Duff on Hospitality Law

Highlights from 2011 Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association Annual Conference September 25 -27, 2011

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Just two weeks ago over 300 restaurateurs, hoteliers and industry suppliers came together in Bend, Oregon, for the 2011 Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association Annual Conference. I had the chance to attend this year's Conference and to present during Sunday's opening sessions.

This year's Conference featured a good mix of speakers and presentations. Highlights from the Conference included the following:

- Smith Travel confirmed that Portland (like many other West Coast cities) is currently enjoying unprecedented growth in lodging demand, solid growth in occupancy and mediocre growth in rate. Unfortunately, given the steep decline that occurred in each category over the past few years, the Portland market still has a long way to go. A complete copy of Smith Travel's presentation, including 2012 forecast, can be found at www.hotelnewsnow.com.
- Vikram Singh of Evision Worldwide presented on the rapidly changing world of mobile marketing and the importance of creating a tailored mobile presence different from existing on-line and web-based efforts. Vikram is a regular presenter at lodging and restaurant industry events, so if you missed seeing him in Bend, look for an opportunity to see him at another industry event.

Like so many other conferences occurring this fall, this year's Conference had a clear focus on evolving technology and media forms and their use in the hotel and restaurant industries. Several of the Conference's exhibitors (see for example, CoHo-Res) and at least five presenters talked about the impact of technology and new media forms on members' operations, sales and marketing. If you've not yet considered how social media, flash sales or consumers' increasing use of mobile devices and applications will affect your property, you need to do so now.

I was invited to speak during Sunday's opening breakout session on the variety of intellectual property issues that are affecting both restaurateurs and hoteliers on a daily basis. Entitled, "Whose Property Is It? Practical Guidance for Handling Third Parties' Music, Images and Brands," the presentation covered music licensing, image and video licensing, patent trolls, illegal downloads by customers and guests, keyword search and privacy. Much to my surprise, the presentation engendered more discussion among attendees than just about any other presentation I have given over the past several years as several

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debated the need for performing rights organizations' aggressive enforcement of copyright holders' interests. A downloadable PDF copy of the much debated presentation is available (linked above) if you would like to review it. I welcome your thoughts and questions.

Attendees' sentiment at this year's Conference was more positive than the sentiment expressed at last year's conference, though several attendees expressed concern over the macro economic environment and its likely effects on the hotel and restaurant industries. Interestingly, there were a number of hotel owners talking about future new development, a topic that wasn't on anyone's mind last year.

Congratulations to ORLA on another great conference. I look forward to attending again next year.

Posted in *Conference Notes*

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