

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Ritz-Carlton makes an impact with business-oriented charity program

May 17, 2016



Ritz-Carlton, Dubai International Financial Centre

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The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company is displaying its commitment to making an impact with its latest Community Footprints program.

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Impact Experiences offers group guests opportunities to partake in charitable and socially responsible activities at their destination. As social activism continues to overlap with travel and becomes a concern of businesses looking to foster a clean image, hotels are bound to follow suit.

"In 2015, we performed a Gallup study of 20,000 Ritz-Carlton customers to assess the influence of a hotel's social consciousness decisions about whether or not to stay at that hotel," said Nicki Allen, manager of Community Footprints, [The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company](#). "Results showed that customers want to know about a hotel's community efforts.

"We also gathered input from key meeting planners and travels agents on the importance of having a volunteer component as part of their event," she said.

Making an impact

At the Travel + Social Good Summit at the United Nations May 12-13, Ritz-Carlton announced the launch of the Impact Experiences Community Footprints program. The conference focuses on the travel industry's future, with attention drawn to the environmental and social impact of traveling, travelers and hotels.



Ritz-Carlton Community Footprints

Ritz-Carlton's participation in the conference demonstrates that it aims to be a leader in this space, and that sustainable or philanthropic travel is a widespread lifestyle, not merely a fad.

Each Ritz-Carlton hotel will organize Impact Experiences alongside and to benefit local communities. Examples include a heritage farming project on an organic farm in Arizona helping to preserve forestation in Hawaii, planting endangered tree species in Dubai, United Arab Emirates and building habitats for migrating rare birds in Shenzhen, China.

Furthering its reach for its business group target, Impact Experience also offers smaller but equally significant initiatives that can be incorporated into the lunch and coffee breaks of an agenda. Among these initiatives are assembling school supplies and art materials in backpacks to donate to impoverished students, forming emergency preparedness kits for disaster relief facilities and working with the culinary team to prepare local ingredients to hunger relief organizations.



Ritz-Carlton Charlotte, NC garden

Moreover, groups will also be able to partake in the Impact Hour event, in which different businesses and organizations are partnered to share how they are making a difference in their communities and environment.

"During the 2014 Travel + Social Good Summit, attendees made suggestions on how to create relevant and meaningful engagement for travelers," Ms. Allen said. "We listened and took action; Impact Hour resulted as a part of this process.

"Our team at The Ritz-Carlton refined the idea and it aligned perfectly with our new group guest engagement program," she said. "Impact Hour is offered as one of the standard on-property Impact Experiences which will allow our guests the opportunity to contribute to the local community."

Both individuals and corporations are turning attention toward social activism in response to new forms of communication and access to information that have cast a spotlight on the values people and businesses reflect. Ritz-Carlton is therefore proving its excellence in service by assisting business groups in staying true to ideals and values that extend beyond the financial realm.

Mixing business with activism

Ritz-Carlton has previously enacted measures to make itself an appealing choice for business meetings and

travelers.

At the beginning of the year, The Ritz-Carlton, Bali, Indonesia began sharing its "Revitalizing Secret" with the health-conscious business professional.

Ritz-Carlton's Bali hotel is now offering three healthy meeting experiences that will add team-building and productive fun into a long day of business and work. The initiative showcases Ritz-Carlton's commitment to the comfort of its guests as well as its dedication to a healthy lifestyle ([see story](#)).

Ritz-Carlton is frequently adding to its Community Footprints charity programming, which will only rise in importance as the world takes more of an interest in preservation and inequality.

Traveling is an increasingly popular way for people to give back, and hotel brands must stay on top of the trend to maintain their status as the best in the business.

A recent study by Tours.com found that an astonishing 55 percent of America-based travelers partook in volunteer work during a vacation within the past two years, with almost three quarters calling their charitable donations or philanthropic endeavors "important," "very important" or "extremely important." As "voluntourism" becomes increasingly common, brands must show that they care equally and assist travelers in partaking in volunteer work or gifting to maintain status and image ([see story](#)).

"Our commitment to the community and environment was part of our original 1983 mission statement, and remains an integral part of our company culture," Ms. Allen said. "Community Footprints, The Ritz-Carlton social and environmental responsibility program, merges our global strategy with local perspective.

"The volunteer efforts by Ritz-Carlton Ladies and Gentlemen around the world are an integrated component of The Ritz-Carlton legacy of service, and we are proud to offer our guests the opportunity to leave a lasting contribution on the communities they visit."

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