

HOSTING

Rapid City Area Hospitality Association News

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NOTES FROM NANCY

Nancy Brady, Editor

HOW DID THE 'HOTLINE' DO?

Since the Hotline started on June 27, there has been a lot of educating to do with the clerks on duty. Since all of them did not get the memo sent to every property, there was resistance from some to give out information, give out accurate information, or they just plain refused to give any information. However, towards the end of the run, which was right after the Rally, some got the message that perhaps the Hotline could help them with those last few rooms.

Records from last year and this year were similar in numbers available at the 4pm reporting time. This year there were 13 nights that the properties sold out. Yes, you may have had a room or two available, but we call that an almost. This was the count for last year, too. The week of the Rally only produced 2 nights of full occupancy. Same as last year.

On the nights when there were 516, 711, 697, or 408 rooms available, the Hotline closed at 7pm, and no other count was made. However, there could not possibly be that many walk-ins during the evening hours.

There was the ever-present price resistance right from the get-go. Price conscience visitors shopped hard to find the bargain they wanted. I am sure some left the city. Prices have always been contested in the Black Hills area, not just Rapid City. I am not sure if the prices during the Rally made a difference—rooms were available every day. Those properties who put their Rally rates before the Monday start of the Rally suffered some, I think. It's hard to speculate how ADR is set by management—can't take that to the bank. Some properties seemed to catch on, and they filled.

The Hotline is a service that is provided by your dues, and it is up to each property to take full advan-

tage of it. But it does no good when clerks at the desk are not informed that the Hotline is there to help, not intrude on business. We'll try again next year, for sure, to get everyone in the loop.

POW-WOW TIPS

The annual Travel Industry of America's International Pow Wow, held in Las Vegas this year, seemed to be more successful than ever. The South Dakota contingent reported more appointments and drop-ins than before. Of course, with the American dollar at a low, this is the time to market the USA. Representatives from our State Tourism Department and various other cities, including our own Convention and Visitors Bureau were doing their best to attract the foreign travel agencies.

After each Pow Wow the State Department of Tourism publishes a comprehensive report on each and every visit. This report shows what the foreign agencies are planning for the next several years, giving mailing address and information on planned trips.

This report is available from the Hospitality Association, and is yours for the asking. Contact Nancy at 342-3108. There are many leads for those interested in booking tours for the future.



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President's Message

Ginny Wagner



Greetings!

I hope all of you are enjoying a wonderful summer. Before we know it, winter will be upon us. As we look toward the remaining year, let us take a little time to remember the wonderful summer we had.

Early on, we were all wondering what type of season we would be having. Gas prices were soaring and everyone was wondering when it would all end. Many were thinking this would not be a good year for the

Black Hills of South Dakota. Contrary to what many believed, we had a wonderful summer season. Hotel rooms were up and the attractions seemed to be holding their own. The rally started off slower than normal; but, from what I could see, everyone had a great time.

School will be starting soon, and we will be focusing on the fall season. September is a wonderful time to be touring the Hills. Maybe this year all of us can spend a little time to see what attracts all of our guests to this area. Enjoy the experience.

Happy Touring,
Deb Feiler, Vice President RCHA

Wow the Employee - Wow the Customer!

How much would it cost for somebody to buy you out of your job?

Well, this is exactly what Zappos.com does. Haven't heard of Zap-

pos? They are an Internet retailer that sells shoes.

They are known for their customer service. They pay shipping costs

—both ways if necessary. Internally they have a saying. "We are a SERVICE company that happens to sell shoes. And apparel. And handbags.

OUR ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

When you have a need or your guests ask for recommendations or suggestions, think of our friends and associate members first. They support us—

LET'S SHOW OUR APPRECIATION.

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Michelle's Memos *Michelle Lintz, CVB*



WINNERS!

Kathy Stachura was the winner of The Great Black Hills Six Day Adventure Vacation Giveaway. The vacation package giveaway was part of an online marketing campaign. Kathy, her son and her parents arrived July 22nd for a five night, six day vacation in the beautiful Black Hills. During the family's visit, they toured The Journey Museum, Mammoth Site, Badlands National Park, Wind Cave National Park and Custer State Park. They also enjoyed a hot air balloon ride, rented mountain bikes and rode from Rochford to Hill City, attended Sylvan Rock Climbing School and enjoyed a wagon ride and cowboy supper at Palmer Gulch. When asked about her visit to the Black Hills, Kathy said, "My family and I had a wonderful time."



Kathy Stachura and her family.

(Wow . . .continued from page 2)

And Accessories.

And eventually anything and everything."

I think the first line of their "mantra" sums it up; a service company that just happens to sell shoes. They get it! And, not only for their customers, but also for the employees!

According to an article by Barbara Rose, writing for ChicagoTribune.com, Zappos offers \$1,500 to anyone who wants to quit. They actually offer to buy their new employees out of their jobs! (Between 2-3% of the people accept the offer.)

You see, Zappos only wants people working there who want to be there. They have an incredibly successful company, and realize that it is not about selling "stuff," but creating an experience that people love.

No matter how great their website is, or how great their products are, their people back up the entire customer experience.

According to Tony Hsieh, CEO of Zappos.com, "...in addition to trying to WOW our customers, we also try to WOW our employees, and the vendors and business partners..." And, they do!

Zappos has created a culture that has employees saying, "I love working here." How do they do it? First, everyone knows the "mantra." Second, Zappos trains well. Third, there are really cool perks that WOW the employees. No, not the usual corporate perks. They have pot-luck lunches, bowling parties, haunted houses at Halloween, holiday decorating, karaoke, picnics, go-carting and much more.

The culture is fun. Most important, they have an environment where people can just be themselves.

All of this is a lesson on taking care of your internal customers so you can better serve your outside customers.

Zappos is a role model in this area.

So, what do you do to create an environment in your organization, or in your department that has people saying, "I love working here?" Think about what Zappos does. Just Google Zappos and you will not only get a link to their website, but many links to articles and accolades that just might teach you something about creating an environment that says WOW to customers AND employees!

On Making Customers Wait

I hate to make clients wait. Whether they are waiting for product, service, a return phone call, etc., it doesn't matter. Clients don't like to wait, and we know it. But, sometimes they just have to. So here is a simple concept: If you have to make them wait, let them know how long! Then under-promise and over-deliver. What that means is that you tell them how long it will be, which creates an expectation, and then exceed the expectation.

When was the last time you went to your doctor's office and he/she was on time? Sometimes it happens that they call your name right away. You get all excited and then they put you in a room and tell you the doctor will be with you in a few minutes. That few minutes turns into ten, fifteen and maybe twenty minutes. You wonder if anybody remembers putting you in the room at all. Wouldn't be nice if you showed up a few minutes

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Rapid City Area Hospitality Assoc.
 PO Box 2731
 Rapid City, SD 57709

RCAHA Mission Statement - *The Rapid City Area Hospitality Association is committed to provide its members with education, resources, and services in order that they can better serve their customers and guests, exceeding both member and guest expectations.*

Upcoming Conventions/Events:

August 2008

Aug 20-24	USS Tennessee Military Reunion	100 ppl
Aug 21-24	Porsche Club of America	50 ppl
Aug 21-25	USS Cortland APA-75 Military Reunion	45 ppl
Aug 28-30	SD Reined Cow Horse Association	200 ppl
Aug 28-Sept 1	Black Hills Four Wheelers	200 ppl
Aug 28-Sept 1	Blackjack Volksmarch	375 ppl
Aug 29-31	Black Hills UTV Rally	200 ppl
Aug 29-Sept 1	Studebaker Drivers Club-Dakotas Chapter	150 ppl
Aug 30-Sept 1	Mike Coley Memorial Baseball Tournament	95 ppl

Sept 2008

Sept 3-7	USS Hector AR-7	200 ppl
Sept 4-8	28th Wing Reunion Association	150 ppl
Sept 5-7	Five State Breeders Barrel Futurity	200 ppl
Sept 5-8	Gideons International – South Dakota	300 ppl
Sept 7-10	USS Trathen Military Reunion	70 ppl
Sept 7-11	American Missionary Fellowship	110 ppl
Sept 8-9	SD Society for Respiratory Care	150 ppl
Sept 8-12	Newmar Kountry Klub Region 4 Rally	90 ppl
Sept 10-13	SD Stockgrowers Association	250 ppl
Sept 11-12	SD Trial Lawyers Association	80 ppl
Sept 11-13	SD Trucking Association	250 ppl
Sept 12-13	Dakota Polka Festival	300 ppl

(Wait . . .continued from page 3)

early and the receptionist said, “I’m glad you are here. The doctor is running ahead of schedule and will see you right away.”

Disney is an expert at managing the “wait.” At most Disney theme parks there are lines, and they are usually long. There is usually a Disney cast member (that is what they call their employees) standing at the end of the line helping to direct “traffic.” When you ask them how long the line is, they give you an estimate. When you finally do get to the front of the line you will usually notice that it wasn’t quite as long as you were told. If they told you fifteen minutes, it probably only took ten or twelve minutes. You are usually happy that the wait wasn’t as long as you thought. Disney makes an art of this concept.

So, if you have to make a customer wait for any reason, let them know how long. Then, don’t just meet the expectation, exceed it!

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Calendar information provided
 by Rapid City CVB.

**NO MEMBERSHIP MEETING THIS MONTH
 See you in September!**