

## GREAT SERVICE IN CLUBS

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## A VITAL CONSIDERATION

There are many views and opinions on this fundamental topic and countless businesses which, like Private Clubs, rely upon customer satisfaction, but much can be learned from one of the best exponents in the hospitality industry, dare I say “Hotels”.

From one of the original purveyors of quality management – Marriott Hotels, through to the Ritz Carlton, Asian based Peninsula and Mandarin Oriental Groups, the underlying characteristic which is central to all their businesses is ‘meeting and exceeding customer expectations’.

As was introduced in last month’s article on ‘Best practices in Club management’, great Club’s are distinguished by their defined uniqueness

and warm personal service.

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As a practical guide, there are five ‘cornerstones’ to providing the solid foundations for delivering great service.

## 1. COMMITMENT AND CULTURE

Managers, boards and owners need to be wholly committed to achieving long term success through customer satisfaction. This begins with quality recruitment, initially at senior management levels and progressively through to all levels of staff. With the exception of skill specific roles, I strongly believe that Club staff should be 'hired on attitude and trained in skills'. Over time, this form of recruitment policy will enable a service culture to be created which will permeate throughout the organisation and ensure that new staff become immersed within and live that culture from the first day of employment. The guiding principle of every successful service culture is simply for all parties to treat others with respect and dignity or indeed, as you would wish to be treated yourself. This goes for both members and staff in order to create what the Ritz Carlton Group refer to as "ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen".

## 2. DEFINE YOUR STANDARDS

The very 'best' have taken much time and effort in defining their service standards and documenting them in standard operating procedures. Through their commitment to these standards they are able to facilitate the most difficult of service traits, that of consistency. Why do we visit our favourite restaurant time after time? Simply because we know exactly what the experience will be and that our expectations will be fully met. Of course service standards still need to be continually reviewed and updated or complacency will undoubtedly set in.



Defining the standards of service.



Continuous 'on-the-job' training to reinforce standard operating procedures.

## 3. TRAIN, TRAIN AND TRAIN AGAIN

Gary Players legendary quote "the more I practice the luckier I get!" comes to mind here. Generally when times are tough, the training budget is one of the first accounting line items to be deleted. For quality service to be delivered daily, a fundamental commitment to regular 'on the job' training is essential in order to reinforce your standard operating procedures. Supervisors should have mandatory scheduled time to deliver training, not merely when they can fit it in. As we all know, if this is the case, it simply will not happen.

## 4. COMMUNICATE

This important 'cornerstone' is the glue that holds your service foundations together. Firstly, Managers, boards and owners need to ensure that the Club's vision, purpose, mission statement and standards have been communicated to its members or customers. This ensures they know what to expect. Secondly, those expectations and operating standards need to be fully understood by all staff who deliver them, otherwise they will simply become nothing more than a 'file on the shelf'. Club life brings new occurrences, events and challenges each and every day and so it is paramount that 'daily briefings' are given to eliminate surprises and prepare everyone from starter to waiter to meet and exceed expectations.

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### 5. FEEDBACK

The final block in the foundation of service is to continually solicit feedback from both the member or user (external customer) through suggestion forms, comment cards, focus groups or annual quality surveys to determine satisfaction levels or otherwise.

#### EXPECTATIONS

It will change, but regular feedback opportunities will enable this gap to be continually identified, procedures updated and communicated and new expectations met.

#### STAFF (INTERNAL CUSTOMER) FEEDBACK

This is equally, if not more important. Find out through regular meetings what staff members believe are the challenges they face in their quest to deliver quality service. Is better equipment needed? Is training adequate?

#### GREAT SERVICE

This is based on fulfilling the basic needs of Club members.

#### THE NEED TO FEEL WELCOME

Members need staff to be happy to see them, smile.

#### THE NEED TO FEEL IMPORTANT

Ensure staff recognise and know the names of as many members as possible and their individual preferences such as a favourite drink or seat. This can be achieved through member history records or customer relationship programs.

#### THE NEED FOR COMFORT

Pay attention to the small things such as cold towels at the end of a golf game. It is often small things such as this which make an enormous difference to a customer's overall experience.

## 7 FEEDBACK FORM

Continually solicit feedback from both the member or user (external customer) through suggestion forms, comment cards, focus groups or annual quality surveys to determine satisfaction levels or otherwise.





- ✓ EXPECTATIONS
- ✓ STAFF (INTERNAL CUSTOMER) FEEDBACK
- ✓ GREAT SERVICE
- ✓ THE NEED TO FEEL WELCOME
- ✓ THE NEED TO FEEL IMPORTANT
- ✓ THE NEED FOR COMFORT



### The must do's for all staff are:

- ➔ Be visible
- ➔ Always follow up
- ➔ Always listen
- ➔ Have great grooming and presentation



Finally and above all, remember that **Quality is a journey, not a destination.**

