

## Article

# A Case Study of LightStay (2010–2017) – Hilton’s Corporate Responsibility Management System

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**Abstract:** This paper focuses on Hilton’s proprietary sustainability performance measurement system (SPMS) called LightStay (2010–2017). It draws on the case-study method and relies on three principal sources of information: in-house documents, a questionnaire completed by users of LightStay and interviews conducted with external experts. Specifically, the paper traces the system’s evolution and highlights its distinctive features, exploring the challenges and trade-offs related to the design and workings of an SPMS in a hotel multinational. The study shows, among other things, how LightStay, using an internationally approved methodology of data collection, calculation, metrics and benchmarking, compares a hotel’s predicted and actual environmental performance. It concludes by arguing that LightStay is a holistic platform that not only integrates precise measurement of the firm’s environmental effects with its business operations and strategic goals but also acts as a repository of sustainability knowledge and a facilitator of organisational learning. Its value and originality lie in providing unique insights into the workings of a proprietary SPMS at a nonanonymised hotel company.

**Keywords:** sustainability performance measurement system; environmental knowledge; energy and environmental indicators; energy saving; hotels

## 1. Introduction

Without doubt, there is a fast-growing realisation among individuals, companies and governments of the need to pursue sustainability. When applied to the business setting, it is referred to as corporate sustainability (CS), which is about “the integration of economic, environmental, and social considerations on the part of corporations” [1] (p. 688). Crucially, there is a large amount of overlap between CS, which derives from the idea of sustainable development, and corporate social responsibility (CSR), which is conceptually rooted in stakeholder theory and business ethics [2]. It is argued therefore, that CSR and CS are oriented towards “the same future” [3]. This is all the more so in the context of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, with multinationals being particularly well placed to help attain most of them (e.g., clean energy). However, sustainability poses assorted challenges that “manifest themselves in terms of trade-offs which involve stakeholders, organizational operations, as well as financial and intangible assets” [4] (p. 337).

Central to these challenges is an organisation’s sustainability knowledge, conceived of as comprising relevant data, information and other knowledge-related resources, which are collected through (and preserved within) organisational knowledge structures [5]. The emphasis on data bears upon the issue of precise measurement (and reporting) of sustainability performance, which per se is highly problematic [6–8]. This also goes for the hotel industry, including hotel multinationals, which operate numerous properties varying in size, brand and geographical location. Therefore, of special

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## **Table of Contents Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual**

1. Understanding the eBook Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual
  - The Rise of Digital Reading Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual
  - Advantages of eBooks Over Traditional Books
2. Identifying Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual
  - Exploring Different Genres
  - Considering Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
  - Determining Your Reading Goals
3. Choosing the Right eBook Platform
  - Popular eBook Platforms
  - Features to Look for in an Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual
  - User-Friendly Interface
4. Exploring eBook Recommendations from Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual
  - Personalized Recommendations
  - Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual User Reviews and Ratings
  - Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual and Bestseller Lists
5. Accessing Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual Free and Paid eBooks
  - Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual Public Domain eBooks
  - Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual eBook Subscription Services
  - Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual Budget-Friendly Options

6. Navigating Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual eBook Formats
  - ePub, PDF, MOBI, and More
  - Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual Compatibility with Devices
  - Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual Enhanced eBook Features
7. Enhancing Your Reading Experience
  - Adjustable Fonts and Text Sizes of Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual
  - Highlighting and Note-Taking Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual
  - Interactive Elements Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual
8. Staying Engaged with Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual
  - Joining Online Reading Communities
  - Participating in Virtual Book Clubs
  - Following Authors and Publishers Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual
9. Balancing eBooks and Physical Books Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual
  - Benefits of a Digital Library
  - Creating a Diverse Reading Collection Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual
10. Overcoming Reading Challenges
  - Dealing with Digital Eye Strain
  - Minimizing Distractions
  - Managing Screen Time
11. Cultivating a Reading Routine Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual
  - Setting Reading Goals Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual
  - Carving Out Dedicated Reading Time
12. Sourcing Reliable Information of Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual
  - Fact-Checking eBook Content of Hilton Hotel Service Training Manual
  - Distinguishing Credible Sources
13. Promoting Lifelong Learning
  - Utilizing eBooks for Skill Development
  - Exploring Educational eBooks
14. Embracing eBook Trends
  - Integration of Multimedia Elements

- 
- Interactive and Gamified eBooks

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