



People Skills

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Demonstrating professionalism in maintenance and engineering

*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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Professionalism in the maintenance area is imperative for the success of the Maintenance department or Engineering division in the hotel. Maintenance and engineering personnel interact with every department and area of the hotel as well as hotel guests. Whether they are providing preventative, scheduled maintenance, troubleshooting malfunctioning equipment, or responding to mechanical emergencies, the staff must always be conscientious of their environment and the people within it.

Confidence is bestowed on members of the maintenance department; they take care of the hotel's equipment and are knowledgeable to fix breakdowns when they occur. Presenting a skilled and polished image is essential for positive interactions with hotel employees and reassuring service for guests.

Professionalism can be exhibited in a variety of ways:

- Keep attire neat and clean at all times.
- Practice good personal hygiene that is consistent with hotel expectations.
- Use good posture and demonstrate proper manners when in the presence of others.
- Follow through and complete tasks and duties as expectations dictate.
- Strive to complete work orders and maintenance requests in a timely fashion.
- Maintain and take care of designated work areas or other areas of responsibility.
- Clean up and restore workspace in public areas to original condition.
- All paperwork must be completed and filed in accordance with hotel procedures.

Maintenance personnel can also demonstrate professionalism when things go wrong in the hotel or when items cannot be fixed to the satisfaction of guests or employees. Many times this will involve the use of:

- Listening skills
- Having patience with the person who is affected
- Understanding others' points of view and perspectives

When things do go wrong, always communicate openly with the guest or employee:

- Advise them of the actions that are going to be taken to resolve the problem.
- Give them a time frame that will be needed to make repairs.
- Outline any alternative options that may be available to comfort the guest or rectify the dilemma.
- Finally, follow through and assure that the task is completed and that the guest or employee is satisfied.

Remember, guest service does not just happen at the front desk or in the hotel lobby. Maintenance personnel can also demonstrate their professionalism when providing service to the guest by:

Ten-foot/Five-foot Rule

When coming into proximity with hotel guests, always:

- ➔ At ten feet from the guest, make eye contact with the guest and smile.
- ➔ At five feet from the guest, give a warm greeting. Call the guest by name, if known.

- Addressing the guest (by name if you know it) or acknowledging them in the hotel corridors.
- When making a service call to the guest- room, contact the front desk or hotel operator and find out the guest's name prior to arriving at the guestroom door. Use the guest's name at least twice during the service encounter.
- Always wear name tags and/or identification badges so guests can identify maintenance personnel as employees of the hotel. This will also help stimulate dialogue from the guest towards maintenance personnel.
- Make eye contact with each guest in hotel rooms or corridors. Using the ten-foot/five-foot rule, smile and extend a pleasant greeting.
- Where appropriate, make time for guests even if they did not request help from engineering personnel specifically. Offer assistance to guests who appear to need a helpful hand.

Many guests don't expect to receive outstanding service from someone traditionally not perceived to be in a guest contact position. Yet, guest service is everyone's job, not just those who traditionally work in the front of the house. Providing superb service will "wow" the guest and impress them with the hotel's range and consistency of service. It is this intangible aspect that the guest will long remember.

The hotel's internal guests, its employees, can also benefit from the professional attitude and support of engineering and maintenance staff. In many cases these employees are the people directly involved in providing service to the guest. Sometimes urgent and (what may be perceived as) unreasonable requests from the front desk staff may seem ridiculous; however, to the waiting guest, these demands are totally appropriate. Quick reaction to other team members requests and needs enable traditional guest contact employees to continue to do their job and to meet and exceed guests' expectations.

Any contractors or specialists that are working on hotel grounds should also exhibit the same professionalism expected from the hotel's internal maintenance staff. Since guests may not be able to discern outside contractors or vendors from the normal hotel staff, management must require the same level of service, professionalism and courtesy as would be delivered by in-house personnel. Prior to them starting work at the hotel, inform contract laborers of these expectations for service and their responsibility when interacting with guests. Contractors and vendors should also adhere to the hotel's dress code standards and policies regarding eating, drinking and the use of inappropriate language.

Ongoing training is imperative to keep staff at a high level of professionalism and competency. Concurrent training on specific skills required in the job description should be updated constantly. Continuing education and recertification should also be monitored to make sure that the employees maintain their level of proficiency and stay up to date on changing information.

Finally, remember this quote about professionalism during your daily activities at the hotel, "It's not the job you do; It's how you do the job." Anonymous ✧

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