

THE MAKING OF A HOTEL FAVORITE

How acing brand standards can win guest votes, drive dollars

In an increasingly competitive hospitality landscape, guest experience wins. Paying customers don't like surprises—they crave consistency. Think of the coffee America runs on, or the world's preferred next-day shipping giant. These brands are favorites because their delivery never falters.

Brand standards are the building blocks of hotel consistency; judiciously designed standards connect hoteliers' investments with the amenities guests expect, helping drive positive reviews, repeat stays and, ultimately, better performance.

And positive guest reviews have revenue ripple effects. Across Wyndham's portfolio of brands in North America, hotels with an online social rating of four (out of a total of five) averaged \$13 (USD) more in RevPAR than those with a three rating. For a hotel delivering \$45 RevPAR, a one-point score lift can mean a 29 percent RevPAR increase.

"Owner payoff is a top consideration influencing brand standards," says Scott LePage, executive vice president, North America Operations for Wyndham. "We're prioritizing practical brand standards that



Days Inn by Wyndham
Dawn Renderings



ACROSS WYNDHAM'S PORTFOLIO OF BRANDS IN NORTH AMERICA, HOTELS WITH AN ONLINE SOCIAL RATING OF FOUR (OUT OF A TOTAL OF 5) AVERAGED

\$13

(USD) MORE IN REVPAR THAN THOSE WITH A THREE RATING.

are revenue drivers and industry differentiators.”

ALL-HANDS-IN BRAND STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT

Wyndham’s team employs a 360-degree approach to creating value-driven brand standards, LePage says, leveraging insights from franchisees, market research and top design firms.

Hoteliers are at the forefront in developing sensible standards for their brands, articulating the elements needed to most efficiently run their businesses, coupled with the wants voiced from their guests, he says. Wyndham’s Franchise Advisory Committees (FACs)—diverse cross-sections of owners from various geographical markets and chain scales—are instrumental in driving each brand’s future vision.

Layering in a deep understand-

ing of what compels a guest to choose one brand over another, Wyndham clearly defines its brand identities through extensive market research, LePage adds, and these unique identities are guiding principles when making brand standard decisions. The company also collaborates with reputable design firms, such as TPG Architecture, CRTKL and Hoefer Wyzsocki, to provide additional design lenses when reimagining brands, prioritizing owner cost-per-key goals and payback.

“Crafting and implementing brand standards is a balancing act of practicality and adaptability,” says LePage. “We want our franchisees—who are independent owners and operators—to feel free to run their hotels as they see fit, while understanding the significance consistency plays in securing repeat guests.”

For example, 90 percent of Super 8 by Wyndham hotels in North America are elevating economy with brand-defining elements from its INNOV8TE design package; the brand now has the highest-rated guest reviews¹ of any conversion economy brand. From destination-specific artwork that doubles as headboards to lime and cinnamon bedding accents, Super 8 brand standards are reinforcing consistent, positive and repeat-worthy guest stays.

PUTTING STANDARDS TO WORK

Helping each of Wyndham’s brands in North America are designated brand leaders, described by LePage as franchisees’ advocates, sounding boards and “solutioners.”

“Each franchisee also has a go-to operations lead providing field support—someone with whom they can discuss the standards,



Super 8 by Wyndham Spirit Lake, IA



Howard Johnson by Wyndham Ocala, FL

their benefits and how to implement them,” he says.

Recognizing different markets may pose unique limitations, like trying to accommodate a brand’s pool standard within a heavily populated city center. LePage says these teams are typically able to work with developers on common-sense solutions.

He notes the company’s holistic and collaborative brand standards approach is setting a new partnership tone. “In the past, developers associated brand standards with quality assurance and compliance inspections—we’re changing that perception for the positive. Standards today are about creating opportunities to drive greater value of and into our franchisees’ assets in ways true to guest expectations.”

In lockstep with evolving guest and owner needs, the company

continues unveiling new prototypes and brand-design packages across its portfolio, LePage says. Reaching its owners for maximum performance potential out of the gate are new prototypes like Wyndham Garden’s Arbor, Microtel’s Moda and the dual-branded Hawthorn Suites and La Quinta archetype, plus design packages including Days Inn’s Dawn, Super 8’s INNOV8TE, Howard Johnson’s RENEW and a new AmericInn room.

Wyndham’s recently debuted Days Inn Dawn design—featuring bright, sun-centric art and thoughtfully designed for seamless installation across varying

WYNDHAM’S TEAM EMPLOYS A 360-DEGREE APPROACH TO CREATING VALUE-DRIVEN BRAND STANDARDS, LEVERAGING INSIGHTS FROM FRANCHISEES, MARKET RESEARCH AND TOP DESIGN FIRMS.

room types—is one example of how the company is placing a premium on aesthetic and owner ROI, highlights LePage. Existing owners continue playing a pivotal role in pressure-testing and flexing the concept, ensuring it meets the needs of today’s hoteliers.

“We want franchisees to feel good about their contributions and to realize how strategic hotel investment can drive significant guest loyalty,” LePage says. “There’s nothing greater than visiting an owner who’s implemented brand standard elements, seeing how good they feel, watching their hotel scores go up and having them say to us, ‘What’s next?’”

¹Based on a leading guest survey platform as of May 2019.