

'Together, Everyone Achieves More'

HLTA Hawaii Engineers Advisory Council promotes 'best practices'—onsite and in the community

BY BRETT ALEXANDER-ESTES

When Eric Au, 2019 chair of the Hawaii Engineers Advisory Council (EAC), heard in October that many Island hospitality workers were on strike, he knew he had his work cut out for him.

"Most properties run a crew of 20 to 60 engineers, depending on the size of the property, to address guest calls, emergencies, operational projects, preventative maintenance and capital projects," says Au, who is also Marriott Hotels and Resorts' area director of engineering and facilities for Hawaii and French Polynesia-Bora Bora.

"During the strike, our engineering management team pulled together with the help of

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other task force management personnel from our mainland sister properties, to address all guest calls and emergencies," Au says. "This was remarkable, as we efficiently caught all the guest calls and emergencies with just two-to-three managers per shift."

This successful approach by Au and his colleagues at the EAC, a committee of the Hawaii Lodging & Tourism Association, exemplifies the council's motto: "Together, everyone achieves more," or TEAM.

TEAM has been a guiding principle since the council's founding in 2010,

EAC helped rebuild the stage for Kaiser High School's performing arts department, and also co-sponsored the 2017 Hotel Forum with the Hawaii Green Business Program. A year earlier, when it became clear that Hawaii's overheated classrooms were impacting student health and performance, the council donated and installed 32 room air-conditioners in 16 classrooms at Jefferson Elementary School in Waikiki. Other council community service includes raising funds for scholarships and non-profit organizations.

Au, as engineering director at Mar-

"Plumbing issues across the board were definitely the highest frequency of calls." — Eric Au

and fosters members' professional development and a strong industry network. Sixty Hawaii EAC members in 2018 were staff, managers or directors of hospitality engineering and/or maintenance departments; 30 were members of related businesses.

"Other HLTA Hawaii EAC members did provide support during the strike, so having that local support mechanism definitely helped, especially with the timing of our task force rotation," Au says. "This collaboration (and) sharing best practices builds stronger teams and individuals."

The council also works to build stronger communities. In 2017, the

riott's far-flung Pacific properties, says he must deal with an equally wide range of issues. "Depending on the country, state, city or county, codes (electrical, plumbing, energy, fire and life safety) may vary," he says. "So overseeing such a broad geographic location can be challenging. Also, working with different unions/nonunion properties, and with different ownership groups, can be challenging at times."

During the strike, "having the adequate manpower with appropriate knowledge and experience were crucial in addressing our guest calls on a timely basis," Au says. And while operational challenges depended on a specific property, he notes, "plumbing issues across the board were definitely the highest frequency of calls."

Eric Au