



Success Story: Colwen Hotels

Bringing Systems and Structure to Hospitality's
Biggest Hotel Brands





In a Snapshot

Since its entry into the lodging space in 1998, Colwen Hotel Management has been developing and growing one of the most successful portfolios in the northeastern United States.

That success is due, in large part, to the talented individuals who make up the Colwen Management team.

And that's where Kara Childs comes in. As the Regional Operations Manager at Colwen, she has worked with hotels across New England to improve their operations and performance, and drive their bottom line.

Her playbook of choice: Manager's Red Book®.

Childs uses it for the simple reason that over her 12 year career in hospitality, nothing has transformed a hotel's operations like The Manager's Red Book®. "Back then, if the hotel didn't have it, I would immediately order it because it's such an important way to organize information," she says.

Childs makes sure the books are on auto-order for every location, which she says is a simple process. "Once the Red Book Solutions team gets the hotel into their system and the books ordered, we get right to work."

Rolling out the new system and training staff is easy because the books are self-explanatory, explains Childs. "If you're excited about it, the staff gets excited about it. Then we just hold our employees accountable to writing everything down and making it their own."

The Bottom Line

Brand standards don't just affect hotel guests, they impact the value placed on the hotel's owners, managers and ultimately investors. There's a balance between upholding the expenses that go into those standards and the need to keep a tight grip on the bottom line.

The Manager's Red Book® is essential to Colwen Management's operational strategy because it

Their Story

From interior design and strategic marketing, to accounting and operations, Colwen Hotel Management helps popular brands like Renaissance, Residence Inn, Marriott, Hilton Garden Inn, and Holiday Inn maximize performance and exceed brand standards. Realizing they needed a better system to keep track of regular shift information, they turned to the industry favorite: The Manager's Red Book®.

Challenges

- Inconsistent methods for managing operations and communication across portfolio of hotel brands.
- Shift-to-shift notes were unorganized, inconsistent or non-existent.
- Guest information was getting lost and there was poor communication between shifts.

Products

- The Manager's Red Book®

Results

- The Manager's Red Book® provides detailed, step-by-step task-lists specifically for hotel operations.
- The Manager's Red Book® gives Colwen Hotel Management and its hotel managers a uniformed system to track performance.
- Off-the-shelf playbooks improve access to information and communication while creating a culture of accountability between departments.



**Designed for
hotel operations.**



**Streamlined
shift-to-shift
communications.**



**Improved
intra-department
accountability.**

serves as a cross-property system, promoting regular communication and accountability for team members during their shifts.

“I have an OCD-mindset about the staff and our every day shift operations,” Childs admits. “You just really can’t communicate enough.”

Her team uses the off-the-shelf version because the book is based on over 25 years of best practices in the hotel industry. “I travel around a lot of hotels. I like to walk in, read *The Manager’s Red Book*® for that quarter and know, for example, which maintenance issues haven’t been addressed.”

The hotel restaurants also use the *Kitchen Red Book* for guided action plans, important safety and training information, the day’s specials and priorities, food and beverage concerns and needs, operational issues and food waste.

“We have strict standards around food waste in some of our hotels. The kitchen staff uses the books to keep a running tally of what’s being wasted and what we need to order more of.”

Calculated Communication

In Childs’ experience, hotels without designated systems and processes are littered with loose papers, sticky notes and random clipboards that cause more confusion than good communication. *The Manager’s Red Book* and the hotel playbooks, on the other hand, consolidate everything in one place.

“Whenever we walked into a hotel that wasn’t using *The Manager’s Red Book*® there were just a lot of disparate systems. Staff members would write down important tasks, shift notes, or follow-up information, but it would be in individual notebooks and was abbreviated or unorganized. It didn’t work because staff would miss critical information or forget to involve another department, which would ultimately impact the guests’ experience.”

Childs uses the example of a bathtub leak. “The manager jots down a note that Room 1227 needs to be fixed and then communicates it to the engineering team who completes the maintenance request within an hour.”

Hotels that don’t have a centralized form of communication might forget important next steps, like communicating to housekeeping that the room needed

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-Kara Childs,
Regional Operations Manager,
Colwen Hotels



to be cleaned again. “There was a lot of opportunity to drop the ball. Which would trickle down to the guests,” she adds.

“The trick to improving the guest experience actually comes from efficient communication between departments.”

With The Manager's Red Book®, each department can clearly see what is going on during the shift or between shifts and staff is aware of any guest issues or complaints.

“We ask that employees check the Red Book first thing when they walk in the door.” Childs said. “Even an update on the status of a problem is enough to satisfy the guest, who really just wants to know that something is being done. It keeps everyone happy.”

A Systematic Stay

Hotel managers deal with a lot. They have to remember every tiny detail, react to big problems or get in front of even bigger priorities. Meanwhile they have empty positions to fill, new employees to train, guests with complaints, inspection ratings to meet and brand standards to uphold.

With The Manager's Red Book®, Childs' hotel managers proactively and effectively deal with those issues. “It helps that each section is designed with a daily list of ‘to-dos’ that are tailored to each role.”

Sections like: Guest Requests, Equipment/Supplies to Order, Major Projects in Progress, and Upcoming Events aren't just for managers. Hotel staff also benefits from a comprehensive template to document everything. Whether it's a special delivery or a specific booking request, every staff member, regardless of his or her shift, can reference the information they need in one place.

It's also repeatable year after year and across properties, which is important when Childs visits to assess their performance.

“The Manager's Red Book® really empowers everyone to plan ahead and focus on opportunities to give guests the best experience possible.” Those simple changes in the way information and daily shift activities are organized make it easier to handle big groups and events, and deliver a great customer experience.

“We have a couple of big sports arenas around our hotels and a lot of teams will book rooms as a group,” Childs explains.

The sales department books the team and then records information related to the reservation.

“Coaches and staff might come in early or players might drop in over the course of several hours. Our team tracks those details to make sure the guests get checked-in quickly and any specific requests are taken care of,” Childs adds. “It's one central location for shift-to-shift communication.”

Because the information is successfully handled at the staff level, managers spend less time troubleshooting staff errors and guest complaints, and more time organizing and planning for future success—whether it's booking more rooms during slow periods, or improving processes for managing peak seasons.



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Game Changer

"The Manager's Red Book® is absolutely a fantastic, all-in-one book that every hotel should take advantage of," says Childs.

The staff feels empowered to track their own tasks, make their own decisions and contribute to the future growth of the property. The Colwen Management team is confident that their team will help produce profitable, revenue-generating hotels that go above and beyond and deliver operational excellence.