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Lather Up! Select Hotels Come Clean With Ingenious Corporate Social Responsibility Initiative

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What is it about staying in a hotel that's so refreshing? Maybe it's the crisply made bed, the pool and spa, or you know, the room service. Hell, even watching TV in a hotel seems more fun than it does at home. And then there's the leaving the lights on, the blasting the heat or A/C, taking extra-long showers and using towels once without worrying about it. But as sustainability initiatives are increasingly adopted and integrated by hotels, increased awareness of urgent environmental issues is quickly making its way into our getaways -- and it's about time.

Hotels in general have become more effective about promoting greener options for their guests -- from energy and water conservation campaigns to re-using sheets and towels. But there is one seemingly simple initiative that a few forward-thinking hotels are adopting that, yes, makes sense environmentally, but also is making a significant positive social impact. The campaign seems so clear and obvious, and is all about soap. Yes, soap.

We all (hopefully) use it as part of our daily lives. At home we might use an entire bar until it dwindles to a sliver and then disappears, but in hotels it's usually 1-2 rinses before the nearly full bar hits the trash. While this might seem like a trivial expense, a bar of soap can mean the difference between life and death in the developing world. This fact wasn't lost on the two innovative founders of [Clean the World](#), who since 2009 have been changing lives through partnerships with hotels... and their very slightly used bath amenities.

Their simple vision was, and still is, to collect and recycle the soap and shampoo products the hotel industry discards every day. By re-sanitizing and distributing these products to impoverished people around the world, they are not only reducing waste, but are preventing avoidable deaths. Clean the World is committed to helping save one million lives a year by providing one of the most basic products most of us take for granted, which also happens to be one of the most critical when it comes

to reducing the two leading causes of death among children under the age of five. Acute respiratory infection (pneumonia) and diarrheal disease can be greatly reduced (up to 62 percent) by basic hand washing with bar soap -- the sad reality is that soap is hard to come by in many communities around the globe.

The lesson here is that an idea is just an idea until the major stakeholders -- in this case hotels -- take note. No surprise, but Clean the World found key support in the San Francisco Bay Area, through an optimistic partner in [Larkspur Hotels and Restaurants](#), a Bay Area company with 23 hotels and 9 dining establishments mostly in California.

According to Larkspur's Vice President of Marketing, Christine Gaudenzi, "Our guests love our partnership with Clean the World, for often the only way they feel they can participate in reducing their impact on the environment while traveling is by recycling trash in their guest room or opting out of linen washing." She went on to explain, "The Clean the World partnership allows another feel good experience for a hotel guest." Since Larkspur began participation in the program, Gaudenzi notes that Larkspur Hotels and Restaurants have recycled more than 10,000 pounds of soap.

Other large Bay Area hotels have broken free from their traditional corporate hand cuffs to participate in the program, including [The San Francisco W](#) and the [Mandarin Oriental](#). But it bodes the question of why, for the cost of an hour long training session to the housekeeping department, aren't more hotels inspired to make such an easy, yet impactful operational tweak?

Initiatives such as Clean the World need corporate dedication across their entire operation base to really make an impact. For now though, it is pretty inspiring to see organizations like Clean the World and select hotel chains, like Larkspur Hotels, become serious and creative about turning waste into resources -- resources that in this case can save lives. Hopefully one day all hotels can view this as an easy way to clean their acts up, literally.

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