



# It's all in the DETAILS...

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FreemanGroup Quarterly

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## A Word from Bill...



The economy seems to be dominating every facet of the news, so I thought that for this issue of "Details" I would be boring and focus on the same subject, but from a very personal small business view; a view from inside FreemanGroup.

I have spoken to a number of my fellow hospitality consultants in the last month and have, not unsurprisingly, found that a number of us are faced with the same types of challenges: lost business in the first quarter, delays in starting projects contracted to, cancellations of projects committed to, much slower pay cycles on receivables and all the attendant issues that arise out of a recessionary environment. The degree of the severity of these issues seems to vary from company to company, but the common theme is that for those of us working within a tourism/hospitality environment, now is the time for nerves of steel and a real belief in the product offering.

At FreemanGroup, we are wrestling with all the issues above; the training side of the business "took a hit". Initially, it looked as if the losses would be minimal, but as goes the speed of the decline of the economy, so goes the speed in the decline in training revenue.

The measurement side of the business however has held up and, in fact, increased. Quality Inspection business is up by 20% year to date. Our recently launched visitor/guest data capture division is not only showing signs of life; it looks very promising. We believe that we have the opportunity to achieve a true fiscal growth in the neighborhood of 35% for fiscal 2009 over fiscal 2008; pretty remarkable for these times.

FreemanGroup Products Division is delighted to announce the first offering from our partnership with the Educational Institute, TRAC. TRAC represents a true breakthrough in adaptable, useable and practical management tools for immediate use within the hospitality industry that directly address quality needs. The details of the products are to be found within this issue, there are none like them available from any other source and we are already working on our next offering for the public sector, due to be released mid summer.

FreemanGroup Latin America on the 16<sup>th</sup> March commenced a quality initiative in conjunction with the government of Panama under a multi year contract and we are expecting a lot of extra projects from the private sector in that country. It is a massive undertaking for us and we are very proud that the Panamanian government has shown such confidence in us.

There is good news to report then for the year moving forward from here. This progress in our other divisions, over the course of 2009 will, to some extent, offset the economic pain we are feeling in the first and second quarters of the year, due to the training business losses we have had. It will take time for the growth revenues to develop and for

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## New FG Clients

All of us in the FreemanGroup family would like to extend our sincerest appreciation and a warm welcome to our new clients.



## New FreemanGroup Product Offering



FreemanGroup and the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute (EI), the premier provider of professional certifications, education and training materials to the hospitality industry for over 50 years, have partnered to create three new line-level training packages for:

- Front Desk Representative
- Guestroom Attendant
- Restaurant Server



Known as TRAC (Train, Retain, Assess, and Certify), each program includes a trainer's guide, a job description, five employee reference guides, a training DVD, and five line-level certification exams. [View Sample \(pdf\)](#)

## Leadership...

### Brilliant Leadership in Times of Change



As I travel around, I continue to hear stories of gloom and doom. Corporations are tightening their belts, consumers have closed their wallets, and when I look into the faces of many people I see a blank stare. It's as if they are saying, *I am just here, I'm merely going through the motions.*

Brilliant leaders embrace change as a friend instead of a foe. They believe change offers wonderful opportunities for growth. And no matter what is happening around them, brilliant leaders remain optimistic. Brilliant leaders know that pessimism and cynicism feed on one another and produce negative thoughts and negative actions.

Here are seven arrows to draw from your leadership quiver:

- Share with your customers what you are willing to do to earn or keep their business. They don't really care about what you can't do or all of the hoops you have to jump through to make something happen. Be straight with them. People are tired, and their tolerance is very low after watching the stock market plunge, retirement plans diminish, and lay-offs happen all around them.
- Remember names, facts and details about customers. What is the name of his dog or cat, of her son or daughter? When is his birthday? What is her favorite cuisine or type of book? Alan Berg, VP of Strategic Solutions for The Knot, says, "Raise the bar on everything you do. Be the kind of business or person you would want to do business with."
- Your greatest asset in this economy is not your house, your car, your 401k, your savings account, or the money under your mattress. Your greatest asset is your confidence and that of your team. Protect that confidence; grow it and watch what happens. It is your bailout plan.
- Host your own "chew and chat" or "lunch and learn." Buy customers or employees a meal or treat them to lunch in the employee cafeteria. Prepare at least three questions to prime the conversation pump. The first should be personal. This creates a bond and answers the question of why you wanted to invite this person to lunch. The second question should be business related, which creates a connection between the two of you within the company. The third question should be future related, which gives you a chance to listen to and support the hopes and aspirations of that employee or that customer.
- Create an *Oh Brilliant One Award* so you can celebrate brilliance in your organization and highlight what employees are doing right instead of what they are doing wrong.

As leaders, you are contagious optimists instead of annoying pessimists. I believe that all of you are brilliant leaders, and that, in these tough times, you can either create history or just read it. I believe all of you are committed to embracing change and to remaining confident and hopeful. Here's the bottom line: Change, or be changed by change. You decide, Oh Brilliant One!

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## A Word From Bill...Continued

the remainder of 2009, it is certain that those revenues will not fully replace the losses we sustained in the first quarter. That said, we feel good about the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarters of 2009 and are very grateful to all our training and measurement clients that have stuck with us in these difficult times. I am very conscious of the commitment to quality that they are making with us and we, for our part, intend to ensure that the investment they have made pays off.

We have also aggressively pursued certain other measures that have ensured our service capability has remained intact for the very busy second half of the year that we know we are going to have. Selected and much valued longstanding clients have assisted with a discounted prepay plan. FreemanGroup employees have assisted with work efficiencies. We have been able to make economies within our office lease agreement, and we have been able to renegotiate certain vendor agreements. We have also found economies of scale within our membership of Worldwide Resource and we have found growth opportunities within our partnership with American Hotel and Lodging Educational Institute. We also are tapping into those geographic and tourism sector arenas that are eager to progress down the quality path regardless of the economic condition. Finally, through a broad base communication program, we have attempted to keep all our partners abreast of the times and conditions of our business interests. I would like to thank all our partners for the assistance given.

There have been casualties. We have had to lay off part of our training team, some of the finest trainers I have ever had the privilege of working with, thankfully the majority have found other jobs and are flourishing. The decision to lay off a colleague is a particularly difficult one; it goes to the heart of the morality of business. No one wins. The company loses a skill base, the employee loses a job and all it does for the economy is add to the problem. I had a real tough go of it with these exit decisions.

There it is then, out there...have the road to the other side is still rocky, but we have good seatbelts! My advice to anyone making a small business transparent there...have courage, be bold, be honest, understand that some of the really difficult decisions you make, will be really easy to criticize. Remember why you started a business in the first place and live by that. Most of all, understand that, under these conditions, you will truly find out who your friends are in business and in life. This recession so far has been worth every uncomfortable problem and conversation for just that.

Finally, to everyone: My colleagues, our clients, our competitors, our vendors and our friends.... I wish you all good fortune in 2009.

## FreemanGroup Is A Member of WorldWide Resource

Worldwide Resource is an innovative, informed and international strategic partner dedicated to performance improvement in, and across, the world of travel and hospitality.

Four respected firms, managed by specialist international industry experts, have integrated their respective services and industry knowledge to create an unparalleled offering in a 'one stop' global consortium, Worldwide Resource.

For more information visit [www.worldwideresource.com](http://www.worldwideresource.com)



## About FreemanGroup

**"Providing customer service solutions to the hospitality and tourism industry since 1985"**

FreemanGroup offers an entirely integrated consulting service, a comprehensive range of service solutions, and exceptional quality support to the hospitality and travel industry worldwide. The firm's clients include major hotels and resorts, restaurants, casinos, destinations and ports of entry worldwide. FreemanGroup services are comprised of hospitality management and line level training, mystery shopping, guest/employee feedback, customization of standards of performance/job description templates, and new property openings.

Founded in 1985 by Bill Freeman, FreemanGroup is based in Dallas, Texas. The firm also has offices in London and Costa Rica. For more information, contact the Dallas office at 972-479-1345 or visit [www.freemangroupsolutions.com](http://www.freemangroupsolutions.com).

To remove your name from our mailing list, please contact [awoodall@freemangroup.org](mailto:awoodall@freemangroup.org).  
Questions or comments? E-mail us at or call 972-479-1345

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## FG In The News

### FG and EI Introduce TRAC



Educational Institute, FreemanGroup Collaboration Results in New "Train, Retain, Assess, and Certify" (TRAC) Program for Line-Level Skills Training



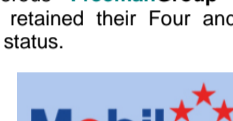
TRAIN | RETAIN | ASSESS | CERTIFY

## Winning FG Clients!

### Mobil Travel Guide Awards FG Clients

Mobil Travel Guide added Trump International Hotel and Tower New York and Skylofts at MGM Grand to their list of Mobil Travel Guide Five-Star hotels.

We wish to congratulate these two FreemanGroup clients and to the numerous FreemanGroup clients who retained their Four and Five-Star status.



## FG Client Opening

### Mauna Kea Beach Hotel Celebrates Grand Opening

After a multi-million dollar renovation that included redesigned guest rooms, restaurants, a new spa, and substantial face lift for the renowned golf course Mauna Kea Beach Hotel celebrated its grand opening at the end of March. FreemanGroup assisted Mauna Kea Beach Hotel with a complete Pre-Opening Training Package.



## FG Happenings

### Houston Short Course

In January, Bill Freeman and Greg Marquart, Executive Director of Operations ran a session titled *Creating a Service Culture* at the Texas Hotel and Lodging Association's 64th Annual Short Course at the University of Houston's Conrad N. Hilton College of Hotel & Restaurant Management.



### FreemanGroup is now on Twitter!

Visit FreemanGroup's Twitter sight for weekly updates from Bill Freeman. [Click here to visit our Twitter site.](#)



## FreemanGroup Products and Services

- Standards of Performance Manuals
- Job Descriptions
- Train The Trainer Seminars
- On-The-Job Skills Training
- Customer Service Workshops
- Internal Trainer Certifications
- Mystery Shopping
- Guest/Visitor Satisfaction Tracking
- Employee Opinion Surveys
- Video Enhanced Online Surveys
- New Property Opening Programs
- Tourism Management/Destination Programs