



## Chapter 6:

# THE METHOD IN COLLECTIVE MANAGEMENT

## 1. GUEST FEEDBACK AT THE TIME OF SERVICE

Guest feedback or guest opinion of service provided is fundamental in Collective Management. Continuous work improvement starts with guests' feedback, at the time of service. Every service worker must be in charge of asking customers "how is the service".

By asking at the time of service, employees should also be able to provide an effective solution when critical problems occur—at least provide a provisional solution to any problem with the service or with customer disappointment.

We all know guests' questionnaires or other systems of obtaining guests information, such as Mystery Guest evaluations or online comments. Indeed, nowadays we have to be very concerned about our hotel's on-line reputation. However, the problem with this kind of feedback is that the activity has already occurred when analyzing guests' data. Collecting data about hotel

performance and customer's opinions is necessary. Guest surveys or additional reviews in service through a guest's opinions are very important as a source of independent information. However, these tools must be seen only as complementary information, thus they shouldn't be considered as the only method to get feedback from guests.

The most important source guest feedback always occurs at the time of service-by-service workers. Otherwise we will lose a great opportunity to solve problems happening at that specific moment, not involving service workers in any trouble resolution.

Guest's opinion must also be further analyzed when services are finished.



# Conscious Hospitality

A bureaucratic system of collecting guest's information, usually limits analysis and corrections to managers and Hotel Directors. Hotel staff usually feels apart from the whole system because they are not in charge of collecting guest's feedback.

The truth is that the traditional model of collecting guest's opinions manifests a lack of trust and reliability in hotel workers. Within this tayloristic approach, only top managers are supposed to be prepared to handle guest feedback without committing a fraud against the system. Workers are seen to be less capable or unreliable of handling such a job.

Contrary to this view in hotel management, Collective Hospitality Management sees guest's feedback as an opportunity, not only in providing good service and solving guest's incidents, but also by putting service employees in the center, being considered to be a cornerstone of the whole system. The main purpose of guest feedback at the time of service, is then twofold: (1) to make hotel staff more responsible for their job analysis through guests opinions, and (2) to show guests that hotel staff is very concerned in providing good service.

Guest's feedback at the time of service works in this way:

**Step One. Getting information in action:** a receptionist, housekeeping maid, or a restaurant waiter will ask how the service is going when providing his or her service

**Step Two. Recording guest's information:** if guest's response is positive, then it should be recorded – memorized or immediately recorded, if employees are busy attending guests, data

should be recorded as soon as possible to do not forget it -in its appropriate Excel sheet, block notes, piece of paper...

**Step Three. First solution if there are problems:** only if guests manifest disappointments; every worker has to apply a solution to that specific problem -and depending on its nature, asking for help to a manager or Director.

**Step Four. Feedback analysis in-group:** every week there should be an interdepartmental meeting between managers and the hotel Director, analyzing weekly performance, service issues, incidents and employee's first intervention, and customer's suggestions. However, before this meeting, department staff, together with managers, should have held a previous meeting and should have made their first conclusions. This is a pre-reunion between operational staff and managers, and it could also be interdepartmental (e.g. kitchen and service staff together with managers). What do we analyse? We'd like to receive and review compliments, but the truth is that improvement only happens through deviations, that is why we will focus especially on problems, incidents, and guest suggestions. Therefore, the unique path to excellence is the one that constantly improves hotel operations within a PDCA working system and this is done with a sense of urgency.

No doubt hotel staff must be very empathic and subtle when asking guests about service. The last thing we would like to have angry guests because they have been bothered when asking. The method certainly trusts in worker's expertise and empathy when approaching guests. Indeed the whole method is based on employee's confidence.



## 2. ON-DIALOGUES

Collective Hospitality Management expects every service knowledge worker, and manager, to dialogue about every work issue such as guest's feedback, revenue opportunities, procedures, better-cost optimization, competition and so forth. Dialogues, if productive, can boost knowledge and come up with better solutions to many types of business issues.

David Bohm introduced the concept stating that any dialogue can be considered as a free flow of meaning between people in communication, in the sense of a stream that flows between banks. These "banks" are understood as representing the various points of view of the participants. Dialogues are very productive if we are able to respect other people's opinions, even seeing the dialogue itself as a positive action. We could certainly learn within a dialogue about many working issues, if we respect the basic principles within a dialogue.

Dialogues have the goals of exploring with other participants better solutions to problems, open mind-sets and learning. In dialogues learn from coworkers and managers. We won't try to impose our ideas, pretending we may be competing in a sort of opinion battle; that's why dialogues differ from discussions. Through working dialogues, we will also come up to better courses of action.

There are certain rules in order to make dialogues productive: (1) we must all carefully listen to others, and respect others'

opinions. (2) Often, there is not a unique -or clear- solution to certain work or business issues. Many problems are unstructured, that is, these problems may have worthwhile solutions. Which one is then the best solution? Through dialogues we will explore unexpected and unknown scenarios better. (3) In dialogues there are no hierarchies; every worker, together with managers, has his or her opportunity to be listened to. There is no place for authoritarian people or bosses, nor for workers without enough self-confidence and humility in balance. (4) There must be a moderator with the skills – authority- conducting dialogues. Normally, managers or directors will participate and moderate these dialogues. (5) We may not always obtain conclusions from a dialogues; this is very important to understand because most of the people think that without a conclusion or final action to all this talking, dialogues could be a waste of time. Work issues don't always need immediate courses of action and often dialogues don't end up with conclusions the first time. Although we may not be conscious of it, there is a learning happening just because of the dialogue itself.

Dialogues happen all the time in Collective Management, such as in feedback, cost savings and financial meetings, small and provisional projects teams, within forums in the Intranet....



## 3. ADMITTING WORKING ERRORS

Great philosophers such as Voltaire and Socrates, or epistemology philosophers such as Karl Popper remarked about human fallibility. As human beings we simply cannot be certain that we did not make mistakes. This principle applies to all cases, and of course, in work and management. If we accept that we might make mistakes when working, by recognizing this fallibility principle, we may start developing a working place that really learns and advances through errors. Of course, a negligent attitude toward mistakes has no place within such culture. Admitting worker's mistakes when working is not an "open-bar" of permissiveness. We commit errors naturally, but we then carefully analyze in-group, trying to learn from every mistake;

we will share them with everyone –if we may consider that certain mistakes could happen elsewhere.

Admitting errors is necessary to improve jobs. Equally, there is no innovation process happening without admitting errors, because innovation occurs basically through a trial-and-error method. Contrary to this view, we have the hotel organizations that unrealistically don't admit errors; this type of belief thinks that by punishing every error, managers will avoid future mistakes. But reality shows that everyone is hiding the error, and such attitude neither permits better learning nor job improvement.

## 4. IN ACTION WORKING

In-action working means that we surely advance further and better by doing – together with analysis. It reflects the PDCA principle explained in the previous chapter, how could innovation happen through continuous job improvement. It is a kaizen attitude, in which action-improvement happens all of the time; doing and planning should be totally blended, because most of workers, and managers should reflect continuously in their jobs. But basically because when we are implementing

countermeasures, or developing ideas, we should apply constant analysis.

Although within a culture in which too much action may cause more errors, what matters most is not to loose workers' initiatives or a sense of urgency when working. A sense of urgency it is a kind of non-conformist state in which employees try to improve things constantly, and its the opposite of complacency.



# Conscious Hospitality

As professor John Kotter pointed out, true urgency focuses on critical issues, and energizes to action, but it is not a state of anxiety, or fear.

In-action means that we put ideas and conclusions into testing, but above all we closely monitor and analyze results. We may ask ourselves: Is this course of action improvement working? Or, Is this new service offering value to guests and

revenues to the company? Is it also profitable? Do we have to make further adjustments? Or, do we better give up that course of action? Could we save costs by re-thinking this procedure and how could it affect guests? ... In-action means doing, analyzing and constantly learning. It is Richard Branson's life and working philosophy: "Just do it! "



**IF PROBLEMS- FIRST  
EMPLOYEE RESOLUTION**



**ON DIALOGUES &  
ADMITTING ERRORS**



**DIRECTOR AND MIDDLE  
MANAGERS MEETING**

**FEEDBACK ANALIZING  
AND LEARNING**

**DEPARTMENT MEETING**

