

# HOTEL Yearbook

## FORESIGHT AND INNOVATION IN THE GLOBAL HOTEL INDUSTRY

SPECIAL  
EDITION ON

# TECHNOLOGY

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# Keeping a property at the ready

by **Frank Wolfe** 

**Frank Wolfe, CAE, head of the HFTP, advises hoteliers on how to maintain a safe and at-ready environment: with an informed and trained staff, a thorough crisis plan and the use of accessible technologies.**

Following the April 2013 terror attacks in the US city of Boston, there has been a lot of discussion about the hospitality industry being “soft targets” for terrorists. While it is true that we are open to the public 24 hours a day, have lots of luggage, packages and gifts coming in and out, and host many transient customers, my contention is that our properties are a lot more secure than the public realizes. And taking specific precautions, including the use of inexpensive, accessible technologies, can go a long way toward protecting your guests and employees.

## First line of defense: employees

Your first line of defense is your employees. While you don’t want to scare your staff with outlandish scenarios, they do need to be informed on the potential dangers that exist. Educate them on ways a criminal or terrorist could use your facility as a base for illegal activities. With that understanding, train your staff to be on the lookout for suspicious behavior. This includes when the person (or persons):

- Acts nervously and is overly concerned with privacy,
- Denies hotel staff access to a room, or refuses room cleaning during an extended stay,
- Insists on cash payment,
- Attempts to gain access to restricted areas, or
- Takes notes, pictures or videos of the hotel.

Also have your staff note suspicious items, such as:

- Large amounts of unusual substances (acetone, peroxide, drain cleaner);
- Luggage emitting fumes or odors, or containing disassembled electrical components (wires, circuit boards, batteries); or
- Plans, drawings, schematics, maps.

While the above does not automatically make anyone a criminal, such activities do merit further investigation, not a look the other way. If any of the above situations arise, instruct employees to promptly alert management and the appropriate authorities.

## Crisis planning

The previous proactive steps can go a long way in preventing a potential problem from occurring, but it is impossible to be 100 percent on alert. So in the event your property is involved in an emergency situation, it is imperative to have a Crisis Plan (CP) at the ready. Such plans include information such as:

- A hierarchy chart that details staff responsibilities such as who is authorized to make decisions or serve as a communications liaison to press and via social media
- Identification of the primary, secondary and tertiary evacuation points
- Staff assignments to the various evacuation points, and documentation of these assignments. This also helps account for staff once the evacuation occurs.
- Noted staff members who have training in first aid or



**Frank Wolfe** joined the association in March 1991. Wolfe started at HFTP as the association's director of education. He became executive vice president/CEO of HFTP in 1994 and at that time was one of the youngest association CEOs in North America. As HFTP's CEO, Wolfe oversees the association's operations, as well as represents the association worldwide at industry events, on industry boards and committees and via the news media. Wolfe is a graduate of East Tennessee State University where he received a degree in Health Administration and also attended graduate school there in the Counseling and Guidance Program. In 1992, he was awarded the Certified Association Executive Designation (CAE), which is the Association Industry's highest designation.

emergency medical training, or other useful skills such as second languages

- List of employees and contact information
- List of major vendors and the services they provide, along with the contact information
- List of key clients and contact information
- Property maps that indicate where the main switches are for utilities; the location of hazardous cleaning chemicals and other important site-related information. These need to be easily accessible to staff, outside security and first-responders
- Directions to the location of master keys and who can access these and under what circumstances
- List of critical items that would be important to remove if possible
- Sources for replenishing supplies if needed
- A system in place that keeps a daily contract/corporate visitor list so they can be accounted for during an emergency
- Resources to reference as guidance in the case of the emergency
- List of offsite computer, business intelligence and surveillance equipment

With a crisis plan in place, it must not sit in a filing cabinet to get dusty waiting for the rare, but critical occurrence. Instead it should be reviewed, tested and updated on a regular basis. Managers need to know where it is located, as well as have it offsite and potentially on their mobile devices. To make sure this happens, assign a staff member(s) as the head of the crisis plan to follow-through.

### **Accessible technology that ups the security level**

Today many management tools and consumer products can extend your security network. One of the many monitoring products available is an employee management system. These systems use fingerprints, facial recognition, RFID badges and web interfaces to track employees throughout the enterprise.

Regardless of the size of your operation, accessible Internet Protocol (IP) cameras are inexpensive and easy to set up and monitor. Footage can be monitored from a smart phone and images can be pushed out to the Internet in real time, as well as stored as recorded images. If you are using cameras, make sure that the public is aware and you publish this fact.

### **At the end of the day**

Know that your risk of dying, or being involved in a plausible terrorist attack is much lower than your risk of dying in a car accident, by walking across the street, by drowning, in a fire, by falling, or by being murdered. With that said, when you are overseeing a very public location such as a hotel property, make the move from soft target to hard target. In the rare case you are involved in such an attack, your response will make a key difference to the level of impact it has.

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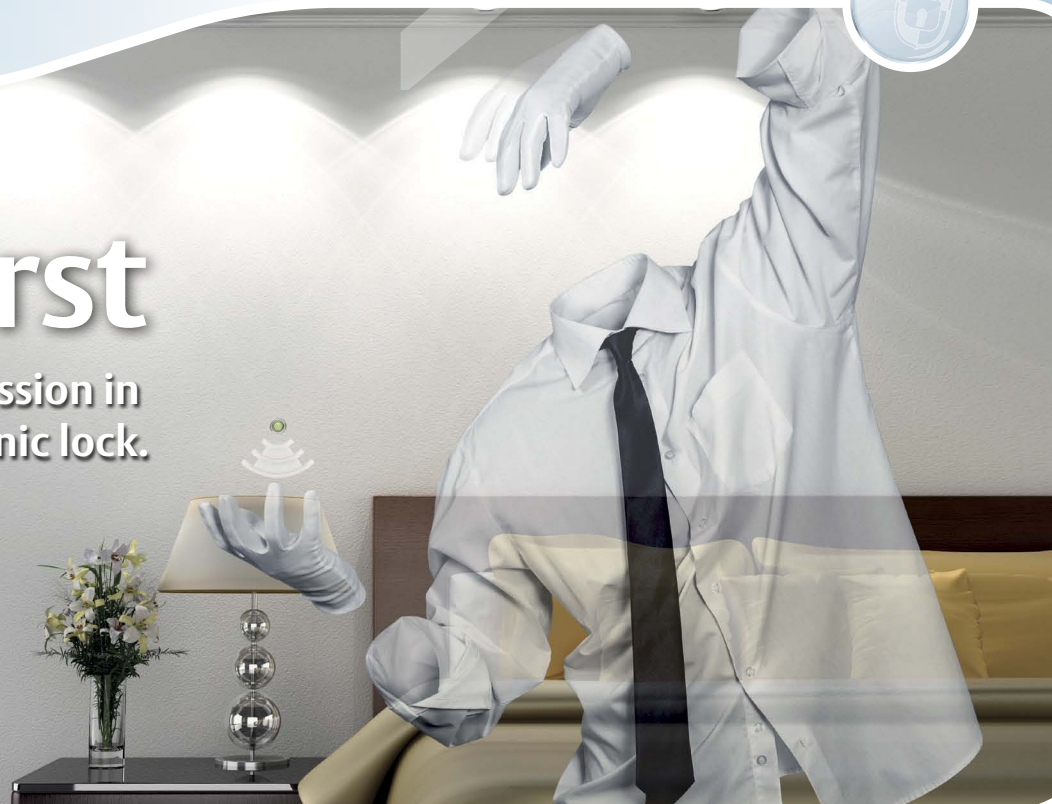






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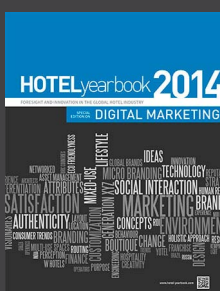
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