



Housekeeping

by David M. Green

When training new housekeeping employees, “Think outside of the triangle”

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Have you figured it out yet? Training is a big deal, if not an investment in the human capital that drives any hotel’s housekeeping department. If you look at all the truly successful companies, you will see a strong emphasis placed on training. Maybe it’s time we think “Outside of the triangle, instead of outside the box”. Take a look at your training process after considering these three main points.

Interview

You may ask how the interview plays a part in the training process. This is the time to show the applicant what the company, property, or even the department is all about. As we’ve heard before – “You don’t get a second chance to make a first impression.” Here are a few simple but powerful ways to plant the positive seed with a potential team member:

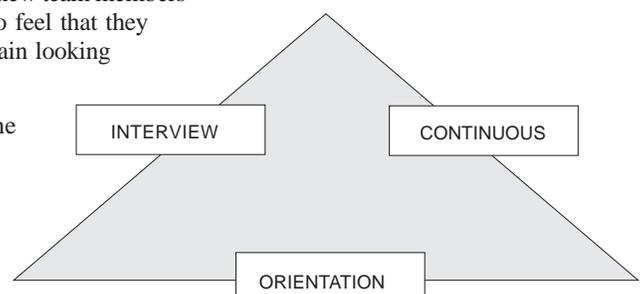
- The interview area should be clean, orderly and freshly painted. It does not make a good first impression when a potential new hire sees clutter and/or dirt. After all, you are probably interviewing them for a cleaning position. Send the appropriate message that cleanliness is important and the business that you are engaged in.
- Posters or other information about the goals and philosophy of the organization should be visible. This serves as a reinforcement tool for all who see them.
- Be on time for the interview and show extreme courtesy and professionalism throughout the entire interview process. Remember, you are still in the hospitality business, even though you might specialize in housekeeping.
- If the organizational philosophy incorporates team input in matters requiring personnel decisions, have other team members join you in the interview process. Multiple perspectives often can aid in determining whether the applicant would be a suitable fit for the housekeeping department. It also lets others have some level of input when determining who their future coworkers might be.

Orientation

On any new employee’s first day of employment, he or she is typically anxious and nervous. It is the job of the trainer who leads the new employee orientation session to tailor the presentation to help new hires ease their feelings. Perhaps start the orientation with some music or an entertaining video of a musical concert. Or perhaps toss a ball from one person to another and as each person catches the ball they introduce themselves and tell about their favorite sport or restaurant. These are good icebreakers and will put the trainees at a comfortable level.

Just as for any type of training, the orientation trainer should always be prepared and organized. They should know the audience and the subject as if they were the expert. The orientation agenda should include safety training, departmental rules/regulations, a property tour, review of technical or procedural instructions, hospitality and customer skills, plus an introduction to other team members and departments. Keep in mind your objective as a trainer is to welcome this new team member to the organization and keep his or her attention throughout the orientation program, and ultimately make them feel welcome. It is essential for new team members to feel like they belong. It is no mystery that new employees who feel that they don’t fit in or belong will quit. Then your organization is back again looking for the next new hire.

When training others, think of yourself as a performer and the new associates as the audience. Sometimes it takes an “off the



wall approach” to ensure the audience gets the message. Try teaching a fire safety class in a fireman’s costume or teach proper vacuuming techniques with a toy vacuum. A powerful follow-up to the training would be to visit with the new team member on payday and ask, “Did the training meet or exceed your expectations?” Then hand them a Payday candy bar along with their check. A small gesture each trainee will long remember.



Continuous

An ongoing training program should encompass a multitude of various ways to ensure that team members are constantly being trained. This is when the front line supervisor’s job becomes very important. The bottom-line is: “You are only as good as your team.” Supervisors must continue to monitor their team members to make certain they are using the right procedures to perform their jobs. A smart housekeeping manager will provide their team with various training aids to assist them with day to day operations. After all, training is a form of communication. Consider these communication mediums as continuous training aids:

Visual Aids – Procedures for all general cleaning, linen washing, carpet spotting, etc. can be customized into reference cards with typed procedures on one side and pictures of one of your own team members demonstrating on the other. With the use of digital cameras and computers you can make your own set of reference cards for various tasks.

Department Meetings – Monthly and/or weekly meetings, or even start of shift briefings with the entire staff are great opportunities for training. Try a new twist with your training meeting – make it fun! Contests and games can help bring awareness to the importance of the hotel’s financial success. You can make your games more enjoyable with props, sound effects, costumes, etc. It’s called “enter-TRAIN-ment”!

Newsletters – This is a method often used for employee morale and to communicate important information. Remember training is a form of communication. The newsletter serves as a valuable tool to communicate important information to the attention of the team members. For example, you can provide information on new chemicals, supplies, and the importance of safety. Newsletters can be prepared on a desktop computer using different fonts, headings, graphics, icons, etc. It does, as mentioned, improve employee morale, especially if you select a small group of team members to help prepare the newsletter each month. Appoint someone from this group to be the editor. The newsletter can also include puzzles, favorite recipes from staff, announcements, pictures, recognitions, etc.

Bulletin Boards – This is an area of training that sometimes goes unnoticed. Bulletin boards should be placed in a highly visible area, such as sign-in areas and service elevator landings. A board might include the following:

- Posted policies and pictures of procedures
- Safety information
- Quality Assurance graphs and scores
- Miscellaneous announcements
- Recognition of employees for notable achievements
- Equipment and supply information
- Departmental organizational chart (including pictures of each manager/supervisor)
- Schedules (work schedules, deep cleaning schedules, “item of the day” schedules, etc.)

Schedules and policies needs to be in a glass enclosed locked cabinet. When placing training memos of importance on the bulletin board, put the posted date in the right hand corner. Record the date when you remove the memo right below the posted date. Keep these on file in the event questions arise from a team member. The bulletin boards should be reviewed by everyone on a daily basis. This should be part of your department’s rules. Consider decorating your boards so they are real “eye-catching”. Suggestion: Decorating your board like a movie marquee is thinking outside the triangle.

Conclusion

For orientation and continuous training programs there are lots of creative things any manager can do to add variety. Remember to always have FUN! Also remember, people learn more from seeing and doing. Role-playing, brainstorming, skits, storytelling, puzzles, CD – ROMS’s and videos are great techniques for interactive training. Learning is directly proportional to the amount of fun trainees have. ✧

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