

instincts

Instincts is a monthly publication on branding for clients, associates and friends.

Leading and inspiring all those who touch the enterprise to understand, embrace and enhance the power of your brand.

Back to basics

The list shown on the right is from the Four Seasons Hotel website, proudly flaunting the exhaustive range of amenities in their rooms. Wow. The list shown on the Hilton website is similar as you might imagine and, not surprisingly, so are the lists for most of the other comparative hotel chains.

services & amenities in your room

- o 100% cotton oversized towels
- o CD and DVD players
- o Down pillows
- o Duvets
- o Hair dryer
- o In-room safe
- o Iron and ironing board
- o Make-up/shaving mirror
- o Non-allergenic pillows available
- o On-command interactive TV
- o Refrigerated private bar
- o Satellite TV
- o Tea/coffee maker
- o Thick terry bathrobes
- o Twice-daily housekeeping service



What has become obvious by its omission is the bed. Yeah, remember the bed? When the first entrepreneur came up with the idea of 'a place to sleep away from home', I just bet he put a bed in a room and assumed he had the customer's needs covered.

Along comes competition and somewhere between then (probably Biblical times) and today, the bed has all but been forgotten. Now, every major hotel chain is differentiating with their extras - which can't be easy with cost pressures and eroding margins. How much can you continue to throw in?

The smart folks at Westin, however, likely while trying to figure out what new amenity to add to their room, happened on the bed. I can almost imagine the scene... with little space left in the room for the next 'extra', somebody on the creative team suggests getting rid of the bed to create some of the needed space. That's when the lightning strikes from above...

Oh my God - the bed! We had forgotten the bed. And so was introduced to us The Westin Heavenly Bed®. Now the cornerstone of their differentiation and marketing thrust, the initiative has been so successful that you can now buy all the bedding components on the Westin website. And Nordstroms, that pearly-gated retailer, sells the linens in their stores with the Westin Heavenly Bed® name. That's all good branding.

What would brand coach suggest?

Old friends are a brand's worst enemies. The very people who are entrusted to care for the brand are always anxious to bring something new and fresh to the equation - mistakenly thinking that everybody else is as bored with the status quo as they are. And add to this boredom the fact that they're way too close to see the obvious, and you have the makings of a hotel without beds.

Stay in touch with your basics. Revisit your brand foundation regularly. Somewhere back in the founding of the organization, embedded in the Core Purpose, is the essence of the business, of the brand - use it to guide your decisions. It's human nature to wander, it's good branding to stay focused.

P.S. Hey Tim Hortons, remember that you were about not just a fresh, but also a quick cup of coffee? If you add one more extra onto your meal menu, we will never get to the counter. You're not Wendy's. They just own you.