

The Important People in a General Manager's Life - By Gina Abernathy

2008-02-18

I began my hotel career as a front desk clerk. I subsequently worked as a reservations manager, a director of sales, and then as a multiple property sales manager. While working my way up the ladder, I noted the closed doors and watch-dog secretaries of many general managers. Those managers rarely took tours of their properties, never said good morning to guests, and had their secretaries screen all calls. I vowed that someday I would be a very different kind of general manager - the kind that I never had.

I mentioned my determination during my interview for a general management position with Hamister Hospitality. When asked for clarification, I responded: 'I want to be the kind of general manager that puts all people-customers, co-workers, vendors, community members-first.' I got the job. Here is how I transformed my ideals into action:

Team Spirit Originates from the General Manager

I believe that the demonstration of team spirit and a willingness to get your hands dirty must be high priorities. There is no more meaningful way to prove that you and your staff are on the same team. If we are short-staffed, I clean rooms with my housekeeping staff. On one occasion, I had my own cart until 7pm, my little boy played with his toys in the rooms I was cleaning. The act earned the respect of my staff and it showed that I did not feel that I was above them or their work.

My co-workers know that if a difficult issue or customer problem arises, they can call me anytime, day or night. I never show annoyance when these calls occur: if I do not maintain a helpful attitude, my staff will not feel that they can rely on me the next time they find themselves in a tight situation.

Embrace the People Coming into your Office and into your Life

An open door policy should not be a just another corporate buzzword: it must be a ubiquitous and constant practice. The positive energy of an open door should attract people into our offices. Co-workers, guests, and vendors should feel free to stop in without an appointment.

Showing that We Value Others through Personal and Prompt Communications

I believe in answering every phone call and returning every message. I use email when I feel that my correspondent prefers this method of communication, but I pick up the phone whenever I feel that a more touch would be more effective.

I was so blessed one day after responding to an email from a guest. After I had emailed him an answer to his question, he responded: 'Thank you so much for your reply. I am impressed that you, as a General Manager, answer questions like mine by yourself, meaning that you receive the inquiries from your website personally. Most managers delegate this, and become so 'distant'. This is probably why you got the Platinum Award! Congratulations and way to go.'

Everyone's time is valuable. I make it a point to have a two to four hour response time. This truly shows people that they are my priority.

Listening is so different from hearing. I remind myself to stop typing or reading when someone is trying to talk with me. I focus my eyes, put everything else aside, and, for that moment, I pretend that the person with whom I am speaking is the most important individual in the whole world.

The Importance of Gratitude and Celebration

Saying thank you is one of the best ways to show people that they matter. We do not hear or speak these words as often as we should. My sales manager and I send hand-written notes to our clients and vendors. On one occasion I sent a letter to the owner of a food vending company. One of his representatives went above and beyond in his job and I thought the owner should know about it. The representative received praise from his boss and our relationship was strengthened as a result.

Saying thank you to co-workers is equally important. I give literal pats on the back and tell people that they are doing a good job as often as possible. When co-workers receive a good customer comment, I reward them with a special certificate. We hold a Thanksgiving potluck dinner each year, give small gifts at holidays, and celebrate birthdays. I bake for my staff regularly and bring them treats. Such gestures are constant reminders that I truly care for them.

People are our Purpose

During my years in the service industry, I have become keenly aware of how vital people are to me both personally and professionally. General managers have to balance many priorities: driving revenue, controlling expenses, labor, AR/AP, and inventory, ensuring profitability and a return to the investors, and so on. We should never forget, however, that people are most important. We depend on them. They are not an interruption of our work, they are the purpose of it. Without co-workers, guests, and business partners, we would have no business to run.

Gina Abernathy is a Hamister Hospitality General Manager. For more information on Hamister Hospitality, visit www.hamisterhospitality.com. Feedback and comments can be sent to Gina at news@hamistergroup.com.

This article comes from Hotel News Resource

<http://www.hotelnewsresource.com>

The URL for this story is:

<http://www.hotelnewsresource.com/article31219.html>

© 1998 - 2008 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