

AICR Australia Newsletter - March - April 2016 Issue

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President's Welcome



Dearest Amicalist, Sponsors and Hoteliers,

Welcome to our first Newsletter AMICALIST OZ.

In this newsletter we highlight some of the important events from 2015. With our quarterly newsletter we are hoping to share exciting stories with the latest updates in AICR and the hospitality world, along with news and pictures from our networking meetings, events, workshops and new hotel inspections. Also recruitment initiatives such as hospitality college/institution visits to support those choosing to pursue Front Office as a career choice.

It all started in France in 1964 and over the following 52 years AICR has developed into an international organisation represented in 18 countries and continues to grow. The Amicale means much more than just a professional organisation, it highlights the friendships within our association formed over many years.

With a new year, comes new challenges and I hope to not only continue to grow the success of hotels in Australia this year but also AICR Australia as it expands into other cities throughout the country. We play an important role in ensuring our cities are showcased to the world in a positive light and by working together, we can achieve great results this year.

It was very exciting to relaunch AICR in Australia last year and in a very short time with the help of our sponsors we have managed to represent Australia in Vienna for the David Campbell Trophy.

I look forward to working with you all once again in 2016.

Amicalement.

Sevag Keroghlian

President AICR Australia

AICR Australia Vision, Values and Mission Statement

Vision-To create a platform for all hoteliers in Australia to engage in hospitality with passion and pride.

Values- Working together across many hotel brands to encourage an innovative service culture.

Mission Statement- To inspire our people to create exceptional guest experiences.

Benefits of being an AICR member

- -Membership includes AICR Australia & AICR International.
- -Networking locally, nationally and internationally with like-minded professionals.
- -The participation of yearly receptionist of the year completion.
- -Member's event invitations.
- -Discounts as negotiated with each sponsors.

AICR Australia Re-Launch Party - 21 October 2015

Terry Johnston – Honorary life AICR Member and founder of AICR New Zealand helping to relaunch AICR Australia.





Hotelier's professionals at the re-launch party at Pullman Melbourne on the Park

Receptionist of the Year Competition

Was held at Pullman Melbourne on the Park, below are the participants with their certificates.



Photo from left to right. Sevag Keroghlian, Meg McLennan - from Cambridge Hotel Sydney, Luther La - Doma Hotels ACT, Mitchell Dye - Pullman Melbourne, Melissa-Sue Miller - Hotel Lindrum Melbourne, Conor Ross - Pullman Melbourne, Nikki Rule - Doubletree by Hilton Melbourne, Madison Groom - Doma Hotels ACT, Emily McKane - Pullman Melbourne on the Park.

The judges

The judges placing contestants in the winning order.



Photo from left to right. Melanie Wilkinson – Director of Talent & Culture from Pullman Melbourne on the Park, Kelvin Lim – AICR Treasurer, Leon Yogaraj – AFOM Doma Hotels ACT & VP AICR, Trevor Lee - Managing Director for TravConsult, Clive Scott - General Manager of Sofitel Melbourne on Collins

AICR supporting Concierge Ball Melbourne

Celebrating Madi's win at the Les Clefs D'or Concierge Ball that was held at Sofitel Melbourne on Collins.



Photo from left to right. Leon Yogaraj – AFOM Doma Hotels ACT, Sevag Keroghlian, AICR Australia President, Kathryn Carling Doma Hotels Manager, Luther La, and Madison Groom - Doma Hotels ACT.

Congress News - Vienna



After taking out the Australian ROTY competition at the Pullman Melbourne on the park Madison Groom went on to represent Doma Hotels and Australia at the international DCT competition in Vienna, Austria. The competition was a weeklong convention for both candidates and presidents. Madison went up against some of the biggest hotels in the world to compete for the David Campbell Trophy. These countries included Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, Czech Republic, Estonia, Spain, Côte d'Azur, France, United Kingdom, Dubai, Qatar, Indonesia, Singapore and New Zealand.

Australia and New Zealand did well to win the USA Today photo competition with the following photo.



Receptionist of the Year 2016 went to Sofia Barroso from The Villa Magna Hotel & Spa in Madrid. Photo below



Q & A with Sevag Keroghlian

What inspires you and drives you along your career path? My passion for people and mentoring young hospitality professionals. Instilling confidence in people and initiating positive changes. Employees need to sense passion from you. If you don't lead with passion then don't expect your employees to do the same! To be the best by being innovative, and always thinking of different ways to do things...

Q & A with Madison Groom. Winner of the best receptionist in Australia 2015.



What's the feeling like, when you were announced as winner of AICR Australia?

The feeling was so unreal for me; I was so shocked I thought my jaw had hit the floor! It was such a fun and exciting time – to be honest I think it's still only just sinking in that I actually won! It was a huge achievement and one I will remember for the rest of my career!

Did Leon and your team have a celebration when you returned with a trophy?

I was lucky enough to have Leon and my Hotel Manager Kathryn in Melbourne with me at the time of my win, so we were able to celebrate over champagne that evening. We were also able to attend the 20th annual concierge ball the following night, which was a first for me and a fantastic way to celebrate my win! Upon my return to Canberra I was overwhelmed with the amount of support and congratulations I received from colleagues at my hotel, the celebration even continued when I was mentioned in front of the entire company at our Christmas party a couple of weeks later.

How are you feeling, representing Australia and most importantly Doma in Vienna?

Being able to attend the conference in Vienna whilst representing my company and country was an unreal experience! Being a local company it was such a fantastic way to get our name out there with such world-renowned industry professionals and showcase what the company and our capital city are about. I absolutely love working for Doma, they are a fantastic company with a huge future ahead of them, so being able to share my passion was so exciting for me. Having the chance to network with such a

broad range of people was a great opportunity for me to encourage visits to Australia and share our laid back, friendly culture. I also met some fantastic people and made some great friends, some of which have already booked their trip to come and see what Canberra and Doma is about!

This journey of a short 3 months have garnered you many experiences, would you like to share with us a few?

-Firstly being nominated for the Receptionist of the year award was an experience in itself! I was so humbled by the thought of my managers recognizing my hard work and deeming me worthy of this award, it motivated me further to do my best in my role and made me even more excited to come to work every day.

Having the opportunity to travel to Melbourne and network with fellow Hotel Receptionists, hospitality experts and even CEOs of large chain hotels was amazing. It is so rare that somebody in a receptionist line role is able to get out there and do things like that, so I was extremely grateful for the experience prior to even finding out the outcome! -I can't go by without mentioning my Vienna experience. It was an absolute honor to represent my hotel and Australia, and being welcomed with such open arms into the AICR family. Spending a week site seeing and being able to see world famous hotels and learn about the European hotel culture was so much more amazing than I ever anticipated! The opportunities we were given to learn about the history of the city and attend the amazing venues that we did was a once in a lifetime occasion. Glamorous parts aside, being mentored and coached by such inspiring leaders was even more fantastic. In the week of the conference I learned so much about personal development, the industry itself and the forecasting trends; it was just the cherry on top being able to experience all of this with likeminded receptionists from around the world.

-Thirdly, my personal career development. After being awarded and attending the congress in Vienna I have since been promoted to Duty Manager in my hotel. This is something I am extremely proud of and a fantastic exciting opportunity for me to now assist in leading the receptionist team and mentoring them towards hopefully becoming nominated for the AICR award themselves!

Is there anything you have learnt from AICR Australia that you have brought with you to compete in Vienna? (e.g. experiences, prepping, time management)

There was so much that I learned from the Australian AICR experience! Being a receptionist I hadn't been too exposed to revenue management or how I can contribute to this in my role, during my training we worked a lot on this and I was able to open my skill set to another aspect of the industry. I was also mentored a lot in complaint handling, and taking charge of a complicated situation.

The most important thing I learned in the Australian

The most important thing I learned in the Australian competition (with a lot of help from my Hotel Manager and HR manager) was to believe in my

capabilities and have the confidence to portray these. That was so much help to me when I was nervous and out of my comfort zone!

Have you made any international friends in Vienna?

I made more friends than I could count in Vienna! I could not believe how friendly and welcoming the entire association was. Being my first international congress I had no idea what to expect, and I certainly didn't expect it to be such a welcoming and fun environment which left me with friendships that will last far beyond the week we spent together.

How was travelling with Sevag, what have you learnt from him during this period in Vienna? Sevag is the best travel companion that you could ask for! He is such an inspiring man who has already taught me so much in our short time knowing each other. For those who do not know Sevag personally, he has such a big heart and is ready to take anybody under his wing, which is what he did with me from the minute I arrived in Melbourne in November last year. In the lead up to the competition Sevag was willing to mentor me, guide me through every step, and answer every tiny question I had, he is a very knowledgeable man who has been in the industry for a long time so was the perfect person to learn from. Not only this, but he had me in stitches the entire trip with his hilarious personality - and definitely played a major role in the friendships I made by pushing me out of my comfort zones into situations where I was able to build relationships with some fantastic people. My experience certainly wouldn't have been as amazing as it was without him and I can't thank him enough for that!

What advice would you give to new participants of AICR Australia 2016?

Just to be yourself! You were nominated and are where you are for a reason, because you're fantastic at what you do and you have been recognized as a future leader of your industry. This is such an achievement in itself and even if you do not go home with the win it is something to be so proud of. So relax and make sure you enjoy the whole experience!

What advice would you give to our next winner representing AICR in the next destination (yet to be announced)?

Practice, practice, practice! It is amazing how much you realize that you already know when you sit down and put your mind to it. Revising my skill sets and practices at work helped me so much in my journey, because all of my strengths were fresh in my mind and I felt ready to go and conquer the world! Become a sponge, and absorb all of the help and knowledge that will be shared with you from your management team, Leon, Sevag and myself.

Another piece of advice is to put yourself out there. Recognize this experience for the amazing

opportunity it is, and get networking with some fellow receptionists and industry leaders, you will not regret it!

As an Ambassador of AICR Australia, what would you like to see more of in the AICR Australia committee?

This year I would really like to focus on just getting the AICR out there and build an Australian AICR family of our own. Having launched in Australia for the first time last year I think it is important to build our base and encourage as many receptionists as possible to want to take place in the competition! The association is such a great way to motivate and build stepping stones for reception level roles, which is of great benefit to the companies that they work for too – and I want to create a widely spread awareness of this. I also want to see more networking opportunities and meet more passionate, hotel driven people like ourselves!

Meet the Committee



Photo from left to right. Kelvin Lim – Treasurer, Sevag Keroghlian – President and Leon Yogaraj – Vice President

2016 Yearly AICR calendar

January

Attending Congress in Vienna

March

Wednesday 16 March - AICR Committee & first members meeting, yearly goal & planning at Grand Hyatt Melbourne

Tuesday 22 March - Pin presentation at Pullman Thursday 31 March - First AICR Australia Newsletter launch *Amicalist OZ*

April

12 April - Visit to International College of Hotel Management in Adelaide

Saturday 23 April - AICR Australia Official Trophy placement in Winning Hotel -Doma Hotels **ACT**

Sunday 24th April - First meeting and pin presentation AICR ACT Members, site visit to ACT Hotels

Monday 25 April - Attend Anzac Day Dawn service with Members at The Australian War Memorial Canberra

May

Tuesday 3, Wednesday 4 May - AICR Stand at Australasian Hotel Industry Conference & Exhibition at Grand Hyatt Melbourne. TBC

Wednesday 11 May - International Receptionist Day Celebration: Morning Tea and photo competition for the most creative picture, participation open to all AICR member hotels

Tuesday 31 May - 2nd *Amicalist OZ* Newsletter release - members meeting and networking

June

Date TBC - Visit Melbourne's William Angliss Institute – Hospitality College **Melbourne**

July

Friday 29 July - AICR Committee second meeting

August

Wednesday 31 August – 3rd *Amicalist OZ* Newsletter release – members meeting and networking

September

Friday 16 September - Sponsor event night

October

Friday 21st October - Cultural workshop by TravConsult for ROTY candidates Saturday 22nd October - National Receptionist of the year competition 2016

AICR Australia One year Anniversary celebration, location TBC

November

AICR members attending Concierge Ball in Melbourne

Wednesday 30 November – 4th *Amicalist OZ* Newsletter release - members meeting and networking

December

Friday 9 December - National Annual AICR Australia General Meeting



Attending AICR Paris Congress - 22 to 26 February 2017

Accommodation Report- A year of growth

For the 12 months to December 2015, Melbourne experienced its highest accommodation revenue takings. Occupancy for Melbourne was 82.8% and average rate at AUD \$186.99 interestingly occupancy +2.3% continues to grow faster than average rate at +1.3%. Other than June, Melbourne's occupancy has been plus 78% all year illustrating the strong corporate demand and consistent events calendar. For example, Saturday night for the last 12 months is averaging 90.3% occupancy for Melbourne. With no surprise Melbourne City sub market is equally at record highs for the 12 months to December 2015. Occupancy is 86.5% and average rate AUD \$205.99. Supply growth of 2.2% has been exceeded with demand growth of 3.5%. February, March and October, November have RevPAR (Revenue per available room) exceeding \$200. Comparably to other capital cities, Melbourne is trading with the third highest RevPAR for the calendar year to December 2015.

Written by Matthew Burke from STR Global. Information extracted from Hotel Today AHA Victoria.

How to help staff empathise with guests

To ensure front line staff care for guests, it is important to understand the various situations that play out on the other side of the front desk. With all of the online guest reviews and social media postings available to prospective guests these days, it seems like the walls of our accommodation lobbies are made of glass and the service provided within is transparent for all to see. This has caused the accommodation industry to focus more than ever on guest service excellence, which is certainly a good thing. Yet many hotel managers are frustrated that their guest service training is not leading to an improvement in guest surveys nor TripAdvisor rankings. Perhaps this is because too many hotel training programs are still teaching hospitality as if it were the summation of a series of communication techniques: smile at the guest, maintain eye contact, use their name three times, and they will all leave the front desk happy. Right? True hospitality superstars know that while delivering hospitality requires good communication skills, it also takes more. The real spirit of hospitality is centred on caring for the guest. Most guests can sense when the service is genuine vs scripted. When you read negative reviews and guest surveys, most guests say what went wrong and what really upset them was lack of caring: To ensure frontline team can empathise and understand the various situations. stories and circumstances, here are some suggestions for conducting guest empathy training for frontline staff: 1-During meeting, discuss the variety of reasons why guests might visit your property. Treat each guest individually and deliver personalised service. 2-Ask colleagues to think about the more sombre reasons why quests might be visiting. Ask guests on arrival to find out the purpose of their visit and share with the rest of the team. 3- Focus on the good times being enjoyed at your hotel, such as special anniversary or milestone

birthdays. 4- Hold a brainstorming session regarding all of the challenges guests might encounter enroute to the hotel, such as travel delays, traffic etc. Then talk during handovers about how the front office team in particular has a unique opportunity to turn things around for guests once they arrive.

Written by Doug Kennedy from Kennedy Training Network Inc, Information extracted from ACCOM Management Guide.

2015 Market Update with Top 10 Trends

It was a year of ups and downs for the restaurant industry according to the fourth annual Dimmi Australian Dinning Index with the market dropping by 2.4 per cent on 2013/14. The states that felt the pinch were ACT (down 4.4 per cent). NSW saw a slight increase of 0.2 per cent however the big standout was SA with the market increasing by 7.6 per cent over the past 12 months.

Despite the industry decreasing the national average spend increased, albeit slightly, by 37 cents with the premium market (more than \$85 per head) showing significant growth, up by 17 per cent. According to Dimmi analysis, diners in ACT are the biggest spenders with an average of \$60.77 per head, followed by SA at \$58.88, then NSW (\$57.43), QLD (\$53.88) and VIC (\$53.85). WA is the lowest spending state, with an average of \$48.43 per person.

The mobile boom has well and truly hit the restaurant world with 52 per cent of online bookings for restaurants now being made from a mobile device, which has contributed to the decrease in lead times by 11 per cent over the year. Australians are no longer sitting behind a computer, they are booking restaurants more last minute, more on the go than ever before.

Top 10 Trends for 2015

- 1- Market down: overall the market dropped by 2.4 per cent with the ACT, QLD and VIC feeling the pinch the most.
- 2- Double sittings: two sittings, not one is now common practice for restaurants. Say goodbye to the much loved 7:30pm dining slot. Bookings have decreased between 7-8 pm by 9 per cent on 2013/14, while the time slots either side have both increased.
- 3- Mobile boom: for the first time in history we are booking restaurants more on the go, not behind our computer screens. 52 per cent of online bookings are now being made from a mobile device. 32 per cent of all bookings are now made within 24 hours of dining time.
- 4- Corporates are back: there has been a 41 per cent increase in online bookings, from the top 10 corporate companies, over the past 12 months.
- 5- Fine dining is thriving but not as we know it: the premium market is up by 17 per cent but what defines fine dining is shifting. Restaurants are

becoming more accessible and share plates are very in-voque.

- 6- Aussies are eating out less frequently but spending more: we are eating out less but spending 37 cents more on 2013/14.
- 7- Distribution channels matter: the Dimmi Booking Network generated \$71 million in bookings for Dimmi partner restaurants over the past 12 months. It's key for restaurants to get connected in order to survive and thrive. The top three booking channels that matter for restaurants are Dimmi, TripAdvisor and Qantas Restaurants.
- 8- Spend concern: worryingly the average spend in restaurants has increased by only \$1 in three years. Automation is critical to reduce costs and boost profit margins at a time of increasing rent and labor costs.
- 9- Gender wars: the gender gap is closing but males still spend more than females when eating out, \$61 and \$53 respectively. Males also make more spur of the moment reservations, with 36 per cent of bookings made by men in the 24 hours prior to dining. This compares to 28 per cent for woman in the same period.
- 10- The telephone is dying: 36 per cent of all bookings for Dimmi Pro restaurants are now being generated online. Still a long way from the 70-80 per cent bookings enjoyed by airlines and hotels online, but the Aussie restaurant industry is catching up quickly.

Information extracted from Sauce Magazine.

Angry guests can still become loyal!

Rivalry, opposition, antagonism, conflict or whatever other synonym you deploy to convey obstacles in the workplace like this would be better viewed as helping your business goals instead of detracting what doesn't kill you makes you stronger right?

When applying this adage to guest staff interactions, it's all too easy to deem livid, annoying, testy, arrogant, needy, rude or whining guests as enemies to your organisational goals that are likely to be high on guest satisfaction scores and the pursuit of higher occupancies for heightened profits. When we are confronted with opposition of this nature, our first thoughts might run to something like, "This person is being unnecessarily irate; he's asking us to perform tasks that far beyond what we normally do for our guests." It's a little trickier, however, to identify how such opposition can actually improve your operations.

Negatives are not necessarily obstacles

To start, a good practice is to view your negative minded guests not as obstacles to your chosen path but as opportunities to learn, grow and better define the path that you are on. To help explain this, I'm drawn to movies and television where, as you probably already know, conflict and its thespian equivalent, drama, are the essence of quality screen time. Without them, a show or film quickly becomes a yawn fest. Drilling down to a specific film genre,

take the buddy cop archetype for example. In successful movies of this type, the story usually finds two central characters with diametrically opposed outlooks on life, forced to work together for the same goal. They argue and they squabble, but in the end, they realise that their commonalities outweigh their differences. In fact their relationship is often on more solid ground because they went through hell and back to reach the finish line. It's this adversity, and the fact that they conquered it, which helps form their solid and sincere bond. Conquering adversity makes their friendship stronger.

Guest application

Apply this paradigm to your team's communication efforts with distraught guests. Both sides have more or less the same goal- the best experience possible for the guests- and yet they have vastly different emotional states of mind entering the interaction. The staff member is trained to be calm, attentive and perhaps even a tad subservient while the guest is more often than not irascible, demanding and more than a bit anxious. It's one thing for a staffer to apologise and leave it at that; it's a whole other level when the staffer rises to the challenge, recognising that the guest's emotional state is temporary and that if they work together to solve the problem then their bond will become all the stronger. I'd even argue that the distraught customers for whom you do put in that extra complimentaries to ameliorate their grievances will become your biggest advocates. That's where the "Loyalty" part of this article's little comes in. Very few people connect with a mediocre or above average experience at a hotel. But you would definitely remember a place where the team members gave it everything they had to solve a percolating crisis.

Corporate culture

This thought process can help augment the way guests see your hotel, but it can also aid with your corporate culture. Competition at work should not be enveloped in negative energy; your rivals and their actions are simply more fuel for self-improvement. Often these are the people who ask a lot of questions get emotional about having their way and are the designated devil's advocates on proposed ideas.

What might be perceived as rigidity to progress should instead be seen as a chance for enhancement. After all, this perceived antagonism is much better than the opposite whereby poor ideas may be implemented because everyone was too afraid or apathetic to raise their hands during the planning meetings.

Silence in these instances, and when it comes to guests interactions, is never golden. Confront hard situations, get people talking and conquer adversity in pursuit of better operations.

Written by Larry Mogelonsky from LMA Communication Inc, Information extracted from ACCOM Management Guide.

In-room entertainment tops the wish-list for guests.

If you thought the increase of tablets and smartphones meant that hotel guests could now entertain themselves, think again. Recent research shows that people prefer to stay somewhere that has all the comforts of home and includes superior in-room entertainment options such as FOXTEL. Recent market research has revealed that when comparing accommodation options, 85% of visitors choose to stay somewhere that has Foxtel. It's one of the top three most important leisure and entertainment factors considered by potential guests. The research, conducted by market research agency Ruby Cha Cha in January, indicated that it all comes to how guests are spending their downtime. 99% of survey respondents had watched TV whilst at a hotel and said they spent an average of 95 minutes watching TV during their last trip. With that much dedicated viewing time, it's hardly surprising that the majority 79% said they expected Foxtel to be provided inroom. The Information extracted from HM.

Note!

If you have not yet done your 2014-15 income year tax returns, you should make sure that any claims you intend to make you are entitled to. If you are unsure what you are entitled to claim or how much of an expense you can claim, you should always seek the advice and assistance of a tax agent. Also, they will be able to tell you about expenses you might be able to claim that you hadn't even thought of! Contact May Shen CPA, Accountant & business Advisor from Mas Tax Accountants may@mastaxsouthyarra.com.au

Tip!

The ATO has released some handy information about claiming mobile phone, internet and home phone expenses.

The ATO myDeductions tool for employees

The ATO has launched a tool for individuals who are employees claiming work-related expenses. The myDeductions tool is intended to make it easier and more convenient to keep individual income tax-related deductions all in one place.

The myDeductions tool can be used to:

- capture and classify work-related expenses, gifts and donations or the cost of managing tax affairs
- store photographs of receipts
- record car trips.

Tip!

This might be a handy new tool to record your deductions throughout the year, but your tax agent is still the best source of information to help you know what you should be recording. Consider sitting down with them now to talk about the kinds of expenses you should retain information about throughout the income year to help you prepare for your 2015-16 return.

2016/2017 Hotel opening's across Victoria

QT Hotels and Resorts

Quest Central Dandenong

Hyatt Essendon Fields Hotel

Four Points by Sheraton Docklands

Little National Hotel debuts in Canberra



Little National Hotel, Barton is the latest evolution from Canberra-based hoteliers, Doma Hotels, and offers interstate visitors to Canberra a completely new hotel experience.

Comprising of 120 rooms, this luxurious hotel offers affordable luxury to all in an efficient space that requires no compromises. Little National Hotel is conceived for the business, conference and leisure guests who demands smart luxury and high amenity in a super-prime location but at a rate that allows for greater enjoyment of the other facilities offered by the thriving heart of Canberra's Parliamentary Triangle.

Each of the 120 Little National Hotel rooms includes all the amenities of a 5-star hotel delivered in a well-considered room featuring super-king size bed, wall-to-wall window, luxurious bathroom with rain shower and amenities, large HD Smart televisions, play-your-own smart devices direct, mood lighting, in-room safe, bar refrigerator and free high-speed Wi-Fi.

Public guest areas consisting of the hotel library and lounge augment the experience of the rooms. The spatial layout of these areas has been designed to

allow for various modes of use, from interaction with friends or other guests, to finding a quiet private space to work from or relax.

Uniquely positioned within the Realm Precinct, on National Circuit Barton, the hotel enjoys views of the city, Parliament House and cultural surrounds. With close proximity to public transport, the hotel and its amenities are easily accessible to all.

For your next trip to Canberra, look no further and contact Madison Groom, AICR Australia's Receptionist of the Year winner to make a reservation.

Madi.Groom@domahotels.com.au www.littlenationalhotel.com.au

For more information contact:

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Note!

AICR Australia is non-profit organisation for Deputy Managers and Front Office Managers of Luxury Hotels and only continues with your support. Please share this newsletter with Hotelier's, like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. Connect with us on LinkedIn.



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