

	RESOURCE LIBRARY - RESTAURANTS Improving Service Program	<i>Code:</i> 03.11.028
		<i>Edition:</i> 1
		<i>Page</i> 1 of 3

Briefing No. 6

Not Understanding

1. ***Announce the Topic***

This briefing is about what to say and what to do if you cannot hear or understand the guest

2. ***Why this is Important***

It is very frustrating to try to communicate with a person who doesn't understand you. The situation is worse when a person struggles to understand; you keep trying to explain and time and energy is wasted before eventually someone else arrives who can explain.

In cases where staff don't understand, they should get assistance right away. The guest will forgive you for not speaking English, but he won't like it if you waste his time.

Business travellers are especially sensitive. They usually have a tight schedule and they hate to waste time. A business-person who has difficulties communicating with staff may lose confidence in the hotel, and next time he might stay somewhere else.

3. ***Common Mistakes and Discourtesies***

Discuss the mistakes that staff make. Get them to give their ideas and cover the points below.

Wrong Actions

- * Nodding or smiling or saying "yes" even when you don't understand the guest
- * Pretending to understand
- * Guessing what the guest wants
- * Not calling someone else to help you
- * Making the guest struggle to explain
- * Saying nothing: just standing and smiling

Wrong English

	RESOURCE LIBRARY - RESTAURANTS Improving Service Program	Code: 03.11.028
		Edition: 1
		Page 2 of 3

- * If you can't hear, saying:
"What?", "Again?", "Repeat, please", "Huh?"
- * If you don't understand, saying:
"I don't understand" without first apologising
- * Saying "I don't know"

4. ***Any Questions?***

5. ***Our Standard of Courtesy***

Courteous Action

- * If you can't hear or if you do not understand, act serious. If you just smile or nod the guest will think you understand.
- * If the guest does not speak loudly enough, ask him to repeat, move closer and look directly at him
- * When you can't understand, call someone else right away. Don't make the guest struggle to explain.

Courteous English

- * If you did not hear the guest, apologise and ask him to repeat. Say:
"I'm SORRY, sir, Could you please REPEAT."
- * If you do not understand what the guest wants, even after he has repeated, say:
"I'm VERY sorry, sir. I don't understand."
"I'll get my SUPERVISOR."
- * If this is too difficult, say:
"I'm SORRY, sir. One MOMENT please."

7. ***Any Questions?***

	RESOURCE LIBRARY - RESTAURANTS Improving Service Program	<i>Code:</i> 03.11.028
		<i>Edition:</i> 1
		<i>Page</i> 3 of 3

8. **Activity; The Q Game**

Use the Q game almost the same way as in Apologising

Get staff to walk up and offer service: They should greet you and say “May I help you?” Then you reply by saying something they can’t hear or by saying something they can’t understand.

First do two or three “can’t hear”. Then do two or three “can’t understand”. Then switch around to surprise them and make sure they concentrate.

As in previous briefings, keep everyone involved: if the staff does it correctly, the group should say “Right” if someone makes a mistake the group should say “Wrong” so he has to do it again, correctly.

Remember: apologetic body language is very important. Make sure staff look and sound serious whenever they can’t hear or can’t understand. This is an important point.

9. **Summary**

This briefing covers something very basic and important: failure to understand the guest. This issue causes much confusion and upset, especially for Western guests.

Here is a major cultural difference between Westerners and Asians: generally, when Westerners do not understand, they admit it right away; Asians hesitate to admit their failure to understand, because of possible loss of face for the guest and for themselves.

But guests will be confused and angry when a staff acts as if he understands when in fact the staff really doesn’t. Western guests will not appreciate the cultural difference. In fact, Westerners often talk among themselves in amazement, saying like: “But this guy said “yes, yes” even though he had no clue what I wanted!”

As employees we must make allowances for foreign guests. It is our duty to bridge the culture gap. Make sure you remember this.

10. **Conclusion**

Do you all understand what to do when you do not understand the guest?