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## The CottageCorner | March 2020



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### A Word from Our CEO...



**Heather**

[CONTACT ME](#)

Hello everyone!

Well, there is no way to sugar coat the current state of affairs, and we aren't going to try to do so, for it would be outside of our typical style of full transparency. In the midst of a full and vibrant winter season, we are confronted with one of the largest obstacles put before us in our 10-year history in the vacation rental industry. But we are not alone, and we are not naive.

Do not forget that we have endured similar issues throughout these years... Presidential election years, hurricanes, zika virus, red tide, and that just names a few of the most prominent obstacles put before us. You may remember them all if you have been with us for that period of time. And yet, here we still stand. The good news? We, as a company, have learned so much through all of those previous hardships. Now

that the time has come when our abilities should be tested to the fullest, we honestly feel well prepared... as much as one can be for such a "once in a lifetime" event.

I am proud of my team. What we have for you in this email is an amazing recount of how we are handling the COVID-19 pandemic from all departments, from all angles, of this industry. We have researched multiple resources, we have asked many questions to both guests and other industry leaders, and we have what we would like to call a fluid, ever-evolving, and pragmatic approach to how we will be dealing with the pandemic and its affect on our commerce. We invite you to help us explore dynamic and progressive ideas on how to overcome this hardship. Will you give us the next big idea? We wouldn't put it past our savvy owners, who are very likely dealing with this very situation on their own terms. You can help us with the evolution of our own plan as it coincides with an aggressively changing landscape of life and business as we know it today and for tomorrow. Let me know if you have an idea that you would like us to consider by [emailing me](#) or calling me at any time. Putting our minds together means we can share a powerful and intellectual surge that could catapult us to the next level. In the meantime, we'd like to share with you our current trajectory and how we will handle the rest of the year. And yes, there is no doubt that this will affect us for the rest of the year. So let's be certain that we fully understand the impact and how we can mitigate it for the best outcome. This will take hard work, creativity, and a willingness to stay away from a fixed mindset. I believe that together we can do it, and my team is more than prepared to share with you our endeavors. We would very much enjoy your feedback, and we look forward to learning more with you by our side as our associates and advocates.

Due to the change in current events, it may seem like small beans to add this to our newsletter. But a few months ago, one of our long time owners, Kathy Ellingson, asked us to include in our newsletter, a link to our updated CottageCrew page so that our employees and their duties at The Cottages on the Key would be more accessible to owners in general. I think the time is even more prudent that we do as she suggested. When you call, or email us, please know that every single one of these individuals knows exactly who you are and how they need to help you when the time comes. I invite you to visit our [CottageCrew page](#) now, to learn more about our team. We are all in this together, and they are ready every minute of the day to ensure that you know this personally. Thank you.

[THE COTTAGECREW](#)



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**A Word from Operations...**

Hello everyone,

We understand the recent coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19) brings uncertainty to investment properties and to our business. First and foremost, thank you for your continued support and patience. While uncertainty can be scary, it also presents the license to be creative, innovative, and to seek out opportunities in areas where others fail to capitalize. This is our motto.

In times of stress and worry, it's important for us to continue to give people the space to relax and connect with one another. COVID-19 is impacting some willingness to travel away from home, but families still want to take vacations - and desire the privacy and amenities our vacation homes provide. We continue to welcome guests, the vibe on the island happens to be quite nice! The beach is packed, the bars are full, and the traffic is just as brutal as any other week in March.

It's important as well as our responsibility to take a heightened sense of awareness as well as a proactive approach with our homes and for our guests and employees who are coming in and out. We have had constant conversations with all of our cleaning crews and have instructed them to put extra focus on high traffic areas where virus can spread: (e.g. tables, hard-backed chairs, doorknobs, light switches, remotes, handles, desks, toilets, sinks). We've also removed our time constraints and asked them to spend whatever time necessary to get the job done correctly.

We have ensured that they are using the highest quality products as released by the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) which were approved for use against COVID-19 on surfaces, including multiple products from brands such as Clorox and Lysol. Some of the specific products include Clorox toilet cleaner with bleach, Clorox disinfecting spray, Lysol disinfectant max cover mist, Lysol toilet bowl cleaners, and Lysol multi-surface cleaner and disinfectant spray. As we all aware, these products are increasingly harder to obtain so we are assisting them with this process when applicable.

In addition to communication and implementing specialized procedures with the cleaning crews, we have added additional responsibilities to our pre-arrival inspection team. Upon completion of the cleanings, we will, for a second time, re-apply EPA approved Coronavirus disinfectant to all **tables, hard-backed chairs, doorknobs, light switches, remotes, handles, desks, toilets, and sinks.**

We are also developing ideas to produce a sustainable approach to create COVID-19 care packages for all of our guests once they arrive, along with a personalized note from our CottageCrew. We understand that some travelers are having to make tough decisions based on the safety of the people who matter most to them. Anything we can do to make our guests feel like they've made the right decision to stay with us is what we will do. This is our mission.



**Nick**

[CONTACT ME](#)

In order to plan for a shortage of supplies in the upcoming weeks, we have been stockpiling items in our storage shed to the best of our abilities. This has been difficult due to changes in our supply chain, but we have been creative in our methods and are focused on doing whatever it takes for our guests to have basic amenities such as paper towels, toilet paper, and household cleaners. It's amazing how important these little things matter and how much we take for granted in times like this. Where other vacation rental companies are issuing emails and notices to their guests to not expect these sort of items, we absolutely refuse to go down that road and will do whatever it takes to show our guests what hospitality is truly about!

This has truly been a collective effort, we are all happy and proud to work to have an amazing team in place, to work for an amazing company in an amazing place and to have this amazing group of owners. As always, please let me know if you have any questions.

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## A Word from Marketing...



Hello Owners!

Here is the link to last month's newsletter:

[The CottageCorner - February 2020](#)

Given the amount of social media/news attention COVID-19 has received, I think it's extremely important during this time to let you know how we are handling this from a marketing stand point. As you know, our approach to this business has always been complete transparency. Not only for our guests, but our owners and staff as well. To quote our company credo, "honesty is the best policy. We portray our company in a realistic, no frills, transparent fashion. Guest and owners prefer and respect honest responses and provide us with their faith in caring for their every need in a responsive and diligent approach. We don't hide from problems; we stand up and address them. In the end, transparency pays off in the long run. It allows us to provide better solutions and to build stronger relationships. Transparency builds confidence in the relationships we hold for our guests and owners." We live and breathe by this every single day. Our marketing approach to this situation will be no different.

I can honestly and with full confidence say that every one of our CottageCrew members is fully prepared to deal with any issues that may arise concerning COVID-19. Where some companies in the vacation rental/hospitality industry may panic or find themselves unsure of how to approach something none of us have ever dealt with before, our CottageCrew is prepared. We have always thrived during uncertain times. We have taken everything we learned from dealing with past experiences (such as red tide) and have come up with an action that we feel fully confident in.

Like Heather and Nick mentioned, there is no handbook on this. This is especially true for marketing. To us, that is a good thing. We have had to truly think outside of the box and work creatively and strategically about our marketing approach. This way of thinking actually gives us a very unique opportunity to target certain domestic travel markets as well as new areas we haven't tried before. Instead of targeting potential guests by direct-flight cities or where our followers are coming from, we are targeting states and major cities that are within driving distance to beautiful Siesta Key.

As things change and new updates occur, we are fully prepared to add/remove cities and states to our targeting, as well as discover new areas of opportunity that we may not have thought of before. As always, please do not hesitate to contact me directly with any questions or concerns you may have. It is truly so valuable to me to hear any and all suggestions you have to better promote your homes.

**Until next time, #CottageOn!**

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## A Word from Revenue...

Hi Owners!

The news heard around the world: COVID-19 is affecting you, me, and everyone in between. As it is hard to see the outcome of this cloudy situation, I am here to inform you that we are doing whatever it takes to mitigate and stay in control of not only the revenue already taken, but future reservations to come as well. As there is no blueprint for this, take a look at the actions we are implementing to combat cancellations and revenue loss for our company.

One unique action that we have never done is that we are using a resource from our Property Management System, Lodgix, to be able to offer Travelers Insurance to our guests up to 24 hours prior to their arrival. This can be used to turn around concerned guests that are adamant about cancelling and also have this option as a sales tool to improve the morale of people that are unsure about COVID-19 and the impact it may have in the future regarding potential reservations.

We are dealing with potential cancellations creatively as well. When something like COVID-19 that is so unprecedented comes to fruition, it is important to think outside the box and use this as a learning curve instead of a crutch. This is how we are analyzing and acting on this scenario:

1. If guests are trying to obtain Travelers Insurance, but are hesitant about the price increase for their trip, we are intending to offer this into our invoices as part of their original total to give them peace of mind. This shows that we are putting our money where our mouth is, and that the balance of revenue



**Barry**

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between guests, owners, and the company alike are treated equal and fair.

2. We may offer them upgrades or free services to accommodate their needs to stay "in house" for the majority of their stays. For the guests that are still coming but are using an enhanced level of precaution, we are planning on going above and beyond to meet the needs of our guests that are staying in your home during this time. Nothing is set in stone as of now, but we will be reaching in our bag to prove to our guests that they are in good hands with us.
3. We could potentially change their dates to a later time of year as long as they stay in that same home in a similar or lower revenue season. The income already present in our system would be used as a credit to a future stay. This option confirms revenue is still going to be flowing through your home.
4. Guests that are all in on cancelling are given the notion that if we are able to re-rent that home for those same dates, they will then be eligible for a partial refund depending on what we are able to obtain for that time period. This is a chance to be able to meet the guests in the middle and show that we are not just turning our heads at this.

We are continuously tracking all of our conversations and situations that deal with COVID-19 through a shared spreadsheet within the company. This allows us to see in real time what is happening, how fast it is happening, and adjustments that we need to make based on these occurrences. We will be following government regulated stipulations to ensure we are acting fairly and with regard to the major health concerns that even all sporting outlets such as the NHL, NCAA, and NBA, which are multi-billion dollar companies, would agree to do. We are being proactive and transparent in the fact that locations that have state or federal travel bans are being treated with caution and that legally, we are dealing with this appropriately.

As we are working tirelessly around the clock dealing with this, it is important that we stick to our guns and hold our cancellation policy to its standard where applicable. We are prepared to work ahead of the curve to show that on behalf of all parties, we are able to bend but not break.

Thank you for spending the time to read this. I hope this was informative in regards to how we are battling COVID-19 in the Sales and Revenue Department. We are all in this together and as a team, we will be able to learn from this experience and new uncharted territory.

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**Until next time, #CottageOn!**





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