

Hospitality Teaser: Customer Service Basics

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In today's highly competitive business world companies are constantly striving to improve the odds that potential customers will choose their business over their competitors. Successful merchants have strived to outdo others in their field by finding ways to make their business stand out from the others. It brings to mind the current Cadillac commercial that so eloquently highlights the fact that 'in today's luxury pursuit it's not a question of' all the latest bells and whistles that you offer 'the real question is' do your customers have the emotional connection with your property that will keep them coming back?

Mark Johnson, publisher of the blog HotelChatter.com brings it home with the comment, 'They can't just throw a 42-inch plasma TV, an iPod dock and some barely functioning WiFi into the room, launch 100 hotels and have it work, guests also want the service.' He adds that better service is the real ingredient necessary to ensure a brand's success since, 'They're all going after the same general market.'

THE IMPACT OF PERFECTING THE BASICS

'Back to basics' is often heard yet rarely mastered. Perfecting customer service basics, such as gratitude and guest recognition is necessary. This is possible and realistic. With the right game plan and tools perfection is possible for any team. How? Consider an example from professional football. In the history of the sport only the 1972 Miami Dolphins have yet to achieve: the perfect season! To accomplish such a feat teams must have the common vision of accomplishing something greater than that of every other hotel in your competitive set and market. This doesn't mean that the ball is never dropped or that a 'turnover' never occurs. What it does mean is that you find a way to win and in the final analysis your property proves superior to that of your competition.

You can influence your Guest Satisfaction Ratings this very month, particularly in categories that rate your loyal customer base, by taking this month's challenge to perfect the basics. Keeping with our football analogy, note how the famous coach Vince Lombardi would begin each team practice in order to keep his professional players keenly focused on the basics, 'Gentlemen, this is a football.' How eloquently Coach Lombardi emphasizes the necessity of perfecting the basics. The simple fact is he that consistently perfects the basics will surpass their competition in market share. What is more basic than showing gratitude to your guests and recognizing them as valued individuals?

CONSIDER THE IMPORTANCE OF SHOWING GRATITUDE: (definition: expressing gratitude grateful thanks)

How can your associates show their appreciation for the guests who have chosen your property for their conference or family vacation? A terrific example of expressing gratitude comes from a gentleman at a New Orleans hotel who works as a housekeeping public area attendant. One day when a guest thanked him for his assistance, the associate responded with, 'It is my pleasure, without you there is no me!' What an excellent example of how to show gratitude to the guest!

It's as simple as good old fashion politeness... Thank the guest for being your guest. Treat them with respect and as an individual. When your guests feel like an individual and not a number, you win their loyalty. The original Greek meaning of the word hospitable is 'love of strangers.' Showing your personal gratitude and that you love that they have chosen your property over your competition and you will never have to worry about market share!

THE VALUE OF EXCELLENT GUEST RECOGNITION: (definition: special notice or attention)

Regardless of the amenities and cutting edge technology offered to guests it ultimately boils down to how you make your guest feel during their stay. When one feels like a nameless number... just another arrival, departure or cover you can bet that they'll be looking to stay at another hotel the next time they visit your city. By taking actions and using words of gratitude and recognition the guest feels like a valued individual.

How about your associates? Do they realize the impact they have on your occupancy levels with how they interact with guests? Consider what Robert an In Room Dining server commented: 'In the beginning, I really didn't think my job was beneficial to the success of the hotel. When I went to my first Formula 10(TM)* training, that's when it actually dawned on me how the importance of my everyday duties had a major impact on the hotel's success as a whole. The Formula 10(TM) program has helped me come to the realization that no matter what your job is, from Stewarding to Sales and even In-Room Dining, everyone plays a major role in the success of our hotel.'

With the same activities and job duties day in and day out it might be easy for your associates to forget who makes their paycheck possible: the guests not a money-tree growing at your corporate office. What can you do as a supervisor or manager to insure your associates appreciate the significant impact they have on your occupancy and market share? Just as it takes many drops of water to fill a bucket it takes each and every guest experience to win the market share battle. We invite you to take this month's Hospitality Teaser Challenge and engage your team members in activities that will increase your loyal customer base!

This month's Hospitality Challenge:

THE CHALLENGE:

This month's Hospitality Teaser Challenge is to engage your team members in actively showing gratitude and recognition to each individual guest that honors you with their business. Therefore, this month challenge your team members to perfect the basics (definition: first and necessary above all else). Ever notice when you are the customer how simple things such as being acknowledged make a difference to you? Concentrate your team members on looking each guest in the eye and giving them a warm smile that communicates they are genuinely welcomed at your establishment. Focus on perfecting the basics of gratitude and guest recognition with each guest, making them feel like a valued individual. Use this month's complementary Hospitality Bingo Card Downloads to engage your associates in interacting with your guests.

THE BENEFIT:

Perfecting the basics of gratitude and guest recognition and master your market share with superior customer loyalty. Involve all of your team members in this month's challenge, by doing so your guests will enjoy personalized experiences and you will enjoy their loyalty to your property!

For great motivational and educational tools, we are proud to announce the launch of Stark Service Solutions' Motivational Marketplace! Now, your team can take advantage of great tools to advance professional hospitality at your property. As a Stark member, you will receive a special introductory 20% discount on purchases made by March 2, 2008 and the opportunity to win \$100.00 in Stark Motivational Marketplace merchandise! A separate email containing the promotional code will be sent to you. Use this discount to purchase the Core Hospitality Principle Banner: Guest Recognition: Know them by Name! This full color 24' x 36' vinyl banner, complete with hanging grommets, will announce, motivate and educate your team members to consistently provide guest interactions that are personalized, professional and hospitable. Display it at your associate entrance or cafeteria for maximum exposure. Purchase multiple ones for each department to have their own. The #1 Light Up Pen promote your cause with the reminder inscription: Want to be #1? Recognize every guest by their name!

We wish you outstanding success this month with your guest satisfaction scores. Stay tuned for next month's Hospitality Teaser as we delve into the subject of guest recognition even further with the subject of GUEST RECOGNITION CREATES AN INTIMATE EXPERIENCE!

*Formula 10(TM) is a program offered by Stark Service Solutions, LLC. If you would like more information on this or any of our programs please contact us at: info@starkservicesolutions.com or visit our website: www.starkservicesolutions.com.

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