



Shift changes provide unique opportunities for improved service

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Daily line-ups or effective, efficient shift changes are essential in providing a high level of service to hotel guests. Sue Stephenson, senior vice president of human resources for The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, explains, “The daily line-up is an invaluable process that enables us to refocus our employees on our vision and gold standards. These are the credo, the employee promise and our motto — ‘We are ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen.’ The motivational process enables our employees to keep up-to-date and involved with the success of their operation.”

Although most properties do not have the budgets to perform the extensive training that Ritz Carlton does, a 15-minute investment in training each and every shift will pay back big dividends in guest satisfaction as well as improve operational efficiency.

What’s covered in the shift change?

Procedures: Invest in 15 minutes each shift — start on time and end on time. No sitting down during the change — no one should be too comfortable because it needs to flow quickly. The manager or supervisor of the prior shift should lead the shift change briefing. Provide information on:

- Number of arrivals — group arrival information

- Number of departures — group departure information
- Total available rooms/occupied rooms
- Functions occurring in the hotel that evening
- Major functions in the area that evening

Training topic: Make it timely and relevant to the tasks that employees may be expected to perform (e.g., relocating a guest, if a sellout is anticipated). Then review the proactive steps for the staff members to take. Listen to their suggestions. In the hotel business there is more than one possible solution to most problems. Seize the opportunity to train and educate employees. For example, review hard dollars vs. soft dollars — sending a guest \$40 flowers from an off-site florist costs \$40; buying a \$20 breakfast for them at your restaurant might cost \$6.

Consistency: The shift change is an opportunity to give reminders of expectations, goals, and challenges, and to recognize individuals for consistently adhering to established standards.

Recognition: Show appreciation for the hard work that employees perform and the dedication that they exhibit. Be specific in this praise. Citing the employee’s name helps reinforce the recognition in the mind of the employee and others. For example: “Joe, you really did a good job walking the two rooms last night” or “Mary, I received a compliment from the Jones’ on their suite — great job up-selling!” And don’t forget the most important rule of all: *Praise in public, but reprimand in private.*

Teamwork and team spirit: Assist the next shift by focusing on a common goal. Making employees part of the decision-making process and keeping them fully informed is an essential element to building a sense of belonging.

Communication: Each employee should be “in the know.” Review highlights of the departmental logbook. Effective shift changes do not eliminate the need to maintain logbooks. The book needs to be bound — no adding or ripping out pages. The logbook typically chronicles unusual occurrences and lists guest complaints and requests, as well as recaps the shift.

Appearance: Is everyone consistently meeting appearance standards? Are they a positive representation of the hotel? Check for and review uniform, nametag and grooming standards as appropriate. Better yet, have employees check each other for compliance with appearance standards.

Preparation: Do all employees and each workstation have the proper supplies/equipment? Is the van gassed up for the next shift? Is each front desk station or housekeeping cart fully stocked? Have keys been distributed and signed for?

Feedback: No one knows the likes and dislikes of guests better than the staff directly serving them. Involve employees; they play *the* critical role of hotel representative to each and every guest. Ask for their opinions and suggestions. The manager who fails to listen to his employees is either lost or deaf. ✧

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