

Count Or Grind The Beans? The Hearty Aroma Of Hospitality At Risk - By J. Ragsdale Hendrie

2007-02-27

Finance People Are Just Like Everyone Else

MONEY MANAGERS ARE JUST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE. They have children, play golf, and are said to have a wry sense of humor. We feel secure with them at our side; Lap Top's whirling; printers spitting out spread sheets; budgets buffeting; numbers crunching; daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly reviews.

They even have their own language. We Hospitality types manage our employees; they oversee the Headcount. We prepared 100 delicious dinners; they count the covers. How many turns of that deuce? We served 45 diners. That's 70 room nights? Well, actually we have over 100 satisfied Guests. Quantify that; what is the cost benefit; no, your Budget will not allow for that educational course. REV/par, ATR, P/E - acronym us to death. It kind of sucks the life out of the Experience, which we passionately frame and try our hardest to deliver. Isn't their role Advisory after all? Do they 'put heads in beds?'

Over indulging or strict adherence to those 'screeners' can be an anathema for any Entrepreneurial type and certainly a Hotelier. We present a creative thought, and they immediately erect the walls. Then, it becomes like the latest Sega challenge, 'Super Monkey Ball Banana Blitz', looking for the backdoors, the trap doors, the muscle bound saviors to help us launch an idea which actually may improve service, product and systems. But, no, let's bludgeon it to death, chop it up, analyze the details out of it, throw it up against the wall, and then see how it looks. An interesting vetting system we have allowed. It removes the oxygen from the brainstorm. Maybe we should submit the dismembered idea as an entry for 'CSI-Miami'. We are left bewildered, hardly energized to raise anything innovative to better care for our Guest.

Many Operators are tired, beaten up, spent. Their energies are internally directed - staffing, budgets, complaints, legislation, etc. - whereas, the external focus on the Visitor and Guest Experience has become almost secondary. Our true calling is now controlled by the numbers not by the virtues of a Host. Beans are good and should be counted and then ground, because many have forgotten the aroma of good Hospitality.

Of course, we need analysis, metrics and performance measurement. We need to have the means for accountability. In all honesty, when was the last time your Money Managers had a creative idea or solution to a Hospitality related problem, other than cut, reduce, slash, close. Perhaps, they were not asked either, which is a shame, too, for creativity and problem resolution rests within everyone, if properly solicited and engaged. In their defense, if we ascribe a certain role, that is often what they become - insulated, isolated, merely linear thinkers. Have they ever waited a table, greeted a Guest, sat in on a pre-shift meeting, even seen a Guest Room or a Banquet Set-up? Got a problem? Take it up to Finance people, but do not stop at Payroll (the toughest cookies out there, where the word 'no' originated).

We end up with 'camps' within our Hospitality organizations, protecting their 'turf'. And, to be heard depends upon the 'clout of the month'. But, the numbers always speak! Astute leadership should recognize this dilemma, but they are so busy putting out the daily fires, they acquiesce that role. The message should be, of course, that we are all in it together, the common Hospitality weal. You wonder.

Who bears the brunt of this financial prerogative? Our Ambassadors, our employees - they do. The very people we have tasked with delivering our promise, upholding the Brand, creating the Experience. They are expendable, insignificant. Let's slice here, keep the wages minimal, limited Health Care, no training and development, living with huge turnover. We'll get by!

As soon as you hear that the Human Resources Director reports to the CFO, you just know that the organization will not evolve, no matter the talent of that individual. HR becomes administrative, not strategic, actually spending all their time filling those rotating employee slots. Just think what would happen with Sales and Marketing reporting to Finance? We want a tasty, zesty salad dressing, but the ingredients simply do not mix.

Successful Hospitality Executives surround themselves with talent and resources. The good ones know the strengths and weaknesses of their subordinates. They encourage debate, listen appreciatively, and act decisively. And, each member of that Management Team has a contribution to make. Money Managers are not demons; they are very smart, dedicated men and women. It is not the people, it is the profession. We do need those checks and balances. In many cases they are following standard procedures, you know, that secret writing on the walls, which we cannot or do not choose to translate. So, when the number gurus speak, we tremble and comply. And, the numbers always sway an argument.

Currently, we are slanted way too far on the financial side of the Hospitality ledger, and our ability to be flexible and creative is stymied dramatically. We are out of whack. Those in sync know that if they look after their Staff, they will enthusiastically care for the Guest and Customer, and the Balance Sheet will reflect significant gains. The Money Managers apply the brakes rather than grease the skids. And, with Tyco and Enron, we have seen too much 'cooking the books' rather than cookin' up savory solutions, ideas and even dreams.

We are in this mix together. Reestablish the strategic Finance role as Advisory, engage ALL your people to move the Organization forward, and, if anything needs to be counted, let it be Customer Satisfaction ballots. The Experience is the Bottom Line, not GAAP; it is the journey, not the Mile Markers.

This article was meant to be provocative, for the pendulum has swung. What are your thoughts?

The author is convinced that Remarkable Hospitality is the portal to the Memorable Experience. Seek solutions:
www.hospitalityperformance.com

This article comes from Hotel News Resource

<http://www.hotelnewsresource.com>

The URL for this story is:

<http://www.hotelnewsresource.com/article26451.html>

© 1998 - 2007 Nevistas and the author.

Brought to you by Hotel News Resource

Distribute your news on our Network

See what all the buzz is about at:

http://www.hotelnewsresource.com/Info-news_account_info.html