



COLUMN BY
JOHN MORRIS
SOFITEL AUSTRALIA
JOHN.MORRIS@
SOFITEL.COM

little things

TWO RECENT experiences in 24 hours set me thinking about how important little things are in the hospitality industry.

While we spend a lot of time strategising, “big picturing” and ensuring we are well positioned as brands, companies and individuals it really doesn’t matter diddly squat unless we get the little things right.

And, it’s funny what we remember too. Rarely is it the whole experience. The things we tend to remember are the little things. All of us can do it but very few of us do, which makes it so memorable. Little things, like a handwritten note or a small gift congratulating someone on an achievement.

But on to my recent experiences – one positive, one not so.

The latter was at a function house for around 500 people with the pre-function drinks held on an enclosed verandah. The crowd rapidly built and soon the verandah was jam packed and inaccessible... Now, call me fussy but surely if you are a function house and that is all you do – you could figure out that 500 people on a verandah will not give trayed waiters access. They get this issue’s Award For Short Sightedness.

The next night I was at a wedding when the bridal waltz CD decided not to play... We downloaded the song on to an iPhone but could not get it from there through the DJs console. Tears were brimming when a call to the bride and groom’s hotel (OK, if you must know... the Sofitel Sydney Wentworth) ended up with the executive assistant manager driving the Bose sound system from the wedding couple’s suite plus an iPhone connector to the venue.

Okay not a major thing. A little thing except to the bride and groom who are now loyal for life.

In many ways, little is the new big.

year, with the estimated value of those confirmations up by a healthy 22 per cent to \$13,640,241. An analysis of data collected from the enquiries and confirmations handled by the Newcastle Visitors and Convention Bureau (NVCB) also revealed that although confirmed business was up, Newcastle had not completely escaped the effects of the GFC with enquiries being down by 11 per cent. “Considering the current global economic situation, this is a solid result,” said NVCB conventions manager, Ruth Appleby. “We have noticed a slowing up on the level of enquiries over the past few months, but I am confident the hard work that has been put in over the past year showcasing Newcastle’s conferencing credential in our major markets of Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra will pay dividends.”

The Melbourne Convention + Visitors Bureau (MCVB) continues to cultivate a green path for the business events industry with the launch of the new MCVB Event Carbon Calculator. The online carbon calculator now enables sustainability conscious event organisers to instantly calculate the environmental impact of their Melbourne conference, meeting, incentive or event. MCVB CEO, Sandra Chipchase, said the carbon calculator, developed in conjunction with the Carbon Reduction Institute (CRI), marked another Australian convention bureau first. Turn to page 57 to learn more.

Swissôtel Hotels & Resorts recently announced the appointment of Wayne Horbach as general manager of the 359-room Swissôtel Sydney. Mr Horbach brings to Swissôtel Sydney almost 30 years of hospitality experience, most of which has been gained in the area of sales and marketing. Since he was first appointed account manager for Southern Pacific Hotels in 1992, he has progressed to assume several senior sales and marketing appointments, most notably

regional director of sales at Stamford Hotels & Resorts and Blue Rock’s national sales and marketing manager.

International visitors to the Gold Coast spent more than \$1.034 billion in the 12 months from July 2008 to June 2009 - \$94 million more than in the previous 12 months, according to figures released by Tourism Research Australia. The 10 per cent increase in international visitor spend means the tourism capital outperformed its main competitors in Brisbane, Sydney, The Whitsundays and Tropical North Queensland in terms of its key measurement, dollar growth. Gold Coast Tourism CEO Martin Winter said while the Gold Coast experienced a fall off in visitors (-7.4 per cent), the increase in expenditure was testament to the strong value and variety proposition of the Gold Coast being heavily promoted.

Planning for AIME 2010, the 18th Asia-Pacific Incentives & Meetings Expo, is well underway with a new look AIME website now online (www.aime.com.au) and a new advertising campaign soon to be launched. Featuring a fresh new colour palette the campaign is the third in a three year strategy, using the theme’s aime higher (2008), aime for more (2009) and aime for the best (2010). “Our marketing strategy positions AIME as the leader in the region, using themes that reflect the high standard of AIME substantiated by its hosted buyer program and audited results,” said event director, Rosemarie Sama. The advertising campaign and website will feature the new tag line ‘aime for the best’ which aligns the campaign with the RTE meetings and incentive exhibition portfolio branding of ‘best for business, best for education and best for networking’. AIME 2010 will be held on March 2-3 at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. The event is the largest of its kind in the region attracting more than 850 exhibitors and up to 500 hosted buyers.