

COMMERCIAL PARTNER

INTERCONTINENTAL HOTELS GROUP



Implementation Model: **Innovation Hotel**

ORGANIZATION TYPE

Hospitality

BARRIER

Prioritizing sustainability efforts to align with guest recommendations

SOLUTION

Innovation Hotel

OUTCOME

Guests and members of the public can explore sustainability efforts at a virtual IHG hotel, room by room, and comment on each idea



Overview

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) seeks to involve guests in the sustainability activities and decisions at their hotels. In addition to guest education, hotel executives are eager to elicit guest feedback and comments about sustainability, applying a collaborative approach to sustainability efforts. As a result, IHG has developed the Innovation Hotel, a web-based virtual hotel to promote sustainability efforts.

The Innovation Hotel describes sustainable technologies and strategies which are currently in place at some hotels and allows the online 'guest' to see proposed future initiatives. The website allows IHG to interact with guests as well as gather their ideas and feedback. This communication platform enables IHG to prioritize sustainability efforts and help to align them with guest recommendations

The site serves as a platform for IHG to showcase its future plans and ideas regarding the way it designs, builds and operates more environmentally responsible hotels. Giving guests and members of the public a chance to respond and contribute ideas to the site has catalyzed a step-change in IHG's relationship with these important stakeholders.

InterContinental Hotels Group's Playbook



Policies

In 2008 IHG developed a website for hotel customers to share their ideas and comments about how IHG properties could ensure a more sustainable stay. IHG formed a Corporate Responsibility (CR) department and hired a Sustainability Officer to lead efforts to actuate the site, review guest and public comments on the site, and present this information to senior level administration for consideration. IHG also formed various other groups which are responsible for reviewing potential innovations. The Corporate Responsibility team tracks and monitors the responses received from the Innovation Hotel site. After a comment is received, IHG thanks the guest for their responses and adds the recommendations to a continual list of suggestions. The CR group then reviews the submitted sustainability ideas and innovations and considers them internally.

In their owned and managed estate, IHG set a corporate goal to achieve energy savings of 6% to 10% over a three-year period (2010-2012) on a per available room per night basis. The company is pleased to report that they exceeded their energy target, achieving a reduction of 11.7% in 2012. More information on IHG's corporate energy goals can be found [here](#).



Process

The Innovation Hotel concept was initiated by two passionate employees who created a proposal for executive review. Development of the Innovation Hotel was guided by the sustainability lead within CR.

Development of the Innovation Hotel was a collaborative effort between design and engineering experts, and specific IHG hotels, who are industry leaders in sustainability and energy efficiency. The Innovation Hotel was launched to hotel guests and the public in 2008.

Today, the Innovation Hotel is used by a range of stakeholders, including IHG general managers and employees, who can learn from each other and the innovative concepts included in the tool to understand and implement sustainability concepts. In an effort to add more interactivity to the Innovation Hotel, IHG has now connected it to social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook to enable online visitors to share preferred sustainability features with friends. These enhancements are broadening the reach of the tool.

Ideas contributed by guests, employees, and the public can then inform the way IHG designs, builds and operates more responsible hotels. Comments and suggestions from the Innovation Hotel, along with social media content, are reviewed by the IHG Stakeholder Team on a weekly basis. Metrics and engagement are reported monthly and shared with each brand as appropriate for consideration. These reports are shared with various departments for design, practical and financial review. If the recommendation receives a standard concurrence among departments, a pilot program is introduced at an IHG hotel to obtain actual feedback from implementation.



Outreach

The entrance to the Innovation Hotel is located on the IHG website. It is primarily promoted to guests and stakeholders through IHG's online [Corporate Responsibility annual report](#) and the [IHG Planet Corporate Responsibility Facebook page](#).



Tools and Resources

Innovation Hotel Site – IHG guests and members of the public are invited to take a tour of this interactive website and leave feedback for consideration by the company.

Tools:

- [Innovation Hotel](#)



Measuring Success

Collaboration is key to the success of the Innovation Hotel. It brings together all stakeholders, internal and external, to learn, share and collaborate with each other. IHG has several metrics by which it measures the success of the program:

- Number and substance of comments submitted
- Number of page views
- Number of Facebook likes and Tweets

In addition, the Innovation Hotel with its Corporate Responsibility team has garnered a number of awards since its launch in 2008:

- Number and substance of comments submitted
- Number of page views
- Number of Facebook likes and Tweets
- CSR Innovation Award, Hotel Magazine, 2009
- Best Initiative in Sustainable Development, Worldwide Hospitality Awards, 2009
- Innovator in Corporate Social Responsibility, Hotel Report Awards, 2008
- Awarded the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) Gold Medal for Sustainability
- Shortlisted for the World Environment Centre Award for Sustainability
- Awarded Silver at the Podium Awards in the Category of Inspirational Skills Project
- Awarded Silver for Business in the Community CR Index 2011 and 2012
- IHG named in Canada's 'Green 30' list 2011
- Commended for 'Best Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Program at the Business Travel Awards 2012

- IHG has been recognized as the most environmentally and socially responsible hotelier in Australasia, after being awarded the inaugural Responsible Travel Management Award (RTM) by the National
- Business Travel Association (NBTA) 2010
- National Business Travel Association (NBTA) CSR Award
- Eco-lodging Award at the China Hotel Investment Summit (CHIS)
- 'Best Corporate Responsibility Report in the Travel & Leisure sector', Radley Yeldar 2010
- Worldwide Hospitality Award for Best Initiative in Sustainable Development
- Most admired leisure and hospitality company for the third year running at Management Today's Britain's Most Admired Companies Awards
- Condé Nast Traveler 2009 World Savers Award for Willard InterContinental Washington DC

Outcomes



The Innovation Hotel receives approximately 7,000 page views a month; this number rises significantly when links to IHG's social media pages are included. IHG attributes the increased attention surrounding the Innovation Hotel to the company's promotional efforts with social networking sites. These sites have enabled the company to leverage social media to capture a broader audience.

Below is a short list of energy efficiency projects completed by IHG hotels in the United States:

- Holiday Inn Airport San Antonio uses efficient landscaping to cut energy bills related to water and irrigation systems.
- Hotel Indigo in San Diego has installed a green roof system to reduce energy consumption.
- Intercontinental San Francisco (Howard Street) offers a vast array of transportation options to reduce energy emissions from their taxicabs, vans and transportation vehicles that they offer their guests. Among its green credentials is the hotels' commitment to sustainable transport. Public transportation is used by 95% of the hotel's staff, reducing the carbon dioxide emitted by commuting. Its concierge team is pleased to provide guests with 'green transportation' recommendations for travel about town as well. For those who wish to travel by car, the hotel offers a Toyota Prius plug-In hybrid Zipcar.
- The Holiday Inn Express & Suites St-Hyacinthe saves 250,000 kWh per year and seven tons of domestic waste is composted annually. The gravel surrounding the hotel is made from cement from a demolished bridge, and a white roof reflects the sun's heat. The St-Hyacinthe was built with special heat capturing water coils. A salt pool filtering system eliminates the need to use damaging chemicals. To further reduce their carbon footprint, they use locally made furniture and custom-made natural fiber mattresses.