

LightStay Helps Reduce Hilton's Environmental Impact, Owner Costs

by Glenn Hasek



Recognizing in a huge way that it cannot monitor—or improve upon—what it does not measure, Hilton Worldwide took a giant step toward reducing its environmental impact this past week with the official rollout of its LightStay program. LightStay is an internal system used by Hilton to collect and track energy and water consumption data as well as information on paper product use, air quality, transportation, housekeeping practices and much more. Specific examples include tracking where energy-efficient lighting is installed at a property, the average flush and flow rates for faucets and urinals, and the various waste streams that are being recycled.

A total of 1,300 Hilton properties are currently using the system. By December 31, 2011, all 3,500 properties within Hilton Worldwide's global portfolio of brands will use LightStay, making the company, according to Hilton, the first major multi-brand company in the hospitality industry to require property-level measurement of sustainability. The measurement of sustainability performance will become a brand standard on the same level as service. (InterContinental Hotels Group's Green Engage program for tracking energy and water consumption and waste generation, an initiative comparable to LightStay, is optional for that company's franchisees.)

LightStay is already having a significant, positive impact on the environment and costs. In the program's first full year (2009), the 1,300 Hilton Worldwide properties using the system conserved enough energy to power 5,700 homes for a year, saved enough water to fill more than 650 Olympic-size pools and reduced carbon output equivalent to taking 34,865 cars off the road. Reductions in water and energy use translated into \$29 million in reduced utility costs for hotel owners. LightStay helped Hilton Worldwide properties using the system reduce energy use by 5 percent, carbon output by 6 percent, waste output by 10 percent and water use by 2.4 percent.

LightStay Tested for Two Years

Hilton's program went through two years of testing before its launch. Christopher Corpuel, vice president, Sustainability for Hilton Worldwide, says LightStay is an online tool. "A variety of stakeholders contribute to entering the data, often with the engineer or director of property operations managing the process," Corpuel says. "All in all, it's really a team effort."

When asked what challenges were encountered as LightStay was developed, Corpuel says one was getting the data right on a global scale. "With more than 3,500 hotels across 80 countries with half a million team members, it takes time to create a common platform and then socialize the issues

that affect our business and the resources we created to support our properties. The technical challenges were really minor. We focused on providing properties with the tools they need to manage performance. Properties were eager to engage the system, as they see sustainability as critical to managing the business. Our owners have been very supportive as well, as it helps them to maximize overall value.”

To confirm the effective implementation and validity of LightStay, Hilton Worldwide commissioned KEMA-Registered Quality, Inc.—a management systems design company—to perform a series of audits. Corpuel says it was important to confirm the validity of LightStay for three reasons. “First, we integrated sustainability as a measure of performance,” he says. “Just like a financial statement, we wanted to validate the calculations in the system, as well as data going in and data going out. Second, the validation process helps evolve the system so we can continually improve. Feedback from our properties and team members is vital to our success. Finally, we want to make sure we’re looking at valid data. If we’re looking at inaccurate data, it’s not helping us drive performance.”

Hilton Worldwide, InterContinental Hotels Group, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide and other companies are formalizing the monitoring and measuring of their environmental impact with the launch of online systems. These initiatives will play a huge role in helping to shrink the carbon footprint of our industry while also reducing water and material waste. What is your company doing that is similar? I would love to hear from you. I can be reached at editor@greenlodgingnews.com, or by phone at 440-243-2055.



Author Glenn Hasek Glenn Hasek is the publisher and editor of Green Lodging News. This article first appeared on the Green Lodging News website. Copyright © 2010. To sign up to receive the weekly Green Lodging News newsletter, go to www.greenlodgingnews.com.

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