

The Guest

R E P O R T

By Roberta Nedry

It's not the aptitude, but the attitude that determines the altitude! Soaring to new heights in service can be as simple as making an attitude adjustment. While knowledge and specific skill sets are key to good performance in any job, they can become null and void if accompanied by a negative and even indifferent attitude. Some statistics show that one of the key reasons customers and guests took their business elsewhere was an attitude of indifference (not even negativity) from the owner or some other employee.

When guests enter any world of hospitality, they will shape their perceptions based on many intangible qualities, courtesies and attitudes from each employee and every touch point during their experience. These guests and the revenue they bring will determine the success or failure of any business enterprise.

Attitude begins with recognizing that the guest is the most important part of the job, not an interruption or by product of the daily routine. And, this recognition begins at home.

Managers must realize that their staffs are also their internal customer. Policies to instill a guest friendly attitude may backfire if employees do not feel management treats them well and/or has not created an environment for guest service success. Unhappy employees tend to project that attitude and may not be around for long.

Recently, I had the opportunity to learn about the "We Care" program at the Embassy Suites in Fort Lauderdale. According to General Manager Don Friedman, this all volunteer committee of both management and hourly employees, has been a key factor in unifying employee commitment to outstanding service. In addition to promoting the Embassy Suites product, this enthusiastic team addresses all facets of service delivery in support of a 100 percent satisfaction guarantee for guests.

"We Care" President, Beverly Ish, an hourly employee and the administrative assistant in the hotel, notes that a 19-member steering committee meets monthly and full employee meetings occur every six weeks. They address all guest feedback responses and surveys, any guest complaints, safety issues, and employee recognition for outstanding service. This team effort gives all employees a voice that matters, promotes buy-in and understanding of the product and shows each employee that Embassy Suites cares about their own safety and morale, as well as the guest.

Says Beverly, "I have never been part of anything as rewarding as this, I'll be here forever!" Her enthusiasm, commitment

Service excellence

Attitude can lead to gratitude

and courtesy reflect the attitude of all the employees I have met so far at the hotel and the management that leads them. That attitude is strongly carried through to guests.

Understanding what impacts attitude in any one particular environment can be enlightening. Guests want to feel valued by the company they have chosen for a particular service. Employees want to feel valued by the company that hired them. Attitude can be strongly impacted by job satisfaction, communication channels and teamwork.

Organizations that are willing to assess these areas will discover wonderful insights to motivate managers and employees to service excellence. Solid guest experience management depends on understanding the environments that lead to positive, indifferent or negative attitudes. By proactively identifying and addressing these issues monthly, Embassy Suites has channeled employee involvement and leadership into a win for guests.

Managers and employees must closely examine the flow of each work day. Determine what interruptions and distractions distance employees from guests.

If the phone has been ringing non-stop and a guest stops by to ask a simple question, the efficient employee may view that guest as another interruption. And while that employee may believe they are giving great service by quickly answering the phones and the guest questions, their facial expression, eye contact and attitude may reveal deeper frustrations. The guest senses that attitude.

On the other hand, if there is a system or process in place to handle the periods of intense phone activity and employees understand the impact of their attitudes, they are able to show guests concern, care and attention to address their needs.

Whether 30 seconds, 30 minutes or three hours, whether by phone or in-person or even by mail, attitude is the essence of service delivery and will lead the companies and individuals who care to exceptional service altitudes. Guest gratitude will take those organizations and their profits even higher. □

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