



CASE STUDY

Coast Hotels

GREEN KEY GLOBAL HELPS COAST HOTELS SET BRAND STANDARDS THAT PROVIDE SOLID FOOTING FOR DIVERSE PROPERTIES TO SUCCEED AT SUSTAINABILITY



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Background

Coast Hotels

www.coasthotels.com

Founded over 50 years ago and headquartered in Vancouver, British Columbia, Coast Hotels Limited, a fully owned subsidiary of APA Hotel Canada, Inc. owns, manages and franchises properties in cities large and small, as well as in resort destinations throughout British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Yukon, Alaska, Washington, California, and Hawaii.

As one of North America's fastest-growing and one of Canada's largest hotel brands, Coast Hotels is anything but cookie-cutter. As today's travelers gravitate toward unique lodging accommodations, Coast Hotels turns the standard hotel brand concept on its head with a highly-localized approach and a firm commitment to preserving the character of every community the hotels are situated in.

Currently, Coast Hotels offers a collection of 38 hotels in North America each as unique and varied as its location, with a style, personality, and sense of place all its own while delivering exceptional value and an unmatched dedication to our guests, backed by our exclusive Coast Rewards loyalty program.





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The Challenge

- Setting brand-wide sustainability standards, eco-friendly hotel practices and benchmarks for a wide range of diverse and unique properties with different buildings, systems, amenities and services
- Motivating and encouraging all Coast Hotels to participate in sustainability assessments and equipping them to succeed, allowing the communities and cultures in which each property operates to thrive
- Measuring progress across multiple individual properties and at the brand level

With a range of ownership models and diverse and unique properties, Coast Hotels' main challenge was to develop a sustainability program that would be consistent across the brand and that all properties could participate in. "Coast Hotels are nestled in magnificent mountain ranges and spectacular cities, quaint towns and coastal retreats. We want to keep those places beautiful and be better stewards of the planet," said Brigitte Diem-Guy, Vice President, Revenue Strategies & Communication. "The buildings, designs, locations, systems and amenities of our unique hotels are very different," said Diem-Guy, "How do we provide a consistent Refreshingly Green™ guest experience with assets so diverse, without having to retrofit?"





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The Solution

“Green Key Global has enabled Coast Hotels to communicate with confidence that we have environmental ethics as a brand.”

Brigitte Diem-Guy
Vice President,
Revenue Strategies
& Communication
Coast Hotels

Coast Hotels had been a long-time member of Green Key Global (GKG) but the GKG program refresh by the Hotel Association of Canada (HAC) was a factor in the chain’s decision to put a renewed focus on green hotel certification.

Diem-Guy noted that with the latest 3.0 Version of the GKG Eco-Rating Program released in 2016, “HAC made the program more intuitive. They introduced progressive ratings and made them more responsive to hotels. Working with GKG, we learned how the assessment process was evolving and how we could kick-start it again at the brand level and with our hotels. It was a shared conversation.”

In the spring of 2017, Coast kicked off the assessment process by initiating a review and planning exercise across the brand. They established a target for all properties to complete GKG Eco-Rating assessments by October of that year and every year after that. “The purpose is to establish benchmarks and to measure year-over-year improvements across our portfolio of hotels,” said Diem-Guy.

By the fall – about six months after initiating the process at the corporate level – properties provided verification of their completed individual assessments and a copy of their rating to head office, which allowed them to confirm to guests and meeting planners that all hotels were up to standards in eco-friendly hotel practices.





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The Results

The Results – Solid footing with Flexibility for All Properties

With a wide range of properties, including some with unique infrastructure, some Coast Hotel members questioned whether and how they could qualify for a rating under the GKG Program. “We had hotels say they weren’t trained in sustainability, they were small, or they could not retrofit their building”, said Diem-Guy.

GKG helped Coast Hotels document a brand-wide environmental policy that was inclusive of, and applied to, all properties. “We established a Green Committee and introduced core items to our hotels to implement,” said Diem-Guy. This included encouraging sustainability in a variety of ways: recycling, composting, sourcing sustainable foods, using bio-degradable cleaning supplies, energy-efficient lighting and more.

In addition, Coast Hotels offers optional housekeeping services where guests can choose not to have their rooms made up daily. “Optional housekeeping is good for the environment and good for business,” said Diem-Guy, “It means less laundry, detergent and energy use. It definitely has a positive impact and it encourages our guests to collaborate with us and be part of the solution.”

For hotels uncertain about their ability to deliver on sustainability, Diem-Guy said, “These brand standards were a way to say, “Here are things you’re already doing”. This enabled us to give all hotels solid footing to start on when performing their assessments.”

At the same time, she said, “It was important to articulate goals for the brand that individual hotels can see themselves in.” Properties were encouraged to continue building on core activities with destination-specific sustainability projects that highlight their unique contributions to the community and the brand’s overall goals.

The Coast Bastion in Nanaimo, for example, introduced honey bees to their rooftop during the summer months to support local pollination and honey production. In 2022, this property diverted almost 3 tons of organic waste from landfill returning precious nutrients to the soil. Improved soil health benefits local farms or gardens and emissions are kept from landfills.

Effective onboarding through education

Diem-Guy noted that properties needed a great deal of encouragement from head office to undertake their sustainability assessments. This was particularly the case at the beginning when properties were grappling with questions such as, “What does a rating mean when you have a certain number of keys?” or “What’s an average rating?”

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Executive Director
of Marketing
& Communications
Coast Hotels



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The Results

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Executive Director of
Marketing & Communications
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“It’s an ongoing evolution,” Diem-Guy said, “Our Green Committee is collaborating with our hotel operators to identify specific areas where they can improve – this is an important part of the process of getting everyone on board.”

Education and documentation early on and creating a Coast Hotels Green Committee were important for motivation and were big factors in successful implementation, she said. “We recognized that we needed to provide ongoing information to hotels in the easiest way possible for them to participate and keep it top of mind.”

Coast Hotels accomplished this by its Green Committee providing information on the company Intranet and holding ongoing training sessions for all hotels through regular brand engagement calls and at brand-wide annual conferences. “A representative from Green Key Global also came to participate in the first few sessions and that was very helpful,” said Diem-Guy. While the head office provides collateral and core tools, she noted, “what was effective was having a Green Key Global resource initially look at all the materials and wrapping it all together in one program.”

Positive brand recognition – from without and within

Diem-Guy believes that hotel brands increasingly need to demonstrate that they are actively and authentically pursuing sustainability. “Consumers and guests notice if you’re not,” she said.

Guests making reservations with a Coast Hotel property receive a confirmation email highlighting the hotel’s sustainability initiatives. For example, guests are informed that Coast Hotels provide large format environmentally-friendly and naturally-derived amenities, shampoos and lotions as a brand standard because they use less packaging than individual sizes. “This creates positive brand recognition,” said Diem-Guy.

Brand initiatives and local actions are backed up by each hotel’s GKG Eco-Rating, which resonates with guests and staff alike. “From a guest-facing perspective,” said Diem-Guy, “Green Key Global has enabled Coast Hotels to communicate with confidence that we have environmental ethics as a brand.”

Internally, green certification generates a great deal of staff pride and it’s an important factor in attracting new talent, too. “We have a wide age demographic as staff, including GenZ, so it’s important when recruiting,” said Diem-Guy, “Social consciousness is part of what people are looking for in their employer of choice and it is part of our Employee Value Proposition.”



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The Results

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Brigitte Diem-Guy
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Promise of year-over-year progress

Having established benchmarks through GKG assessments of all Coast Hotel properties, we have seen great improvements and we consistently analyze the progression of a set of “green” key performance indicators and then consult with Green Key Global about what other strategies to undertake,” said Diem-Guy.

Coast Hotels is committed to the certification process – and to making progress. “It will be important to show continual commitment and review improvements across the brand,” said Diem-Guy, “And with Green Key Global as our partner to help with that review and to identify new strategies to move forward, is what we hoped for and what we're achieving.”

