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LEAD STORY

Hospitality Warriors

How the hospitality industry stood steadfast in their fight against the pandemic

Much has been talked about how the travel and tourism business around the world was and continues to be hammered by the pandemic. The industry, which has always welcomed people with open arms, was severely hit as international tourism came to a standstill; discretionary spends were down and leisure travel was completely wiped out. The industry in India was not left far behind and was equally, if not more, hit badly. Just when the cheer was beginning to return, the second wave hit and sent everyone back to ground zero. But this time, the situation was far graver than one could have anticipated. On one side where the fear of unemployment and an economic crash loomed large, the industry lost several lives to the pandemic. But there was one thing which did not change – the industry continued to reinvent. It did not shy away from its responsibilities.

The past few months and last year have shown us how volatile our business is and yet how resilient the industry can be. This is one industry where you can't work from home but the industry has remodelled itself to great extent, says Shailendra Yadav, Resort Manager, Signum Eco Dera Resort & Spa – Jaipur.

“**This is one industry where you can't work from home but the industry has remodelled itself to great extent, says Shailendra Yadav**”



“**To contain the spread of the virus in the current phase as well, we have again put a hold on some of the services and amenities for the better safety of our guests, says Stephen D'souza**”

Yadav adds, “Our team and associates have put in extra mile on every given day to ensure our Guests feel safe with us and with work ethos like never before. Every passing day brings in a new challenge and we stand to deliver to the best of our abilities.”

A similar sentiment is echoed by many from across the industry. Stephen D'souza, General Manager, Four Points by Sheraton, Navi Mumbai says, “In post Covid times, it has become imperative to maintain guest satisfaction and highest safety standards with strict protocols. At Four Points by Sheraton Navi Mumbai, we have put in place a multi-pronged approach designed to meet the health and safety challenges presented by Covid -19 for our guests and associates.”

During the onset of the Covid -19 outbreak, D'souza says, the hotel management was extremely proactive in taking precautions and additional safety measures even before the lockdown. “It helped us relook and reimagine many services and come up with innovative solutions for enhanced hospitality experience for our guests”, he asserts.

Marriott brand's cleanliness commitments

- **Introducing contact-less stay:** By encouraging guests to use Marriott Bonvoy mobile app to check in and check out; Using QR codes for payment and menus for restaurant and in room dining.
- **Minimizing Contact:** Floor markers to crate social distancing in public areas and in elevators, awareness posters and digital videos in public areas. Glass shield at front desk, usage of PPE (as required) by all front line staff.
- **Identification of common-touch points:** The entire focus is on reducing the common touch points and sanitizing them at regular intervals. High traffic areas are sanitized every 2 hours.
- **New Cleaning Technologies / Hygiene Partners:** Implemented enhanced technologies including Electrostatic Sprayer and the highest classification of disinfectants recommend by our hygiene partners Johnson Diversey and Ecolab.

Following the first wave, the hotel had gradually reopened its facilities while simultaneously engaging with guests to reassure them and make them feel safe with stringent safety protocols in place. “To contain the spread of the virus in the current phase as

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well, we have again put a hold on some of the services and amenities for the better safety of our guests. However, once we are over this phase, we shall gradually reopen the hotel's facilities, at least for vaccinated travelers", D'Souza adds.

Lemon Tree Hotels has been working closely with Diversey on a programme "Rest Assured" since May 2020. The programme is focused on sanitization of the hotel to ensure the safety and wellbeing of guests/employees. Similarly, its programme "Lemon Tree Cares" provides support by financing all vaccination expenses for employees and their families (dependants); medical expenses (including oxygen, if required) for home quarantine cases; additional expenses beyond the insured amount for hospitalization cases; three weeks paid leave; free hotel stay, medicines for employees needing to isolate; compensation in case an employee passes away. Rattan Keswani, Deputy Managing Director, Lemon Tree Hotels says, "this is a graded plan based on tenure in the company, and the spouse/child will be trained and employed."



We have secured oxygen concentrators and deployed them at Moolchand Hospital in Delhi to be used by our colleagues, their family members or society at large, says K B Kachru

While a lot of internalization, employee care, setting up of safety protocols is being carried out, the industry has not left any stone unturned to extend support to the larger populace either. From providing free meals to converting hotels into quarantine facilities and giving rooms for healthcare workers and medical staff, the industry has remained at the forefront of fighting the pandemic.

K B Kachru, Chairman Emeritus and Principal Advisor, Radisson Hotel Group, South Asia said, "Hospitality industry is uniquely positioned to support communities and frontline warriors as they deal with the pandemic. Keeping the safety and health of our employees and guests at the core of our operational plans, we continue to work with SGS, the world's leading inspection, verification, testing and certification company, to further strengthen our existing rigorous sanitation, cleanliness and disinfection program across all our hotels."

Apart from a slew of initiatives, Radisson has also taken steps to assist colleagues across its hotels and the corporate office. "We have secured oxygen concentrators and deployed them at Moolchand Hospital in Delhi to be used by our colleagues, their family members or society at large. The Group launched a worldwide campaign 'Radisson Cares' to raise funds in partnership with Red Cross in Americas, and United Way in Rest-of-the-World (RoW) for Covid -19 relief", Kachru said.

Across the Radisson corporate office, a dedicated taskforce consisting of 30+ volunteers have 'adopted' affected colleagues and continue to support them through their recovery by helping with medicines, meals, and information in timely manner. In solidarity with the families of our colleagues who lost their battle against Covid -19, Radisson is launching a structured financial and medical coverage plan for dependent children (<18 years) of bereaved colleagues.

Yadav added, "At Signum Hotel & Resorts, the safety and well-being of our guests and associates is paramount for us and it is important that our guests and associates feel equally safe during their stay or even at work. We stand to our commitment to vaccinate all our associates across all hotels and in line with government directions for our guest to be assured of a safe environment. Keeping our associates motivated and engaged has been our focus along with developing talent and providing exposure."

As the second wave of the pandemic impacts lives and livelihoods across the country, IHCL has once again extended support to India in its battle against the pandemic. The company has implemented a number of initiatives keeping the health and safety of its employees, guests, and community at the heart. "We have established a structured and holistic four-pillar framework with the aim to Prevent Infection, Protect Lives, Provide Support and Persevere in ensuring sustained safety of all our stakeholders", said CEO & Managing Director, Indian Hotels Company Ltd. (IHCL), Puneet Chhatwal.



What the pandemic has glaringly brought to the fore is that one's health cannot be taken for granted, says Puneet Chhatwal

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In support of frontline Covid warriors, IHCL has once again extended its #MealsToSmiles initiative through the Taj Public Service Welfare Trust in collaboration with TajSATS, and other donors. The company has delivered approximately 358,000 nutritious meals to healthcare workers at eight cities across eight states and 32 hospitals and Covid care centers to date. In addition to hosting over 10,000 room nights for doctors at its hotels across the country, IHCL has also partnered with hospitals to provide quarantine facilities for asymptomatic to mildly symptomatic patients. Currently 17 hotels across 12 locations are offering approximately 1,500 rooms, and the scope is expanding depending on the dynamic needs of the situation. These quarantine facilities extend to IHCL employees and their families too. The company

is also providing employees with critical medical, home care and logistical assistance as required.

IHCL will be focusing on providing sustained health support such as introducing more nutritious diets for employees at staff cafeterias to organizing annual vaccination drives to increasing awareness about regular medical- check-ups and other endeavors for the long-term commitment of the safety and health of employees.

Lemon Tree has partnered with state governments and converted hotels into quarantine centres. SOPs have been redefined based on guidelines from WHO, Ministry of Home Affairs and State Governments around hygiene/sanitization and nutrition. The hotel chain has partnered with hospitals under “Support By Lemon Tree” to provide early care to mild/asymptomatic Covid patients.

“What the pandemic has glaringly brought to the fore is that one’s health cannot be taken for granted”, Chhatwal concluded.

Although there is much left to do and the pandemic is far from over, HAI ENGAGE salutes industry captains and the entire fraternity for their tireless efforts and the selfless acts of kindness towards the larger benefit of fellow citizens.

Sarovar Hotels and Resorts

Sarovar Hotels and Resorts in partnership with #iamgurgaon and Emoha Elder Care has dedicated to Gurugram a 60 bed Covid Care Center in the Golden Tulip Hotel Sector 29. In a time when the pandemic is causing so much stress for our elders, the center will be a ‘home’ for elders to recover in peace with dedicated oxygen concentrators, on-site clinical and nursing attention, vitals monitoring, online activities for emotional wellbeing and most importantly a caring homely atmosphere. This facility is aimed for elders who are Covid positive and are unable to take care of themselves in their homes. The initiative is partnered with Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurugram for Covid Consultations.

ITC Hotels

ITC Hotels has achieved the distinctive milestone of being the First Hotel chain in the world to receive the PLATINUM level certification under DNV’s My Care Infection risk management programme. Certification programme “My Care” by DNV, is developed at a global stage by a team of expert infection risk and hospital management professionals. The maturity model of the programme (Level 1 to 5) assesses and covers all facets of hotel operations on six different dimensions Governance, Strategy, communication, actions, data analysis and continuous improvement.

Embodying the ethos of Responsible Luxury, ITC Hotels, the world’s largest chain of hotels with the maximum number of LEED Platinum Certified Properties has been accorded the global certification for it’s one of a kind ‘WeAssure’ programme.