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The Hospitality Industry's Response to Climate Change: Is the Response Sufficient?

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THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY'S RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE:
IS THE RESPONSE SUFFICIENT?

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by

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THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY'S RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE:
IS THE RESPONSE SUFFICIENT?

ABSTRACT

The Hospitality Industry's Response to Climate Change:
Is the Response Sufficient?

by

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THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY’S RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE:
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Introduction

The debate over the existence of global warming and climate change rages on between the scientific community and entities that continue to refuse to accept the theory despite the abundance of scientific research that substantiates it. Many individuals, corporations, industries, governments, and countries continue to operate in a mode of “life or business as usual” pertaining to environmental issues. The hospitality industry is no exception. These attitudes and behaviors are not acceptable given the gravity of the problem and the potential consequences. This paper will focus on identifying the current and projected states of climate change; the impact of the hospitality/hotel industry on global warming and climate change; current initiatives in place both in and out of the hospitality industry to combat the problem; and will then emphasize a case study of one Minnesota Hotel and its brand holder to explore their efforts toward becoming a green, carbon-neutral facility.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the serious consequences that global warming and climate change pose for the planet and its inhabitants, and to shed light on the hospitality industry's contribution to the problem. The study further sought to examine whether the hospitality industry is doing their part in implementing “green” programs to combat its negative contribution to climate change.

Objective

The broad objective of this research project was to examine climate change and the hospitality industry's role in it. Once that information was obtained, the focus of the project

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narrowed to taking an in depth look at one Minnesota hospitality facility, the Staybridge Suites in Bloomington, owned by Torgerson Properties, Inc. (TPI). TPI's brand holder is Intercontinental Hotel Group (IHG). The policies, procedures, and operational practices of both TPI and IHG were examined in order to determine which entity had green policies in place, and which were following through with their commitment to establishing a carbon-neutral facility. The data collected was used to make recommendations to TPI and the Staybridge Suites for becoming a more "green" facility and corporation as a whole.

Statement of Problem

According to the latest Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) data, there are some facts regarding climate change considered to be "known with virtual certainty" ("Latest Environmental Protection Agency Data", 2011). This means that the following assertions have a greater than 99% chance that the results are true:

- The human activity of burning fossil fuels is changing the composition of the earth's atmosphere.
- The levels of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gases (GHG's) in the atmosphere have been measured and documented since pre-industrial times, and have been shown to be increasing.
- GHG's emitted by human activities remain in the atmosphere for decades to centuries making it virtually certain that the levels of these gases will continue to rise.
- Increasing GHG concentrations tend to warm the planet.

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- An “unequivocal” warming trend of about 1.0 to 1.7 degrees F occurred in both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres as well as over the oceans between the years 1906-2005 (IPCC, 2007).

According to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, scientists anticipate that as the concentrations of GHG's in the atmosphere continue to rise, average global temperatures and sea levels will continue to rise as a result and precipitation patterns will change (IPCC, 2007). These changes have the potential to be devastating and costly to the hospitality industry.

The contribution of the hospitality industry to global warming and climate change due to its sheer size is enormous. These contributions will be further explored for the purposes of this paper. Issues of energy and water consumption, types of energy usage, limited natural resources, and operational costs are always central issues to any industry. Finding the appropriate balance in all of these areas is vitally important to each individual, corporation, industry, and to our world as a whole.

Justification

Although the hospitality industry is a major contributor to global warming and climate change, the industry appears to be dreadfully lacking in proactive initiatives to reduce their contributions (Scott & Becken, 2010). Many questions arise around these topics, and so far no clear answers. What are hospitality corporations doing in their attempt to reduce their contribution to global warming and climate change? Who within the industry is responsible for implementing the conversion to green or sustainable hospitality facilities? Because industry-specific efforts to combat climate change are falling well short of what they need to be, it is

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imperative that this problem be explored further. Mandated initiatives within the industry must be put into place to insure that a carbon-neutral, sustainable hospitality industry can continue to meet the needs of the customers.

Constraints

While this study involved an investigation into but a single hotel, it is believed that broad generalizations can be made regarding TPI their corporate owner, and IHG their brand holder. Each property at the lowest level in a hierarchy of ownership should reflect the mission, values, and commitments to whatever manner of being of the ownership level above them. A comprehensive look into the green policies, procedures, and practices in place at the Staybridge Suites does not reflect the perception of and commitment to being green that TPI as a corporation and IHG as a brand holder propose to ascribe to.

PART TWO

Introduction

This portion of the study sought to further explore the current state of global warming and climate change and the contribution of the hospitality industry to the problem. Initiatives to combat climate change by industry and non-industry entities were reviewed in order to gain an accurate picture of what is truly being done and by whom. Barriers to becoming sustainable were also thoroughly examined. All of this information is crucial in formulating a plan and mapping the direction the hospitality industry needs to proceed in in order to create a balance between their contributions to the problem of climate change and their efforts to mitigate it.

Global Warming/Climate Change

The increasing concentrations of GHG's in the atmosphere are causing the earth's temperature levels to rise; in fact, the last decade was the warmest since 1850 when temperatures were first measured and recorded (Roller & Dombrovski, 2010). These rises in global and ocean temperatures are changing the typical distribution of precipitation, and causing sea levels to rise. Other changes may include increases in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, hurricanes and tornados (Richins & Scarinci, 2009). These changes mean potentially devastating consequences to the travel and hospitality industries, and to the economic welfare of many geographical areas.

Effect of Climate Change on the Hospitality Industry

Thus far, the problems associated with climate change have been mostly apparent in ski resort areas (Moreo, Demicco, & Xiong, 2009). Many popular European ski areas have been dramatically affected with nearly half of Switzerland's ski areas left snowless. Similar changes have been seen in the United States in Vermont and New Hampshire. A recent study by the

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Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development on the likely effect of global warming on the alpine ski industry reported that a global temperature rise of 4 degrees Celsius can be expected in this century (Moreo et al., 2009). If this projection were to become a reality, half of the Swiss ski resorts would be forced to close. A one degree Celsius increase would similarly mean a 60% close of German resorts. Banks in Switzerland are already refusing to lend to ski area located below 1,500 meters in elevation.

The tourism industry in Australia is one of the country's largest industries worth more than \$18 billion in the 2004-2005. Their main attraction, the Great Barrier Reef, brings in one-fourth of that income and supports over 800 tour operators. High ocean temperatures in recent years have begun to kill corals that make up the reef, and researchers estimate that by 2050 more than 95% of the reef's coral will be dead (Moreo et al., 2009). The majority of travel and hospitality destinations around the world are located along coast lines and the continuing rise of ocean levels will put all of these locations at risk.

Global warming/climate change will have major consequences for business owners, local economies, and state and federal tax incomes. In the United States, the hospitality and travel industries are the second largest employer next to healthcare, with a total daily average spending of \$1.8 billion, and over \$650 billion a day in domestic airline revenue (Richins & Scarinci, 2009). This is becoming a growing concern for areas such as the Florida coast where rising sea levels due to global warming/climate change could have a profound effect. As a regional example, the Palm Beach County Hotel and Lodging Association has determined that rising sea levels could potentially effect over 40,000 jobs in the hospitality industry.

Contribution to Climate Change by the Hospitality Industry

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Tourism and the hospitality industry have been important aspects in the economic development of many regions in the world. However, along with these benefits come negative consequences for the environment (Graci & Dodds, 2008). As one of the world's fastest and largest growing industries, its development is placing great stress on the environment (Persic-Zivadinov & Blazevic, 2010). Globally it is estimated that 5% of CO₂ and other GHG emissions can be attributed to the tourism industry (Gossling, 2009). It is estimated that buildings are responsible for approximately 40% of global energy use and up to 30% of global GHG emissions (FAQ - LEED and the Hospitality Industry, 2011). In the United States hotels account for more than 5 billion square feet of space, nearly 5 million guest rooms, and generate approximately \$4 billion in annual energy usage (USGBC, 2009).

Energy consumption, water usage, the generation of enormous amounts of garbage, failure to recycle, failure to utilize recyclable and compostable products and a host of other contributors to global environmental problems are neglected by the hospitality/hotel industries. For these reasons there are many possible interventions possible for utilization in this industry.

Current Initiatives to Combat Global Warming/Climate Change

There are initiatives in a variety of industries that are aggressively attempting to address the problem of global warming and climate change, as well as mitigating its effects. These include, but are not limited to, the United States Building Council LEED program, the Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method, and the Green Globe Certification and Operational Performance Program.

LEED Program

Since the year 2000 the United States Green Building Council has been transforming the building industry marketplace to promote the sustainable building, design, construction, and

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operations practices (FAQ - LEED and the Hospitality Industry, 2011) . The acronym LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. LEED has developed a rating system that attempts to certify and push the advancement of a planet-wide implementation of green building and developmental practices (Barber, Deale, & Goodman, 2011).

In 2006 a LEED program was specifically developed to assist hospitality facilities in becoming more environmentally friendly, or green. As of March 3, 2011, 91 lodging properties have achieved LEED certification, and an additional 1,100 properties have registered with the program and are working toward their certifications (FAQ - LEED and the Hospitality Industry, 2011).

The Green Building Council has also created a Green Venue Selection Guide to be used by businesses to integrate hospitality facilities with green practices into their travel and event management planning (Green Venue Selection Guide , 2009). Both of these programs were created by an entity outside of the hospitality industry.

In reviewing the recent initiatives toward becoming a “carbon-neutral” or “sustainable” industry, there were none identified that were specific to the hospitality industry. While some corporations within the industry are actively pursuing LEED accreditation and other avenues for becoming green, the numbers are negligible in comparison to the size of the industry as demonstrated above.

BREEAM Assessment Method

Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) is a points-based rating system that is administered by a BREEAM Assessor (Holmes & Hudson, 2002). There are different rating systems for different building types, but there are none specific to hotels or the hospitality industry. If an owner/builder of a hotel prefers to use the BREEAM

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standards in the construction of a new facility, a BREEAM assessor can devise a customized rating system unique to that construction project. There are no pre-requisites for BREEAM. Each of the BREEAM rating systems have four ratings based on the overall score after a design and post-construction review have been completed. The four rating levels are Pass, Good, Very Good, and Excellent.

Green Globe Certification and Operational Performance Program

Green Globe is a world-wide certification and operational performance program based on principles for sustainable development (“What is Green Globes?” 2012). Sustainability is defined in this program as planning for the long term, with emphasis on balancing environmental, economic, and social demands. The program provides a framework that monitors, measures, and records environmental, social and economic performance in the travel and tourism industry.

There are three green globe standards; design, operational, and community. The design portion of the standards consider the unique attributes of each proposed development site while providing a framework for social, economic, and environmental sustainability. The areas that are addressed include:

- Location and siting
- Energy Efficiency and Conservation
- Water Conservation, Storm water and Waste water management
- Solid and other Waste Production
- Resource Conservation (Materials)
- Chemical Use
- Social Commitment
- Economic Commitment

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- Innovation & Synergies

Projects are then assessed by a third-party assessor against industry best practice supported by the science and research of the Australian based Sustainable Tourism Co-operative Research Center.

Achieving certification in the Company (Operation) standard for operating hotels involves completion of the following:

- Establishing a suitable sustainability policy
- Completing a benchmarking assessment incorporating key elements such as energy, water, waste, community, paper, cleaning, pesticides etc.
- Compliance with relevant legislation and policy requirements
- Documentation of performance outcomes and communication with clients, suppliers and staff.

Independent third party audits are required for certification.

Potential Barriers to Becoming a Green Hospitality Facility

Lack of Green Education in Hospitality Industry Leadership Curricula

Individuals in leadership roles in the hospitality industry must be well educated in the areas of environmental, social, and economic sustainability. These will be the very people implementing green policies, technologies, products and practices into the hotel industry. Many institutions of higher learning are incorporating the concept of sustainability into their degree programs such as engineering, computer courses, architecture, business and tourism (Barber, et al.). Unfortunately, hospitality management degree programs are not including sustainability into their curricula, and thus are not preparing future managers and executives as well as they will

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need to be to face the challenges presented to the hospitality industry by global warming and climate change.

Cost

Another barrier to becoming green, especially as it pertains to existing hotels is the cost involved in retrofitting these buildings with new technologies. New heating and air conditioning units, water heating devices and plumbing fixtures, and many other features that would reduce water and energy consumption require expensive up-front costs that facility owners may not have or may not be able to envision the long-term returns on these types of investments.

Changing Prevalent Attitudes Getting All Members on Board with Sustainability Practices

An essential part of creating and maintaining environmentally conscious behavior is to provide an increased amount of knowledge about the relationship between human actions and the environment. This increased knowledge has been shown to dramatically influence human lifestyle choices (Barber, et. al). One role of knowledge is to influence attitudes. As the level of sustainability knowledge increases in the hospitality industry, owners, employees, and patrons will be influenced to change their negative behaviors that in the long run contribute to climate change.

Franchise Holders Adherence to Policies and Practices Dictated by Brand Companies

While there are an innumerable number of green programs available for hospitality facilities to utilize in their attempts toward becoming green, none of these programs appear to be mandated. Even those most notable green programs such as LEED, Green Globe, and BREEAM, are not mandatorily used. If the hospitality industry truly intends to meet its responsibilities in confronting climate change, participation in these programs needs to shift from voluntary participation to mandatory participation.

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Waiver Process

The implementation of some potentially mandated green technologies and equipment could pose major financial problems for smaller franchise or independent hotels. In that event a waiver process could be put in place such as those currently used by IHG with their franchisees. Facilities like the Staybridge Suites owned by Torgerson Properties, Inc. (TPI) are allowed to submit documentation as to why they are unable to comply with the requested change; upon review of the request, IHG would either accept the waiver completely or arrange a plan and timeline for compliance that would pose less of a strain on the franchisee.

Conclusion

The review of the literature solidly demonstrated that the hospitality industry is a major contributor to the problem of global warming/climate change. While some industries are meeting the problem head-on, the hospitality industry appears to fall well-short of meeting their inherent responsibility to become a carbon-neutral, sustainable industry. Because there are currently no mandates within the hospitality industry to become sustainable, facility owners can continue to operate as usual, possibly unaware of the impact their facility may have on climate change. The industry as a whole needs to commit to create an entity that establishes “green” standards for both existing and new facilities, mandates the implementation of those standards, and creates an over-sight mechanism to insure that the mandates are put into practice. The current and future leaders of this industry should be required to complete educational programs that consist of coursework in “green” business management, economics, and social issues. This type of preparation would arm industry leaders with the knowledge and understanding to bring about carbon-neutral, sustainable, profitable hospitality industry.

Part Three

Introduction

The hospitality industry is a major contributor to global warming and the industry will face potentially devastating consequences if climate change continues as projected. It is very apparent that the industry as a whole is currently falling well short of addressing climate change and their role as a major contributor to it. While efforts are being made by some, they are fragmented and remain unenforced. It is therefore incumbent upon the international hotel industry community to develop and incorporate an industry-wide, enforceable system to deal with global warming. In the absence of such a plan and the means for enforcement, it is time for individual brand-holders, and independent property owners and operators to take a strong look at their facilities and to initiate steps to reduce their carbon footprints simply because it is the right thing to do.

Case Study Methodology

The case study methodology for this professional paper included a thorough review of the green program that has been developed by Intercontinental Hotel Group (IHG), the brand-holder of the property being assessed for this study. The policies and procedures manuals of both Torgerson Properties, Inc. and the Staybridge Suites hotel in Bloomington, Minnesota were also thoroughly reviewed in order to determine the green policies and practices currently in place. Lastly, a detailed observational assessment of the Staybridge Suites was conducted as well as an in-person interview with the hotel's General Manager.

Case Study

IHG Green Management Program

In 2006 IHG kicked off their own program, IHG Green Management Program, to answer the question of "what is a green hotel", and to determine how they could reduce their energy

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costs and consumption. Global representatives of IHG met to establish goals, principles, strategies, and actions, in order to produce an operations, management and design tool for all of their current and future hotels.

The IHG Green Management Program was created to address sustainability issues that are specific to the hospitality industry. Their program was however, created to work with existing programs such as LEED (US based), BREEAM (UK based), and Green Globe (Australia based). The program is laid out as follows:

Purpose:

- The purpose of the Green Management Program is to identify appropriate sustainable building criteria, technologies, and operational guidelines for IHG hotels – this is considered the green baseline.
- The IHG Green Measure was the measurement instrument created to guide efforts to reduce what had been measured at the green baseline level
- The Green Baseline was made actionable by a number of prerequisite actions
- According to the IHG Green Management Program purpose statement, “Designing and operating a hotel to be sustainable demonstrates a strong commitment to our guests, the environment and the future of the planet”.

In order to achieve the sustainability goals that IHG set forth, they developed eight “action groups” to address the following categories: site, water, products and materials, waste, building envelope, mechanical, electrical, and operation & process. The intent of each action group is to attempt to reduce energy and water consumption, reduce carbon footprint, improve guest health and comfort, reduce operating and maintenance costs, and to raise guest awareness of sustainable

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development. IHG guidelines describe and recommend a number of design and operational strategies and technologies to be implemented within each category to meet the goals set forth.

The certification process in the IHG Green Management Program for existing hotels is structured similarly to that of the LEED program. Points are available from each of the eight categories previously mentioned. There are 30 prerequisite actions, 124 available points, and 3 levels of certification. Detailed actions that can be taken in each of the eight categories are outlined, as well as the points awarded for each intervention. Existing hotels need to complete a certain number of prerequisites and then achieve a certain number of points depending upon which level of certification they wish to obtain. The Green Manage Program is not mandatory for hotel facilities in which IHG is the brand holder.

A 2009 Green Lodging News article indicated that there had been a dramatic increase in the number of hospitality corporations interested in the LEED program (Hasek, 2009). The list was not all-inclusive, but a cursory scan showed a strong presence by the following companies: Starwood, Hilton, Marriott, Wyndham, and Hyatt, with some Intercontinental and Best Western representation. A January 2011 addition of Green & Clean article with the following title: "Sustainability Spotlight: InterContinental Hotels Group Wins LEED Pre-certification". The article lauded IHG as the first organization to receive the award for an existing hotels program, and stated that it would give IHG a streamlined path to full LEED certification.

Analysis of the Staybridge Suites Hotel, Bloomington, Minnesota

The Staybridge Suites in Bloomington, Minnesota is owned and operated by TPI. TPI is the owner/operator of 28 properties in the hospitality industry under a variety of different brand names. The brand name holder of the Staybridge Suites Hotel in Bloomington, Minnesota is IHG. Because TPI owns and operates multiple facilities, an in-depth assessment of one property

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could certainly be deemed indicative of the green policies and practices at their other properties as well.

A thorough review of TPI's policies and procedures manual available at the Staybridge Suites property was completed. The operations manual contained no reference to any green policies or procedures with the exception of one possible reference pertaining to recycling which stated, everyone is encouraged to recycle all items possible to include cardboard, aluminum cans, glass bottles, and paper. This directive was dated 8/99. Under the green initiatives portion of the manual there was a 12/09 memo citing the use of a single sort recycling guide which listed the items to be placed in one single bin and collected by Allied Waste Services. On inspection of the facility, there were no recycling bins of any type, and staff members stated that Allied Waste Services was no longer used by the facility.

Observational assessment of the Staybridge Suites:

- As stated above, there were no recycling bins or directions for recycling located anywhere on the premises.
- Batteries and used light bulbs thrown in the garbage; not recycled
- There was no motion-controlled lighting, meaning that some unnecessary lights were left on at all times.
- No liquid soap dispensers; large bars of soap are provided to each "suite" even though guest may be staying only one night.
- No facility "range control" for thermostats. Some guests leave temperature at 90 degrees or higher in the winter; down to 50 in the summer.

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- Refrigerator/freezers in every room left running despite not being used by guests.
- Non-recyclable dinnerware used for food service; thrown in the trash.
- Absolutely no employee training on environmental policies/practices
- Executives drive Dodge Durango's; poor fuel efficiency vehicles
- Vehicles used for guest transportation are old, inefficiently fueled models that are sometimes in poor repair
- Lawn treatments consisting of toxic chemicals

After interviewing the Staybridge Suites General Manager it was clear that there were no green policies or practices currently in place at the hotel. The GM provided information on both IHG's Green Management program and on the Green Engage Assessment Tool. Those pieces of information had been retrieved from the IHG web site through "personal communication" simply because information was requested for the purpose of this study. The Staybridge Suites is currently not enrolled or registered with any green rating program in an attempt to work toward and receive certification and recognition as a green facility. According to the Staybridge GM, IHG actually charges a monthly fee to be enrolled in Green Engage. There have been no directives from either IHG or TPI to initiate participation in a green program of any type.

Public relations are important to any business, and projecting the image of being environmentally friendly in today's society is of great benefit. Consumers are increasingly making choices based the green policies and practices demonstrated by organizations they patronize and receive services through. Despite the lack of green policies and operational procedures and practices observed at the Staybridge Suites, TPI is publicly presenting their

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organization as being very environmentally responsible. This was demonstrated in a May 18, 2008 article in the Minneapolis-St Paul Business Journal (Vonhoff, 2008) in which according to the article, TPI was “launching a green initiative”. The initiative called for the following:

- Conservation of energy, water and other natural resources
- Reduced hazardous or solid waste, wastewater discharge and air emissions
- Increased recycling and purchasing recycled products
- Reduced use of toxic materials
- The use of green landscaping techniques
- Employee training on environmental policies
- Designated “environmental impact representatives” at each property and the creation of new “environmental impact board” to oversee the initiatives
- \$1,000 per month in grants toward community-based environmental projects

While these appear great in print and make for excellent public relations material, other than the new hotel specifically cited in the article, first-hand knowledge of the corporation indicates that none of the above initiatives have been put into place at TPI's other facilities. Because properties that operate under “Brand” names often have policies and practices dictated to them, some policies and practices are out of the control of the individual property ownership. These policies could directly influence the proposed implementation of green policies, products and practices. In such cases it is often possible to obtain a “waiver” from the brand owner for

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adopting practices that may not be addressed in their guidelines. TPI has definitely been found to not require any “waiver” for the implementation of any “green” initiatives from IHG.

Recommendations

IHG level recommendations

1. As a major player in the international hospitality industry, IHG should take a leadership position in assembling the hospitality industries leadership in order to meet and develop a global plan to combat climate change and to mitigate their contributions to it.
2. Then, as an industry leadership community, consensus needs to be achieved in selecting a rating system or a number of comparable rating systems that would be implemented throughout the industry in order to achieve carbon-neutrality.
3. Once the international leadership arrives at a consensus and develops a short list of green rating systems to be used, globally mandated industry standards and time frames for becoming a green, carbon-neutral industry should be put in place.
4. On a smaller scale, IHG needs to mandate their Green Engage programs for all of their facilities, and for those that they hold the brand names for. Participation should not have fees involved for participation.
5. This study did not investigate the level of green higher education within the IHG leadership. As a corporation they should develop hiring practices that have pre-requisite standards in place. IHG should promote and facilitate educational opportunities for current employees who wish to pursue degrees in the areas of environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

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6. Upon completion of their degrees, employees should be rewarded with promotions to higher level positions within the organization.

TPI level recommendations

1. TPI should incorporate all policies, technologies, and operational procedures that they represented themselves as currently doing in the 2008 newspaper article.
2. TPI should be moving toward requiring that management-level employees have degrees in university programs that include coursework in environmental, social, and economic sustainability.
3. Staff education programs should be put into place where employees in all capacities are schooled on climate change, causes, consequences, and actions to mitigate the contributions at the facility level. It would be encouraged that all employees take what they learned home with them to bring about green practices in their everyday living.
4. TPI should have factual information available to patrons regarding energy and water consumption costs, as well as what efforts are being put into practice by the organization to combat the effects of climate change. Awareness could then influence guests to be more mindful and implement green practices at home as well.

Conclusion

Although limited in size and scope, this study creates the ground work for further investigation into the consequences of climate change, the contribution to climate change by the hospitality industry, and the actions being taken within the industry to achieve carbon-neutrality.

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These problems and issues are all very complex, and it is vitally important that solutions be obtained in an expeditious manner before it's too late.

This study brought to light the fact that there are a myriad of green initiatives, actually too many to count, currently being used within the industry. Many organizations are creating their own green programs by spinning off well-known ones such as LEED, BREEAM, and Green Globe. In and of itself it's good that organizations are doing something to combat the problem, but adding more and more of the same on a voluntary basis lessens the significance of the rating system concept. Again, a consensus needs to be reached on which programs produce the most positive outcomes, and then they need to be mandated and enforced.

In an ideal world, the corporate world would work hand in hand with the scientific community. Science is producing undeniable facts indicating that the earth is headed for potentially perilous times. It is no longer acceptable for governments and corporations large or small around the world to turn their heads in the face of the facts regarding climate change. Further study needs to be undertaken to determine what global initiatives have been achieved, and to determine ways to bring about greater global cooperation in meeting the challenges facing us all.

The Staybridge Suites, their ownership, and their brand holder each have a responsibility to bring about actions that off-set their contributions to climate change. It's time for each of them to stop presenting themselves as being progressive in their efforts to combat climate change, and then continue to operate in the same old ways. Change has to start from within, not necessarily because it's mandated, but simply because it's the right thing to do.

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