

ISSUE

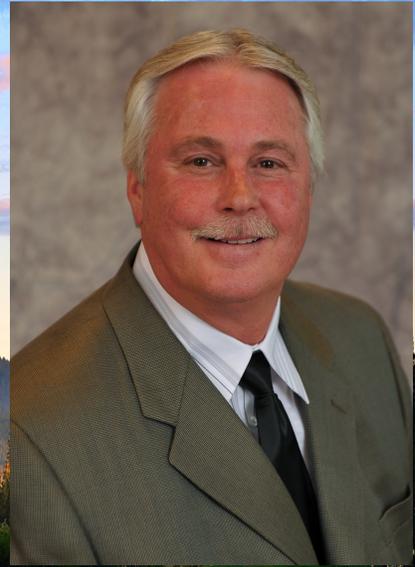
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FALL 2018

Lodging Engineer

The Electronic Magazine for Hotel Engineers

1st Person



**Interview with
Bruce Slay
Sun River Resort**

Featuring:

Is Systems Engineering in Your Future?

The Economics of Smoke Alarm Replacement

Hot Water is a Comfort Priority

Safety Tips to Prevent Ladder Injuries

Leveraging Energy Management Technology

1st Person Interview With

Destination Hotels' Sun River Resort, Oregon



featuring

Bruce Slay, CDOE

Bruce, it is a real pleasure to catch up with you and share this interview with our readers. I believe we briefly met at your corporate conference meeting at the awesome La Cantera Resort in Texas a few years ago. As you may recall, I was invited by Mike Shutts, Vice President of Engineering at Destination Hotels & Resorts, to speak about NAHLE's online engineering training and certification programs.

I'd like to start off with a little background information. Can you tell our readers how you started your career and then how you ended up at the Sun River Resort in Sun River, Oregon?

I started at the Sun River Resort in 1991 and have been here for 26 years. I first started working in maintenance over 30 years ago for an investment company in California. Primarily they developed apartments and were looking for a maintenance worker. I showed up for the interview in a 1958 Dodge truck with a ladder rack and tool box. They

hired me on the spot, and to this day I believe that showing up in my '58 Dodge was what got me the job.

I then went from facilities to working construction as a carpenter. My boss, John Sutter, owned a sail boat and I got to spend a lot of time on it with him over the five years that we worked together. I have picked up a few life lessons over the years and the one I still use the most in my job today was taught to me by Mr. Sutter.

Tell us about your current property.

Sun River Resort is a luxury resort located in central Oregon. We are owned by Lowes Enterprises and managed by Destination Hotels & Resorts, which is one of two brands within Two Roads Hospitality. I am proud to say our resort is currently celebrating its 50th anniversary!

The property was initially established by the War Department as part of a 5500-acre combat engineer replacement and training center. Built by the Army Corps of Engineers, it was established as Camp Abbot in 1942 in honor of one of the two original land surveyors in 1855. The base opened under the command of Colonel Frank S. Benson in 1943. Over 90,000 combat engineers were trained at Camp Abbot. It was later closed in 1944 and then left abandoned for many years.

The property is located among the Sun River and the Deschutes River. We have over 318,000 square feet under roof, which includes over 45,000 square feet of meeting space. We have three 8-hole golf courses and one 9-hole course. We even have our own airport located on the property.

Our resort now has 54 buildings spread across 36 acres. Sun River Resort is now primarily a destination for weddings and business travelers. We also have 300 homes located on our property, multiple swimming pools, and three spas located throughout the resort. We have a horse stable and several horseback riding trails, in addition to the 40 miles of bike trails on our property. Our marina also supports guests that want to take a canoe or raft down the Sun River.

STAFF:

How many employees do you manage and how are they divided among hours?

I have a total staff of 16 employees and am responsible for maintaining all 54 facilities. Ten of my employees are field technicians, overseen by one supervisor and an assistant supervisor. Our grounds department has three maintenance technicians and one supervisor. We also have a painter under contract. Our staff is made up of two shifts that work between the daily hours of 7 AM and 11 PM. By way of a duty phone, we share the remaining shift of 11 PM to 7 AM among a few of us who are 'on call' during these hours.

MANAGEMENT:

Would you speak to your management style and experience?

My management style is based upon being prepared so that my team and I can always make informed decisions. It is so important in our industry to train people to be competent. I call this 'Empowering Prepared People.'

At our resort I find communication is key to our success. I like to get in front of staff at our 'stand up' meetings and engage employees. I also try and get out in the field often and do preventive maintenance with the staff. I think a hands-on approach is crucial in keeping people connected.

HIRING

I know hotel engineers are often characterized by their love to 'fix things.' In today's market they usually have strength in a particular area. Can you talk about your hiring process and what you look for in a new employee?

When I interview an applicant, I look for experience in facility repair such as electrical, painting, plumbing, or mechanical. But, sometimes it helps to think outside of the box. For instance, I'll ask about their hobbies. I often find applicants have a related hobby, like working on cars or boat motors, that develops many applicable skills.



“Not everyone knows the importance of taking the time to instruct others and show them the right way to do things.”





Tillamook River

I also look for job certifications in a new hire. This includes safety training such as slip, trips and falls, as well as life safety training for the use of respirators and Automatic External Defibrilators (AED).

When I first hire a new employee, I conduct what I call a ‘job verification.’ Because the property is so spread out, it is very important that new hires know where all our buildings are located and how to get them. My ‘job verification’ requires each new hire to locate on a map each of the various buildings and their rooms. They must also locate where a building’s systems, such as electrical panels and plumbing systems, are located. I have them verify fire alarm systems and how to silence a fire alarm system. I then have them sign off on their maps. We give an employee three months to learn our property maps.

“Applicants don’t always have to ‘fit the mold’; their desire to succeed goes a long way. ”

Another important part of facility maintenance is interacting with guests. We demand excellent guest service from our employees. We allow a new hire six to eight months to become familiar with our ‘Associate’s Handbook’ which covers guest services.

Many new hires will request more job training or industry certifications, which is something I highly encourage. I believe it helps them develop their strengths.

You mentioned thinking outside of the box when looking for an applicant’s relevant experience. Any success stories from this approach?

One employee particularly comes to mind. I hired this candidate from what I call “Public Space.” What I mean by this is that they had no experience or any related training in hotels or facilities maintenance. I interviewed a woman, Jenna, who had training in welding and a strong desire to succeed, but no experience in hotels. So, I took a risk and it paid off. Her skill set translated well to the hotel environment and she has been a huge asset to our team. Applicants don’t always have to ‘fit the mold’; their desire to succeed goes a long way.

What advice would you give to someone looking to advance their career?

I believe that pursuing training will have the biggest impact on your career. Take advantage every opportunity to train or advance in your career. From a broader perspective, I would say embrace new technology. The customer is changing and the technology used by 'Baby Boomers' is going to keep changing and evolving for the next generation of guests, the millennials.

SUSTAINABILITY:

Can you describe your property's efforts toward sustainability and energy efficiency?

Two of our buildings are LEED certified, and one is even certified at the Silver level. We have also been working with Energy Trust Oregon (ETO) on several projects and realized considerable success. We initially spent \$400,000 on various utility and insulation projects involving ETO and, Pacific Power and Mid-State-Electrical. We spent \$35,000 for a Technical Analysis Study (TAS) to gather information and put together a report with utility recommendations. When we finished we received \$110,000 back from EOT.



Homer Alaska

How did you decide to get involved with ETO?

We put in an application with ETO showing our gas and water savings, specifically the replacement and retrofit boilers we had targeted due to the findings from our TAS. We also looked at the efficiency of the heaters used in the pools and spas. ETO came back and recommended high efficiency boilers.

Lastly, we completed a five-year retrofit of lighting at our resort that included all main buildings. We now use LED lighting in all locations, many of which used to be lit by incandescent bulbs. This saves money and benefits the environment.

EDUCATION & TRAINING:

How do you train your staff?

I have successfully completed NAHLE's Certified Director of Engineering (CDOE) training and loved the program. It is pertinent to what I do every day. I have started Mike Dean on my staff with his Certified Chief Engineer (CCE). It is great way to transition some of my field technicians, so they can learn more about how a chiller works, how to interact with guests, and how to deal with service contractors.





Sunriver Resort Lobby

TIME MANAGEMENT:

How do you stay disciplined and focused on your daily activities?

I personally use Outlook's 'Task Calendar' to help keep up with operational issues. I report to the director of operations and in Outlook I can click on documents, tasks, and capital projects and pull everything in 'Notes.' I have developed a color-coded system working in Excel where I use one color to highlight an upcoming task and another color once it is completed. With 'Notes' I can provide a brief description of a task or capital project and key facts, such as the contractor, start date, or when a particular part was ordered. These programs are both excellent communication tools.

FISHING & OTHER HOBBIES:

It seems all engineers love a good fishing story. Do you have any you'd like to share and maybe a photo or two to back it up?

One of my favorite hobbies is to fish. I have a 20-foot boat which I mostly use for lake fishing. I usually find about 4 or 5 months in season for fishing. In April and May I like to fish for rainbow trout and I can fish for Salmon June through October. I am planning on going to Alaska for vacation this year and hope to fish for halibut.

What are you going to do when you retire? My wife and I are planning on retiring on the Oregon coast. I hope to sit back and relax, maybe pop open a Corona, and do a little more fishing.

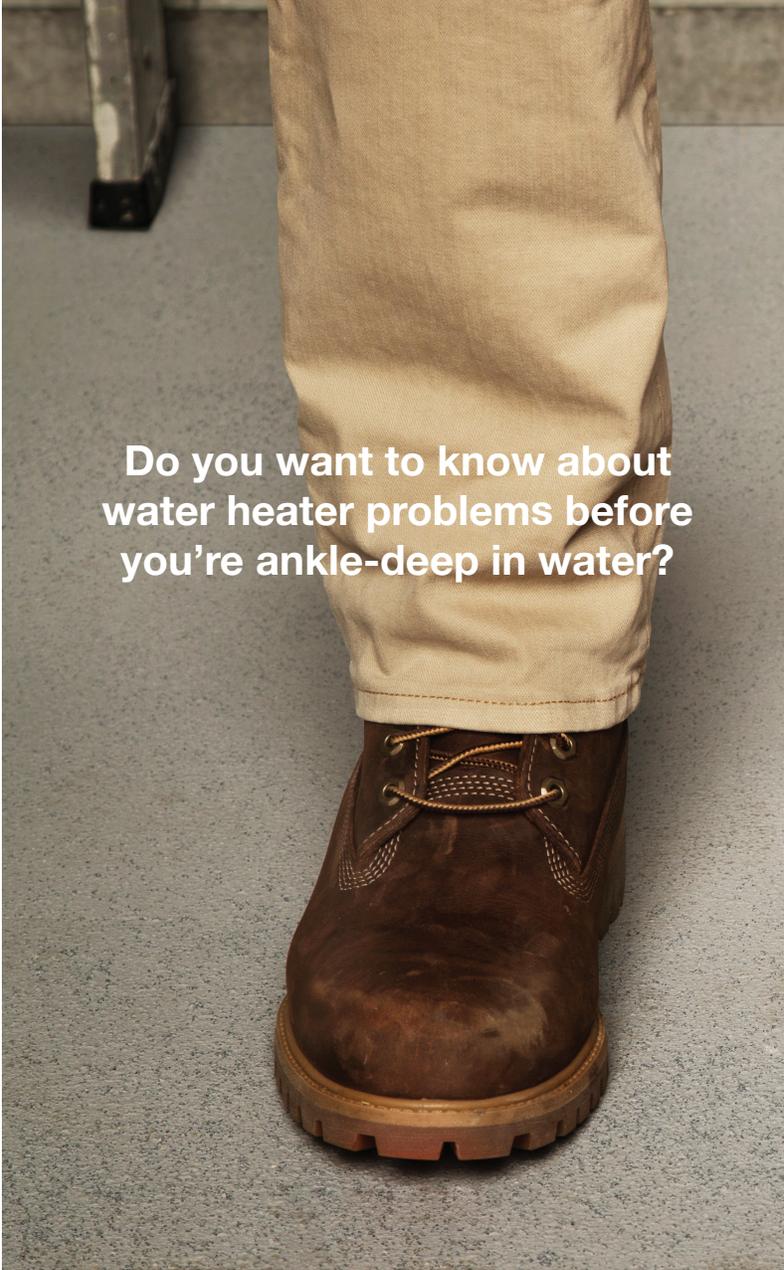
A note from your editor:

I believe we now have one of the biggest challenges yet facing our industry; finding, training, and retaining workers for jobs in hotel engineering and maintenance. NAHLE has the tools in place to help support these challenges and grow the profession, but we can't succeed if you don't get involved. We need both your financial support and your intellectual support as contributors of ideas, leadership and articles. What each and every one of you can contribute individually benefits the entire industry as a whole. The very same problems and challenges you face at your hotel are the same ones your peers are facing at the hotel right down the road from you. It is my personal conviction that together we can build a trade association that provides educational opportunities to improve professional development and interest in the profession while also striving to improve hotel asset-management by creating an environment of informed decision making.

Please ask yourselves what you, hotel engineers, corporate managers, and owners can do to help meet these challenges and pass along your 'institutional' knowledge to your staff and the next generation of hotel engineers. If you like what we are doing, then please support the National Association of Hotel & Lodging Engineers.

As our nation's 26th President, Theodore Roosevelt said...

“Every man owes a part of his time and money to the business or industry in which he is engaged. No man has a moral right to withhold his support from an organization that is striving to improve conditions within his sphere.”



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