

Spring 2012



## SPECIAL POINTS PAGE:

- 3 ROA Presidential Address
- 3 FREE Call Forwarding
- 4 & 5 Convention 2012
- 7 Choice University
- 8 Hospitality Check-up
- 9 Guest Reimbursements
- 10 Technology
- 12 & 13 Social Media
- 14 Coop



**RODEWAY  
INN**

CHOICE HOTELS INTERNATIONAL

TM

## ELFA Presidential Address From Mahendra Z Patel

### Welcome!

I would like to thank everyone who attended the Convention last year and elected me as President of ELFA for 2011-2013. I would also like to thank my Board members for their support and loyalty.

My goal is to increase our membership by marketing, not only the hotels, but also the ELFA organization. By doing so, we increase the strength of our position. This long lasting effort of marketing would increase the power of our voice and enable us to make the necessary and needed changes. After taking into account, all of the current owner's concerns, we will undoubtedly make consistent efforts to nationally advertise the Econo Lodge Brand. In today's economy everyone has been facing a decline in revenue, but to ne-

gate the effect of the economical weight on the Econo Lodge group, my goal is to help publicize our hotels by setting higher standards at affordable prices throughout. I want to create a new and exciting image for our hotels.

ELFA's current communication methods should be reaching each and everyone of you. We want to ensure that everyone's concerns are given equal attention and support. These concerns are taken to Board meetings for review, discussion and resolutions that will benefit the majority of the community.

Using my previous years of experience in this organization, I am determined to utilize this knowledge to take this Brand to new heights!

I have worked diligently on 2012 Town Hall Meetings. One day meetings will be held at 10 locations across the country at

a reduced rate of \$149.00,. The designated locations ensures that the majority of the Economy Brands live within 200 miles. This is an effort to reduce your cost and traveling time. Town Hall meetings will be a source of education in GIS and related networking topics.

We have a vendor program that was established by our past president that offers our members options for maintaining their properties, reducing costs and offering a great guest experience. The newest vendor is Maintenance USA. Visit ELFA.org for additional information

My team of Officers, Regional Directors and our Executive Director, Ross Almo and I are working on TV advertising and cost reduction with the help of BPC's. We are working diligently to help each and every member operate a successful business.

I wish to thank all of my officers and chair persons for their hard work and dedication in helping me achieve the goals that I defined for this Association.

**I hope to see all of you at Convention in Las Vegas.**

## Report-out from Past President - Natu Patel

Dear all members. It was almost 1 year ago I became past president. My helping nature and caring for ELFA and its members helped to create a better brand. Econo Lodge is always my aim. To fulfill my goals and satisfy your expectations. This will not work without all members input. It is very important that if you are not a member, become one now. This will make a more solid ELFA association and help members to create a stronger voice.

Guests and their travel behaviors constantly change as well as the economy. The old slogan “do the best you can” was never more true. We must also backup our leaders to assist us in the direction to be better.

**Scholarship-ELFAS'** scholarship program and their requirements and applications are posted on elfa.org.

**Vender program-** ELFA has an excellent member saving program put together to gather the history of ELFA and save 10 to 22% for members along with some free gifts. Nationwide go to elfa.org to see those Venders specifically assisting the economy brand hotels.

**Fall Regional Meeting-** This year we are still working out the plan for our Fall regional meeting for Economy brands. The new Town Hall meetings will have at least 10 meetings a year and cover a lot of area. The beauty of these meetings is they will be mostly only one day travel for participants. More education classes geared to the Economy brands with small groups and great speakers. Awards will be given out to qualified properties. It is easy to get an award, just go to choice central and read about the different awards available if you are perfect in Standard LTR and brand standards. The ELFA board works with Craig Mustard our brand leader and Brenda Riley in education. Lunch and snacks will be included. *We have heard your voice and we are determined to save you money.*

## CALL CENTER UPDATE

2012 started off with plenty of excitement for Choice's Customer Care and Reservations department. With a new year ahead of us, what better way to start off than with a celebration! Throughout February and early March the Customer Care and Reservations enterprise recognized our top reservation sales associates in our annual Night of the Million Stars celebrations. These events allow Choice's leadership team to recognize our best and most consistent performers. The theme of the celebrations in the Grand Junction and Minot centers was the Oscars (Academy Awards) , complete with the fanfare of script, music, humor, and mock awards. With decorations of black, gold and silver balloons, associates enjoyed a red carpet, along with Oscar statues, huge movie cameras and a slide show highlighting the honorees. The Grand Junction center celebrated 14 associates who reserved a grand total of \$17,288,312.98 in revenue! The Minot center celebrated 75 associates who reserved a grand total of \$28,000,000.00 in revenue! In addition, we recognized more than 20 associates who demonstrated their commitment to Choice's Values and Principles with our annual Star Achiever awards. These associates were nominated by their peers for exemplifying the best of the best. Finally, bringing it home for the Choice centers, our Toronto, Canada location celebrated 7 Million Dollar producers who reserved a grand total of \$10,789,613.94 in revenue. We are so proud of our fantastic associates in all of the Choice centers who work so hard to “Show you the Money”!!

In the partner centers we had much to recognize as well. In our Albuquerque center, a Valentine's Day themed Night of a Million Stars celebration was held in early February. We recognized 11 associates who reserved a grand total of \$12,517,678.25 in reservation revenue. After the awards, dinner & dancing was enjoyed by all.

Our El Salvador partner center also held an Oscar themed Night of a Million Stars celebration. Complete with an emcee for the evening, presenters, and video screens captured the events for all to see throughout the room. There were a total of 14 associates recognized bringing in a grand total of \$8,970,000

From our Partner Centers in Albuquerque, New Mexico and San Salvador, El Salvador to our Virtual Sales sites in Minot, North Dakota, Toronto, Canada and Grand Junction, Colorado a great time was enjoyed by all.

As we have mentioned previously, an important part of our capacity strategy in Customer Care and Reservations is our partnership with our nearshore reservations centers in Central America. Late in 2011 we reviewed our position, seeking the most effective way to drive conversion and quality while still maintaining overall efficiency. This analysis prompted a migration of our GenRes volume from Panama to a new site in Managua, Nicaragua. While the decision was a difficult one, Managua took their first GenRes call as of February 27, 2012. The outstanding team at this site has been showing great signs of becoming a top producing contact center for Choice. With 5 weeks now under their belts, they have handled over 29,000 calls, signed up over 2.5% of new **Choice Privileges** members and they are trending upwards in conversion and revenue per call. By the end of May, the Managua site will be fully staffed and ready to handle the higher level of call volume that we see in our busy summer season.

Finally, the week of April 2<sup>nd</sup> the Customer Care and Reservation team will be hosting a contact center tour with key members of the Choice Hotels Owners Council at our new Managua, Nicaragua location. Stay tuned for further updates on this visit and other happenings from the Customer Care and Reservation department in the Summer newsletter.



## ROA PRESIDENT      NEIL BHAKTA

I am looking forward to personally meeting and talking to many Rodeway Owner/Operator/GM at Choice's Annual Convention. Please mark your calendar to attend Rodeway Brand Session and Association meeting Thursday, May 17<sup>th</sup> 1:30pm – 3:00pm Southseas C / D room.

The Rodeway Owners Association met in early March. GIS and LTR scores are improving across the nation. We need to continue to emphasize our clean rooms with everything in good repair. Also, providing a great guest service is the key to achieving high LTR and service scores. Note; if your GIS scores fall below the established thresholds a mandatory LRA consultation will be enforced at \$1,700 cost to you.

Your Board continuously communicates with Choice's Call Center team concerning quality of service at the South American Call Centers. We made several test calls and provided Choice with our results and suggestions. The Board continues to ask Choice to conduct additional and more in-depth training to improve agent service with an objective of closing more room sales..

I do want to remind you about staying current with the new ADA rules and requirements. As most of you are aware, the new pool lift requirement date of March 15<sup>th</sup> has received a 60 day extension. There are various resources available with links on Choice Central for franchisees wanting to learn more about this hot and controversial topic.

Fall Meetings for the year 2012. ROA and ELFA are working in unison with Choice Hotels to plan Economy Brands Only (Rodeway and Econo Lodge) Fall Meetings. We are planning TEN, one day meeting throughout the US. Locations/Cities selected are going to be within 2 to 3 hour driving distance from at least 60% of the economy brand hotels. This will eliminate a need for to stay overnight. This one day Fall Town Hall Meetings will be designed specifically for economy brands . Meeting will also consist of a half day of educational seminars coordinated by Choice Hotels. Most importantly, a price reduction from \$299 for last years Fall Regional to \$149 for the Economy Brands Town Hall Meeting. Both ROA and ELFA have been working hard to organize these Association sponsored meetings. Additional details will be announced soon. Please continue to check for updates on Choice Central, your GM email account and mail.

Also, please stay tuned for details about new and exciting Coop Program for the Economy brands. If you are not a member of Coop please sign up during Convention We are currently working on revamping our Rodeway Owners web site to include more resources, updated information etc... Be sure to attend our Rodeway Session at the convention to learn about these new exciting developments. Hope to see many of you in Vegas....

Neil (Nilesh) Bhakta

## Call Forwarding – Try it For a Month!

As a hotelier, this is a scene that has undoubtedly played out many times in your hotel's lobby. Enter a tired family who has been driving all day. The children are thrilled to be out of the car and have turned your hotel lobby into a playground and all their parents want to do is check-in and get the children to the pool. Your front desk clerk has two callers on hold who want to check rates and availability for the weekend and the family has already been waiting for five minutes. What happens next will likely determine not only the overall satisfaction of the traveling family, but whether the callers on the phone receive the service and information they need to make the decision to book your hotel. How can you make sure that everyone is satisfied and you are generating as much revenue as possible from this common situation? Choice's Call Forwarding program may be the answer!

Call Forwarding provides you with a virtual front desk staffed with revenue-based agents who are trained to sell the services and amenities of your hotel while driving the highest rate possible. The program is simple and can be used at any hotel.

**CONT on Page 11**

## Convention Registration Open

Registration for Choice's 58<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention, May 15-17, 2012, at the beautiful Mandalay Bay Resort and Convention Center in Las Vegas is open! Be sure to check your email and visit ChoiceCentral.com for the latest event and registration information.

As Choice returns to Las Vegas, make plans to join your fellow franchisees for three days of education, networking, and celebration. Highlights include the Corporate Business Session, Marketplace, hundreds of educational sessions, plus new and exciting events to make your time in Las Vegas valuable and memorable.

**Please note the correct Convention dates are May 15-17** – the original dates were May 22-24, but were moved to accommodate our space requirements. We look forward to seeing you in Las Vegas, May 15-17, 2012.



## CHOICE HOTELS ANNUAL CONVENTION

It's hard to believe that the 58<sup>th</sup> Annual Choice Hotels Convention is a month away! From May 15-17, Choice franchisees around the country will gather in Las Vegas for 3 days of fun, networking, and most importantly learning. Mark your calendars, because this year's convention will host a wide range of educational opportunities specifically designed to develop your professional skill set, improve your hotel operations, and grow your economy brand property.

Making a profit is our primary desire as a franchisee. Don't miss out on the many educational offerings designed to teach you how to grow your bottom line. Scheduled topics at this year's Convention include effective sales tips that require only 15 minutes of your time a day, negotiation techniques to help you offer better rates for yourself and your customer, and strategies on where and how to find profitable relationships in your community.

As owners, we also have a unique viewpoint to the business and require a different understanding of hotel operations. Make sure to check out the many educational sessions designed specifically for you as an owner. Two interesting panel discussions taking place this year include a discussion on lenders, and a discussion on immigration laws and its affect on the business.

A large number of sessions will also be devoted to providing the expertise and skill set to successfully handle the basic requirements of hotel operations. Planned sessions worthy of mention include presentations by industry experts on how to develop an employee handbook, maintain great room conditions, create high GIS scores, better manage and organize your time, deal with bed bug management and litigation, handle new ADA compliance policies, make your staff perform at its best, and find financial alternatives when your property is in distress.

Outside of the numerous offerings of Convention, plans are also underway to make finding sessions more convenient. Specific rooms will be set aside for topics such as social networking and global sales, with rotating sessions taking place within the designated areas.

I hope you take advantage of the multitude of educational sessions that will be available for our economy brands, and I look forward to seeing you in Las Vegas!

## New This Year - Pre-Convention Education Sessions

The Classrooms of Choice University are opening their doors a day early this year at Convention! New this year, we're proud to introduce Pre-Convention Programs to provide more in-depth educational clinics on popular topics. Each session is only \$89.00.

**Monday, May 14, 2012**

**Times: 8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. AND 1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.**

You or members of your staff can now take advantage of three-hour sessions at the Mandalay Bay Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas on the following subjects:

- o Facebook Basics: Making an Effective "Face" to All Your "Friends"
- o Profit Mastery®: Using Your Financials to Manage and Drive Performance
- o Understanding your Management Style and Maximizing Your Managerial Effectiveness
- o Using Social Media to Find & Get Business
- o Internet Prospecting Clinic: How to Build Solid Business and Where to Find It
- o Managing Your Emotional Energy Getting the Blue Ribbon - Award Winning Results Don't Come Naturally!

Full descriptions of the classes are available on the Convention registration site. You will register and provide payment through the same process you use to register for Convention. Space is limited so we ask that you please register in advance.

All sessions conveniently take place at the Mandalay Bay Hotel and Casino; the negotiated rate for hotel rooms at the Mandalay Bay Hotel and Casino starts on Sunday, May 13.



## Recognizing Award Winners at Convention

Each year at Convention, Choice Hotels looks forward to recognizing the best of the best hotels and operators, recognizing them for their hard work and contributions to their communities, their businesses, the industry and their fellow hoteliers.

### Hotel of the Year Award

Each year, ELFA, ROA and CHOC review the top-ranked properties for each brand. Based on that review, Hotel of the Year (previously Inn of the Year) finalists are selected for each brand and the winners announced at Convention. Last year, two Nebraska properties won: the Econo Lodge in Kearney, NE (NE119) and the Rodeway Inn & Suites of Kearney, NE (NE011). The 2012 Hotels of the Year will be announced during the Awards Gala dinner on Wednesday evening during the Convention.

### Woman of the Year

Now in its fifth year, the Women's Business Alliance of Choice Hotels (WBA) is proud to celebrate women leaders within the Choice franchise community in the U.S. and Canada. The Woman of the Year award is based on the recipient's success in the areas of professional achievement, personal leadership and industry leadership. Nominations were accepted from franchisees within the Choice system, and three finalists selected. The winner will be announced during the Convention Awards Gala.

In addition to Hotels of the Year and Woman of the Year winners, the Premiere Alliance and Developer of the Year award recipients will be announced, and the 2012 Platinum and Gold hotels will be highlighted. Convention is May 15-17, 2012, in Las Vegas, Nevada. If you haven't already registered, go to [www.ChoiceCentral.com](http://www.ChoiceCentral.com).



#### Tuesday, May 15<sup>th</sup>

ELFA Roundtables and Membership Meeting  
1:00pm – 2:30pm  
Reef D/E/F

#### Wednesday, May 16<sup>th</sup>

Econo Lodge Brand Session  
11:30am – 1:00pm  
Southseas D/F

#### Thursday, May 17<sup>th</sup>

Rodeway Inn Brand and Association Session  
1:30pm – 3:00pm  
Southseas D/F



## ELFA CONCERNS

### Your Voice Your Choice !

Please be sure to attend ELFA's Roundtables and the Econo Lodge Brand Session at Convention.

If you don't speak the ELFA Board can't help.

Your attendance is strongly needed. We need to stand united.

ELFA realizes what works for one may not work for all!

ISSUES that will be discussed include

BIRG

LTR

Co-Op

Education

**ELFA's Goals are to have OPTIONAL programs Not MANDATES**

# Economy Brand Updates and Changes

## ELFA Officers

Mike Adams and Amrish Patel

Spring is here in most parts of the country. With spring comes the annual Choice Hotels International Convention in Las Vegas. You will be updated on changes and current information. It is also an opportunity to voice your opinion. Please attend your Brand and Association Sessions.



## BED BUGS

As bed bugs continue to be a threat, some new items that are gaining attention with hotel operators are: steamers and Cryonite.

- Steamers work off the principle that heat kills bed bugs and their eggs. Even though there are varying reports as to what temperature is needed, (Anywhere from 120-160 F) most of the steamers are operating with a nozzle temperature of over 200F. Many operators are using this in a combination with other pesticide and prevention measures.
- Cryonite goes to the other extreme and freezes the pests. This technology has been developing in Europe and Australia and just recently coming to North America.
- At present it is fairly expensive, but is showing promise in being very effective. It can be used in electronics and areas that are difficult to reach. The big advantage here is that rooms can be rented immediately after treatment and where contact is made, 100% effective. Again, this technology is being used with a combination of treatment measures.
- At present, none of these insects have become resistant to either of these treatments.

## TECHNOLOGY

Communication is imperative, as cell phone use has become a way of life for most of us, Choice has developed training bulletins to explain how we can get our gm.\*\*\* emails on our smart phones. Choice will continue to use our gm email addresses to communicate critical messages such as when we need to respond to a guest within 72hrs. Those training bulletins are available on: rodewayowners.com, elfa.org or choicehotels.com.

## ECONO LODGE

Here are some of the latest UPDATES. We are no longer being inspected by LRA. We are now and always have been inspected by our guest. Now our guest will be grading us. This will be done through our Guest Insight Surveys (GIS). Cleanliness and condition will be more heavily scored than before and likelihood to recommend (LTR) will be figured in the calculation. When was the last time you checked your GIS scores? Do you know how to check them? If you don't know, ask at Choice University during convention, or your BPC.

We are out with our new Easy Breakfast program. You will see more and more "Easy" programs with Econo Lodge.

If you haven't checked out the most current changes to the Rules and Regulations, you should. Did you know that lotion is no longer mandated? You do not have to have Ehostream as your internet tech provider? Check out the latest changes at Choicecentral.com Remember, it's "Easy" at Econo Lodge

Be sure to attend the ELFA Roundtables and Membership meeting on May 15<sup>th</sup> at 1:00PM and the Econo Lodge Brand Sessions on May 16 at 11:30AM.

## RODEWAY INNS

Rodeway is rolling out the standard of wireless internet at all of their properties. More of our traveling guests need to stay connected while traveling and this has become the number one amenity that guests are looking for. The only requirement after the login is that the hotel have the rodewayinn.com landing page.



Did you know that utilizing Choice University resources can directly impact your business? In fact, current data shows that there is a positive relationship between engagement in ChoiceU.com and guest satisfaction! So exactly what does this mean? This means the more engaged your property is with the resources available on ChoiceU.com, the more likely it is for you to perform high on guest satisfaction metrics. In other words—your guests notice the results of your training effort!

A happy guest is a returning guest, and that helps your bottom line. But training engagement doesn't only help your guests. It helps your employees too. Encouraging employees to engage in training opportunities can improve morale, motivation, and overall employee satisfaction which can lead to saving big costs in employee retention.

So how can Choice University help your property? Whether your property has already been actively engaged in training, or you want to begin now, new and exciting learning resources are continually being added to develop your team's skills and improve business operations. Outside of the mandatory content that may be required for your brand, Choice University offers a large wealth of educational content--both instructor-led and self-paced.

If you don't have the time to travel...or to even get away from your desk, Choice University's webinar program the Learning Wire can be a great asset. From the comfort of your own computer, the Learning Wire provides lively, 1-hour courses taught by experienced industry professionals. This year's schedule includes webinars on how to maximize your sales efforts by utilizing two powerful Choice sales programs-- Choice ROCs and TargetworX Business Case Application Training.

But there is also a vast amount of learning that can occur outside of the classroom. It's the learning that takes place by sharing thoughts and ideas with your colleagues. This year, Choice University launched the Campus Network, an online discussion-based platform, to facilitate dialogue between Choice property staff. Whether you have a question on a particular topic, an idea to share, or you want to communicate with others in your same line of work, the Campus Network has a forum for you. The site also features video-based news reports, best practices from award winning properties, and a weekly blog discussing current operational topics.

Don't miss out on the numerous opportunities and resources available to you as a Choice property. Continual engagement in training is key to the success of a true hospitality professional.

*For a full list of courses and resources available through Choice University,  
visit your student account on ChoiceU.com.*

## Reality Checks in Hospitality- Myth or Fact?

By Dr. John Hogan CHA CHE CMHS

During the past 25 years in workshops and presentations, I have been collecting "myths" that many of us have held as self-evident truths. I have shared some in earlier columns, but this list is more comprehensive.

*The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie -- deliberate, contrived and dishonest -- but the myth -- persistent, persuasive and unrealistic - John F. Kennedy*

Judge for yourself the depth of these following items, and decide for yourself if you agree with my assessment whether they are "myths or facts":

1. **The Myth:** that consumers will value only "new and shiny" and that they will pay whatever price is charged. **The Fact:** There is no doubt that while some "new" is appreciated, value has replaced new for the sake of new. Many third party web sites have tried to accelerate our industry into a price driven commodity. The success of a hotel is not guaranteed by its age, but by the consistency of product and services delivered at a fair rate.
2. **The Myth** that a franchise or brand will or should guarantee success. **The Fact:** More than 50% of the hotels/inns in the United States were unable to meet operational and/or debt service in the early 1990s, regardless of affiliation. There are almost 100 new brands that have been launched in 2011 alone, and that was preceded by at least that number from 2007 to 2010.. A franchise may help with lender financing but it will not assure success.
3. **The Myth** that technology alone will enable us to improve our margins and capture more market share. **The Fact:** The hospitality industry has always been (and should remain) a "high touch" business. High-speed Internet access, WIFI, the latest in cable and communication offerings and other high tech features can help in competitive markets, but not replace the people element.
4. **The Myth** that it is the sole responsibility of the security guard or the local police to keep our hotels "safe." **The Fact:** Ask any hotelier who has ever had to give a deposition or defend operational security in court if that myth holds true. The term "reasonable care" means that all of our staff *must* be attentive and security conscious. Our hotels should not be operated like a bank vault or a prison, but we must remember the world has changed since 9.11 and we must share awareness with our entire staff.
5. **The Myth** that hotel owners, management companies and lenders have the same goals and priorities. **The Fact:** While everyone wants the business to succeed, the priorities of success are not often even close. There are overlaps in these stakeholders, but there are clear differences. There is no "bad guy" here, but we need to remember each of our needs. Recognizing these differences as owners and managers can make our lives much simpler.
6. **The Myth** that the hospitality business is primarily a real estate business. **The Fact:** The 1986 US tax law changed lodging from an emphasis on real estate to an operational focus in the 1990s. The 2008 global financial meltdown dramatically changed the economic climate . It takes dedicated and perceptive operators to make these hotels successful and financially sound for more than one fiscal quarter or year.
7. **The Myth** that our quality standards are good, because we passed a franchise and/or local health department inspection. **The Fact:** Passing those inspections means in most cases that we have met minimum standards for those categories. How many of today's customers really want **the minimum in quality**?
8. **The Myth** that the person(s) charged with the sales function should be able to fill the hotel. **The Fact:** In the hotels that really succeed, everyone sells! The same philosophy should be true in smaller rooms only hotels as well as full service properties. It is a related **Myth** that our managers and staff are adequately trained and that our industry or college educated staff have learned enough to make them successful. The related **Fact** is that most of us in hospitality **do not have** adequate continuing education. That myth alone is a leading factor in turnover, which is a major expense.
9. **The Myth** that the GM is responsible for quality. **The Fact:** At past conventions of many brands, management companies, national and international Associations I have seen presentations from hotels of all sizes who participated with quality teams. Their results were usually of exceeding both occupancy and profitability over hotels that did not make a focused effort – regardless of hotel size, brand or location. The term used is one we are all familiar with – **empowerment**. It means hiring the right people and then authorizing them to do what we hired them to do
10. **The Myth** that an expensive renovation, a new flag, or a new manager alone will "save" us and solve all our problems. **The Fact:** It takes time, focused and planned work to solve our problems and to properly financially position our hotels for the long-term. It takes the right combination of quality product and committed staff to succeed.
11. **The Myth:** " If what I'm doing today works well or at least OK, I should keep doing it exactly the same forever." "**if we never did things differently, we would never get any other results.**" **The Fact:** Our world is changing so quickly and regularly – we must be pro-active, not always reactive. Inflation and time will not allow us to raise our room rates a certain percentage annually and we must avoid the illogical price war strategies many hotels use as a primary marketing strategy. We should maximize our rates and our revenues by offering the best value in our market.
12. **The Myth** that we provide sufficient feedback to our staff with regular annual reviews. **The Fact:** Annual reviews alone are almost worthless. Do we recall the great thing someone did 9 months ago, or the problems of 10 days ago? Quarterly performance appraisals with an annual financial review are worth the effort from renewed enthusiasm to a more focused attention.
13. **The Myth** that hospitality associations are a needless expense and they are primarily social clubs. **The Fact:** Some associations were and possibly remain at least partially socially focused. The reality is that most of them are politically astute, in that they are attentive to memberships' needs in introducing, monitoring or lobbying against legislation that treats the industry unfairly. Most provide ongoing educational and specific membership services.

Our myths and belief in them shape our understanding of our personal and business lives. They describe for us "the way things are."

Add your own myths to the list.....

The full article may be read here <http://www.hospitalityeducators.com/articles/20110927>

We must remember that we must focus on delivering the right services to the right customer at the right price, which means attentiveness to sales and marketing efforts are essential.

# Guest Reimbursement Form

When you resolve a complaint locally, you should always fill out a Guest Reimbursement Form (GRF) on Choice Central by clicking on [References and then Guest Reimbursement form](#). The form provides you a means of reporting the complaint and resolution to Choice. When you complete and submit a form it will go directly into the Customer Relations database as a Closed General Comment so Customer Relations has access to the information if the guest calls at a later time. Completing GRFs will help you avoid receiving formal complaints from Customer Relations. If you have submitted a GRF showing you issued compensation that was reasonable for the complaint and the guest still calls Customer Relations looking for additional compensation, Customer Relations will stand behind your documented resolution and send the hotel a General Comment to acknowledge instead of a formal Complaint to resolve.

**The form can be located on Choice Central in your References drop down menu.**

You are required to complete the compensation or reimbursement before submitting the form.

## Guest Reimbursement Form:

\* = Required Field

Property Code:	TR200
*Today's date:	2011-Apr-20 <input type="button" value="Calendar"/>
*Suite Number:	<input type="text"/>
*Agent initials:	<input type="text"/>
*Guest First Name:	<input type="text"/>
*Guest Last Name:	<input type="text"/>
*Address 1:	<input type="text"/>
Address 2:	<input type="text"/>
*City:	<input type="text"/>
State:	<input type="text"/> ZIP: <input type="text"/>
*Country:	US - UNITED STATES <input type="button" value="Down"/>
*Confirmation Number:	<input type="text"/>
CP Number (if applicable):	<input type="text"/>
*Check-in date:	<input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Calendar"/>
*Check-out date:	<input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Calendar"/>
*Invocation Reason (e.g. TV Remote) <small>Note: Limited to 45 characters</small>	<input type="text"/>
*Reimbursement Type:	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Cash <input type="radio"/> Points
*Room:	<input type="text"/>
Tax:	<input type="text"/>
Other Charges:	<input type="text"/>
*Total Refund:	<input type="text"/>
*Currency:	USD - US Dollar <input type="button" value="Down"/>
<input type="button" value="Submit"/> <input type="button" value="Clear Form"/>	

## BEHR Paint 20% OFF

ELFA & ROA are invited to use the Associations Phone Number as the discount code: 8027862260  
Home Depot's improved system, called Paint Rewards will allow you the ability to go through any register at any time of the day. You will be required to enter the code number (8027862260) at the credit card key pad. This will give you the instant 20% discount.

# Technology

By Amrish Patel  
ELFA Region 8

In November 2011, PMS released new version 3.6.3 with following enhancements included:

- Do not auto post with Audit
- Travel agency information display
- Tips on Housekeeping room assignment report
- Housekeeper Preferred language
- Guest refund postable in reserved Account
- Varying arrival/departure dates for group rooming list
- Check number stored on invoice payment
- Search for direct bill invoice payment
- Status filters on arrivals/departures list reports
- Filter special request report by guest status

These enhancements are directly results from your feedback through Spigit, Now Choice Advantage Idea Link <https://choicehotels.brightidea.com>.

I would like to encourage you to use this site to share new or existing ideas and new functionality for ChoiceAdvantage.

Property management support department are converting all Profit Manager PMS properties to ChoiceAdvantage by June 2012. In order to do load balance and performance, IT department has doubled the CA application servers.

Rate Center: There are at least 63 or more economy brand properties are on a Rate Center. Rate center is optional for economy brand properties.

ELFA's web site, ELFA.org has been updated recently with new looks, allied venders information, up coming events, news letters, board members and members information and easy to navigate. Thanks to Dilip Vekaria (NM048) Region 11 Director and Natubhai Patel, Past President for their hard work and efforts.

ELFA membership and Co-Op enrolment forms are available to download on the site if you are not currently a member.

## ChoiceADVANTAGE Functionality - What's New?

By David Hol I  
ROA Region 3

With a total of 24 major enhancements in choiceADVANTAGE, 2011 was a BIG year!

We are continuously receiving your great ideas through choiceADVANTAGE IDEalink; our main resource for obtaining your suggestions. Together, you and this tool help us to determine the functionality that is most important to you, and we would like to highlight just a few of those enhancements.

One many advantages to having Shift4, is now, you have the ability to identify a Debit Card and charge the estimated amount of the guest's stay at the time of check-in. Not only does this ensure the immediate collection of funds, it also avoids guest frustration while waiting for a pre-authorization hold to be released on their card.

With the enhanced Estimated Costs functionality, you can simply use this information to quote costs for the guest's entire stay, including taxes and incidentals, or use it when collecting payment for either the first night only, or the guest's entire stay.

In conjunction to identifying Debit Cards and estimated costs of the guest's stay, you can also collect payment during the Walk-in process.

Previously, a user had to check the guest in, and then go into that guest's account and into the Folio to post payment. Now, this process has been simplified by providing the option to collect payment during the Check-in flow.

Another feature that you said would be helpful is the ability to set an account so that it does not automatically post Room and Tax during Night Audit. This can be used if charges are applied ahead of time and you want to avoid having to Adjust off the duplicate charge.

We hope that these enhancements, as well as the other 20, have simplified your front desk operations, and we encourage you to continue submitting XX

## Quality Assurance for Rodeway Owners Association

What you as a licensee need to know...

Amit Patel ROA Vice-Chairman



Choice announced a new quality assurance process for Rodeway Inn hotels last year. As of January 1, 2012 Choice began using your guest's feedback from the Guest Insight System (GIS) and Customer Relations to determine if your hotel is clean and in good condition. Since its launch Rodeway Inn owners have been doing a great job focusing on guest satisfaction. A third of properties that were not meeting these standards last year have improved and now meet Rodeway Inn guest satisfaction standards and the whole brand has seen increases in GIS scores.

How it works: Your hotel must meet the minimum scores for GIS Overall Condition of Room, GIS Overall Cleanliness of Guest Room and Complaints per 1000 Occupied Room Nights (CPT). If it does not meet these standards for 6 months Choice will send LRA to inspect the property and you will be charged \$1700 for the inspection.

Suggestions for managing your status: Make sure you are checking your Performance Zone score card each month to see how your hotel is doing. If your hotel is not in the Green Performance status, make sure you are regularly checking your GIS results on Choice Central -> Resources -> Guest Insight System (GIS) -> Guest Insight System Survey Results. If you need help or have questions with your scores the Operations Resource Center can assist you.

Overall the program has been working in getting the properties moving to the right direction. Guest complaints have decreased and more properties are in the Green Performance status. With the technology and resources customers have to voice their opinions to millions worldwide now more than ever we need to LISTEN. By using our customer responses as recommendations on where to improve, as well as, where we may be doing well already a trend is developing in the right direction and as a whole Rodeway Inns have started moving into the Green.

## Economy Brands 2012 Co-op

Mike Adams, ELFA Region 6



Well, one thing we know for sure about co-op it changes all the time. Last year Choice told the economy brands that we had to increase properties that were in the co-op program. The ELFA team put a membership plan in effect and November Choice informed us that they were splitting out the economy brands back to the way it used to be 6 or 7 years ago. Oh, one more thing, all the money will be used on digital advertising at Joey Martins direction. Now fast forward to our March meeting. Now we learn that only the money that Choice puts in will be used on the digital campaign and the monies that the membership collects can still be used by individual regions as they wish, print, electronic, trade shows etc. Joey would like each region to use that money digitally, but it will be up to each region. Your ELFA Board is still working on your behalf to get all the details straight with Choice. We are hoping to have at least one more meeting on co-op before convention and we hope to give you an update at that time. As of today, things are still not clear, but the one thing we know for sure is:

***"Econo Lodge and Rodeway Inn Franchisee Associations did not want to Split the Co-ops, Choice made this decision"***

Stay tuned for the latest "change"



### CALL FORWARDING CONT

Here's how it works:

You decide when you want to transfer calls to Call Forwarding, maybe it's only during busy times of the day or during group arrivals.

There are no commitments or minimum number of calls that must be transferred.

Once you sign up for the program, Choice sets up a toll-free line that connects the individual hotel to the contact center. As hotels receive calls from guests who want to make new reservations, the desk clerk pushes a transfer button on the phone that sends the guest to the contact center. Alternatively, the program can be set up to forward calls to the Call Forwarding team directly from a hotel's automated voice response system.

The cost per call transferred is \$2.55, so you can control your costs by monitoring your call volume and training your front desk staff on when it is appropriate to transfer calls to the Call Forwarding desk.

With the busy summer season approaching, now is the time to give Call Forwarding a try. By transferring one call a day for a month, you'll invest only \$77, a small cost to see how the program works for you and how the ADR premium you can receive makes the program more than pay for itself. If you're not completely satisfied, you can stop using the service at any time. There is no contract or obligation.

Want to give it a try? Learn more or sign up by visiting [ChoiceCentral.com>Resources>Call Forwarding Reservations Service](http://ChoiceCentral.com>Resources>Call Forwarding Reservations Service). If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Stephanie Hartman at (970) 254-3606 or [stephanie\\_hartman@choicehotels.com](mailto:stephanie_hartman@choicehotels.com).

# Social Media Mistakes

By: Leon Thomas, Senior Operations Performance Trainer



[Facebook.com/leonthetrainer](http://Facebook.com/leonthetrainer)  
[www.youtube.com/leonthetrainer](http://www.youtube.com/leonthetrainer)

Twitter @leonthetrainer  
[www.leonthetrainer.wordpress.com](http://www.leonthetrainer.wordpress.com)

More hotels are becoming involved with property directed Social Media channels like Facebook and Twitter. In your quest to make the best use of social media for your hotel be aware of these common mistakes businesses make.

1. Social Media is not like magic. Creating a Facebook page and simply having a Twitter handle will not help your social media campaigns be successful. It takes effort to be successful at social media. **Suggestion:** Learn as much as you can about Social Media. Then try some of the ideas that have been offered to you.
2. Some hotels consistently post selling related statements. Status updates and Tweets similar to: “Stay with us tonight the rate is \$89 plus tax” and “Our hotel is ranked #1 on Trip Advisor”. While these are good things to know these aren’t best practices for hotels to follow on Social Media networks. One major aspect of using social media is that it is an engagement tool. The two status updates I offered do not create engagement. Another reason that continuous sales related comments are not good is most individuals are easily irritated when our only message is buy, buy, buy, buy. Although, fans will continue to “like” your page; your page may be hidden from the user’s newsfeed which means they will never hear (read) what you’re saying. **Suggestion:** Post something about an area attraction or event.
3. Using social media at your hotel should not be a 24/7 job. Most of you are owners or General Managers that wear many hats. You have many responsibilities and tasks that must be performed daily. Your social media campaign should not take you away from the other things that must be done at your hotel. **Suggestion:** Talk or listen on social media channels in the morning, at mid-day, and in the evening.
4. One type of engagement that can be created through social media is guests commenting about your hotel. When guests use social media areas that you’ve created (Facebook, Twitter, etc) to comment about your hotel a response is expected. When you don’t respond to guest comments on your social media networks you are sending one of two messages: 1) You have not read the comment or 2) You don’t care about what the guests think. **Suggestion:** Say something to acknowledge the guest comments. Don’t argue with guests on social media networks. Take the conversation off-line.

5. Before implementing any form of social media at your hotel the person directing your social media efforts should have a solid understanding of the personal areas of each social media network. If you don't understand how the personal platforms work, it will be difficult to understand how they relate to the business applications. Far too many people create personal accounts and business pages within minutes of each other. **Suggestion:** Don't create a business page until you have a solid understanding of how the personal side works. I would suggest waiting until after at least 45-60 days of actively using a social media networks personal platform before creating a business page.
6. What you say on your personal areas of social media should be different from what you say on your business page. For example, from my personal facebook profile/timeline ([www.facebook.com/leonthetrainer](http://www.facebook.com/leonthetrainer)) I might say things like "I'm in line at Starbucks" "What should I have for lunch today" or "I'm proud of my son" None of these comments are good posts for a hotel to make. This is because the hotel does not go to Starbucks, the hotel doesn't eat lunch, and the hotel doesn't have a son to be proud of. **Suggestion:** Talk about events, post a link to your brochure, and post pictures of your hotel.
7. Facebook offers businesses an opportunity to create business pages. However, many hotel owners/managers have not created business pages for their hotels. Instead they're using the personal platform to create time lines/profiles for their hotel. When this happens business page applications and analytics are not available. **Suggestion:** Use a business page and become familiar with all the tools and analytics that are available.
8. Many hotels have properly developed Facebook pages but do little to inform others about the hotel's page. If guests, business contacts, and other local businesses aren't aware of your page, then in reality you don't have a page. Does your front desk team know the direct URL for your Facebook page? **Suggestion:** Inform current and potential guests about your page. Ask your Front Office team members to become familiar with your hotel's page.
9. Some hotel owners/managers that have Facebook pages are more concerned about how dynamic their page looks than they are about what is said through the page. The value in having a page is in what you say to those that like you NOT in how fancy and dynamic your page looks. In fact, research indicates customers know businesses through what the business communicates through social media post/news feeds and that a high percentage of customers never view a business's page after liking them. **Suggestion:** Stick with the basics of making good post/status updates. The basics can go a long way.
10. Be careful with video and photos. There are two areas of concern here: 1) Posting videos or images that are not appropriate. An example of this is a video I saw a few months ago of a General Manager attempting to sing while drunk and continuing to drink at the holiday party. 2) Posting videos or images without proper authorization is the second area of concern. **Suggestion:** Be sure to obtain written authorization for videos and pictures that you post. This authorization must be obtained prior to taking and posting videos and photos on social media. Make sure no inappropriate content is posted anywhere on your page, especially inappropriate video/photos.

To learn more about Social Media I suggest you attend a Choice University Social Media workshop called Socially Speaking. To learn more about this dynamic hands-on workshop visit [Choiceu.com](http://Choiceu.com)

Be sure to visit me at the Social Media Gallery

## Choice Hotel's Co-op Marketing Program now driving over \$70 million in revenue!

The Co-op Marketing Program is a collaboration between Choice Hotels International and its brands, facilitated through the ELFA/ROA Leadership Council, with the goal of growing brand awareness, promoting and driving business to individual Co-op member hotels in the U.S., while increasing revenue at the regional, state and local level.

The program is divided into 13 regions across the country. Each region has volunteer franchisee leaders, including directors, vice directors and chairpersons. The Co-op program is funded by membership fees by each region as well as Choice Hotels International and combined, these funds are spent at each region's discretion.

The Co-op began back in 2006 and had revenues of 7.4 million dollars and has reached over \$70 million dollars in revenue this year.

The Co-op marketing program is designed to drive revenue to the participating individual hotels by allowing franchisees the ability to directly influence the regional marketing efforts.

The program drives franchisee engagement, delivers a consistent message, provides a competitive advantage – as not all hotel companies have Co-op marketing programs – and it can be used to test-market cutting edge promotional concepts.

Regionally specific marketing efforts focus on driving customers to Co-op landing pages that exclusively feature the hotels that have opted in to participate in the program. If your hotel has not signed up for the program it will not be listed on the regional landing pages. Co-op member hotels have the ability to vote on the leaders and have input on how the regional marketing funds are being spent to directly impact their hotels.

Hotel participation has increased significantly since the Co-op Program began and most recently it has grown from 2900 properties in 2009 to 3300 properties in 2011. A record 330 new Co-op participating hotels joined in 2011. We expect that number to grow even higher in 2012.

Last year, Choice contributed 2 million dollars to the Co-op for marketing purposes. 100% of those funds were spent on online advertising campaigns. Each region sets its own membership dues for the Co-op, which are then collected and maintained by ELFA/ROA.

The fees are combined with Choice Hotel's funds and each region then determines its marketing plan based on regional needs and goals in accordance with Co-op marketing rules and regulations. In 2012, your membership dollars were spent on digital media including online banner ads and paid search engine campaigns, other state, regional and local efforts including state travel guides, local tourism opportunities and AAA print publications.

In 2012 the Co-op program provided a 5 to 1 Return-On-Investment per property on the budget spent through the online media campaigns for all participating hotels in the program. All online reservations are tracked through the Choice website and can be directly tied to the banner advertising campaigns.

Choice has partnered with a digital marketing firm that specializes in the hospitality and travel industry to work with the regions on planning, implementing and tracking the online media plans. Historical and industry research is used to provide recommendations on the comprehensive digital media plans. Each placement is negotiated based on Choice's collective buying power to ensure buys are made at the lowest cost possible.

A variety of different types of sites are utilized for the Co-op campaigns. These often include: Performance Ad Networks, travel intermediary sites, news and travel lifestyle sites as well as Mobile Advertising networks.

Regional buys are executed based on geo, behavioral, contextual and demographic information. In many cases re-targeting is also available to ensure our messaging is appearing in front of consumers who have indicated a propensity to travel.

Regional advertising offers often take advantage of existing Choice Hotels national promotions, but can also be tailored to a specific program that is being offered exclusively to Co-op participating hotels.

If you are looking for opportunities to drive additional revenue to your property, the Choice Hotels regional Co-op program is a good place to start. It has a track record of success and has been growing rapidly over the last few years. The program is truly a partnership between franchisees and Choice Hotels, designed to offer individual property owners and managers input into how marketing funds will be spent in their immediate area.

By driving traffic to the Co-op specific landing pages, only hotels that participate can take advantage of this opportunity to join forces with other hotels in your area to execute revenue generating programs.

As a member of the Co-op program you will be able to access a report for your specific hotel on the ChoiceCentral.com website that shows exactly how much revenue the Co-op program has generated for your property.

These monthly reports provide net ADR trends, the ability to switch between year-to-date and rolling 12 month views as well as the capability to click on a month name and view all reservation detail for that specific time period. This expanded detail will include reservation number and rate plans booked to your hotel.

It is easy to join the Choice Hotels regional Co-op program. Enrollment forms are available on ChoiceCentral.com or contact your local Brand Performance Consultant (BPC). The participation costs are outlined on the sign-up form for each region.



Fall



## *Town Hall Meetings*

### Econo Lodge & Rodeway Inns

We are pleased to announce to Econo Lodge and Rodeway Inns for 2012, we will return to the popular Town Hall format for our regional meetings this fall. ELFA and ROA Leadership and Choice Hotels believe these meetings will deliver more value offering sessions that are exclusively for and about owners and operators of Econo Lodge and Rodeway Inn properties.

The benefits of having more focused meetings are many, including:

Training and Education sessions that are all about the economy hotel market

TEN Meetings Locations – within 2 to 3 hours driving distance for most hotels

One-day meeting agenda, overnight stays not required

Lower registration fee **\$149.00**

Chance to meet and network with your ELFA ROA colleagues

Save money and time while learning and networking with your Econo Lodge and Rodeway Inn colleagues, ELFA-ROA leadership, Choice BPCs. You will also want to take part in the membership forums, education sessions, and Awards Luncheon.

Please stay tuned for additional information .



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### Econo Lodge Franchisee Association Rodeway Inn Franchisee Association

**Ross Almo, CHA  
Executive Director**

**4293 US Route 4 East  
Mendon, VT 05701-6806  
P: 802-786-2260  
F: 802-786-5237  
C: 802-345-6692**

**E: [Killingtonlodge@aol.com](mailto:Killingtonlodge@aol.com)**

**VISIT [ELFA.org](http://ELFA.org) ~ [RodewayOwners.com](http://RodewayOwners.com)**

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