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Case Study

SUBJECT:

INCREASING SALES BY SERVICE

EXAMPLE:

MARRIOTT HOTELS & RESORTS

LISTEN – RESPOND - TEACH

SUMMARY:

“Customer courtesy is the mainstay of every Marriott hotel, resort, and suite.”

Marriott Hotels and Resorts utilize customer response for rapid resolution to customer complaints. Feedback enables Marriott to identify opportunities to enhance the overall experience and generate customer “delighters”. Furthermore, Marriott employs continuous education training for front-line employees and managers, to share experience and to empower prompt resolution. This blend of knowledge and empowerment is a proven formula for success.

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Listen – Respond - Teach – Marriott

“One of the most meaningful aspects of our quality program and our customer service program is related to Quality Service Composite,” says Jim Moyer, vice president of Total Quality Management.

Recognizing the importance to differentiate from the competition by providing superior service, Marriott Hotels and Resorts has taken three basic principles of good customer service to a higher level or great customer care. The three basic principles are:

Listen – Respond - Teach

Customer Surveys are a method to procure customer feedback and measure the METRICS of customer service. Remember that METRICS stands for “Measure Everything That Results in Customer Satisfaction”. As customers, we are accustomed to receiving a questionnaire or survey once an event or activity has come to completion. In the case of Marriott, the survey is available during the stay, so the staff can respond immediately.

“We determined that our customers have immediate concerns and interest in improving their service while they are staying with us,” acknowledged Moyer. “If a light bulb doesn’t work or the hot water doesn’t meet their expectations, our customers should not have to fill in a long, in-depth, partially market-driven survey to let us know.”

As a result of this real time feedback, Marriott not only addresses the immediate needs of guests to resolve complaints, but they have also identified customer desires to improve the experience. Examples of responding to evolving customer needs are evident in enhanced services designed to accommodate travelers, like having a receipt prepared and placed under the door for the last morning of a stay. This convenience allows a customer to simply pack and leave without ‘standing in line to check-out’. In some locations the check out and billing summary are also available by television in the room or on the Internet. Daily newspapers, high-speed Internet and wireless connections are also becoming increasingly prevalent. These conveniences demonstrate Marriott attention and responsiveness to customer needs.

“I think that more than anything else, the traveling customer wants consistency. If there is anything that separates us from other companies, it is that you can depend on the room and the service quality to be at a certain level. We have a rigorous set of minimum standards, and it’s these standards that have earned us the reputation for consistency.”

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To maintain this consistency, Marriott maintains a rigorous training program.

“Our training program is administered through Regional Training Directors. They have a cadre of operations people who work with them. Those people are professionals who leave their posts for four to six weeks a year to do on-site training,” says Moyer.

Moyer explains how listening to the customer needs and responsiveness is incorporated into ongoing training activity. The ongoing education increases knowledge and empowers the employee. “Part of that has to do with increased training of our front-line people and increased empowerment – their ability to be able to satisfy the customer at their point of contact.”

The training is not limited to new employees. It is ongoing education and representative of a continual commitment, a culture of dedicated service. “Our goal is to have all our managers involved in 40 hours of in-service training every year. That is the stated goal for the division’s management team. We achieved 82% performance against that goal. For the hourly associates, our non-management folks, the training they receive varies widely from as few as seven days a year up to as many as 20 days a year.”

Marriott developed a tool called the “Success Kit”. It is a compilation of knowledge gathered from the expertise of seasoned management, and given to new managers as they join the organization. “It helps people understand some of the fundamentals of business management and how to get along and be effective at Marriott.”

The continuous commitment to empower employees to identify and provide customer satisfaction is evident by the results. Marriott has enjoyed occupancy levels of over 70%, while the industry average is in the mid 60’s.

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