



Living in the Greening Age

By Lee Melancon, III, B.S., B.A., MMC

There has been a noticeable change in the hospitality industry over the past few years. The reduction in the use of water, laundering, and a noticeable reduction in the use of plastics are all but a few of the cases where greening has become not only a life-saving move for the environment, but also a cost-cutting move for the industry.

Greening can be referred to as a focus on being environmentally-conscious at the hospitality management level. What began as a method to save on the consumption of water resources has now grown into a daily practice of conservatism throughout all the departments of the industry. It should come to no one's surprise why signage has now been included in many hospitality industry organizations which encourage the reduction in the use of towels and toiletries. The use of plastics are also being discouraged in hospitality industry organizations, as is reflected in the price of bottled water.

Local and regional governments are educating and compelling meeting facilities to reduce their waste stream or face steep disposal costs. San Francisco's Moscone Center has cut hauling costs by \$500,000 per year since beginning a recycling and donations program (Meetings & Conventions, 2004).

According to the Green Meeting Industry Council (2005), "Corporations and associations are feeling pressure from shareholders and members to demonstrate environmental responsiveness and corporate responsibility in their activities, including meetings. According to a 2002 survey by PricewaterhouseCoopers 90% of the US's 140 largest companies indicate enhancing or protecting reputation was their primary reason for adopting environmentally responsible practices and 89% believe sustainability will grow in importance as a business issue over the next 5 years."

Organizations are being increasingly pressured to tighten meeting spending. This is causing meeting professionals to consider all options to reduce waste and increase efficiency. Energy efficient lighting in Seattle's Washington State Convention & Trade Centre has saved almost \$200,000 in the last year (Meetings & Conventions, 2004).

According to a case taken from www.greenmeetings.info, it is estimated that a typical 5 day conference for 2,500 attendees will use 90,000 cans or bottles, 750,000 cups and 87,500 napkins (Meeting Strategies Worldwide, 2003). The continued use of such materials will pose a continuing threat to the environment as well as a substantial cost to the customer. The Green Meetings Council is working to encourage the employment of "green friendly" conventions and meetings as they have a substantial impact.

It is possible to be "green" conscious in today's hospitality industry. The San Francisco Hilton recycles approximately 800 pounds of cardboard daily and 5000 pounds of glass, plastic, and metal weekly. In addition, by composting organic waste the Hilton has eliminated almost 5 tons of waste per week and cut its garbage in half (Association Meetings, 2004). Initiating a linen and towel reuse program can conserve 200 barrels of oil - enough to run a family car 180,000 miles (Green Suites International).



The BRHMA Board's Letter to the Editor

As published in the Baton Rouge Business Report and The Advocate

The Hospitality Management Association would like to address the recent newspaper articles ("Morton's gambit," Business Report, Oct. 25) surmising the opinions and views on the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) of the Capitol Park Hilton under renovation in downtown Baton Rouge.

We are opposed to the financing of a new Hilton through a TIF which is nothing more than code for corporate welfare. We consider it unfair trade advantage for any hotel to use the hotel motel tax they will be collecting from their guests to help pay their mortgage.

The TIF will exempt the Hilton from paying 9% of a 13% lodging tax for 30 plus years. The Capitol House Taxing Board went after the entire 13% initially, knowing 3% of that was dedicated through votes of the electorate to sewer improvement, street improvement, educational facilities improvement and the River Center expansion.

Once the for-profit Commercial Properties Inc. realized this might be challenged by the tax paying hotels, they decided to restructure their TIF. Taking monies that are levied, or that are approved by the voters was ruled unconstitutional by the Louisiana Supreme Court on June 29. They then went to the individual recipients of the portion of the tax not levied and asked their governing authorities to divert the 9% of the Hilton's taxes to help retire their debt.

Mr. Morton has said on several occasions that the TIF is necessary because he paid too much for the property. Are we funding a poor business decision? Don't we all wish we could use our taxes to pay off loans because we paid too much?

The Hilton's share of sales/occupancy taxes should go to CATS, the Research Park, the Sports Foundation, CVB, La. Office of Tourism and Riverfront Development and the City Parish coffers, just like every other hotel and motel in Baton Rouge.

The HMA fully supports the development of another hotel downtown. It is imperative that we have at least 600 rooms downtown if we are to draw more regional business to Baton Rouge. However, the funding should come through the free enterprise market, not through social engineering.

Board of Directors

Baton Rouge Hospitality Management Association

Please join us in thanking **President Janet Schwartz** for serving the BRHMA Board for the 2005 year. Her service and dedication to the association has not gone unnoticed. Please take the time to thank Janet for all of her hard work. Janet will continue serving on the board next year in the capacity of Past President.



Congratulations!

Please join us in congratulating **Kelly Hurtado** for her recent promotion to VP of Louisiana Business, Inc., the parent company of **Business Report**. Kelly Hurtado is now VP of the corporate and consumer division of Louisiana Business Inc. She manages all advertising sales for corporate projects, custom publishing, the Business & Technology expo, the new publication 225 and its online companion. Kelly has served as 2005 BRHMA board VP of Public Relations.

Please join us in congratulating Margrett Fels on the recent sale of the Best Western Chateau LA. Hotel. Margrett will be actively involved at Universal Plaza, the office park her and her husband own and with disposition of hotel assets through their real estate company.

Margrett said "As a member of the HMA since 1986, I have enjoyed working with all of you, especially Janet, who has lead this association through some of the most trying times we have ever experienced. She is due a round of applause for her commitment, her extra tour of duty, and for taking such heat for our stand on the TIF and the hotel-hurricane conundrum. But most of all, as a person, she is real and I will sorely miss her wit and humor. As GM's, the times you are navigating through post-Katrina will be one for the hotel history books, as you strive to provide lodging to your regular business while accommodating the hurricane's on-going relief effort and evacuees at the same time."

Please take time to thank Margrett for her service to this organization!

Meetings & Conventions magazine recently named the Baton Rouge Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (BRACVB) as a winner of the 2005 Gold Service Award.

Now in its 22nd year, this prestigious award honors Convention & Visitors Bureaus that have excelled in professionalism and dedication in their service to meeting professionals.

"To continually provide quality service to clients sets these superior bureaus apart," said Bernerd W. Schraer, Meetings & Conventions' Group Publisher. "The 2005 Gold Service winners continually excel in many valuable areas of service, impressing not only their clients but also the demanding readers of M&C."

This year, 85 domestic and international CVBs were honored with the Gold Service award by the readers of M&C. Relying on their extensive industry experience in both corporate and association markets, M&C's readers made selections based on key criteria including: professionalism of staff; support on hotels and site inspections; assistance with ground transportation planning; guidance on local attractions; and liaison with local vendors and services.

"It is an honor to be recognized for our efforts to provide our customers with great service and to welcome visitors to Baton Rouge," said Paul Arrigo, BRACVB CEO/President. "We are building on our successes every day and continuing to promote Baton Rouge as an ideal place to travel for both business and leisure."

The BRACVB has been honored with this award several times in past years.

Meetings and Conventions magazine will honor all of the winners as part of its Gold Awards gala ceremony on November 11, 2005 in New York City.

Please join us in congratulating Paul Arrigo, Renee Areng, and the BRACVB staff for this incredible honor!



INNspired

**Baton Rouge Hospitality Management Association
Post Office Box 4092
Baton Rouge, LA 70821**

Upcoming Events

For up to date information please visit www.brhma.org

**January 12th, 2006
Details Coming Soon**

BRHMA Mission

Creating a unified hospitality industry through business partnerships, collaboration, continuing education, and networking.