainability efforts would significantly improve your sustainability performance?

- 78% Yes
- 0% No
- 22% Don't see the value in it



Guest Engagement for Improving Sustainability

In terms of the hotel managers' perception of engaging their guests, the results are bit more mixed, with 60% of the managers indicating that they had not considered it and only 40% indicating that they did. However, interestingly, all of the managers surveyed indicated that they do see value in doing so. Regarding the consideration of rewarding their guests for participating in their sustainability efforts, 4% of the managers indicated that they do not see the value in it. However, 76% suggested that that they would consider rewarding their guest, with only 20% indicating that they wouldn't. Finally, in terms of whether involving their guests would significantly improve their sustainability performance, 7% indicated that they would not see the value in it, however 67% suggested that they would and only 27% indicated that they wouldn't.

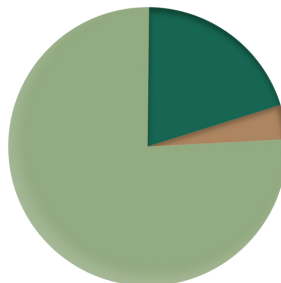


Have you considered including your customers in your sustainability practices

- 40% Yes
- 60% No
- 0% Don't see the value in it

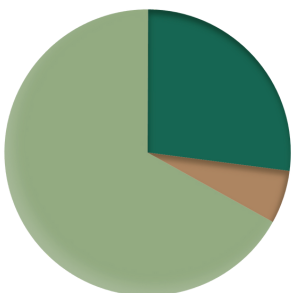
Have you considered rewarding your customers for their participation in sustainability efforts?

- Yes 76%
- No 20%
- Don't see the value in it 4%



Do you think that involving your customers in your sustainability efforts would significantly improve your sustainability performance?

- 67% Yes
- 27% No
- 7% Don't see the value in it





Action Points for Improving Sustainability Through a Collaborative Approach

Hotel sustainability is a critical issue that could be improved through a collaborative approach that engages both hotel employees and guests. However, implementing a such sustainability strategy is a complex process that requires careful planning and execution. The action plan below outlines the key steps that hoteliers need to take in order to successfully integrate such a collaborative approach into their operations, from planning to implementation and evaluation. By following this action plan, hoteliers can ensure that sustainability is integrated into every aspect of their operations, reaping the benefits of it and creating a more sustainable future for the industry and the planet.

✓ **Planning:**

- Assess current sustainability practices and identify areas for improvement.
- Develop a sustainability vision and goals that align with the hotel's overall mission and values.
- Conduct a stakeholder analysis to understand the needs and motivations of employees and guests.
- Develop a comprehensive sustainability plan that outlines the steps needed to achieve the sustainability goals and vision.

✓ **Employee Engagement:**

- Communicate the sustainability vision and goals to employees.
- Provide training and resources to help employees understand the importance of sustainability and their role in promoting sustainable practices.
- Encourage the involvement of employees in sustainability initiatives, such as green teams or sustainability committees, and empower them to take action.
- Provide opportunities for employee feedback/input, such as suggestion boxes, surveys or regularly held meetings.

✓ **Guest Involvement:**

- Communicate the sustainability vision and goals to guests through marketing materials, in-room information, and other touchpoints.
- Offer guests the opportunity to get involved in sustainability initiatives, such as recycling programs, conservation activities, and sustainable tourism practices.
- Provide education and information to guests on the importance of sustainability and how they can contribute to the hotel's sustainability efforts.
- Encourage guest feedback and suggestions, such as through surveys, feedback forms, or suggestion boxes.

✓ **Implementation:**

- Establish metrics and KPIs to track progress and measure the impact of sustainability initiatives.
- Allocate resources, such as employee time, funding, and technology, to support sustainability initiatives.
- Implement sustainability initiatives, such as energy and water conservation programs, waste management programs, and sustainable procurement practices.
- Continuously evaluate and refine sustainability practices to ensure they align with the hotel's sustainability vision and goals.



✓ **Evaluation:**

- Regularly evaluate the impact of sustainability initiatives and assess their effectiveness.
- Analyze feedback from employees and guests to understand their perspectives and identify areas for improvement.
- Continuously refine and improve sustainability practices to ensure they are effective and aligned with the hotel's sustainability vision and goals.



Conclusion

In conclusion, by leveraging the skills, experiences, and perspectives of both guests and employees, hotels can create a culture of sustainability that drives innovation, efficiency, and continuous improvement. Engaging employees provides valuable expertise and hands-on support, while involving guests increases their understanding of sustainability and provides valuable feedback. This approach can lead to a more effective and efficient use of resources, resulting in a more sustainable future for the industry and the planet. The strategies and action plan outlined in this white paper provides a roadmap for hoteliers who are just starting to implement such a strategy, guiding them through the key steps of planning and implementation. By following these strategies and action plan, hoteliers can ensure that sustainability is integrated into every aspect of their operations, creating a more responsible future for their guests and the environment. The important thing to remember is that a collaborative approach of engaging both hotel employees and guests is an effective strategy for improving hotel sustainability as...

Two heads are better than one!"
