

Hospitality How-To: Adhere to Brand Standards

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YOUR BRAND IS YOUR CORPORATE IDENTITY as well as your public persona. Familiarity with your hotel brand promotes certain guest expectations, so it's critical to develop and maintain brand guidelines, communicate those to staff and be consistent in applying them so a guest's experience is always consistent and satisfying.

Consistency is Key

Adhering to brand standards is primarily a matter of consistency. "Setting the expectation with your brand standard is paramount because it creates the necessary consistency that is the baseline of great service and for guest and team loyalty," said Caroline Dyal, SVP of operations at Crescent Hotels & Resorts, a management company with about 110 hotels in its portfolio. "It is a blueprint for providing the service that differentiates the hotel."

When management companies have large portfolios consisting of diverse brands, such as Hotel Equities, it is essential that they are on top of any brand changes. "In fact, it's one of the critical items our brand partners count on us for: to ensure compliance with their brand standards and guidelines. Along with our regional and above-property operations team that monitors compliance with brand standards through in-person and virtual property visits, we have a dedicated brand performance leader who assists in monitoring new brand initiatives for compliance," said Peter Tziahanas, the company's EVP of operations.

When hotels are franchised, there could be more flexibility in brand consistency. "We want to ensure that our guests have a clean, comfortable and safe

stay, while offering our hotels the opportunity to maintain individuality in their markets. Our franchisees know their customers better than we ever could, so hihotels believes in offering the flexibility to customize the designs, amenities and experiences based on their diverse market demands, while maintaining a base level of standards. This is a winning combination for our franchisees and their guests," said Gary Gobin, hihotels director of operations.



Gary Gobin



Scottish Inns are a hihotels by Hospitality International brand, located throughout the U.S. and Canada. (hihotels)

Training Your Team

At Wyndham, Kendrick said that most of the company's brand standards are shaped in collaboration with Franchise Advisory Councils, comprised of experienced hotel owners; they share best practices for implementation and assessing the ROI of these standards. "This collaborative approach ensures that our standards are not only relevant but also beneficial to our owners' bottom line," she said.

Monitoring Compliance, Leveraging Data

Beyond training, regular monitoring ensures that the brand guidelines are being followed. Many hotel companies set up quality assurance programs that evaluate areas for improvement or that track deviations from brand standards, from annual evaluations to onsite visits to regular team meetings.

At hihotels, the company hires an assurance and marketing program director that visits each hotel annually, to inspect, score and make recommendations for improvements.

Another way that hotels check consistency in employing brand standards is through guest surveys to help identify pain points. "We consistently monitor guest feedback by staying current with industry trends, monitoring reviews and information provided by our hotels," Gobin said. "Our franchisees have a direct pulse on the needs of our leisure and business travelers, so they share information with the corporate team. In fact, we established an advisory council that consists of a group of our hotel owners, who provide excellent information and ideas that help direct our brands."

Brand Initiatives at Work

hihotels' loyalty program stands out by offering instant rewards rather than accruing points, enabling guests to save directly on reservations. Additionally, they provide a discount program granting access to savings at thousands of nationally recognized businesses, all at no additional costs to their franchisees.

