



So You're Green Certified: Now What?

Date: 2010-12-01

EcoRooms & EcoSuites wants you to help get your green message out with these '10 Ways to Promote Your Green Certification.'

Hotels that have gone through [green certification](#) can attest to the tremendous amount of time and effort that go into a successful application. It's not just about filling out a checklist and getting a green stamp of approval. There are exhaustive forms to fill out, policies to develop, repairs and upgrades to make, fees to pay, and in some cases comprehensive on-site audits to verify all of the above.

But once it's complete, what then? If you aren't getting the word out that you're certified green, then why go through all the effort? Consumers are inundated with claims of "green" and "sustainability" with almost every product they buy. Being certified by a third-party builds your credibility, and helps distinguish your brand from competitors. It can attract potential customers interested in environmentally friendly products and services. That's why your green certification should be a key part of your marketing strategy on-site, off-site and online.

"When dealing with going green, it's important to have a clear, consistent message going out to the public," says Tedd Saunders, Chief Sustainability Officer for the Saunders Hotel Group, operator of the Comfort Inn & Suites Logan International Airport in Boston. "We make sure to have our green policies and certification visible to guests before they ever even step foot in the hotel."

"All of the surveys out there – whether they be for business or leisure sectors – tell us one-third of travelers actively seek out hotels with sustainable initiatives," adds Rauni Kew, who leads PR & Green Programs for the Inn by the Sea in Cape Elizabeth, Maine. "It could be a meeting planner working for a company with a CSR platform that signals a preference for [green hotels](#), or a LOHAS or an eco-minded leisure traveler."

"In any case, a great number of travelers are looking for properties that share their values – yet so many hotels with sustainable initiatives in place make it difficult to find them by not having a green page or their green certifications visible on their sites and collateral," Kew says.

While both the Comfort Inn & Suites Logan International Airport and Inn by the Sea have been green for years, both hotels also have recently been certified through EcoRooms & EcoSuites.

EcoRooms & EcoSuites (www.EcoRooms.com) is an online directory of the [greenest hotels](#) in the U.S. To be listed on the site, members must meet a rigorous set of standards for ecologically responsible hotel products, practices, and principles. Certified EcoRooms members must also pass a thorough on-site audit.

"As environmental awareness continues to grow, highlighting your green efforts is a great way to attract new customers and build your brand," says Ray Burger, president of Pineapple Hospitality, parent company of EcoRooms & EcoSuites and the premier distributor of Green Hotel Products and Marketing Programs for the Hospitality Industry.

"But consumers won't let you get away with vague claims of being 'environmentally friendly' anymore," Burger adds. "It's important that you back up your green work with concrete examples of what you've done. It's not just about starting a linen reuse program – it's about how many gallons of water you've saved. Having a credible third party like EcoRooms & EcoSuites validate your green program provides accountability and assurance that sustainability standards are followed."

10 Ways to Promote Your Green Certification

To help get its message out, EcoRooms & EcoSuites provides its members with official certificates that can be displayed throughout their hotels. There are also logos that can be uploaded on your Web site or in your marketing materials.

But because your green certification should be a part of everything you do, here are the **Top 10 Ways to Promote Your Green Certification:**

1. Web site – Have a page dedicated to outlining all of your property's green efforts, with the certification designation there to back up your claims.
2. Lobby Signs – From the moment guests check in, they'll be able to see you're making efforts to promote sustainable travel.

3. Elevators – Signs here will give your captive audiences something to read, and something to think about.
4. Key Cards – Many hotels are switching to green key cards, which can include a certification logo.
5. Social Media – Blogs, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube are all great ways to reach out to a younger, technologically savvy audience and let them know you care about the future of the planet.
6. Memberships – Along with EcoRooms & EcoSuites, there are a number of other reputable certification programs for hotels, including GreenKey, LEED, GreenSeal and EnergyStar for hotels. Many states also have green lodging programs you can belong to. Being members or receiving certification from these groups builds your credibility further, and offers more opportunities to get your name out there.
7. Customer Communications – Make sure to note you're green certified in any kind of client communication. This can be on stationary, brochures, reservation confirmations, or even in your email signature.
8. Press Releases – While it should certainly warrant a news release to announce that you've earned certification, beyond that you should note your green certifications in any news article you do – at least in your "About us" boilerplate.
9. Local News – Local newspapers, TV and other outlets should know all about your certifications so they will know to come to you as one of their local green experts.
10. Events – More and more, companies are reaching out into their communities. And being green is one way that you can show you're being a good neighbor.

The Inn By the Sea's Kew says taking these steps help promote both your green message and sustainable travel.

"We have the EcoRooms.com indicia on our green page, use it in marketing pieces, and I use it in my email signature," says Kew. "We usually couple the indicia with a value statement saying we are committed to both outstanding hospitality and environmental preservation. We also bullet point some of our green design features and initiatives to back up the statement."

Saunders adds that the Comfort Inn & Suites makes sure to use its green certification logos throughout its Web site, as well as on all guest paperwork. The property also leverages its numerous green memberships to network with new guests, and is working to promote its green message through social media.

"We started out on this green journey long before there was any concept of sustainable hotels," Saunders says. "It's encouraging for us to see that the 3rd-party certification movement has matured, that someone is willing to define what green is and put their stamp of approval on properties that meet those qualifications. It adds credibility to our efforts and puts us out in front for the public and media to see everything we've been able to accomplish."

Newly Certified

As the latest hotel to receive EcoRooms & EcoSuites certification, Hotel Arista in Naperville, Ill., found being sustainable doesn't mean compromising luxury. Guest are greeted by a personal host upon arrival, guestrooms are stocked with custom linens, plush bathrobes, 42-inch flat-panel HDTVs, iPod docking stations, vanity mirrors with built-in TVs and more. Best of all, however, the hotel which opened in 2008, recycled 70% of construction waste; and now in operation, uses 30% less water and 21% less energy than hotels of comparable size.

For these efforts, Hotel Arista earned LEED certification (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) from the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), and at the same time is rated as a 4-Diamond hotel by AAA.

"Being EcoRooms & EcoSuites Certified shows that not only were we built in a sustainable way, but we also operate that way each day," says General Manager Jeff Wardlaw. "If you are doing things the right way, if sustainable practices are important to you, it shouldn't take that much effort to achieve certification. We looked at it as affirmation of many of the things we're already doing, and for those requirements we hadn't yet met, it gave us some new ideas to try out."

All cleaning products at Hotel Arista are chemical-free, and abundant natural lighting contributes to the hotel's energy savings. Unused shampoos and soaps are donated to local charities for the homeless, and used newspapers are delivered to the local animal shelter. The hotel's signature restaurant, SugarToad, also utilizes many organic and locally-sourced products, in addition to an on-site garden, and all guestrooms offer a "Nosh Box" which is stocked with local, regional and organic food items.

"We've put a lot of effort into being a sustainable property, and having green certification helps us to reach out to others who are also making eco-sensitive choices," Wardlaw says. "Sustainability is especially important to many companies and associations, and being green certified helps us find like-minded partners and better communicate who we are and what we do."

About Pineapple Hospitality

Headquartered in Saint Charles, Missouri, Pineapple Hospitality brings fresh ideas to hospitality guests' doors and owner/operators' bottom lines — including FreshStay® (www.freshstay.com), EcoRooms® & EcoSuites™ (www.EcoRooms.com) Save Your World, Pharmacopia, Environmentally Sensitive Amenities™, EO®, Earth Perfect, eco.fresh, ecosential elements, Sonoma Soap Co. and greenSPA™ amenities, AVIVA and WAVE amenity dispensers,

Energy Efficient Lighting from GE and TCP, , Custom Linen & Towel Re-Use Programs, Green Earth Key Cards, Energy Management Systems and Controls, High Performance showerheads, Zero Odor, and dozens of other products and programs. For more information, please visit www.pineapplehospitality.net, or call us at 636-922-2285.

This article comes from Hospitality Trends
<http://www.htrends.com>

The URL for this story is:
<http://www.htrends.com/article50585.html>