

A CRISIS MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK TO LEVERAGE YOUR HOUSEKEEPING DEPARTMENT IN COVID-19

A financial restructuring framework for the housekeeping department of your hotel, as a crisis response approach during COVID-19 hotel closures.

With many hotels already closed, the first step of reacting to this crisis has been completed. This critical action hits pause on numerous cash outflows. Therefore, we suggest a financial restructuring framework¹ as a crisis response approach to look for what to do next. Now is the time to stabilize your employees, develop and implement your reopening plan to come out of these challenging times stronger than before.

While often not at the forefront of hotel owners' or asset managers' minds, housekeeping is arguably one of the most important departments. After all, the housekeeping team takes care of the "house" that you invited your "guests" into and focuses on the main product of a hotel operation - the rooms. With COVID-19, housekeeping has become more critical than ever. Those teams put their health in danger to look after that of the remaining staff and guests.

Even once the worst of the virus is over, the threat won't disappear overnight. Therefore, once hotels can safely reopen, guests' attitudes and your operations will likely be impacted in the long term². Even before the virus, 78%³ of hotel guests felt cleanliness is the most crucial factor affecting their accommodation choice. We expect this percentage to increase, as guests will expect the highest standards of sanitation to feel comfortable in your hotel. Therefore, hotels and asset managers worldwide need to work with their housekeeping teams to better prepare for these impacts after re-opening.

1. FINANCIAL AND DATA ANALYSIS

The high costs, that are inherent to an integral department such as housekeeping, are expected to rise as additional precautions must be taken for the safety of the staff and the guests. Now is the time to look at your current housekeeping practices, and by prioritizing hotel housekeeping analytics, you can take advantage of the technologies that are becoming an integral part of hospitality management. They allow you to spot opportunities to increase your bottom line by eliminating wasted resources and going beyond having rooms cleaned in record time. Online checklists, location-based room assignments, accurately predicted room cleaning times, and automated reporting are examples of technologies that will prove extremely useful in your reopening. Planning for increased room cleaning times to account for additional sanitation measures will be necessary.

2. RESTRUCTURING AND TRAINING

Once you've leveraged and analyzed your data on how to update the housekeeping processes, it is vital to tackle these newfound opportunities by beginning to restructure the department in preparation for the reopening.

During the closure, you must ensure that the hotel is cleaned a minimum of once a week, and best practices include allocating one attendant per floor to reduce cross-contamination. Furthermore, your housekeeping managers should stay in touch with room attendants and use online platforms to begin retraining. This will allow the team to get ahead of the crisis and be ready for the next step. After re-opening, guests will have a keener eye on the work of the housekeeping team, which is why they need to be prepared.

3. IMPLEMENTING YOUR REOPENING PLAN

The final stage of implementing your new plan will take place after re-opening. Housekeeping Consultant Sophie Huertas recommends including a pamphlet in all rooms along with the marketing collateral from other departments (i.e., room service menus). This pamphlet should be signed from the housekeeping team, and detail the steps they take to maintain the room's hygiene and guests' health. It could also be beneficial to wrap more items in plastic/paper after a room's turnover to help signal sanitation measures to wary guests. Furthermore, many standards that had to be put in place during the virus, such as installing automatic hand sanitizer dispensers in public areas, should be kept long after the passing of the crisis.

At the end of the day, the plans you create and implement should make your housekeeping team more efficient when tackling additional hygiene measures that are necessary post-COVID-19. The steps outlined in this writing will help reassure your guests to stay at your property once more. We encourage you to begin reflecting on how specific departments, like housekeeping, can be improved and leveraged in time for your hotel's re-opening. Please contact us at info@globalassetsolutions.com; we would be delighted to offer you our assistance and tailor-make an action and implementation plan for closure and re-opening.

A special thank you to Sophie Huertas, Housekeeping Consultant, and Trainer.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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Global Asset Solutions, your key partner in hotel asset management, has partnered with a team of five students and one alumna from **Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne**, recognized by industry leaders as the best hospitality school in the world. Together, we are working on compiling the best practices to help hotel owners and operators navigate through the COVID-19 crisis. By combining diligent research, expert opinions, and our own experiences, we will be publishing the best practices on the most current topics facing our industry. Team APAC is composed of Paloma Guerra, Mingze Li, and Zhaoyu Zhu, while Eliana Levine, Larina Maira Laube, and Vani van Nielen make up our Team EU & US and **Remy Rein** (EHL Lecturer).

Co-Published with **Alex Sogno** (CEO - Senior Hotel Asset Manager at Global Asset Solutions). Mr. Sogno began his career in New York City after graduating with honors at Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne, Switzerland. He joined HVS International New York, and he established a new venture at the Cushman & Wakefield headquarters in Manhattan. In 2005, Mr. Sogno began working for Kingdom Hotel Investments (KHI), founded by HRH Prince Al-Walid bin Talal bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud member of the Saudi Royal family, and asset managed various hotels including Four Seasons, Fairmont, Raffles, Mövenpick, and Swissôtel. He also participated to the Initial Public Offering (IPO) of KHI at the London Stock Exchange as well as the Dubai International Financial Exchange. Mr. Sogno is also the co-writer of the 'Hotel Asset Management' textbook second edition published by the Hospitality Asset Managers Association (HAMA), the American Hotel & Lodging Education Institute, and the University of Denver. He is the Founder of the Hospitality Asset Managers Association Asia Pacific (HAMA AP) and Middle East Africa (HAMA MEA).

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