

## Overcoming: 'Now Is Just Not A Good Time For Training' - By Doug Kennedy

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Being in the business of providing outside training support for hotels representing all market segments, I never cease to be amazed by numerous reasons hotel managers give for not being able to schedule training 'just yet'.

œ 'We first need to get the right manager in place to lead the staff.'

œ 'Once we install our new 'system' then we'll have more time for training.

œ 'It's just too busy now - we can't spare the staff.'

œ 'It's just too slow now - we have to cut budgets.'

œ 'We'd do the training now, but we've just had too much turnover lately.'

Interestingly, I've casually observed that the hotels and hotel companies that already have the best sales and service training in place always seem to make the time to schedule even more, despite that they also seem to be the busiest! Interestingly also that training itself can be the solution for many of the objections above.

For example, one reason the hotel might be 'too slow right now to schedule anything' is that the staff isn't properly trained in sales. Similarly, the excuse of 'too much turnover' is actually made worse because employees leave because they don't feel they are being properly trained, as many state in their exit interviews.

The reality is that seeking the right time to schedule training is kind of like seeking happiness: Don't wait for some major milestone or life event to 'bring' it to 'make' you happy and instead take control of your own destiny. When it comes to both scheduling training and finding happiness, there's no better time to start than right here, right now!

Alternatively, here are some very good reasons to schedule your next training class immediately:

œ Your hotel is only as good as the impression of the last guest who checked-out today, the last person who called the switchboard, and the last patron who dined in your restaurant. For that matter, your now-profitable hotel is only as viable as its last accounting period.

œ Due to our naturally curious human nature, everyone thrives when they are learning, and an environment of ongoing training and development helps reduce turnover and ensure standards long-term.

œ Indeed, at its core creating hospitality is an incredibly simple process, and yet also so incredibly hard to do well consistently.

Rather than waiting to find that 'legendary' training program event that will create an epiphany for your staff, make it a top priority everyday to make sure everyone on your team conducts training everywhere and every time they can. Here are some suggestions for making training happen on your very next shift:

œ Conduct 'Grab n Go' training on the fly. Everyone knows that business cycle in the hotel business creates significant bottlenecks where everything happens at once, and thus simultaneously also creates times during which absolutely nothing is happening at all, albeit only for a brief interval. Whenever 15 or more minutes present themselves, grab every available employee who is open and conduct training activities and/or exercises.

œ Coach on the job, every day. Use down-time between guest transactions to reinforce what was done well, and to remind them what could have been done more effectively.

œ Clip and distribute articles from online and print trade magazines to your team on a regular (weekly) basis. Discuss their impressions and how the topic can apply at your hotel and lessons learned during 'Grab n Go' training.

œ During slow periods, connect a tape recorder to a telephone handset adapter and have managers (who are coached in advance to sound like a realistic customer) place calls to frontline staff. The recordings can then be critiqued and discussed during 'Grab n Go' training.

œ Similarly, use the camera movie feature of the hotel's digital camera, or purchase an inexpensive camcorder. Then during down-time you can conduct role/play skill rehearsal activities in the workplace, videotape them and then critique them in small groups during 'Grab n Go' training.

œ Reinforce core themes of traditional training workshops with workplace displays, posters, and job aids that provide reminders in the workplace.

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By Doug Kennedy

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His articles have also appeared worldwide in more than 17 prominent international publications including the HSMAI Marketing Review, eHotelier, 4hoteliers, Hotel News Resource, Hotel Online, Human Assets - Dubai and Hong Kong, Hsyndicate worldwide, BAHA Times - U.K., Hospitality - Maldives, and the Hotel Expert Magazine Hong Kong.

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