



People Skills

by Bruce Wienberg, CHA

Five key rules to be a more effective General Manager

*Another great article from The Rooms Chronicle, the #1 journal for hotel rooms management! ***Important notice: This article may not be reproduced without permission of the publisher or the author.*** College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Niagara University, P.O. Box 2036, Niagara University, NY 14109-2036. Phone: 866-Read TRC. E-mail: editor@roomschronicle.com*

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The concept of “inn” (and Innkeeper) was originally established 2,000 years ago by the Romans to simply service travelers on their legendary European highway network. Today’s hotel and motel General Managers (GMs) have quickly evolved into much more than simple innkeepers. Currently, finance, operations, staffing, sales, service, brand standards, safety and liability, and many other issues pull general managers in many different directions.

At Best Western, our North American properties have experienced Regional Service Managers who can help a GM utilize not only the vast resources of Best Western but also assist the operation to maximize its potential. While each property is unique, there are many methods to become a more effective General Manager that apply to every hotel, motel and inn. Here are five imperative rules for every general manager’s consideration:

1. Utilize your Brand’s Resources

Remember, you are not the first hotel in the world, so don’t spend time “reinventing the wheel.” For example, you don’t have to develop an Operations Manual from scratch. Like Best Western, your brand probably has all of the contents of a manual already created that you can pick, choose and modify to match your property’s criteria. Likewise, assistance is usually available with sales and marketing, design and renovations, purchasing, public relations, legal issues, etc. Be curious and find out what assistance and resources are available. After all, the hotel’s monthly membership or franchise fees are paying for it.

2. Know Your Rooms

Your guestrooms make you money. So you must know them, inside and out. That means you should be assessing the rooms daily. You should know each and every room, and its condition. Do you assess rooms every day? You need to, ideally with your executive housekeeper and maintenance manager.

Keep a list of the rooms you assess so that you inspect every room at least once per month. If you assess five rooms per workday, you will visit 100 in a month. A good self-assessment program will allow you to be confident that all the rooms are well-maintained and cleaned, and can provide instant feedback to your staff on how well (or not) they are doing.

Have you taken home your amenities and tried them? Have you stayed overnight in your hotel and tried out the bed? Do you know how loud the elevator is or how loud the ice machine is at 1 a.m.? Only by knowing what your guest is experiencing will you be able to improve your hotel.

Do you visit your competitors’ hotels? When on vacation in another city or country, do you spend a few minutes looking at new hotels? As a hospitality professional you need to be looking for new ideas to make things better and ways to make the guest’s stay more comfortable and memorable.

3. Focus on Service

In addition to the guestrooms, your property is also selling service. While service includes the obvious, like cleaning the rooms and checking guests in and out, an effective GM also knows that great service needs to permeate throughout the operation, in areas such as:

- Maintenance response to in-house guest issues.
- How the staff is dressed (uniforms) and pleasantly greets each guest.
- Keeping the public areas clean, tidy and well maintained at all times.
- Added-value amenities in the guest rooms.
- Helping guests find local attractions, restaurants, etc.

Also, an effective GM ensures that time is spent meeting and greeting guests. Simply by interacting with guests, you will be amazed at what you will find out and your guests will be impressed that the GM cares enough to make the time to meet them. Lastly, your staff will see your care and attention towards the guests, and will emulate your attitude. Remember that your employees and management team are always watching you, taking their cues on how to work from you. Attitude is always “top down”.

4. Be Expendable

To truly be a more effective General Manager, you don't have to be at the property all the time. A hotel runs 24/7/365. I'm willing to bet that you can't be there all the time (no matter what you told the owner). So, for everyone's sanity, you need to create systems and backup plans for your functions and the functions of your management team. Then, put it on paper and into a binder, available for your employees to access, if required. Review the binder quarterly with your management team and make revisions. Perhaps a new, capable employee can be trained to assist.

The real test of a good GM is how well the hotel runs in his or her absence. Without you there, who is the Manager on Duty? Does he/she know what to do or who to call in an emergency? What happens if the MOD is sick? Who takes over then? Planning for these eventualities will make your job less stressful and you will be more productive, knowing that you don't have to always be at the hotel.

5. Be a Coach for your Staff

Probably the number one issue facing hoteliers today is a lack of adequate staffing. Committed employees are out there, but turnover is very high in our industry. So it is important for you to do everything reasonably possible to retain your best employees and to stop them from even considering going to another property or another industry.

How does an effective General Manager do this? First, you need to have a good, clean, well-maintained property. This minimizes guest complaints and makes the hotel a more pleasant place to work. The employees see the care and attention given by the GM and ownership and will feel the same pride in the property. Next, ensure that the holistic work environment is positive. Look objectively at your operation and ask yourself:

- Am I paying a fair wage for the work performed?
- Do I have staff incentives, recognition and empowerment programs?
- Do we have all the tools, supplies, equipment and materials needed to do the job?
- Are the staff areas clean, tidy and well-maintained?
- Am I firm, fair and consistent in how I treat the staff?
- Do I ask for their ideas and input to make their jobs and the hotel better?
- Do I regularly provide ongoing training and job performance reviews?
- Do I show respect and understanding for their work?
- Am I professional in dealing with staff, suppliers and guests alike?



While there are many other topics that contribute to being a more effective General Manager, one must first master the above issues. Once these five areas are effectively managed, the GM can move on to more fine-tuning and enhancement of the operation.

Remember, being “more effective” doesn't necessarily equate to “work harder”, or “work longer hours”. But it does mean “work smarter.” Focus on what really counts to your guests and staff, and they will join you in creating success for you and your property. ✧

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