

### Setting Up a Linked Policies Database at Your Hospitality Operation

Communications among the management staff of a hospitality operation is critical to keeping everyone informed, on task, and functioning as a team with a common vision. But other than a weekly staff meeting it is often challenging for managers to get together, given their varying schedules.

The advent of emails and the Internet has made it easier for managers to communicate among themselves, but the power of computers and the operation's intranet can be harnessed to truly improve communication and consistency in operations. This can be done by setting up a linked intranet of values, standards, policies, procedures, training material, benchmarks, and other operating and organizational material.

In 1999, as I opened a new club, all department heads were writing standards, policies, procedures, and training material for their departments. By establishing a basic layout template, we were able to create a great deal of material with a common look and feel. Much of this material is now available on the Hospitality International Resources website for all to use.

But after creating this material, we took it a step further by creating the linked database on our club's server. This meant that as an individual was reading a golf policy and it referenced a particular form, the reader could click on the form number in the text. The form number was linked to the form so that the reader could automatically see and, if desired, print out the form.

All this was simple to do by using MS-Word and the link button on the toolbar at the top of the Word document. The link button is the little symbol of the earth with a chain link at the bottom. You simply underline the word or phrase you want to link, click on the link button, and scroll through your folders and files until you find the file you want to link. When you finished selecting the file, you will have a hyperlink to that file from the selected (and underlined) word(s) in your document.

The beauty of this linked intranet is that all of your operation's key documents, standards, policies, procedures, and training material are easy-to-find and readily accessible to any manager who may need them. Further, any changes or upgrades can be made in one place and all managers notified of the change via an email.

Steps to Building an Intranet at your operation:

1. Download any desired material from the HRI website. Modify it to suit the needs of your particular operation. As an alternative, use your own created material.
2. Set up a Main Index Page in a Word file. Usually this will be set up by department, so that if someone wants to go to Food & Beverage, they click on Food & Beverage and the link will take them to the F&B Index Page. Each department's index page is nothing more than a Word file with the numbered policies and procedures linked to the actual files.
3. For uniformity sake, the GM should set a standard design template (font type, size, header, footer, and text formatting) so that every file has a common look and feel.
4. While each department head can set up their own department's policies and procedures and index page, it is helpful to have someone – usually the organization's administrative assistant set up the Main Index Page and create the necessary links from file to file.

While building such an intranet takes time, in the end it provides the organization with a cohesive set of operating standards and policies that will make everyone's job easier. Having set one up, I can tell you its well worth the time and effort – and ultimately not that difficult. As with so many other things, it's really a matter of discipline and organization.

*Ed Rehkopf, Hospitality Resources International*