

The human touch

Manav Thadani

Chairman, HVS South Asia. Director, Samhi

This year, don't be surprised if Manav Thadani walks into a property and tells you how a particular eco-investment will bring down costs by a significant, carefully calculated quotient. "Making money and going green at the same time," he says, is one area of cost reduction that receives too little attention in the industry.

Member of the board and investment committee, of investment and development company Samhi and chairman HVS India (he does own the largest stake), he will be busy setting up two new businesses, having assumed global rights and responsibility of setting up HVS's Sustainability Services, known as Ecotel.

While Thadani's entry into hospitality was planned with a degree in hotel management from the US, his dream was to "own a single hotel."

He identifies three turning points: "Choosing to bring HVS to India and going up against the established consulting firms of the mid-90s, starting the Hotel Investment Conference for South Asia (HICSA); and last year, deciding to step out of day to day control of HVS."

HVS, the global consulting, valuation and research company, started in India in 1997. Thadani will easily tell you that one of his first projects was the Taj in Bandra Kurla complex which has still not come up. The company grew slowly until 2002 but truly turned around only after 2005-06 when he launched HICSA, the event that has acquired the reputation for bringing together on one platform the old boys of hospitality in India.

"Tomorrow if 100 hotel projects were to come to India, I would be surprised if a good 60-70 didn't have us involved in some area of the project or the other, whether for feasibility or valuation or executive search point of view," he once said.

HOSPITALITY IS: "Part of my bloodline."

FIRST INTERVIEW: "At the Sheraton Manhattan as a front desk clerk (and I got the job)."

CRISIS CONTROL: "At a property in New York city while managing the front desk — I started getting calls from different guest floors saying that there was a man running around nude. Most of the guests were Japanese, who were not so fluent in English and this did not help matters. Apparently our nudist friend had a spat with his wife who had kicked him out of the room and he had nowhere to run. He was trying to get to the front desk but every time he pressed the guest elevator keys the elevator doors would open and the guest in the elevator would be horrified. Being the responsible young manager, I was given the responsibility of tracking down this man, which I did 15 minutes later and provided some relief to the poor man who was quite miserable by the time."

Brand box

In the next five years, "HVS will continue to be the preferred consulting provider of services to the hospitality sector. Samhi, my other new company will hopefully have its first 1500 rooms operational."