



Mark Slymen Helps Montage Balance Luxury & Sustainability

By Glenn Hasek
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Name: Mark Slymen

Title: Director of Sustainability, LEED AP

Company: Montage Hotels & Resorts

Years with company: Six

My primary responsibilities: "To coordinate the development of sustainable practices for future developments and to ensure that we are operating our current hotels in an environmentally sustainable manner."

Hotel group's most significant environmental accomplishment so far: "Earning LEED Gold certification for the Montage Beverly Hills. The accomplishment is a reflection of what our associates bring to the table daily."

What we are doing right is educating our staff to take the proper steps to create a sustainable experience."

Our biggest environmental challenge: "To stay on top of the many new advances in products and technologies in our industry."

What I like most about what I do: "The challenges. With sustainability you are never done. You always see things that can be done better."

What advice I would give to a developer considering building to LEED standards: "Educate your staff. If you are building a new hotel, it is important to educate the contractors and subcontractors. Have someone on your team who understands the LEED process."

LAGUNA BEACH, CALIF.—As director of sustainability at Laguna Beach, Calif.-based Montage Hotels & Resorts, Mark Slymen oversees all sustainable development and operational practices at the young but growing company. Montage, which focuses on the development of ultra-luxury properties, recently earned LEED Gold certification for its Beverly Hills hotel that opened last November. Working in tandem with Green Dinosaur, a green building consulting firm, Slymen recently oversaw the process that led up to the LEED designation.

Slymen, who began his hospitality career working at the Aliso Creek Inn & Golf Course in Laguna Beach, Calif., currently oversees sustainable development and operational practices at not only Montage's Beverly Hills hotel but also the company's Laguna Beach property, its upcoming hotel in Deer Valley, Utah, and its future Los Cabos property in San Lucas Baja California Sur, Mexico.

For Montage, Slymen helps the company green its properties as much as possible without negatively impacting the luxury experience. For example, the company does not ask its guests to opt out of laundering sheets and towels but it does do everything possible behind the scenes in its laundry operations to reduce energy and water consumption. "We are taking that choice away from the guest," Slymen says. "We want to be handling things for the guests."

Montage's Pursuit of LEED

At its now LEED Gold certified Beverly Hills hotel, the decision to pursue the LEED designation was made after construction had started. The biggest challenge, Slymen says, was getting all of the plans finalized and educating the different trades in regard to the LEED credits. Montage was already meeting many LEED standards because of California's strict building mandates. One of the projects that put it over the top was a garage exhaust system that incorporates carbon monoxide monitoring. The Beverly Hills property is 43 percent more efficient than a standard mixed-use building. During construction, 83 percent of construction waste was recycled. Montage's Laguna Beach hotel is currently in a pilot program with the U.S. Green Building Council, the creator of LEED, and the company's Deer Valley and Los Cabos hotels have been registered for LEED.

Slymen says many green initiatives are currently under way at Montage's Laguna Beach and Beverly Hills properties. These include green cleaning, integrated landscaping and pest management practices, energy-efficient lighting, environmentally preferred purchasing, waste management programs (recycling), and water-quality management practices (using water filtration instead of offering bottled water). At the Beverly Hills hotel, a saline chemical system is used to keep pool water clean. Managers participate in Environmental Impact Group meetings and staff volunteer for beach cleanup events.

At the Los Cabos hotel, still under development, a desalination system will allow Montage to irrigate the golf courses and grounds. Waste water will be treated on site and 13,000 square feet of solar thermal panels will help heat the property's water. At the Deer Valley property, a brownfield site is currently being revitalized to make room for the hotel.

Sustainable Business Approach

Whereas some companies build and operate hotels with the idea that they will sell them within five years, Slymen says Montage intends to hold on to its properties for the long term. This approach helps justify more expensive investments.

"We can look at things with a longer payback, understanding we will be operating these hotels for a long time," Slymen says.

What is necessary to make any green hotel a success? Slymen says it is staff training. "If they are not properly trained, you can only do so much."

Montage's director of sustainability says it was while working as a golf course manager and superintendent at the Aliso Creek Inn & Golf Course that he honed his operations-related skills. Those skills plus his knowledge of green design have helped make him an ideal fit for his position. His experience is backed by his education. He is a graduate of the University of Oregon with a degree in Management and Finance and an MBA in General Business.

Go to [Montage Hotels & Resorts](#).

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[Molly Ray Helps Kimpton Make Sustainability/Sales Connection](#)

SEATTLE—When one thinks of sustainability and hotels, it is certainly not the sales department that first comes to mind. Molly Ray, manager, sustainable partnerships and senior sales manager for Kimpton Hotels Seattle, is proving, however, that by making a commitment to sustainability, one can not only sustain sales volume but grow it as well. Ray is the architect of Kimpton's Sustainable Partnership Program (KSP).

05/27/2009

[Beattie Elected Co-chair of Florida Caribbean Regional Council of U.S. Green Building Council](#)

MIAMI—The Miami office of international architecture, planning, engineering, interior design and program management firm LEO A DALY is pleased to announce that its director of architecture, J Beattie, AIA, LEED AP, has been elected co-chair for the Florida Caribbean Regional Council of the U.S. Green Building Council. He has been an active participant of sustainable efforts for many years.

05/11/2009

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