

Lodge-ical News – September 2006

My one month sabbatical as a lodge manager is over. The issues I had to deal with both inside and outside of the office were challenging and each day brought new excitement. My passion is fueled by juggling the constant activity behind the scenes while the guests are enjoying their best vacation ever. I feel as though I could fill pages of a book with my experiences over the past 30 days. I can only imagine how you feel after a complete season.

User Tip: Getting into a Routine

The office that I worked in, also served as the store (fishing tackle, gifts, and clothing). I like this design because the high traffic allowed me to interact with our guests and fishing guides each day. However, that meant that it was very easy to get distracted. I felt very unorganized the few first days. I was in and out of Lodge-ical, in and out of Outlook, running back and forth to the lodge, and keeping up with the phones. It didn't take me long to realize that I was not making good use of my time. I needed to establish a routine.

I arrived early each morning and headed straight to our bar (now don't get the wrong idea). I picked up the bar tab which accumulates the beer and wine our guests drink the night before. Once in the office I opened up Lodge-ical, printed the Housekeeping report and the Assumed Mealcount report. I then entered all guest bar purchases from the night before. The Housekeeping report shows the guests who are checking out so I prepared a Lodge-ical Final Bill for each guest.

I gave our housekeeper the Housekeeping report and kept the Assumed Mealcount report. On my desk (in most cases) were trip tickets that our guides had dropped off the night before. The trip ticket outlines the guide's name, guest's name, activity, and what type of lunch they required. I use the trip ticket to determine how many guests would be in our lodge for lunch. I manually adjusted the Assumed Mealcount report to accurately reflect the lunch count. The dinner count on this report was helpful to the dining room staff as they were able to set tables appropriately based on the number of guests in each party.

The trip tickets were also helpful for other recordkeeping purposes. For each trip ticket, I opened up the appropriate Lodge-ical reservation. I verified the activity was appropriately charged within the reservation. I then made sure the actual activity was entered into the Lodge-ical activity planner. Finally, I assigned the guide to the activity. The more data I entered into Lodge-ical, the more confident I became with the integrity of the reports.

After working with the trip tickets, I moved to the Store Purchase tickets. Each time a guest or employee purchases something from the store a ticket is prepared. Keeping up to date with daily store purchases makes the preparation of the final bill super easy.

Once this daily data entry was completed, I was now ready to pay attention to our emails.

User Tip: Coping with Emails

I think I mentioned before that the last time I managed a lodge was prior to the Internet. I nervously wondered what impact email would have during my day to day office management. Each morning I opened up Outlook and cringed as I saw email after email piling up in my Inbox. The first rule of thumb was to delete all "junk" emails based upon who the sender was and what the subject line contained. I was never tempted to open up any of these emails but simply deleted them.

Sure enough, we had plenty of guests send emails with questions, special requests, and other pertinent information regarding their upcoming stay. My Inbox started to accumulate emails quickly and once again I was feeling as though I was losing control. Being a firm believer in keeping data in one place, I once again looked to Lodge-ical to store important notes. It was common to receive airline itineraries via email. Using the Lodge-ical Activity Planner, I entered all airport pickup and dropoff information. This also forced me to open up the reservation to ensure the proper airport transportation charge was applied to the reservation. General notes were copy and pasted into either the Lodge-ical Correspondence Log or the Other Notes field on the Reservation Entry form. I admit that I did not delete any emails. Instead a folder was created in Outlook called Guests 2006. However I will say by updating Lodge-ical, I did not have to sort through the Guest 2006 Outlook folder containing hundreds of emails to look up something. Additionally, I feel confident that at the end of the season this Guest 2006 Outlook folder can be permanently purged.

The other type of email frequently received was a general inquiry. I became an expert at copying and pasting information from an email into the Lodge-ical Client Entry record and generating an Inquiry letter. I spent time pre-stuffing envelopes with our brochure so I could simply take the Inquiry letter off the printer, stuff the letter into the brochure envelope, apply the postage and mail the brochure within 24 hours of receiving the inquiry.

Wanted: Lodge-ical testimonials

We are starting a mail marketing campaign this fall to specially selected destination lodges and guest ranches. In some of our letters, we will be using client testimonials. If you would like to share an experience that demonstrates how Lodge-ical saves you time, we would appreciate hearing from you.