



Corporate Responsibility: South Sands Hotel



South Sands Hotel works closely with other local businesses to raise the profile of Salcombe

Becky Paskin, 29/09/2010 09:33
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Hotelier Jeff Gillard, who has recently reopened South Sands Hotel in Salcombe, Devon, believes there is no excuse for shying away from your commitment to the local community, no matter what size of business you have.

On working with other businesses

During our first season we've had ties with the sailing school next door, local boat hire companies, a local charter company and a teaching academy for sailing. We're also doing a lot of work with other restaurants in the area too. We're not stupid enough to think that our guests will want to eat with us every evening of their stay, so by promoting other restaurants in the area we hope they in turn will send diners our way when they want something different.

Our design is also a good example of working with local businesses. We used a local artistic blacksmith, who designed the staircase, door keys, door handles and light fittings. He's a single operator in Devon and South Sands gave him 18 months of solid work. Everything possible has been done using local people. Our blacksmith has had a lot of business off the back of the staircase and we always mention as many of our suppliers as we can.

We run links on the websites of other business' websites as well as vouchers throughout the summer. We used old sails from local fashion brand Quba in our beach suites so naturally we now promote each other's business.

On being a responsible employer

Offering local people jobs again is our most important role in the community. Salcombe was dying out – businesses were closing and pubs were closing. At peak season we had 52 staff but now at the end of the season we've managed to keep 25 on. Working at South Sands is not just a job. We offer everyone the opportunity to grow within the ranks and move upwards. Ideally if we're successful in this business we'd like to go on and replicate the hotel somewhere else.

On being green

About 60 per cent of our food, including our meat and wines, is sourced within 10 miles of South Sands. Your average guest knows more about food than you'd expect now. They all want to know where it's come from, and it goes a long way if you can identify that and boast about your credentials when they ask.

As we underwent a huge refurbishment before opening South Sands we were conscious of the build's environmental impact. We used local builders and materials to keep road miles low, installed low-energy lighting and have instigated a 100% recycling system. We were planning on being more eco-friendly with wood chip boilers, but the delivery trucks couldn't get down to us so we've had to go with LPG.

Everyone has to have responsibility for environmental issues, but especially as we are blessed with such an amazing area with access to great resources, we have no excuse but to maintain what we have.

On supporting charity

We work with Salcombe primary school because they are so poorly funded. Salcombe's population has dwindled so the school doesn't have the funding it once did. It's such a vital cause. That's the main focus of our charity work. Although we've been doing bits for others too, we make such a difference to the local children's education that it's really nice to stick with just one charity. You can see where your moneys going.

On publicity

We only opened a few months ago and haven't really been doing much marketing. But when we are featured in the press, we not only publicise that we are an eco-friendly business but also try and mention our suppliers ourselves. In every article you read about us there will be something that tells you that we work with these suppliers. Hopefully that will come back to us, but it doesn't always work unfortunately.

What's the impact?

Everyone goes off blinkered in their own little world and there's an attitude that its bad to publicise other businesses. We're totally opposite to them, and think the more we can push business their way, the more people will want to respond in kind. It all results in there being better options in Salcombe, which ultimately drives tourism down our way.

It's not just about us and seeing a return. Quba Sails have had their best season ever this year purely because South Sands is up and running again and our customers are using them daily. In return they have given us access to their mailing list so we now have a good database of clients