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Home is Where the Heart is...

By Rob Rush, CEO of LRA Worldwide



I must say, I am somewhat conflicted by the blurring distinction between the home and the hotel that I describe in my article for this week's *Hotel Business Review*, "[There's No Place Like Home – The New Paradigm of Hotel as Home](#)" On the one hand, I am a person who likes to be at home in my surroundings – the greasy spoon diners that I frequent make better small talk and personal connections than they do home fries and coffee. On the other hand, my partner and I founded a consulting company with its roots in the travel and hospitality industry, at least in part originally because of its sense of exotic allure...and the need to reinforce and deliver that exotic allure consistently over a wide geographic area.

If the trend now, however, is to deliver "home" from Mexico City to Moscow, so be it. It turns out Sam, Norm, Carla, Cliff and the rest of the gang at Cheers may have had it right when they determined that you want to go...where everybody knows your name. And your taste in music, comforting furnishings and business needs.

The expectation of some vestige of home on the road has become so ingrained at this point, that its absence becomes somewhat vexing. A colleague of mine recently had to attend to some personal business in Milwaukee for a few days, where the only rooms available (yes, in Suburban Milwaukee – the travel and hospitality industries are truly booming, my friends) were at the Chalet Motel of Mequon. It was a perfectly nicely appointed, clean motel, but without internet access or a common "family room" area (and with the rental car keys locked in a family member's room early in the A.M), he resorted to thumbing a ride to Starbucks to regain his equilibrium. Starbucks – now there's a home away from home if there ever was one, only with stronger coffee and friendlier people!

Incidentally, the same colleague was "thrilled" during a recent Marriott stay when they went the extra mile to make him feel at home. The electronic "buzz" that a malfunctioning alarm clock made on the hour from 3 AM to his 6 AM wake-up call made him feel as if he hadn't left his three kids – ages 3 ½ to 5 months – home in Philadelphia. Now that's going the extra mile to make someone feel at home. (Though the "strung out parent" feelings of home are probably less valued to the traveler than the "caregiver" sensibility that I describe in my article.)

Me personally – I'm waiting for this trend to really extend itself so that the diner culture that makes me feel at home is easily translated to a hotel. The first time I step up to check-in and the front desk clerk asks me "Rob, what can I do for ya', hon," that's when I'll feel home!

Thanks for listening – as always, I'm available to chat by phone or e-mail.

Cheers,

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