

Typical challenge faced by room division staff



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

There is a saying , “ Customer is God” which means customer’s needs should be fulfilled by the goods or service provider so that the customer can become your loyal customer. As to the hotel industry, it is also very true that hotel staff should try the best to satisfy all demands and requests from the guests so as to keep the guests come back often and introduce their friends and relatives to step in the hotel. However, not all customers are easy going and sometimes customers may bring up difficult requests which are not able to be met by the hotel, thus it will pose a great challenge for the hotel staff to handle.

In this way, the relevant hotel department, here referred as the front office under the room division will often be responsible for processing such requests and complaints. The way how the customer’s requests and complaints are handled is very important for the hotel’s development regarding its reputability and sustainability in this field. Therefore, the aim of this report is to highly focus on the reasons of such difficult requests and complaints and the solutions which will properly get the issues handled without offending the customers and making them satisfy with the services of the hotel. It also addresses the significance for the hotel to be able to handle the complaints and requests in a proper way. In the final part, the report has drawn a proper conclusion for such challenge discussed and analysed.

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Introduction

With the development of various businesses and tourisms, different types of hospitality industries such as business hotels, holiday inn hotels, have been rapidly developed and expanded in the cities all around the world. Since the massive expansion in this hospitality sector, the competition between hotels with the same level is becoming more and more intensified. Therefore, to improve the service trying to satisfy every customer whenever stepping into the hotel to the best is becoming vital in the hotel management

(Kandampully, Mok & Sparks, 2001). However, no matter how well the hotel staff made the preparation and how much efforts they made for trying to meet the customer's needs, there are still many challenges in terms of handling the actual incidents in the real situation. With the consideration of addressing the challenges which might be encountered by the hotel staff, this report picks one typical challenge that the hotel room division department will occasionally face to analyse. The challenge is identified in the report is how the difficult customer's requests and complaints are processed by the relevant staff. Usually the requests and complaints are

handled by the front office staff under the room division department of the hotel. Such difficult requests and complaints from customers are very common for the hospitality industry. In the report, it is to write about such typical challenge to be handled by the front office staff in a business hotel.

Discussion about the reasons and forms of the difficult requests and complaints brought up by customers

In hospitality industry, it is very hard for the hotel not to have any incidents occur since the hospitality sector is dealing with different types of people. Take a Business Hotel as an example, one large Business Hotel will receive thousands of customers each year. All of the customers are with different characteristics or from different countries with obviously different cultures. Even the best and most reputable hotel may not be able to make every customer satisfy with its service. Usually, it is more occasional for the Front Office under the Room Division Department to contact the customers directly. And more often requests or complaints from customers will be delivered to the Front Office and the staff is responsible for handling such incidents.

The reasons why sometimes customers will propose some hard requests or even sometimes they directly make complaints about the hotel is not difficult to understand. From the perspective of customer, he/she spends money on the food and services in the hotel, therefore, customer may think he/she should deserve more convenient and better service. And the more money he/she spends in the hotel, the much higher expectation with respect to the services he/she will have for the hotel. This is the psychological reaction of human being. During the hotel service process, if the customers feel the

actual experience of the service is not up to the expectation they set in their mind, it will cause customer's dissatisfaction (Bardi, 2010). Although most of them will not reveal this mood and leave the hotel without a word, some of the customers will complain to the Front Office. Also since different customers are greatly different in their living background, behaving methods, characteristics, they will reflect a different needs for the hotel services. Meanwhile, as the evaluation of hotel services by each customer is subjective, evaluation of the same services may vary from person to person. Thus not all the customer's needs can be fulfilled and nothing is perfect, the diversity of the lodging customers absolutely ensure that there will be difficult requests and complaints (Hsu & Powers, 2001).

During the hotel service, a hotel may confront many forms of difficult customer's requests and complaints. There are difficult requests such as late room service, asking for some facilities which are not equipped in the hotel etc. Typical complaints are like unclean room, unreasonable phone price, poor facilities, bad-quality food, language misunderstanding, unhelpful staff and so on (Ahmed, 2005).

The ways how the Front Office staff should face and handle such challenge

When encountering the difficult customer requests and complaints, Front Office staff may feel great stress for handling such incidents especially when dealing with some hard customers. It is a great challenge for the employees to handle the requests and complaints properly without offending the customers and to ensure Hotel's interests at the same time. To handle these incidents in a proper way, the staff should firstly have a right attitude about

the challenge. To deal with such unprepared incidents is one position's responsibilities. Requirements and complaints made by customers should be regarded as gifts to hotel. Customer's requests and complaints not only reflect the needs of customers are not fulfilled by hotel, but also provide an opportunity for the hotel to evaluate its service quality and management quality in various aspects (Barlow & Moller, 1996). It actually provides a good chance to improve hotel in many ways, which will eventually enables the hotel with an outstanding performance and to be very competitive in the lodging industry.

For Front Office staff, it is a knowledge to well handle the difficult customer's requests and complaints. Normally the staff can resolve the incidents with reference to the following guidances according to different complex situation.

When customers ask for some hard requests which may not be achieved within the hotel's limit, customers may feel frustrated and disappointed. Usually customers will not deliberately make some unreasonable requests, therefore, when the staff face such requests, they should firstly try to satisfy their customers if the requests are not ridiculous. If hotel can not meet the customer's requests, the staff should make apologies to customers in a polite way. The staff should keep the requests down on the notebook and assure the customers that the hotel will improve its service or add the requests in the service range (Malhotra, 1997). Actually the requests are also the advice for the hotel. It can make the hotel perfect its services. For instance, now there are more and more women business travellers, women have more requirements than men in terms of lodging and food and so on.

Women customers may ask hotel to prepare better hairdryer and healthy meals. In other situations, hotel may have some disabled persons who will demand more special requests from the hotel. Normally if customer's difficult requests can not be provided by the hotel and the staff refuse them in a very polite way, most of the customers will not be annoyed. However, if the customer's requests are refused by the staff without any explanation, customer will make complaints because they feel his self-esteem is devalued.

When dealing with the complaints, the staff should be very careful because if the complaints are not handled properly, the hotel will lose not only one customer. When customer complains, the hotel should handle the complaints immediately and take the complaints seriously. Hotel staff should carefully listen to the customer with complaints with a wholehearted attitude and deal with the complaints after being agreed by customer. After investigation, if it is found fault with the hotel, apology and proper compensation shall be made in order to get forgiveness from the customers and make them satisfy with the hotel again. The staff shall keep in mind avoiding conflicts with customers. For the serious incident, the staff shall comfort the customers firstly then report to the manager and handle it according to the complaints procedure. Every complaint should be integrated in a file and analysed so that it can become a material for training as typical cases (Heung & Lam, 2003). After the complaints are resolved, hotel staff should appreciate the customers for pointing out the improper ways of the hotel, which makes the hotel improve itself. Then the customers will feel good impression about the hotel again and will come back for next time.

Significance for the hotel to handle the challenge in a proper way

To properly deal with the difficult requests and complaints is crucial for hotel's success and development. There are plenty of hotels established in the city, why the customers would come back if they feel they are not treated in a good manner. For hotel, to offer a good service is one thing, to resolve requests and complaints in a good manner is another key factor for its reputation. Resolving the problems effectively has a strong impact on the customer satisfaction and loyalty. Customers will possibly satisfy with the hotel based on the recovery efforts made by the hotel (Liao, 2007). There are numbers of hotels becoming good players in the lodging industry because they know how to deliver their services to customers and how to ensure guest satisfaction about their services or even how to handle the guest complaints successfully and gain back the customer's trust about their hotels. Therefore, these hotels survive in the competitive accommodation area.

Especially at present, technology develops fast and Internet is used by most people around the world. If one hotel failed to handle the guest's requests or complaints, the offended customer may spread bad words via Internet, which will greatly destroy the hotel's fame and potential customers may choose the other competitor by viewing these comments (Piccoli, Spalding & Ives, 2001). Besides this, once the customer feel negative opinion about the hotel, he/she will deliver this message to his/her friends and relatives. For example, when we check the hotel information via Internet, we will occasionally see some messages or comments made by other people. These bad words will

definitely make us feel not good about the hotel, although some of them may not be true.

While on the other hand, if the hotel can try to fulfill the requests of the customers, hotel will gain considerable profits and will definitely build a good reputation in the hospitality industry. Take London Hilton in Park Lane as an example. Since now there are more and more women business travellers who have specific needs and requirements different from those of male guests. These women guests highlight good health diet and fitness facilities and they require more appropriate facilities in their rooms, such as padded hangers, good lighting and full-length mirror. Therefore, London Hilton refurbished the 30 rooms on its 22nd floor to become an all-women zone and offers a private section for them and enhance the security. The rooms are facilitated according to women taste including fashion magazines, powerful hairdryers and others (Carysforth, 2003). As a result, the London Hilton Hotel is popular by most of the women travellers. Proper handling customer's complaints and make the complaining customer feel he/she is respected also helps the hotel to build its reputation and win back customer's loyalty.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the hospitality industry most often deal with people. In order to survive in today's intensively competitive business environment, it is very essential for hotels to ensure to achieve customer's satisfaction. As people's increasing sense of protecting his consumer rights, many complaints occur in the hotel service. Also because hotels provide products and services which may be perceived in different ways by different people, different people will have varied levels of opinion in responding to the same or similar service

and product consumption. Complaints sometimes do good to the hotel if the hotel is able to solve the problem in an effective way. If not, complaints will contribute a very bad influence to the hotel. However, for the Hotel Room Division sector, it is very challenging for them to properly deal with the matter. The persons for undertaking such position should be experienced and well-trained in this area. The capability of handling the complaints and difficult situation is not only about personal traits but also about tactics and strategies. The hotel staff should be familiar with the relevant strategies or procedures when handling the difficult and complex issues. It is also the hotel's fortune to have such excellent staff being capable of solving complaints.