

Small gestures in hospitality

Publication: June 2014



This is a free publication of
Van Spronsen & Partners horeca - advies

**VAN SPRONSEN
& PARTNERS**
horeca - advies

Preface

Let us introduce ourselves..

Van Spronsen & Partners hospitality consulting is part of the Van Spronsen & Partners group. This group consists of three more independent companies; hospitality payroll administration, hospitality administration and hospitality training. Our slogan is “think different, act different” and we are active in the hospitality and leisure market for 27 years. Our approach is to put our client and his/her goals first.

Within our hospitality consulting we mainly focus on performing feasibility studies, company audits, efficiency improvements, development of hospitality concepts, giving management support and creating marketing and communications plans.

Besides these activities we publish new industry studies monthly, where we reveal more depth information about the different sectors within the hospitality industry in the Netherlands. Check www.spronsen.com for previously published studies.

**VAN SPRONSEN
& PARTNERS**
horeca - salarisadministratie

**VAN SPRONSEN
& PARTNERS**
horeca - advies

**VAN SPRONSEN
& PARTNERS**
gastvrije trainingen

**ROLLEMA
& PARTNERS**
horeca - administratie

Perfect hospitality

Perfect service throughout the whole staff is the most hospitable gesture you can make to your guest. No grand gestures but simply a team like a well-oiled machine for example a bellboy that makes conversation, staff that understands your needs on the go, give explanation about all technical possibilities in the room and just asking how a guest is enjoying themselves throughout their stay.

Last May we have had the chance to experience this type of hospitality at the Lindos Blu hotel on Rhodes. On top of this they offered many little gestures like a glass of bubbly upon arrival and a departure gift with regional delicacies. This perfect hospitality was of a kind we have seldom had the chance to experience, so if you are a hotelier and haven't decided on a holiday destination for the fall, be inspired at Lindos Blu!

In this edition of “small hospitable gestures” we focus on gestures in hotels, where we separate gestures to the business guest and leisure guest. Publications on the expectations of travelers in hotels are countless. We have made a shortlist of items from a bunch of these publications. Due to the different nature, wants & needs of business guests and leisure guests we have differentiated between these here too.

Marjolein van Spronsen



The wish list of a business guest

An excellent bed, good pillows, a refreshing shower and a quick hairdryer.

A good nights' rest. So precautions like noise cancelling from your banqueting rooms, hallways and outside plus a silent air conditioning.

Business facilities, computer connection point, print facilities, access to Wi-Fi.

Tea or coffee options in the room.

Spacious lobby where guests can meet with their clients.

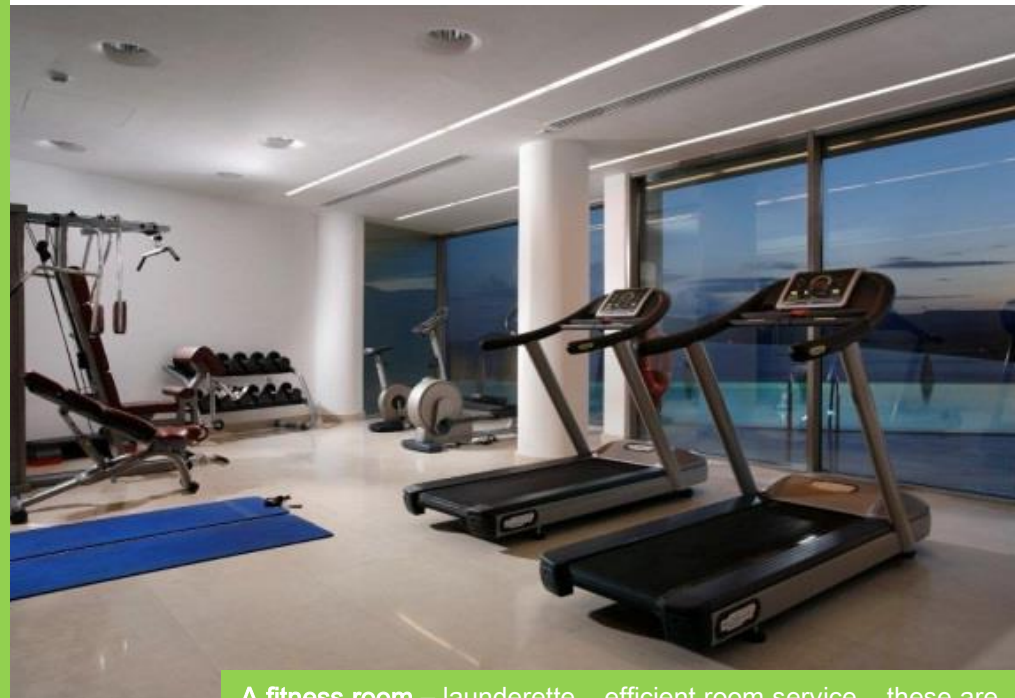
Easily usable technical facilities.

The option of a quick breakfast, possibly in a brown bag in the room.

The possibility of an early check-in and late check-out.

Clear expectation of hotel chain and attractive loyalty program.

The modern business guest wants transparency, honesty and a good quality-price ratio, due to the changed economic circumstances he does not want to be surprised by unexpected costs. This means that the website needs to inform the guest specifically of what services are included and which not. Especially the young business travelers indicate that they prefer to pay for the services they actually use, on "itemized bills". An example could be that when you offer a small range of laundry service within a room price, you could scratch that and offer the room for a lower price. Be transparent in your pricing and do not confront your guests with unclear extra costs.



A fitness room – launderette – efficient room service – these are items business guests value.

The wish list of a business guest



Brown bag with breakfast – the business guest does not always have the option to have a relaxed breakfast. Create a simple, sleek bag with a logo..

Also a personal greeting by staff and an unexpected free little extra are very appreciated. To be specific if these gestures are customized, they're even more appreciated. So make it something the guest needs or likes very much. This does not mean you should stop doing the little extra's you do for your guests that most people like (that are often mentioned in reviews on Tripadvisor and social media), it just means that sometimes you can even go the extra mile.

Local phone calls for free. There are even hotels that set-up local mobile numbers for their guests, especially interesting for foreign guests..

A free bottle of water in the hotel room. Especially if the bellboy brings them to your room (cold) when he delivers your luggage that feels very hospitable to the guest.

An espresso machine in the room.

A special with free laundry service every once in a while.

Gadgets that these guests mostly appreciate are an iPod station and iPad with easy tips and (digital) papers in their own language.

Concierge-service, especially for getting those hard-to-get museum and theatre tickets.

Staff makes the difference

Train your staff well, teach them to greet every guest friendly and if possible have some small conversations with them. Give them the trust and space to respond personally when they see something happening with the guest, obviously there are boundaries that need to be set by you but within this field people like it to be personally responsible. One of those opportunities to make a difference is with a guests' birthday, give a little extra at dinner or in the room, it's easy enough. For example; our daughters had a bottle of champagne send to our room on our wedding anniversary and the Lindos Blu added a small cake and card with their congratulations.



Random friendliness – the KLM has surprised many passengers over the years with small hospitable gestures. Through their social media efforts they found out their passengers' preferences. This knowledge gave them the opportunity to surprise them with specific surprises before departure. The videos of these little happenings spread like wildfire through social media.

When large corporations can use this “random friendliness” as marketing tool than this is definitely possible within a small (hotel) team. Together with your staff you can appoint certain triggers that call for a certain action. Be clear in your guidelines as to budget, information retrieval and usability of information.



Give a short tour – don't just give the key but make sure that guests are escorted to their rooms and give a little tour along the way. Especially if guests visit your hotel for a vacation, this is a great moment to get to know them and inform them about the hotel. Did your guests come from far? Offer them a drink, possibly with a little snack, it creates a sense of coming home.

Do like many hotels in the Middle East and Asia, give your guests a drink, hot towel (to clean your hands and such) and a little bite while the receptionist checks their reservation. A perfect way to start a stay!

The wish list of the vacationer

The leisure guest is usually a bit easier to wow than the business guest. They have similar wants as the business guest but are much more relaxed. No pressure and often in company of family or friends. The small hospitable gestures that you offer these guests will be more easily experienced and shared with their network.

The coffee at breakfast – a never ending battle for hoteliers. The automatic machines are started up hours before most guests have their coffee and the coffee is of a poor quality, especially for coffee lovers. These guests that love their coffee will request an espresso or other specialty drink and this is not always as easy as it seems. While at home many of these people have breakfast with espresso or cappuccino. Or if you have a large lobby, why not make use of the space by offering free coffee in the morning. Already a standard with many American hotel chains.

Remember me – Do your guests leave by car? Give them a local delicacy and a bottle of water for the road upon check-out. Send a postcard to your guests so they can feel relaxed like on their vacation again upon arrival at home. Give your guests something like a memory of your company, create your own collector's item. Think of the KLM canal houses that are in offices and homes all over the world.

Price transparency – pricing is an element that has gotten much more important over the last few years. Many items guests had to pay for back in the day are expected as service or need to be reported specifically beforehand if they need to be paid for afterwards. The only conclusion you need to draw is to be transparent in your pricing and to never face them with unclear extra costs.

Young children – Stay alert and see what you can do to help guests. For example when families with young children are checking in it is of great help when someone is distracting the kids for a bit. Super simple, you can have a playing area or just a little toy for them to play with.



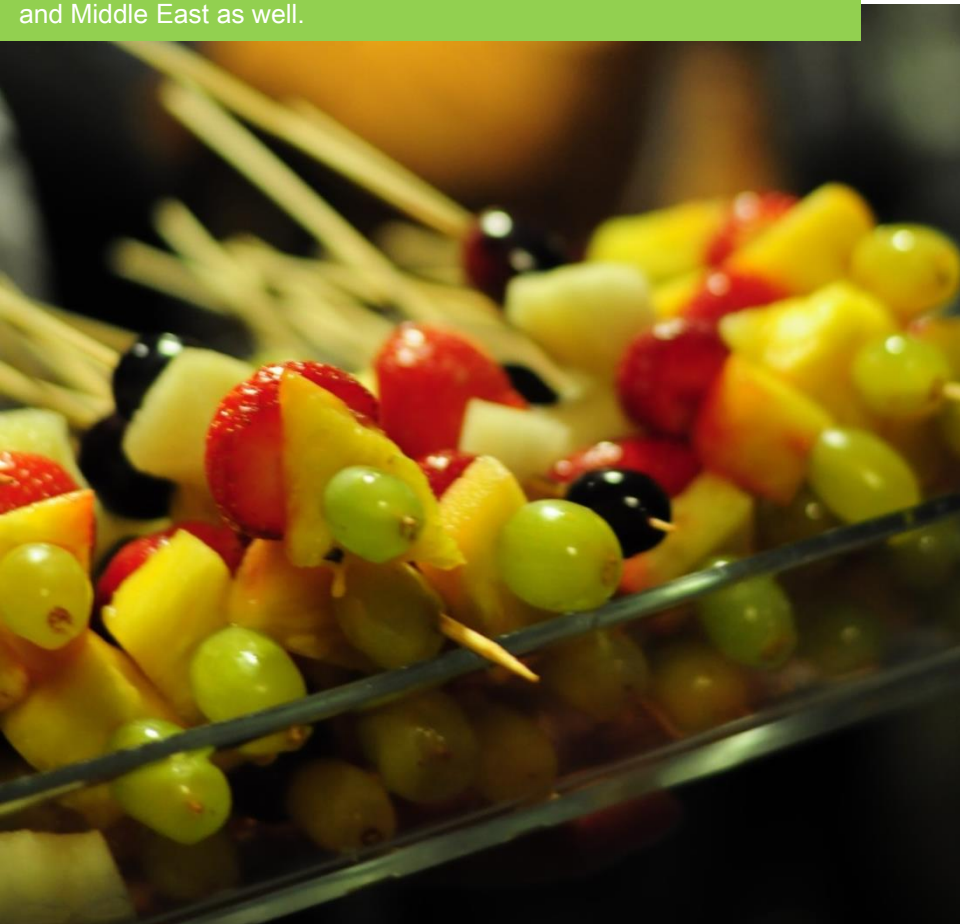
Cooling, refreshing, surprising

Handing out ice-creams in your lobby

Recently I read a tweet of restaurant Stravinsky in Hengelo (The Netherlands) that they were handing out free popsicles on their terrace. This is also perfectly possible in a hotel lobby and is guaranteed to leave a smile..

Fruit at the beach or by the pool

For example at hotel Lindos Blu we got served a plate of fresh melon at the beach. Especially when the local fruit is ready to be harvested this is a refreshing and surprising snack! Often served at pools in the Far and Middle East as well.



Serve something different with a meeting than coffee

NH hotels Amsterdam Galaxy at the Distelkade serves a buffet of candy with the coffee and fresh mint tea between meetings and trainings. Simply different and it caught our Armand Sol's eye while his fellow participants threw themselves at the buffet!

No disturbance of other guests' mobile phones

Instead of asking guests to turn off their phones, a small reminder is a lot friendlier. Grand Hotel de Draak in Bergen op Zoom (The Netherlands) wrote on their lunch menu: "Don't forget to turn the sound of your mobile phone back on when you leave". You can also write a similar message on the backside of your sandwich sign like the cover picture. This indicates that both you and your guest find this obvious.

Share compliments and feedback



Share compliments – Don't forget to share the compliments you receive via your social media. If you do use social media, you know what we mean, you can share a message received on Facebook or retweet a compliment on Twitter.

For example we found this message on Facebook, that was shared by WestCord hotels;

"Forgot to empty the safe in our hotel room, found this out only after taking the boat to the mainland, called the WestCord and took the boat back. Wim (from the reception) was waiting for us with our safe contents and a goodie bag. Great service.. Thank you!"

This tweet of Deb Thompson of @newjetsetters with a picture of Fa-raon, the Birmeese cat that keeps kids and adults company in the lobby of the (five star) Bristol hotel in Paris, is an exact example of a small hospitable gesture that guests share with their networks. Naturally the hotel retweeted the picture. Since 2010 this cat is bringing cosiness and affection to the hotel and emphasizes the quiet and family friendly vibe of the hotel.

When you read about these examples here, I hope you feel enthused to keep tabs on what is being written about your place on social media, if you don't already do that!

Digital paper - Traders Hotels has launched its digital newsstand 'PressReader' in 15 hotels in Australia, Asia and the Middle East. Guest only have to connect with the Wi-Fi network and don't need an account or log in. Through the 'PressReader' they get unlimited access to more than 2,500 global newspapers and magazines in 60 languages from 100 countries. They can read a newspaper or magazine at any time of the day, from anywhere in the hotel: a great gesture from to hotel to its guests.



Own paper – You don't have to go digital! A paper about your own company with a special event is great give-away! For example Grand Hotel De Draak in Bergen op Zoom (The Netherlands) recently published the "Draak Courant". This special paper was spread within the region and handed out to visitors during the reopening after a large fire last year.

list of sources

www.horecatrends.com

Picture front page - Armand Sol

Hotel in preface - www.lindosblu.gr

Picture page 2 - Fitnessruimte Lindos Blu - lindosblu.gr

Picture page 3 - Chök (through horecatrends.com)

Picture page 4 - by Esther Ottens (Van Spronsen & Partners)

Picture page 6 - by Armand Sol

www.nh-hotels.nl/nh/nl/hotels/nederland/amsterdam/nh-galaxy.html

Page 7 - www.facebook.com/WestCordHotels

Tweet Deb Thompson - www.newjetsetters.com

Pressreader - www.pressreader.com/

Grand hotel De Draak - www.hoteldedraak.nl

Check our other publications with small gestures at

<http://www.horecatrends.com/en/>



Trendpresentations for entrepreneurs and students

On a regular basis we supply trend and inspiration sessions about the (inter)national developments within the hospitality, marketing, leisure, retail and experience economy. We have experience in giving presentations for different audiences, from students to board of directors.

Would you like to apply trends in your own company? We can look at your current communication channels, provide an inspiration session, together we determine what is attainable and we will help you with the execution! For more information, send an email to armandsol@spronsen.com.

