

News monitored for: Lemon Tree Hotels

SUSTAINABILITY
SPECIAL

THE BUSINESS OF THRIVING

By integrating sustainability into every aspect of its operations, The Lemon Tree Company shows how corporate responsibility is a great business strategy

BY VINITA BHATIA



Aradhana Lal, VP, sustainability initiatives, The Lemon Tree Company.

Companies across industry domains have realised they can use sustainability as a key differentiator and also to gain an economic edge over competition. Those that choose to ignore it are doing so at their own peril.

The Lemon Tree Company has adopted a sustainability strategy that is based on the well-established Triple Bottom line principle that encompasses planet, people and profit. It has broadly classified these into energy and water conservation, waste management and adoption of green fuels and green material.

For instance, under energy conservation, the chain has opted for Variable Refrigerant Volume (VRV) air-conditioning technology that is 30% more efficient and Heat Recovery Ventilators (HRV) with thermal enthalpy wheels for heat recovery from washroom exhausts. Praveen Agarwal, associate general manager, engineering services, The Lemon Tree Company explains how its building automation systems have chilled water reset to reduce power consumption while cooling the building and auto time management for lighting, air-conditioning and ventilation fans through timers and motion sensors that conserve energy.

By harnessing natural and daylight power consumption has reduced dramatically at the hotels, while double-glazed vacuum-sealed windows conserve energy by - 5% and reduce noise too. "The energy-efficient hydro-pneumatic system with VFD motors for water supply ensures constant pressure and reduces load on pumps. Wind power is used as alternative, renewable energy at both our hotels in Chennai. We are working on implement this initiative at hotels in more cities," Agarwal adds.

GAINING A GREEN EDGE

Under water conservation initiatives, the sewage treatment plant recycles water used across the hotel and approximately 30% of this recycled water is used in the garden and flush systems. Further, aerators and flow restrictors are affixed on taps to maintain water force

and yet reduces outflow, while auto flush minimises water wastage in urinals.

Aware that becoming environmentally conscious can give it a competitive edge in the industry, the hotel chain is leading the efforts to use green materials in its daily operations. This includes using CNG instead of LPG and recycled wood or medium density fiberboard, rubber wood and particle board. It also uses AAC blocks, i.e. cement concrete blocks in fly ash, which offers several benefits, including thermal efficiency, in building material.

MORE ON THE PLATE

Sustainability is intrinsically interconnected with various divisions within a hospitality business. And one vertical where it has a significant impact is F&B. Organic produce, for instance, is gaining a lot of attention not only from customers but also from chefs. Many professional kitchens have started maintaining their own herb garden and this is something, The Lemon Tree Company plans to do in the future as well.

"The health benefits of organic food are now increasingly recognised the world over and by offering such food at our hotels in the future we too can address this customer requirement of eating healthy on the go. Another positive rub-off of this initiative will be that our consumers will see us as a responsible brand and will be inclined to become Lemon Tree loyalists," Lal notes.

There are several such uncharted routes to take on the path of sustainability. But what matters is the willingness to tread down that path, with the understanding that they can become sustainable only if they give back to the world a little bit of what they are taking from it. ■