



Top Tips for Maximizing Your IHG Investment

The Owners Association asked our Board members for their advice on how to succeed as an owner/operator of an IHG hotel. Here are their top tips:

Work at the right level for any item you wish to discuss or to resolve. Nothing is more demotivating than bypassing an individual and denying them the opportunity to do their job and provide quality service. By working at the appropriate level of IHG for any given issue, it creates a positive environment where the employees you are dealing with know they will be given an opportunity to work through an issue rather than you going over their heads immediately. Remember how big an operation IHG really is and that you need to work through the system, treating each IHG staff member with respect, to reach a solution.

Establish a relationship with your Area Manager (or HPS Director in EMEA). Owners should make it a priority to attend Area Manager visits to their hotels. Your Area Manager can guide you through anything you need from IHG, including getting you the right contacts when needed.

- **Develop an action plan during your Area Manager (or HPS Director in EMEA) visits.** When you're present at the visit and paying attention to what actions are discussed, you're GM and hotel staff will take the consulting visit seriously. Follow the progress of items on the action plan that is developed and review it regularly with your GM to reinforce follow up and your continued commitment.

Inspect what you expect. You should personally inspect each of your hotels on a regular basis for cleanliness, maintenance, and product quality. You will be better able to evaluate your hotel's quality scores, capital needs, and other opportunities to improve performance. Hang around the lobby and listen to what people are saying. Walk the hotel with your GM and pick a room of your choice on every floor, at least once a month where possible, to inspect. If your portfolio is too large to allow for monthly visits, then schedule time to carefully review OSAT, QA, and Focus visit reports regularly so you can discuss ways to improve any deficient areas with your team.

Consult with your quality inspector and PIP person before making any capital expenditures or major repairs. These individuals see more things in a week than owners see in years, and they can give you guidance to get the work done more effectively and less expensively.

Make sure your management company is as connected as you are. If you have a management company running your hotel, make sure they are involved in the OWNERS ASSOCIATION and close to IHG. Ask them to put together a monthly or quarterly Owner's report that lists accomplishments, your hotel's current position in the market, quality scores, and what is planned for the next month/quarter.

Become a revenue expert. The profitability of all hotels in the system is driven by revenue and market share growth. It is incumbent on owners to be fully knowledgeable and skilled with the revenue tools that are available and their application for specific situations. Be engaged from a revenue

standpoint to ensure that your hotel teams are maximizing these resources and putting the reach of IHG to work for your assets (Merlin > Teamspaces > Global Sales & Marketing > Revenue Management Americas).

- **Engage Revenue Management for Hire.** If you need consistent and constant revenue management assistance, consider engaging IHG's Revenue Management for Hire program, which helps to manage the complexities associated with today's revenue model including pricing and channel management (www.rmh.ihg.com).

Take full advantage of the tools provided by IHG. Remember that the value of the brand and the IHG relationship comes from leveraging all the resources that are offered. Within Merlin (slated for an overhaul in 2013), you can review guest satisfaction scores and guest comments about your hotel, assist your GM in coming up with solutions to address any issues that arise, and essentially find all the tools IHG provides to create a great hotel that your guests will love. Learn to use Merlin effectively and use it often – it's a "one-stop shop" for countless resources.

- **Review the current Standards Manual and any updates.** This information is available on Merlin and can help you understand the specific requirements for your brand's hallmarks and services (Merlin > Applications > Brand Central). You should also review the Risk Management Teamspace, where you'll find checklists and resources to help with compliance (Merlin > Teamspace > Risk Management).
- **Be sure that you are the Principal Correspondent for your hotels.** IHG provides consistent communication about standards, marketing, and other issues directly to the PC—you won't receive it if you don't ensure your contact information is correct. Make sure IHG has a correct email address, which you can update through Merlin, for an email address that you check regularly, to receive weekly IHG Mail bulletins.
- **Send your staff to appropriate IHG workshops and courses.** This training is specific to your brand and to the IHG system and will benefit you at the hotel level. Much of the training is available online 24/7 via Merlin, and there are many webinars/conference calls, as well as e-training classes that your teams can attend. Be sure to check IHG Mail weekly for updates. The key to establishing and maintaining a successful service culture is *training, training, and more training!*
- **Regularly review your hotel's Priority Club performance.** Priority Club members pay more, stay more, and say more. Ensure that your team embraces the loyalty program and meets or exceeds the established compliance thresholds. (Remember, you must meet the enrollment standard for all four quarters in 2012 to qualify for a rebate of the enrollment fee.) Complete resources are available at www.ihgmerlin.com/pcr.

Make your online presence known and monitor social media. Be sure to claim your hotel listings on sites like Google Places, Yahoo, and Yellow Pages.com. This is generally free and it allows you to post content specific to your hotel for customers to review. Use Google Alerts to monitor the web for news and postings about your hotel. Review the competitive websites, third-party websites, GDS sites and third-party guest reviews, such as Trip Advisor. Learn to use Cymfony Maestro to listen to social media and respond appropriately (Merlin > Teamspaces > Social Marketing > Listening and Reputation Management > Cymfony Maestro).

Go green (and save money too). IHG supports many opportunities to promote sustainability at your hotel. The cost savings can be substantial, not to mention the responsible business of saving the planet. For example, engage the “print to file” feature in Opera for your daily night audit function. It saves time, paper, toner, boxes, storage – all of the consumable items associated with this daily activity. And investigate Green Engage, IHG’s exclusive program for energy savings at your hotels, at <https://greenengage.ihg.com>.

Visit the IHG offices in Atlanta or Denham or other regional offices and make courtesy calls to people whom you interact with there (your revenue manager, franchise support, etc). Put a name with a face so when you do not know who to go to or how to navigate through an issue, an IHG person knows you as more than a voice on the telephone. Give them your business card, get theirs, and make notes on the back so that next time you pick up their card you remember them. Always network with fellow owners and IHG staff as there is lots of information to share and knowledge to be gained.

Join the IHG Owners Association. Be a part of the industry’s premier owners association and help ensure the long-term value of your investment. The Association works in collaboration with IHG, championing collective issues on behalf of all IHG owners. While our focus is on common concerns not individual issues, we can often connect you with someone who can give you guidance, whether it is a fellow franchisee or an IHG employee.

- **Get involved with the Owners Association.** You have many opportunities to participate, so get involved - opportunities abound in every region. Connect with the Board and contact the appropriate Committee Chairman about issues of concern to you. (A complete listing of contacts is available at www.owners.org under the Who to Contact tab.) Attend an owner event or meeting. Read your member communications for valuable insights and information. Bookmark the website, www.owners.org, and check in regularly for updates.

www.owners.org
(001) 770.604.5555