

# How Supplier Diversity Gives Hoteliers a Critical Competitive Edge

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A commitment to diversity practices is essential in today's business world. It promises inclusion and support for the community in which customers live and work. In the hospitality industry, where a hotel's business directly affects the surrounding community, a respect for diverse cultures is necessary. A business cannot be prosperous without an investment in the success of the communities in which it operates.

Diverse suppliers bring new ideas and different points of view to the table. Diversity also adds a human element to all the goods and services provided

in a hotel. Encouraging the growth and development of these suppliers enhances the vitality of businesses and communities all over the world. Diversity best practices need to be the foundation of hospitality because they strengthen the entire industry.

It's important to make conscientious decisions when supplying hotels with products and services. Every choice matters; and each choice can directly affect the bottom line. Cultivating a diverse group of suppliers can really boost business.

Diverse suppliers are 51 percent owned, operated, and controlled by a person with a diverse background. As defined by the National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC), there are 16 categories that can qualify a supplier as diverse, such as woman-, minority- or veteran-owned. The more diverse suppliers hoteliers have in their procurement portfolios, the more they're able to tap into pockets of their communities that they didn't have access to before.

Diverse suppliers have unique perspectives and distinctive creative touches. And they can bring new customers from their networks. For example, serving wine from a small local winemaker may attract a loyal following to dine at the hotel. Feature artwork in the lobby by an LGBTQ artist and members of that community will feel welcome and safe. Partner with a veteran-owned supplier to let service men and women know the hotel and its team care about finding ways to thank them for their service. Connecting a hotel's business to diverse suppliers establishes it as a member of the community who embraces every group woven into the fabric of its culture.

This can only enrich a hotel, its workplace, and the surrounding community.

A commitment to stocking a hotel with products and services from diverse suppliers can also positively affect the bottom line. It showcases the property's interest in doing business with diverse markets, making a brand more appealing to stakeholders and investors. A commitment to supplier diversity can bring in new markets that are highly attuned to doing business with inclusive companies. An additional benefit of working with diverse suppliers is it can improve a hotel's internal workplace culture. Generally speaking, people want to work for companies whose values mimic their own.

Hotels are local businesses, but they operate on a global scale. The world is vast and becoming more diverse by the day. People travel to experience different parts of the world and to understand cultures that are different from their own. But people also want to feel comfortable and know their surroundings reflect their ethics and values. Hoteliers and their properties should want to be a reflection of the many perspectives and lenses through which each guest views the world. Increasing a property's number of diverse suppliers not only helps a hotel be more representative of its community, it also helps it to be more representative of the world at large.

Ultimately, commitment to supplier diversity needs to be a priority. A truly comprehensive supplier diversity program can connect a property to thousands of woman-, minority-, veteran- and LGBTQowned suppliers. People from all different walks of life are at the heart of the hospitality industry. Having a long and varied list of diverse suppliers can help shape

the story hoteliers want to tell so they can provide a warm welcome to each and every guest. It's good for the hotel, it's good for the community, and it's good for the world.

The bottom line? It's just good business.

*This article by Anu Saxena, the global head of Hilton Supply Management, originally appeared in the November 2019 issue of LODGING.*

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