Reuse Models
Engaging Staff and Guests

Agenda:

• Getting support from staff
• Insights on staff engagement from Six Senses and EXO Travel
• Communicating sustainability with customers
GETTING SUPPORT FROM STAFF

So, let’s get started with how to engage staff, first I’m going to share some strategies and contexts that I truly believe need to be the underlying foundations before you can get staff to be motivated to help your business achieve its goals. Unless your business is a super eco-business already, then the chances are you find it a challenge to get support for your sustainability initiatives from some or even quite a lot of your staff. I think we all need to be realistic and remember that most people come to work because they have bills to pay, and not necessarily because they love their job or because they want to help the business to hit its targets. I think there are some things business can do to get staff more enthusiastic about work related tasks and actions they can take to become great places to work so that they attract the type of staff that Will actually proactively support the businesses initiatives but you build this over time, so you need to have Good strong foundations in place from which to start.
Firstly, the management teams in the business need to critically assess whether or not the business finds itself in the intention-action gap. For example, businesses say that they want to be more sustainable, that they want to reduce single-use plastic, and yet very often, there are lots of barriers within the space of that gap. All of you on the call have got some kind of published targets about reducing or eliminating single-use plastic at a corporate level let’s say, but achieving those targets requires the effort and the buy-in from operational staff and it is likely to require investment into reusable alternatives. This is where things can start to come undone. The intention is there but the action isn’t happening, or it’s happening and it’s not working, so it seems to be too much effort, somewhere along the line it becomes harder to tip the scales towards action, and the business stays where they are, in the intention space. To close this gap between good intentions and taking action, the people involved need to feel perceive two specific things.....
An increase in the “benefits to them of doing something differently” and a decrease in the effort required to do it. This is the same for all of us. For example, you are in this webinar today because your intention is to switch from single-use items to reusable items. What Benefit do you get from that personally? Is it something you believe in so much that you would just love to see the change happen, to know you’re making a positive difference and that’s what drives you? Is it the satisfaction of hitting a target and being responsible for making that happen no matter what the topic? Does that drive you? Is that feeling worth the effort to you, or do you wish things could be a bit easier to achieve? If you’re in the sustainability team, why does it always seem so hard to get others on board? Why do you feel like you’re constantly fighting against something or someone, or that people are always like “Oh, not her again” which is what used to happen to me a lot. I had to spend a lot of time with colleagues in my tour operating business to find out what THEIR objectives were in THEIR job, what benefits would they love to feel rewarded with for taking an action, and would they be more or less willing to make an effort to achieve this Benefit, and then I presented my sustainability initiatives in a way that they realised they could help themselves to meet some of their objectives if they took some of the actions I suggested – then I started to get buy-in. Then people started knocking on my door asking me for ideas instead of me trying to push on their door to even get in. It is a game changer if you think about how YOU can HELP OTHERS rather than how they can help you, rather than how you can just simply get them to do things that you want or need them to do.

We need to make the reusable options the easiest to work with wherever possible, and if effort is still needed we need to put strategies in place to increase benefits such as solutions that save time or that just make daily life at work easier. I am not suggesting for a
minute that this is going to be easy, that you’re always going to achieve this for every change you want to implement, but increased Benefit and decreased effort is by far the best way to embed the changes you want to see.
Strategies to strengthen support from staff

Create an employee loyalty programme

- Saves costs and time on recruitment, onboarding and training
- Boosts employee retention
- Builds customer loyalty

If staff simply come to work to pay the bills, then as soon as a similar job comes up in another hotel over the road for an extra 20€ a month they’re going to take it. This is how it is. Employee loyalty is when employees feel attached to an employer because they believe that their employer has their best interests at heart. Understanding loyalty requires understanding that people are driven by their emotions. If you have a loyal workforce everything is easier. It saves time and costs on recruitment and onboarding and training. Do you really want to spend time and effort to recruit someone, give them training, only for them to go and use the skills you taught them and work for a competitor – you want to keep hold of these people, if you want them to be there for you, you need to be there for them.

Employee loyalty builds customer loyalty because customers love your business if they’re attended to by engaged, productive and happy people. How many times have you had amazing food in a restaurant but the service was terrible – Will you go back? Probably not. You can have an amazing hotel, cruise ship, itinerary programme but if the customer facing people are not happy, it shows.
Gone are the days of the Employee of the Month

- Does your business have a working environment that makes people more loyal?
- Do our people feel that they are in an environment where they can comfortably share ideas and suggestions?

Gone are the days were people are simply satisfied with working for a company for years and maybe getting an Employee of the Month reward, this just doesn’t cut it any more for a lot of people. If this still does work for you, that is great, but I would start looking at the potential for introducing other ways to create a better working environment.

If you’re struggling with loyalty, you need to ask yourselves a hard question – am I creating a work environment that would make people more loyal to us? Why would people stay if the didn’t feel valued or respected? Unfortunately for all of us, hospitality is a hard sector to work in, its often unsociable hours, customers are increasingly demanding and can appear thankless of the effort you put in, the pressures on the teams, including yourself are immense and often we can get home and think “Is this what life is all about?” Lots of hospitality staff in the Canaries for example are moving into the construction sector because it is Good pay and they don’t have to work weekends or bank holidays. As well as the salary, which I know is important, there is the “I want a life” factor to consider. Whilst I understand that you can’t make everyone happy and you have an operation to run that relies on people being around at certain times of the day, is there anything else that you could do to make the workplace more attractive?

Often, in staff training sessions where I cover well-being in the workplace, I ask staff “apart from your salary, what could the business do to create a better work environment for you, because I can take these suggestions back on your behalf? 9 times out of 10, I get blank looks. In the beginning I used to get annoyed about this because I would think – right, you’re all complaining about your job but when I ask you want would you like to see
changed, no-one has any suggestions? Then I realised, that the people that did actually have Good suggestions felt stupid mentioning them in front of everyone else, or simply felt that whatever they suggested, they won’t be taken seriously, they approach me at the end of the sesión instead to share ideas privately. This tells me one of two things – people are not comfortable around their colleagues because they think whatever they suggest the idea Will just get knocked down straight away, It’s like a whac-a-mole – no-one wants to put their head up with an idea because it Will be bashed back down straight away. No-one thinks that their business is like this, the managers in the hotels that I work with, don’t think that this happens in their business but it does, so, how do we go about putting the same amout of effort into identifying staff values and concerns as we do for our customers?
How do we help them to be their best (nearly) every day?

- You need to ask them what they want.

- They need to feel safe and comfortable enough to tell you.

- You don’t have to implement every idea but don’t dismiss it.

- Go back and explain the thought process for why a certain idea can’t be implemented right now.

- Collaboration between customer experience specialists and Human Resources

Well firstly, no-one is a mind reader so we do have to take that step and ask staff what they want, what would make life easier, what would make work more enjoyable? You might have to think about different ways to do this, because no-one will be sincere if they don’t feel safe and comfortable or if they think their idea will be ridiculed. You don’t have to implement every single idea but don’t dismiss them right there and then in front of the people suggesting them, there is nothing more disempowering. Think it through, come at the idea at different angles, maybe something could work. For example, in a hotel I work with here in the Canaries, a lot of people are struggling to get young children in and out of nursery and school in times that fit with their shifts. They would love to have an onsite creche or be able to put their children into the children’s club where hotels have these. Then, they can go and see their kids in their break and lunch and take them home when they go home from work. This can work if there’s a children’s club and you come to an agreement with the animation team and there’s some kind of curriculum to follow, but what if there’s only 2 or 3 people struggling with that – well, we started to ask other hotels in the same area if they had similar issues with their staff so that one of the hotels with some additional space could create a creche which meant it was nearby and the opening hours were aligned with working hours. It hasn’t happened yet but a number of hotels are collaborating together to see if they could do this because it will benefit all of them in the end. Those workers will be less stressed and they will certainly be loyal to that business for having their best interests at heart.

If an idea simply can’t be implemented right now (tell SEASIDE BAR STORY), explain why – perhaps there is a time in the future it could better (e.g. Will will prioritize this as a
refurbishment) and maybe in the meantime there could be another temporary measure that makes things a bit better. Give people the thought process that led to their idea being turned down for now, but still be appreciative that they shared their idea.

Think about engaging your customer service specialists, who are the people that are creating your customer experiences and loyalty programmes, they are constantly thinking about how to improve the guest experience. Why not ask these people to change their focus for a short time and collaborate with HR to share some wild but possibly really powerful ideas that could completely overhaul motivation and retain and attract the talent and commitment that you need to meet your sustainability goals – and other goals for that matter.
Recruit employees whose values match yours

- Job descriptions.
- Benefits of why they should work with you.
- Buddy Up

Finding staff is a major issue at the moment and I do understand that, but I also think it could be a Good opportunity to attract the staff that Will actually make it easier for you to reach your goals. If job descriptions include information about expectations on sustainability then you’re getting people in from the outset who are expecting that to form part of their job function. Don’t forget also the power of the benefits when you send out your job adverts. For example, imagine recruiting for housekeeping staff and in the benefits it says “We implement chemical free cleaning technology to reduce the impacts on the environment and to create a healthier work environment for our teams” – I’d be thinking ooh, with two hotels to choose from and exactly the same salary but this Benefit, I’m going to choose you. You might need support from HR with this but it’s worth thinking through the role descriptions and getting sustainability in there. When you think about it, if you do have high staff turn over right now and you could implement this change, you might get more of the right people in straight away, that start their role already being more engaged in sustainability, which means you just increased the potential for support amongst your teams.

If you’re a diver, you know what it is to buddy up – you never go diving alone and when you’re new, you go with an experienced buddy the whole time. When pairing new people up with someone to show them the new role, make sure the buddy is the greenest possible person in the team wherever this is feasible. That way, the new person learns the sustainability actions from the first day. I also thought about other ways of using the buddy system such as getting hotels within a chain to talk to each other and share ideas on what is working and what is not, getting heads of department to talk to each other, even getting whole teams on a zoom call to talk to each other, but on having some discussions over the
course of the last weeks, it’s clear that within one chain there can be really different customer demographics and expectations, so the brand standards and the way the service is provided are totally different, making it difficult for people within the same chain to connect on common ground. That made me think about the value of the GTPI signatories, and that there is potential for different signatories with similar customer demographics to reach out to each other and make these connections, to share ideas on embedding sustainability and to let staff from different companies talk to each other. I don’t know how people feel about that, but from the outside it seems to me like finding a buddy would be a good initiative for some of you to take.
It is important to keep building and reinforcing awareness of sustainability issues because many people are simply not aware of them. There is a saying that Works well in English – You don’t know what you don’t know – most of my Friends don’t know that 99% of paper cups are lined with plastic, they use a paper cup thinking it is a Good thing to do because they just don’t know otherwise. Why would they? None of us can know everything about everything, so we have to introduce staff to the issues and keep building that awareness, and this is best achieved through training. If you do training in this kind of audience and presenter format, are there any ways you can liven it up a bit. We include some quick 2-3 minute exercises where we get the staff into teams of 5-6 people, we put this laminated poster on the table, only what we have done is remove the years, see where it says 30-40 years, or 500 years. What we did was we printed and laminated the years and we attached velcro to them so the staff have to guess how long it takes for these plastics to break down in natural environments. It’s not to be right or wrong, it’s to have a bit of fun and break up the boredom of sitting still. Then we show them this on the screen and they can see if they got any right or not.

I hear this all the time, well what difference do I make? I’m just one person – well, actually they can make a lot of difference because their actions accumulate with other people’s actions. A really Good exercise to do is to get a week’s worth of single use plastic products consumed in your hotel onto a table for people to see. When they see the sheer amount of waste that is provided, they soon realise that actually, small acts really do add up to big change. I love this images of It’s only 1 Straw, said 8 billion people – 8 billion straws saved if we all said no.

My husband Works in food waste prevention, most of the staff in the kitchen don’t know
how much food waste is generated everyday and certainly none of the staff in other areas know this, but an average in the Canary Islands there is anywhere between 1 tonne of food waste at least every week in half board and all inclusive hotels – he’s even been in one hotel where it was a tonne of food waste every two days! When you tell people in the kitchen that, it can really flip a switch so that they want to be part of the solution and not part of the problema.

Why not deliver sustainability training outside of the hotel, if you take the time you can potentially plan it in as part of an activity like a beach clean or a trip to the recycling facility. In our case here, we took hoteliers to the recycling facility in Mallorca, when they see the amount of waste created in just a week or two on their own island, it can really make them think about how they can be part of the solution to reduce it. You have to be careful with this though mind, as one of the signatories I was talking to did this and it had the opposite effect where the staff though the waste at the recycling plant was so well managed that it didn’t matter that they created so much waste in the first place.
Even if you have really Good staff, and you build awareness, knowledge does not necessarily lead to action. We all know that we should eat healthier and exercise more, but the world is still full of people who are unhealthy and overweight because of their choices. Knowing something isn’t always enough to change habits. You need to find out what Will truly motivate people to change and this means Finding THEIR WHY – Don’t think about it as WHY they should support you, or support your sustainability goals so much, but WHY would they bother, especially if they are short on time or they are a disinterested member of staff? So, how do you draw out their WHY? What we need to get to the bottom of, is what do they say at the end of this sentence......I Will make this effort because.......a) I can’t stand to think that I could be part of the problema and I prefer to be part of the solution...... b) I didn’t realise that our plastic waste can end up in other countries for people less fortunate than us to deal with.......c) because it impacts my own health today, if the food I am eating contains microplastics or the chemicals associated plastics, or other toxins........d) Because my child, my niece, my nephew, my grandchild could be ingesting microplastic from breast milk, ........e) because so much waste is being incinerated and even if I don’t see it, the air around me is becoming more polluted which is not Good for me and my family.......f)....if I go to the beach with my Friends and family today, the sea I’m swimming in is a lot more polluted than 20 years ago....7) or because I didn’t realise that even here in our country, most recycling is done by hand and I’d like to make their job easier, because I would sure appreciate it if someone helped me to make my job easier. You never know which WHY Will resonate if you don’t first share some information with your teams and then ask them. If necessary do it via 1:1 or smaller group meetings, have an Anonymous questionnaire – if you find out why they are willing to make an extra effort, then you have
more support for your sustainability strategies. Not everyone will be motivated by waste reduction, water and energy could be their thing. Social actions could be their thing – don’t limit this exercise to plastic if you try it.
Make Time

I really want to support this but I don’t have the time.....

It’s great if you get to the bottom of the WHY and you get some additional buy-in, but not so great if they’re expected to do additional tasks without additional time. This is very common when you have a green team for example: Green Team’s are usually voluntary, and they start of with lots of enthusiasm but over time this enthusiasm can turn into apathy or even worse, into not wanting to be part of the green team any more. This is usually because when people think about the time required for the Green Team they think about the hour or so that is needed for the people to get together and talk, but what is not factored in, is the preparation time for the meeting or the list of actions that comes after the meeting, the follow up required, the updates required etc. Realistically, people on a green team need to be relieved of at least a day of work a week in my experience in order to be able to attend a green team meeting once a month and do everything that goes with it.

If people have to leave their post of work and know that they’re coming back to a backlog – the green team soon runs out of steam. It’s also a Good idea that members of the green team are NOT heads of department. Having HODs as the green team does Little to empower other staff. Green teams usually work a lot better when ideas come from other people in not so senior positions. In fact, in the Canaries, a lot of Heads of Department are near retirement age and its interesting how many are not motivated to change, whereas the next in line ready to take over is super excited to introduce more sustainability actions. If green teams are in the hands of uninterested people, they Will go nowhere, so choose the people that really want to be involved.

It’s the same for any other tasks that may require extra time, the time Will have to be found somewhere. In some hotels, I have seen the cleaning of public areas is outsourced to an
agency so that housekeeping staff can start on romos that are empty straight away. In F&B I’ve seen that the refilling of water bottles in hotels that have water filtration on site is done by someone on the night team, relieving the pressure on F&B the following day, and in other hotels cross training takes place so that people can switch between tasks if necessary, which also makes it more interesting for staff to not have to do the same thing every day. You can implement opportunities for guests to opt out of room cleaning in return for a reward of some sort, but rather than reducing the number of staff, keep the same number of staff so that they all have some more time to do the sustainability stuff, to separate the waste properly etc. I get quite disappointed when I see hotels using streamlining technology or other initiatives to cut positions rather than to create a more optimum environment that would attract and retain staff.
I would be able to do my job more efficiently if......

Keeping on top of equipment might not seem like it has anything to do with waste reduction initiatives and sustainability but it can have everything to do with time and motivation. If something is broken, like the pedal on a pedal operated bin, like a missing Wheel, like a broken support at the back so it’s harder to pull, all of this makes the everyday tasks harder. In one hotel I worked with, the glass recycling bin had a part missing at the back of it where it hooked on to the bigger bin outside which made it easier for one person to lift. When I went back, over 6 months later it had still not been fixed, it was taking two people to lift the bin and even then it wasn’t easy. They got dirty, had to go and get cleaned up etc before they could go back to work. That is not an efficient use of their time, nor is it respectful to make their job so difficult for such a long time. The hotel was waiting for a replacement bin from the council and it was the council causing the delays, but they could have done something about it themselves if they really wanted to. How do the people emptying the glass feel, when they’re not given the tolos to do the job....valued, respected, rewarded – not really – more like utterly fed up and not prepared to do a single thing more that is asked of them.

Very often in staff areas, I see a whole load of yellow bins or a whole load of Brown bins because there are simply not enough of the right colour or there’s not enough space for coloured bins so smaller containers are in place, and then we wonder why people make mistakes in separating waste for recycling. If we want staff to separate waste properly we need to make it really easy, and we also need to police it for a while. Even when you do have everything really well done, it seems that people still make mistakes, it Works to assign someone as a waste monitor for a few weeks until people start to get used to it. It sounds a bit like school but in places where I have seen waste separation working really
well, it is because they put a lot of effort in in the beginning. Again, information is now enough, there needs to be some level of oversight for this, unless you are on a cruise ship it seems. I found it very interesting visiting the cruise ships recently where recycling was absolutely perfect. When we were thinking about why this is possible on cruise but seems not to be possible in a hotel, we think it comes down to safety. On cruises, some waste needs to be incinerated on the actual ship – if the wrong things go into that incinerator it could cause significant safety problems and that directly impacts the staff who live on the ship. There was a waste monitor in the waste separation room making sure everything was done properly. I have also seen some hotels do this but they have found it easier to outsource that job, because as an example, there was a guy checking and sorting all the waste as it came into the main waste area – even just this act made staff do it better because if they didn’t, it impacted on that guy’s role so much, but when the guy went on holiday, that threw up some problems because he had been assigned to the maintenance team, so when he was away, the maintenance manager had to assign a member of his team to that role, that made all the other maintenance people busier. The same happened when he was unwell, when the maintenance manager suggested putting the guy on the kitchen team, because at that hotel it was kitchens that weren’t really separating waste properly, it started a lot of arguments because kitchen didn’t want to be responsible for it. In the end, outsourcing it to an agency means that the agency covers holidays and illness, and it doesn’t add pressure to regular staff.
Finally, a major barrier to implementing change is people’s confidence in dealing with the consequences of something new, this is a bit like the “You don’t know what you don’t know” scenario we looked at a few minutes ago. If a member of the reception or guest service team doesn’t know what is happening in the guest rooms to reduce single-use plastic, how can they confidently and competently answer queries or defend any complaints. Imagine if procurement teams are supposed to find alternatives to single-use plastic but they really don’t know what exists out there or why some materials are not as green as they seem. They are unaware that they don’t know something. This is unconscious incompetence. Once they are aware of this, they know they need to learn more about it and why it is important that they do that, this is Conscious Incompetence, they know that there are things that they don’t know and this can make people scared and uncomfortable. Scared to be on the front desk dealing with a guest complaint, scared to order an alternative product in case it ends up being worse than the plastic they were trying to replace. This is the point where your awareness raising training comes in, you can also consider giving people the opportunity to undertake some self development in all things green, can you allow people to attend local sustainability fairs and events so that they get the opportunity to listen to other people, hear different perspectives, learn some amazing new things and get some fantastic ideas from people who share their experiences. This is exactly what has been so great about doing this bilateral work with some of the signatories, we have shared and learned so much from each other that we didn’t know that we didn’t know. Once people learn, they become consciously competent, but they still need to practice and put thought into what they say and do, so they still need support and reminders, which is why the waste monitor is such a Good idea, and again why information
is not enough, it requires follow up actions. Finally, after a while, things become second nature, we do them without thinking about it, this is when we become unconsciously competent. As managers of teams, we need to take our teams through these stages in their career, we can’t expect them all to come knowing what to do without thinking about it. Competence creates confidence which in turn creates much happier people.
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<td>Create / Review employee loyalty programme</td>
<td>Encourage staff to sit on the green team</td>
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<td>Ask for support for employee loyalty programme from customer service teams</td>
<td>Plan training as part of events, remember to align training schedules so that morning and afternoon staff are able to attend</td>
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<td>Ask for support from HR colleagues to include sustainability tasks and benefits in job descriptions</td>
<td>For joint events with guests, like beach cleans, put on transport for employees and their families so that they can all go together</td>
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<td>Find out people’s WHY......I will do this because.....</td>
<td>Provide self development and professional development opportunities</td>
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<td>Give staff the time, the tools and the knowledge that they need in order to support you</td>
<td>Invest in access for staff to meditation apps</td>
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<td>Outsource tasks to agencies where possible to free up staff time</td>
<td>Have some recreational activities in staff rooms (e.g. table football, air hockey)</td>
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<td>Implement flexible scheduling and cross training if possible</td>
<td>Have a library where people can exchange books</td>
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<td>Avoid using streamlining to cut staff hours</td>
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<td>Move them through the 4 levels of competence</td>
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This is a Good checklist
I think this is a really useful point to speak to a couple of the GTPI signatories who can bring some of these strategies to life, so I’ve asked Jennifer Klar from Six Senses if she would be happy for me to ask her a few questions about how they have achieved such great buy in for their sustainability initiatives from their employees.

• Six Senses has been reducing single-use waste for many years, how do you think this facilitates staff engagement with ongoing changes?
• Over the years, could you describe some of the most effective ways that you have got staff to implement operational changes, particularly if that change was going to increase their workload or involve a change in their day to day routine?
• How much involvement do your staff have in suggesting changes?
• You’ve also worked deeply within your supply chain to influence change there, how did you go about engaging suppliers and what strategies have worked best for you?
Signatory Experience – Exo Travel

Our Plastic Journey

EXO
TRAVEL
Started in 2015...by “Sweeping our doorstep”

GO RECYCLING
19.7 kg/person/year average consumption in all our destinations.

OUR TARGETS
- Waste: Reach below 10kg/person/year
- Certified B Corporation

EXO Boomerang TRAVEL
Buy a Boomerang bag and get a discount on your next purchase.

EXO Bags
Bags that give back to our environment.
Engaging our Teams

- Recognition and rewards
- Performance management - KPIs on Plastic reduction for our employees
Involving our Operations

- **Single use wet wipes**

- **Bottle bags** designed exclusively by EXO, in order to set up water stations in vehicles.

- **400,617** single use plastic bottles saved in 2019 (decreased by 40%), +10,000 reusable bottles distributed.

- **800 Tour guides and Drivers trained.**
Involving our Sales Teams

ENGAGE WITH TRAVELLERS PRE-DEPARTURE

We recommend you to ask them to:
- bring their own refillable bottles
- customize it, so that they will always recognize it.

REFILL, REFRESH, REPEAT

Starting June 2023, our teams will resume working with our partner hotels towards setting up water stations for convenient and safe refills.

A cooler will be at their disposal in their transportation enabling them to keep their bottles fresh throughout the day.

Why buy bottled water when you can refill instead?
Q&A with Jennifer and Alexandra
So, let’s move on now to the second part of the webinar which is engaging customers with sustainability. There will be a few pauses for Q&A as we go through so jot down anything you would like to ask or put it into the chat so that Svitlana can let me know.
Let’s start with something a bit unexpected, Sustainability is Boring….How does it make you feel to hear that? I remember many years ago when I was working with a large international tour operator, part of my job was to check the accuracy of hotel descriptions in brochures. In 2008, when the tour operator started to highlight the sustainability credentials of hotels that had been certified to the Travelife for Accommodations Sustainability Standards, we wanted to go beyond the label and bring some of those sustainability initiatives to life so that potential customers could clearly identify and proactively choose to stay at hotels that were taking concrete steps to improve their
environmental, social and economic impacts in popular holiday destinations. I emailed over 250 hotels asking them to tell me about the most innovative and interesting sustainability activities that were taking place in their hotel, and all I could think of when reading the responses was: wow, this is really boring, this is not going to sell holidays, people are not going to book your hotel because you have a towel reuse programme and you’ve switched to low energy lightbulbs or got solar panels on the roof. They were top 3 responses when I asked them for something I could use to SELL their hotels.
EVERYONE IS SUSTAINABLE…
Who’s telling the truth?

Fast forward to 2024 and we’re at the opposite end of the spectrum. Almost every business in every sector, not just in hospitality, is headlining their eco-credentials, their net zero strategy, their climate change plan and their contributions to wider society. Marketing teams that have not been given appropriate training are suddenly tasked with creating eco-friendly content and can often unintentionally publish blogs, social media posts and website pages that are filled with greenwash, to the point where it becomes impossible for the lay-person to distinguish who’s telling the truth and
who’s writing things that they believe people want to hear. So even now, it can still seem boring because a lot of the time, we just hear the same old thing. There is so much noise around sustainability that it is no longer a differentiator in terms of headlines, to the point where we actually advise businesses not to even use the “S” word.
Back in 2018, we started to see headlines like this, XX hotel or restaurant chain or airline or whatever.....to eliminate single-use plastic, and when you read the rest of the story you find out that they’re just talking about plastic straws! You won’t believe how many articles I read with headlines like this, hoping I was really going to find some amazing actions taking place and for it to be straws every single time! It got to a point where I almost stopped reading them. And this is the thing, in the end people get bored or don’t believe you or get annoyed at the fact that there really is not real foundation to the
headline, or all of those things.
Communication isn’t just what we say, it is also everything that we DO. In a hotel, it isn’t just what you say to guests or what is written in communications such as the towel cards in your bathrooms, the content on your website or posts on your social media. What does the choice of materials decorating the bedroom say about your attitude to hospitality? What do lots of small amenities say? What does a disposable drinking cup wrapped in plastic sitting on the bathroom sink say? Are the televisions, lights and air conditioning all switched on when a guest puts the electricity card into the slot the first time they walk in? All of these things communicate what sort of business you are and your attitude to the environment, waste and resources. Everything you DO communicates who you ARE.
A really Good exercise to do is to get staff in all departments to look at the areas of the hotel or the business that they are responsible for, and consider them as pieces of communication. Think about what they say about the attitude your hotel has to your staff, guests and the environment you operate in. Write it all down. Get everyone across the hotel to do this. It is a fabulous exercise to do because it can highlight Good and best practices and it can also highlight so many opportunities.
These are pictures I took myself from a hotel in Amsterdam. The first thing you see when you walk into the bedroom is the wallpaper, proclaiming that being green is sexy and fun! The hangars in the wardrobe show they have a unique personality. In the shower, there is an actual tile fixed to the wall that tells people about the water consumption being really low, I’ll let you read it, and in reception there is a whole range of reusable items on sale and when you spoke to any of the staff in this hotel, they ALL knew about and cared about the sustainability actions being taken. It was in their DNA and you could immediately feel this as a guest. It was real and certainly not greenwash.
This is a hotel in Lisbon that I audited earlier on this year, they have a bookshelf behind the reception and in the guest areas of reception with all sorts of literature, including a whole book on the Sustainable Development Goals, small things such as identifying the flowers in the vases, a totem with the most beautiful way of displaying information about local culture, environment, carbon footprint, waste reduction I took 17 or 18 pictures at this totem as each image changed. In the breakfast room / restaurant, there’s information about the filtered water which they do charge guests for, but then they give the revenue from the water to Pump Aid. The communication is happening right where people will buy water. This is important. What does this say to your guests? How does it make staff feel to work there? Everyone feels the sustainable DNA. They have a clear identity. Everything in these two hotels communicates their story and Brand identity brilliantly.
Your story and identity

WHAT is your story or identity?

- A package holiday hotel where guests come to relax and leave responsibilities behind
- A heritage building and your mission is to preserve the building so it can be enjoyed by future generations
- An eco-lodge that supports local livelihoods and has a minimal environmental footprint.
- A business hotel where people stay 1 or 2 nights for conferences or meetings, that want convenience, good wifi, a gym, maybe a healthy breakfast to fuel a busy day.

Useful Exercise

- Ask you staff to describe your hotel’s purpose in 1 or 2 lines.

Another useful exercise to do is to ensure that you and everyone in your teams has clarity on what you Brand stands for. When you know this it becomes the guiding principle for all of the unique initiatives that you might launch, including your plastic and waste reduction initiatives. A package holiday hotel is very different to a heritage hotel which is very different to an eco-lodge or a hostel. All might want to remove single-use plastic from the operations and the supply chain, but they way they communicate it with staff and guests, to stay true to their own stories or Brand, many be very different. So, the exercise is to ask you staff to describe your hotel’s purpose in 1 or 2 lines. You can ask them anonymously so that they don’t feel any pressure. If they struggle with this or if you see there are a lot of different responses, then you can refine that purpose together. Once staff are clear on purpose, it really helps to integrate other changes because they understand WHY you are making them, and this in turn then makes it easier to communicate with guests.
WHO CURATES YOUR STORY?

WHO TELLS YOUR STORY?

So, what story do you want to tell? Who is responsible for writing the content of your communications? Who actually then tells the story? Is it the same team? Does the marketing team suddenly email the sustainability team desperate for some content, the sustainability team writes something, the marketing team changes it to make it sound better, the marketing team publishes it and the sustainability team wonders how they’ve gone from eliminating straws to eliminating everything that’s single use plastic as that’s what the headline would now have people believe.
If only the sustainability team, marketing and the social media teams are involved in creating content, you are very likely to be missing out on a lot of great content. You will not believe the number of times I have sat with the marketing and social media teams of a hotel group, and I’ve been the person to tell them what is happening in the hotels – beach cleans, tree planting days, food bank collections, you name it, the comms teams knew nothing about them. For some reason, all of these people don’t always talk to each other, but the minute you set up this opportunity, you have got sustainability content for a year or more, both for communicating with guests and for engaging staff. Having representatives from these groups of people, where relevant, meet at least every quarter, if not monthly is really recommended. The job then is to make sure that stories and actions reach the right audiences and that information is not over-exaggerated. Front office and guest relations probably know the cultural calendar for the month in your destination, they probably know really great local restaurants and places of interest because they’re telling customers this all the time, they are essentially communicating sustainability at this point whether they realise it or not, but are marketing and social media teams using this knowledge to create more interesting newsletters and posts and web content that can reach people before they travel, making your hotel a bit more interesting. Do social media teams know enough about your actions so that they can create more dialogue with customers – running polls, being confident to respond to comments etc. Operations teams know in minute detail all the Little changes that are being made on the floor as it were. If changes have happened in the hotel, have operations teams fed into the changes so that they buy into them, do they need to communicate any changes to guests to bring new sustainability actions to life, or at least be aware of changes so that they can deal with any questions should they arise, they need
to be confident in talking about these changes and may need some support with that? Does human resources know what sustainability actions are taking place in the hotel so that they can include them in training information for the staff, or so that they could think of ways to incentivise staff to get more involved? Are environmental action days like beach cleans always taking place in the morning? This usually prevents housekeeping teams from taking part and I know from experience that they get really frustrated about that, HR could be instrumental in managing shifts so that everyone gets a turn if they want. Is procurement stopping the purchase of some single-use plastics? Have they bought alternative items that are more sustainable? How many products are they procuring locally? Does anyone that is responsible for writing or telling the story know about this? Does the sustainability team always give you information but it sounds bland and boring – ask the sales teams to re-write it thinking about features and benefits – the same way they would sell anything else (again just be careful not to allow anyone to exaggerate).

When all of these people are involved in the communications strategy, you also significantly widen your audience and reach many more people.
Features and Benefits

FEATURES
• Tangible attributes
• Objective and factual
• Product/service focussed

BENEFITS
• Value to the customer
• Emotional and psychological appeal
• “What’s in it for me?”

Features and Benefits are widely recognised by sales teams, I am not an expert sales person, but I love features and benefits. We need to tell the customer (and our staff) how the sustainability features of whatever product or change we have made meet their needs or solve their problems. Have you noticed that most adverts on the TV for products and services talk about how you’re going to FEEL, much more than the objective and factual part? We don’t usually buy things, we buy INTO things, things such as changes, because of how we feel about them and the “what’s in it for me” question.
For example, people don’t buy a 12 megapixel camera with 128 Gig of storage and a 6 inch display, they buy the opportunity to capture high quality photos, store a large number of files and have a vivid and immersive visual experience when looking back through their photos. We need to apply this same way of thinking to communicating sustainability. If you have a sales team, this is a great thing to get them involved with.
WHAT are the sustainability / plastic reduction features of your hotel?

- Switched to refillable toiletries
- Switched to water dispensers to avoid plastic bottles
- Made dry toiletries available on request
- Switched to reusable cups around the pool
- Installed more recycling bins in public areas
- Switching to chemical free cleaning in reusable plastic bottles

Useful Exercise

- Write up the features and benefits of each

A great exercise to ask the sales team to do is to come up with the “guest benefits” that are related to your plastic reduction or other sustainability features. If you’re in the sustainability team, you will know the environmental benefits and the social benefits, but the “what’s in it for me?” benefits can be harder to create, and of course, you need to do this sincerely and without greenwashing.
Let’s think about something like a refillable shower gel. There are product features and there are benefits to the small business and to waste reduction which will hopefully resonate with people’s values, but then there’s the usual benefits that show it is also a Good product, such as leaving the skin soft and moisturized which helps to show off you great holiday tan, these are the things we often miss out, but could be the things that clinch the buy-in with change from your guests.
FEATURES
• Uses 6 proprietary filters
• Dispensers 300 litres per hour
• Self Service
• Available as still, sparkling, cold and temperate
• Zero Plastic

BENEFITS
• Great crisp taste recognisable wherever you see this brand
• Quick and convenient to refill
• Skip the queue - Hydrate 24/7
• Water exactly as you like it
• Keeps our beaches clean and tidy

Or water refill, that also has features and benefits. You’ve probably got some ideas of your own, but honestly, getting sales teams involved with this is a great idea. For example, the water filter company might sell it to you saying a Benefit is the 6 proprietary filters that guarantee safety, but you don’t necessarily want to sell it that way to your guests – you might say it’s a great crisp taste that you’ll recognise whenever you see this brand, for that its quick and convenient to refill, not it dispenses 300 litres per hour.
When you think about engaging guests with plastic reduction or any sustainability initiative to be honest, is this what you ask yourself? What if we changed it around and asked how we can connect what we want to do or are doing to our guests concerns, passions and values? You can do this once you know why guests stay with you, why they choose your hotel and you reach this conclusión when you are clearer on your brand identity and story.
From my experience, when you want to talk to people about sustainability, it is best NOT to use the Word sustainability. A lot of the time, the language of sustainability can be, technical, very dry or it might even sound campaigny. There is a phrase in English “tree-hugger” which is a way of describing someone who always talks about environmental issues – unless your accommodation is an eco lodge, most of your customers won’t respond well to the language of sustainability.

Understand what your guests want, what are they looking for when they come to your hotel or book your trip? Are they looking for a great family holiday, are they looking for a break away from non-stop parenting, are they just passing through and need a bed for the night? Are they on the Hunt for culture, do they just want to get the perfect selfie for their Instagram, do they want to live like a local. This Will influence the content and tone of your messages.

What type of person does your customer want to be? One of the most powerful ways to motivate people is to make them feel that doing something reinforces pride in themselves. It is much harder to get people to do something if they feel it goes against their values. If people stay in an eco-lodge or do an eco-focussed tour, they’re more likely to make an effort to find the right recycling bin or hold onto rubbish until they find a way to dispose of it responsibly because doing the right thing for the environment is part of who they are. If people stay in a business hotel where efficiency is important, then making waste bins with separate components available in the guest room and/or on every floor or near to every lift makes it much easier for someone to separate their waste for recycling. They are much less likely to go hunting around for a recycling bin if they’re in a hurry and waste disposal isn’t top of their agenda anyway. I’m generalising here but you get what I mean.
And then of course, we still need to be realistic because there are those customers that say that they want more sustainable holidays or they want hotels to reduce plastic, but when they arrive, they may be upset to find that you have in actual fact, given them what they said they wanted. This can be both confusing and frustrating for businesses who are trying to respond to supposed new customer expectations and personas, only to find they are burdened with complaints rather than praise. This is where we have the intention-action gap again only this time from the customers.
And we need the same two components to bridge the gap, an increase in the “benefits” and a decrease in the effort. In terms of this reuse Project from GTPI, we need to make the reusable options the easiest to work with. For guests, we need to think about how this is not only effortless, but how it also improves their experience, reinforces their values, makes them feel good that they chose your hotel.

I am not suggesting that we are always going to achieve this for every change you want to implement, but increased benefit and decreased effort is by far the easiest and most efficient strategy to employ.
This is a Good example. According to the latest statistics from Booking.com’s Sustainable Travel Insights, 71% of travellers want to make more effort in the next year to travel more sustainably (up from 61% in 2021), and 53% are more determined to make more sustainable travel choices when they travel now than a year ago. But how much of this intention actually turns into action? Booking.com has set a target that over 50% of their 2027 bookings will be sustainable options. For this to happen, they have to proactively make it easy for people to choose the more sustainable option, which they are doing by making it one of the filter options. For a customer, it is now really easy to find the more sustainable properties because they simply select the filter at the beginning of the search and they know that everything that is shown to them is already going to be a more sustainable choice. And Booking.com are also making it easier for themselves to track their progress because they can get reports on what filters people are using so that they can see if they are on target.
This is a really interesting picture. I watched people’s behaviour with this hot drinks and juice station for 20 minutes in a hotel just a couple of months ago. Notice how the ceramic cups are sitting to the left of the machine that is on the left hand side. On the right hand side and near to the tea bags are single-use paper cups which are lined with plastic. Throughout that 20 minutes, everyone that went to get a coffee from the machine on the left took a reusable cup. Almost everyone that went to get a coffee from the machine on the right, or that went to make a cup of tea, took a single use cup. Everyone went to sit down, no-one was taking the cup away, offsite. On the left hand side, the reusable option is the easiest, on the right hand side, the single-use option is the easiest. It is a couple of metres to move to get a reusable cup but hardly anyone, with the exception of one older couple made that effort. Really the hotel should just remove the single-use cups completely and the situation around prioritizing reusable alternatives is resolved, but you would be amazed how often I see takeaway cups at a sit-down breakfast buffet. Perhaps have to-go cups available on request if necessary, but as that “increases effort” people are less likely to request them.
Any questions on Brand and resonating on connecting with customer behaviour.
Once you know what you want to communicate, then you need to look for all the communications touch points, we just saw one right there with the reusable cups, it’s a DOING action, its some choice editing that communicates that reusable cups are the preference. But let’s look at other touch points too, starting with before people have even travelled.
A survey by the Independent Newspaper in the UK of 7800 people across 26 countries found that the average person spends 10 hours planning a holiday. An average of 20% look at more than 11 options before making a decision on where to go. People put a substantial amount of effort into creating their perfect holiday, they rely on peer review sites and other online sources to form an opinion. They might check out your website, your social media, they might refer to friends for ideas and inspiration, they might see an article in a newspaper or they might rely on a holiday planner who has visited your hotel as part of a FAM Trip. There are an astonishing
number of touch points that people may come across when searching for a holiday and these are all possible opportunities for you to highlight the sustainability actions that differentiate your hotel and that would attract your ideal client, one that will support your plastic reduction initiatives and other sustainability actions. You have to make it quick and easy for them to find the information that you want them to see and that you know RESONATES with what they are looking for. This is a non-exhaustive list of potential touch points before people travel. All of these where relevant to you, provide opportunities to connect what you are doing with your guests concerns and passions, using features and benefits.
How are you communicating your plastic reduction measures on your websites? Is it relegated to the footer? If you put your link to sustainability in the footer, you are essentially saying we think sustainability is as boring as our terms and conditions so probably not worth reading it. Have the link in the menu bar, make sure you highlight your actions transparently and truthfully throughout the website, using images to bring it to life. You can have it in the footer as well, but don’t make that the only place it is. If you’re a large chain, can each hotel have its own sustainability page on their own website? So often, at larger chains the
sustainability actions are communicated about what is happening at corporate level, but it can be difficult to find out what is going on in individual hotels. It’s not just guests that look at your website, other corporates looking to host events at your conference centre, suppliers of reusable products that you might not know exist looking at how to easily get in touch with you, make it easy for these people to find the information they need, helping them to help you.

What about your social media? If you haven’t done already, you should check out the Universal Beach Instagram account, communicating sustainability has just become part of what they do.
A top tip for social media is to include people in your posts. Can you imagine how boring this picture would be without the people, particularly when you want to talk about solar panels! Give a shout out to the people behind the scenes who manage the solar panels. Or, as in this picture, the General Manager, the Assistant Manager, the Head Housekeeper, the Executive Chef and the Head of Technical Services promoting their Travelife Award. It’s not just a picture of the award on the wall, you can use it to talk about your teams and bring the award to life. It’s also a great way to engage your staff, most of them really do like to be recognised.
and feel proud to be asked for their picture. This is a hotel group I work with in the Canary Islands. Try it to see if it works for you. Post a picture of solar panels for example and some data, and post the same picture a couple of weeks later but with people in the picture who manage the solar panels giving a shout out to the team and see which one gets the most interaction. You can do this with your all your actions, including your plastic reduction activities. Have you got a water filtration system on site, show the staff filling up from that so that they set the example you want customers to follow, have a picture of the housekeeping team taking the recyclable waste from a 3 compartment bin in the room and give a shout out to how important recycling is for you. When people see that your staff make an effort, they are more likely to make an effort to help them.
Newsletters are great for returning guests as you can update them and prepare them for any changes, you can remind them to bring reusable bottles, tell them about water refill apps in your destination if they exist. Review sites are a way to react to guest comments, check them for mentions of plastic, it is often the one thing that prevents the five star review. There are lots of other pre-travel engagement strategies but we don’t have time to go through all of them here today. I want to move on to during the travel experience now and go into a little more detail here unless any has any questions about pre-travel touch points.
Q&A

Or any reflections, anyone happy to share if they are already doing this well and if it has had a positive impact on comms.
During Travel

Under your direct control

- Guest room booklets
- QR codes
- Totems
- Mirror stickers
- Mobile apps
- TV channel in guest room, reception or public areas
- Green corner
- Information on the back of vehicle seats
- Place settings at tables
- Buffet signage
- Art and décor
- Maps
- Daily announcements
- Daily hotel news bulletin
- In the lift
- On the back of restroom doors

There are so many ways to communicate with guests when they are staying with you or travelling with you, these are just some that you think of. There’s the obvious opportunities there but also others that people tend not to think about like, on the back of vehicle seats for transfers, excursions….on the back of restroom doors where people will be sitting with a direct view of the communication without having anywhere else to go for at least a couple of minutes. What about art work on the walls?
What do you want people to do?

- Separate waste properly?
- Return their reusable glass to the bar?
- Eat breakfast in rather than taking something away which relies on single-use packaging?
- Keep hold of their reusable picnic packaging until they get back to the hotel?
- Stop wasting food?
- Take shorter showers?
- Stop changing their pool towels 3 x per day
- Remember their water bottle for tours?

When people are with you on your premises, whether for business or leisure, or on your tours, what is it that you actually want them to do? Remembering the fact that if they are on holiday then they usually want to relax, forget about responsibilities for a bit, have an easy life for a week or two weeks. If they’re on business they could be in a hurry needing to get out of the hotel to meetings or to take a train or plane somewhere. Remember what we said earlier, how do we connect what we are doing with our guests concerns and passions, once they’re with you we need to think “how can we connect what we would like them to do with their expectations now
now that they are with us. At the end of the day, we have to make it easy for them to do right thing otherwise they will fall into the intention-action gap. We have to make the majority of the effort to make things easier, if we want them to make an effort whilst on holiday or their business trip. Think about the 80/20 rule – 80% of the effort is on us, 20% on them – depending on your customer demographic you might play with those numbers a little. So how do we make things like this easier?
Let’s look at waste separation. There is not one hotel I have been in in my life where the guests separate waste correctly, every hotel I know complains about this. If you have a hotel map, put the recycling points on it, and the water refill sites if you have them. If you use hotel maps then your reception staff show them to everyone who checks in, make sure that part of the welcome information at reception is to highlight the recycling points and tell guests what they can put into them and why. The map is much less effective if reception staff simply point out the pool, the restaurants and the bars. With just a few extra seconds, you have the opportunity to
tell people right from the start that you would really like their help with recycling.
• Colour coded bins don’t make sense to everyone when colours mean different things in their countries.

Have a careful look at these two pictures for a moment, and tell me what problem you see? The left hand picture is in an airport in Belgium, the right hand picture is in an apartment complex in the Canary Islands. If you are Belgian, and you come to the Canary Islands for two weeks and the rest of your time you are in Belgium, what do you think Belgian people are going to put into the yellow bin in the Canary Islands? I can tell you right now that the colour dominates people’s decisions. I almost put a drinks can in the yellow bin in Belgium, me, a person who really cares about recycling right, I know that the yellow bin says paper and card and I
saw the pictures but I still almost put the can in the yellow bin. The exact same thing is going to happen in your hotel. Unfortunately there is no universal colour coding system because every country, sometimes even different municipalities in the same country, have different waste processing infrastructures and this is what leads to the different waste bins. It is highly unlikely you can do anything about it, the reason I say this is so that you are aware of why people seem to make mistakes, most are not doing it on purpose. This means you are going to have to take responsibility in your hotel to do some additional separation if you want to make sure that you are not contaminating any recycling streams yourselves.
• Separating at source is often quicker in the end.
• Trial different messages to see what works best.

It’s also why bins like these actually do make life easier in the longer term, it is easier for your teams to separate waste from these bins than it would be from the larger bins we saw before. We can’t expect our teams to put their hands into bins to fish around for things when you don’t know what else is in there, but containers like this hold much less waste and it is easier to retrieve recyclables such as plastic and paper. I loved this message that was right above where the bin was situated in a Premier Inn I stayed in in London last year. They didn’t have a compartmentalized bin but they asked people to keep recyclables to one side so that staff didn’t
staff didn’t need to be putting their hands into the bins to fetch things out.
I read about a study where bins like this one on the left, had pictures on them of animals being strangled with plastic in an effort to get people to recycle better. I don’t think many hotels would want to put strangled marine animals on a bin, but it made me think about the impact of images at the point of changing behaviour and my designer created this label for the bin you see on the left, in the end they decided not to go with the images but did keep the #recycleright. This is something that they can then use on social media as well so there is a consistency of message and people become used to seeing the prompt around
the hotel. Imagine, as well, that a member of staff is right by the bin when a guest actually does recycle right, simply saying at that point “Thank you so much for recycling with us, it means a lot” – how far would that go? How likely will that guest be to continue to make the effort? What about the people sitting nearby that heard your member of staff say that – all these little things go into the sub-conscious – it’s also a way of getting your staff to be more conscious of recycling. If they know to say that to a guest, they will automatically be making more effort themselves. Or if they see someone going to put something in the wrong bin they could very politely say – Ooh, that goes in the yellow bin in Spain actually – is it different where you’re from? It’s really confusing isn’t it – showing empathy, being helpful, not telling the guest off, because as we know from a minute ago, the guest probably thinks they were doing the right thing. It’s not going to work perfectly every time, but hopefully it will get better.
Again, what do you want people to do….return the reusable cup to the right place damn it, why is so hard! Lots of hotels I’ve worked with before get to the end of a season and they need to order new stock, which doesn’t make financial or sustainability sense. Some strategies that are working well are making the reusable cup deposit points really easy for guests to find and easy to use. This image on the left is good as it is clear what the bin is for. That said, it is likely that you will still find napkins and straws etc in there because people can be lazy. I know that some hotels have found companies to outsource this to, that actually come and
take the whole thing away, clean and sanitise everything and bring back clean cups and a clean deposit point, there will obviously be a charge for that service but it removes the responsibility from your staff. The picture in the middle is from a hotel here in Gran Canaria, there are plenty of these trolleys around the pool and staff regularly collect them in. Charging a deposit for a cup – a bit like you do for a pool towel is working well in a lot of places now, it is particularly popular in Mallorca, you can even read on Trip Advisor how happy customers are with this, saying things like “About Time” Happy to do it to reduce plastic waste etc!
Want people to eat in at breakfast in rather than taking something away which relies on single-use packaging?

- Incentivise eating in.
- Free eat-in breakfast for foregoing room cleaning.
- A good amount of loyalty points for eating in.
- Bundle an eat-in breakfast with a complimentary 20-minute spa treatment or car-parking.
- Charge extra for take-away packaging, particularly coffee cups, rather than discounting for people using their own.
- For franchise coffee outlets in reception, could they be encouraged to offer a speedy coffee queue for people with their own cup?

In business hotels or city break hotels where people want to get out early, they often eat and drink on the go. You will need to make staying in very attractive if you want them to change their behaviour so that you can avoid packaging. Can you incentivise staying in for breakfast by offering discounts? If someone stays for more than one night and foregoes cleaning, could they have a free breakfast if the eat in? What do repeat customers really love – loyalty points – can you give a really good amount of loyalty points to people that eat breakfast in? Could you bundle up an eat-in breakfast with other things guests might like, such as a 20 minute spa
treatment like a head and shoulder seated massage when they get back from a long day at work. Another thing that has been proven in numerous studies is to charge extra for things like single-use coffee cups rather than give a discount for people that have come with their own, repeat customers are more likely to bring a reusable coffee cup with them if you do this. Make a speedy coffee queue for people with their own cups.
If you have an all-inclusive hotel, does it pain you to see how much waste guests can leave on their plates? They’re on holiday, they want to eat more, drink more and you don’t want to feel like the party pooper or the fun police putting a negative message on things. These are some really good ways to get people to think a bit more consciously.
You can also implement choice editing. Switch from really large plates at the buffet to smaller plates – people will have to take less food, they can go back if they want more. Towards the end of the service, when you know you want the buffet to look full even for people coming down at the last minute but you know it creates a lot of waste, switch the serving trays to smaller ones so they look fuller. Imagine now, if the white plate was half the size and those 4 mozzarella things were on it, it would look really full making people think they still had the whole buffet to choose from. You can also get staff to serve some types of food, especially expensive food.
expensive food like seafood, people are less likely to keep going back for more when they have to look at the same person in the eye every time to get it. This happened to me in COVID, I went up to get like a small muffin thing from the pastry section and at this point everything was being served to you. The guy gave me one, I could have asked for another one but was too embarrassed, I was going to go back up if they changed staff but they didn’t, so I didn’t cos I didn’t want the same man to see me going back for another cake. When we spoke with the chef, he told us how much difference it made in terms of what had to be prepped, they were reducing food waste back of house by doing this.
If people travel with a reusable water bottle and then forget to bring it down with them, you’re left waiting while they run back for it or they’re going to have to buy a plastic water bottle somewhere. What if the accommodations where your guests stayed would put something like this in the breakfast room or near the main entrance so that your guests would see it as a reminder and run back up. If it was in the breakfast room and there were water dispensers in there, guests could fill up at breakfast rather than once the bus arrives to pick them up. I did this on Canva so it’s a bit rubbish, but you could maybe spend a bit more time thinking
about where some timely reminders could go. Do guests get emails or pop up messages from you to remind them of pick up times, could information to remember to take their bottles be included there? Are accommodations offering reusable picnic boxes that guests could fill up from the breakfast buffet?
When it comes to communicating sustainability so that people relate to it and support it, I find that these 4 strategies when used together are the ones that Will have the most chance of success. Keeping it simple, staying positive, telling people WHY you want them to do something, or why you are changing something in your business – you have to make this meaningful, you can’t just say “to save the planet”, it’s too abstract, and finally making sure the location of the message is right. If you want to see behaviour change at a certain point during someone’s trip, you have to locate the communication at that point in the stay or the trip, whether this is written, visual or spoken.
This is a great way to show you all 4 strategies in action. When Universal Beach removed dry amenities and switched to refillable bottles, we created this communications cube that you see on the bathroom sink unit. The whole message is positive, there’s a few different reasons WHY the change has been made, because the hotels are in privileged beach front zones and near to protected areas, they want to keep the place special, reduce unnecessary consumption of chemicals and unnecessary production of waste. Further down it talks about the refill being local, with ingredients grown on the island and that they’ll be
avoiding 70,000 plastic sachets. The location is exactly where it needs to be, right there in the bathroom, and if people do need something the message about what they need to do is simple – go to reception.
This is another Good example. I saw this sign in the reception of a hotel I was in a couple of months ago, it tells people that as Travelife and Biosphere certificate holders, they have agreed to a society that is more respectful towards the environment and towards equality. It goes on to say, “Due to our sustainability policy, you may find changes in certain processes and products in favor of those that respect the environment. Help us to make the world a more sustainable place.” It ticks the boxes of being simple, telling people why, staying positive and it’s near to the lifts so people have time to read it before going to their rooms and they are “ready” for the changes they might encounter.
This sign on the left is in a hotel in Mallorca which has removed all customer-facing single-use plastic and has a lot of reusable alternatives in place. They have this sign in reception. This image on the right is from a hotel in Portugal which has this information in the grounds about how long it takes for items to break down or decompose. How do you feel about these two? They both have why, they are both in Good locations, they are both simple to understand, - depending on how you feel about topics, you could see either one of them as negative or positive – all your communications need to fit with what feels right for you and how they help you to connect with your guests.
Why not get behind trending campaigns, this is particularly Good if you’re a tour operator and your spotting litter during your itinerary trips. I learned about it on the SusTour Conference last year in September from Explore 360 degrees, they have a whole video about it on their website. In fact, whilst working with the SusTour Tour Operators, we undertook some surveys with their customers, all of whom said they would be happy to do a 2 minute speed litter pick as part of the day itinerary. It was something some of the tour operators had wanted to do, but they were concerned that customers wouldn’t like to be asked to do that but actually EVERYONE that was asked thought it would be a great idea. If we keep ideas in our mind because we’re concerned about suggesting them, we’re never going to see great initiatives like these – what’s the worst someone can say – NO, I don’t want to pick litter for 2 minutes – well that’s fine, they can do something else for 2 minutes while others do it, just make sure that they don’t feel vilified for not joining in.
Some businesses near to beaches are actually encouraging litter picking by offering a free coffee or drink when you’ve filled up a bag or bucket. Perhaps you can’t do this on an ongoing basis in a hotel but you could do 1 day a month, or organise a beach or resort clean with guests and for those guests, give them a free drink when finished. In the end, there’s a lot you can actually do and you’d be surprised how many people will take part.
As with everything, there is so much more to do with communication and engaging customers but there’s no magic wand and it requires ongoing effort. So be proactive, look at the full customer journey to identify all of those touchpoints. Remember, that everything you are doing about plastic comes from the businesses response to what is happening in the world around us right now. The actions you take Will impact your guests right now but they can be communicated as part of your future goals such as being single-use plastic free by 2025 so that customers understand you’re on a journey to.

Communicate in a tone of voice and style that resonates with your guests, remembering that the demographic might change between seasons, so you might have to change your communications to match. Take the time to understand what is important to your guests so that you can connect with those values in your communications. Information is not enough, people need an emotional connection if you’re asking them to do something differently. Be inspiring, we all want to feel good on holiday or feel like we chose the best place to stay on a business trip. You need to show them that by choosing your hotel or tour, they’re helping you to achieve your goals and they’re proud to help, make them feel good about being part of the solution. Use humour if it fits with your brand. The eco and sexy that we saw in Conscious Hotels in Amsterdam was amazing. It made me smile, it made me go “WOW”. People are more likely to share things when you make them smile, you can turn your guests into ambassadors and word of mouth marketers for your business. Make the most sustainable action the easiest action that guests can take, this means implementing some choice editing into how you provide your products and services. Incentivise actions through points systems, offers, discounts and other things that guests love, hold regular events, use a World Days Calendar to plan them in. As I said, there’s lots more than this
obviously but for the sake of time today, and to allow for people to share their own experiences and reflections, or ask questions I want to stop here.
Questions and Reflections

Any questions or reflections.