



## **Publish Cleanliness Standards**

**BY MICHAEL SHINDLER, PRESIDENT**

Companies in the hospitality space – hotels, restaurants and bars, casino – have been touting their “toolkits” and re-opening requirements/conditions and processes. Very few, however, have stated what those processes are.

Some, like Wynn Resorts and the Singapore Government (where the food carts on the streets are likely cleaner and more sanitary than most US-based restaurants) have published detailed standards; others, like Accor, Marriott and Airbnb, have announced certification requirements, “Cleanliness Councils” and enhanced sanitation standards that sound like wonderful PR, but do not have details. Accor even has a certification firm alongside it, prepared to provide “certification” for those Accor hotels that meet the standards. One hopes that the certification firm has a copy of the standards (and really strong general liability insurance coverage).

Streetsense, a design and consulting company that “creates brands” and “solve[s] complex problems in the experience economy,” has published a series of thought pieces on the COVID 19 impact and, most recently, a “Pandemic Relaunch Toolkit for Restaurants & Bars.” This kind of approach to sanitation post-COVID (or while the economy reopens but COVID continues) is critical to provide consumer trust and confidence. Congratulations to Streetsense leadership for being at the forefront of this effort.

I am disappointed by the hotel brands’ broad failure to publish their detailed standards for consumers – not to mention, the owners, who will bear the economic brunt of the increased costs and potential decreased operating efficiency of applying these measures. It is amazing to me that the major hotel brands are not leading this charge. If they want the public to return to their hotels – and, let’s be clear that, with “asset light” corporate purposes, the hotels belong to their franchisees and managed-property owners, despite the brand on the rooftop sign. For God’s sake, publish these standards. Even if they are initial drafts, publish them.

All brand standards, according to both definition and virtually every management and franchise agreement, are subject to change. If they need subsequently to be changed, change them. That the initial standards may not be perfect is acceptable; the key is to try and, as every brand is using its PR machine to let the public know it is trying, do so in this case as well. If cleanliness standards someone else is using clearly prove to be a better approach, copy them; do not just talk about instituting standards, institute them and make them available for review.

The hotel brands have great leaders. Arne Sorensen, Chris Nassetta, Mark Hoplamazian and the leaders of the other brands all are more than capable of making good decisions on the basis of experience and their ongoing inquiry into what is right and good. But, they will not be perfect. Doris Kearns Goodwin, in her recent book, *Leadership in Turbulent Times*, describes President Franklin Roosevelt's approach at the beginning of his Administration during the Great Depression in 1933, as being one of trying to attack a problem with a specific solution, knowing that each suggested solution would not work. She quotes FDR as saying

I have no expectation of making a hit every time I come to bat. What I seek is the highest possible batting average, not only for myself but for the team. . . . Do the very best you can in making up your mind, but once your mind is made up go ahead.

Goodwin goes on to write, "Such adaptability, the willingness to shift ground, revise, and accommodate the contours of changing circumstances [was] an animating principle" during Roosevelt's first 100 days.

The hotel industry, indeed, the broader hospitality industry, needs this animating principle today. And, we need transparency in standards – what will a Hyatt hotel do to clean its rooms and public areas and will it provide step-by-step procedures describing this – to help bring the industry back from its current dormancy.