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GUEST CONTACT and SALESMANSHIP HANDBOOK

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this handbook is to give you an understanding of what guest contact is and how this relates to salesmanship. Perhaps the best way to begin to understand why proper guest contact and salesmanship is so necessary is to start at the end - the results of proper guest contact and salesmanship. In the service industry today, competition is stiff and fierce, and especially in Japan where the customer is conscious of proper service, proper guest contact and salesmanship will determine whether a hotel shines or is just mediocre. In many cases, the main difference between one hotel and another is really the hotel staff and how seriously they approach service, and usually the more serious a hotel is about its service, the more successful it will be. In other words, the result of proper guest contact and salesmanship is profit - profit to the guest, profit to the hotel, and profit to all staff - and this is determined by solely by guest satisfaction. Sales and marketing attract guests to our hotel, but it is only by our manner of handling guests, our quality of service, and our salesmanship as professional hotel staff that will make those guests return because they are satisfied.

So there you have it. Proper guest contact and salesmanship leads to guest satisfaction, the single most important factor in success. Guest satisfaction leads to return guests, and this leads to benefits for all. The guest is happy because he receives the service he wants, the hotel benefits because of the rise in reputation and profit, and the staff benefit through increased job satisfaction, better wages, and the pride of knowing they are professionals working for the best hotel in Tokyo.

How does one become a professional in guest contact and salesmanship? Of course, people will always point to job experience. The longer one works in a service industry job, the better he gets to know his customers and how to approach them. However, there are two very important factors which experience can only enhance but not replace - proper judgment and a positive attitude.

A hotel professional requires good judgment in order to see his customers as they are - individuals with individual tastes and dislikes. Knowing how to approach a guest, how to handle difficult requests or situations, etc., means not only how to do the job but actively putting your mind to work on how to serve the guest in an appropriate manner. Positive thinking is essential for the proper attitude in serving guests and meeting their requests with flexibility. Without a positive attitude, there is no salesmanship.

2. What is Service? What is a Proper Service Attitude?

Proper guest contact and salesmanship are required for proper service to the guest. Service, as we define it, is basically satisfying the customer's needs including those needs which can be anticipated in a manner which is exemplary of Hilton International standards and quality. Hilton International has its policy guidelines and procedures for proper service. This is to ensure service standards are always met. However, service standards and procedures only come alive when the employee makes contact with the guest to learn his or her needs with the proper skills and judgment necessary for fulfilling those needs. This is why each guest has to be seen as an individual, and each individual need has to be satisfied. If the guest is satisfied, we can expect certain benefits for ourselves:

- pleasure in performing our duties
- satisfaction with our image and reputation
- pride in our product
- recognition for our high standards of service

Good service means proper preparation for service - customer knowledge, product knowledge, and service discipline. Discipline is necessary for the good teamwork that guarantees the high level of service expected by the guest. Of course, appearance is very important. The appearance of the employee is equal to the image of the hotel. Each employee creates the image and atmosphere of the hotel which is part of guest satisfaction. In a sense, the employee is an ambassador of the hotel.

Positive thinking is necessary for proper service. This means putting professionalism before personal problems in the job, i.e., avoiding thought of one's personal problems at work. Positive thinking also means one is positive in the use and improvement of knowledge which helps one to offer better service. Positive thinking requires hotel staff to obey commands from their superior for proper teamwork and to be punctual as good service requires a sense of timeliness.

3. Guest Contact Techniques

Assessing the Guest

Properly assessing the guest will help you in being able to greet the guest in an appropriate manner. By properly assessing the guest, you can also avoid useless actions such as suggesting a dinner menu to someone who is attending a wedding reception and has just come for something to drink. Remember that guests are individuals and should be treated in a way which shows respect to their individuality. Of course, there is a limit to which one can assess a guest without falling into stereotypes, but there are ways in which you can sharpen your powers of observation for a proper response. Some are listed below:

- Be observant.
- Look at the guest's clothes, hairstyle, age, type of companions, manner of bearing, etc.
- If it is a foreign guest, what language does the guest speak in? If you don't know, assume English is to be used.
- Determine whether a guest is a first-time customer, repeat guest, etc., and the purpose of their visit.
- Anticipate the needs of the guest.
- Be curious, flexible, and open-minded in assessing in order to respond to guest needs properly.
- Listen carefully.

Verbal Contact

In the service industry, verbal contact is very important in establishing a personal and meaningful psychological relationship with the guest. When a guest is addressed by the hotel staff, he automatically enters into a deeper relationship with the hotel. By properly nurturing this relationship through simple verbal contact, the guest will leave the hotel with a deeper impression of his experience than if he had no verbal contact. In fact, when verbal contact is not established at the proper time, this is often considered rude. For example, when clearing dishes away from the table, you should excuse yourself or you will create a bad impression. Any opportunity within reason to establish verbal contact, no matter how brief, should not be passed up. A guest takes nothing home from the hotel except the memories of an experience, and proper verbal contact help to determine whether the experience was a warm one or not.

2. Ask the guest if they would like a second drink. This gives you a reason to approach the table and see if things are going fine.
3. Change ashtrays for tables with guests who are smokers and take the opportunity to see if anything is wrong.
4. Ask the guest. Sometimes asking a guest if everything is fine will give you information to prevent a mistake in service from becoming a real problem.
5. Follow-up on the sequence of service. Be sure that your guest is receiving the items he has ordered in the proper sequence with the appropriate timing. A little time and caution spent here can go a long way to preventing problems later.

Don't forget that the above will also give you a chance to create opportunities to sell as well as to serve. When your supervisors talk to you about being active in service, what they really mean is taking every opportunity to confirm the guest's well-being and using your own intelligence to anticipate problems or guest needs.

General Conversation Skills

No person can be good at guest contact without the proper conversation skills, and certainly no hotel employee will ever be recognized as a complete professional without the proper communication skills. Conversation skills usually represent an area in which very little conscious training is done as most people tend to believe that conversation is related to personality. However, this is not really true, and there are quite a few ways in which one can improve his or her conversation skills.

Perhaps the most important skill is speaking politely. Have you given thought to your speech lately? Is your manner of speech as polite as a guest would expect of a Hilton employee? Have you studied how to speak politely and courteously in both English and Japanese? If you find areas in which you can improve and need help, please go to your manager and/or the Training Department for assistance.

Communicating clearly is also quite important. There are several points to being able to clearly communicate.

1. Listen carefully to the guest. Clear communication depends on your understanding of what the guest has said. Have the patience to listen to what the guest is saying, and don't jump to conclusions.
2. Think about what you want to say and how you want to say it before speaking. Your choice of words often depends both on content and the feeling you wish to convey. Be specific and precise. A little caution here will not hurt.
3. Speak clearly. When a guest cannot hear and understand what you are saying, it invites misunderstanding and is extremely irritating as well. Enunciate your words precisely, and use words which will communicate clearly.
4. Establish good eye contact. It is not discourteous to look at a guest directly when you speak to him or her. Good eye contact lets the guest know you are addressing him or her and shows the guest your respect and concern.

5. Ask questions when you really don't understand what the guest has said. Asking questions is not a sign of ignorance, and it shows the guest your desire to understand correctly what he or she has said. The worst thing you could do is to assume you understood what was said when you really didn't.
6. Repeat what was said if it is necessary. Not only will you be able to reconfirm your understanding was correct, but you will also assure the guest that you understood what was being said.
7. Don't use jargon or slang. Not only is this discourteous and lazy, but it also contributes to a lack of understanding and miscommunication.
8. Write down what you need to remember. Don't take for granted you'll remember everything that was said.

Your Body Language

Before you even think about contacting the guest, don't forget about your body language. Remember that your appearance communicates volumes. Make sure you are well groomed and properly dressed before approaching any guest. When you speak to the guest, consider these points:

1. Stand erect and face the guest or guests you are speaking to directly.
2. Do not lean toward the guests, their belongings, or the table they are sitting on.
3. Do not touch the guests' belongings or the table and chairs they are sitting on.
4. If you are carrying anything and the guest should address, acknowledge and apologize to the guest saying, "Just a moment, ma'am. I'll be right with you," and take what you are carrying to its place first. Then return and talk to your guest. Don't stand and talk with things in your hands.
5. Place your hands behind your back or clasp them in front of you as you speak to the guest.

Expressions of Gratitude

The end of a conversation is one of the most important points. It shows the guest how much concern you had for him or her. At the end of a conversation with a guest, you will want to thank the guest for his order, for eating at the restaurant, for calling for information, etc. Some proper phrases for ending a conversation and expressing gratitude are listed below.

After receiving a phone call:	"Thank you for calling, sir."
After receiving a guest's order:	"Thank you for your order, sir."
When a guest is leaving the restaurant:	"Thank you for coming, sir. I hope everything was fine."
When you know the guest:	"Thank you for coming, Mr. McDonald. It was a pleasure to see you again."

Opportunities for Conversation

Basically you'll find two situations in which you will be able to start a conversation with a guest, 1) when you are addressed by a guest, and 2) when you initiate a conversation by asking the guest a question. You may initiate a conversation by asking him the following:

- If the guest is satisfied with his food order, e.g., "How was the prime rib, sir?"
- If an order suits the guest's taste, e.g., "How is the wine, sir?"
- If the guest is satisfied with the service and enjoying himself, e.g., "Are you enjoying yourself, sir?" "Is everything fine, ma'am?"

If the situation allows you some time, general questions can also be brought up as a way of starting a conversation. For example, questions on the following subjects are usually very safe methods of starting a conversation.

- Present weather conditions, e.g., "The summer is quite hot and humid here, isn't it?"
- The guest's stay, e.g., "How long will you be staying here, sir?"
- Purpose of visit, e.g., "Is this your first time to Japan, ma'am?" or "I hope your business trip will be a successful one."

Conversation Taboos

In the service industry, there are just some things which cannot be done, and conversation with the guest is no exception. Although this was mentioned earlier, it bears mention again - "Never use improper Japanese or English." Under no circumstances should an employee ever use any manner of speaking other than polite Japanese or English even if the guest himself does not speak politely. We are not only the service industry; we are also Tokyo Hilton International employees. What we do and say affects the image of our company and hotel.

Other taboos to avoid in conversations with the guest are:

- Don't ever comment or give information on other guests.
- Never criticize or comment on our competitors.
- Never take sides in a dispute. Always remain neutral.
- Never criticize your fellow workers or your hotel.
- Do not ever give any operational information on the hotel.
- Don't give confidential information to anyone. Confidential information is to be treated as it should be - confidentially.

Handling guest inquiries and requests

As we work in a service industry, the ability to handle inquiries for information and requests are a must. Your knowledge has a direct relationship on your ability to serve the guest in this manner, and you are responsible for learning any information required by your job. Always be certain and aware about what you are saying to the guest. If you are unable to give an exact answer to an inquiry for information, first apologize, and then go and check for the guest. If it is a request which you are not sure the hotel can satisfy, apologize and tell the guest you will check with your superior for them. Then refer the matter to your superior. If a guest requires information in detail, they should be guided to the person whose job it is to provide that information in an efficient manner. For example, a guest who wishes to obtain information on one-day tours of Tokyo could be referred and guided to the travel desk in the main lobby.

You are probably wondering how you can obtain the information you need to serve the guest properly. In the section on "Salesmanship" are some suggestions on the resources for each category of knowledge. You should probably compile your own file for useful information to keep at hand.

4. SALESMANSHIP

Introduction

At first glance, salesmanship may not seem to be directly related to good guest contact. The idea of a salesman still conjures up that old image of the intensely aggressive, high-pressure salesman wheedling the customer into buying something he doesn't want. But there is good reason why a guest contact professional has salesmanship, and as we examine the qualities of a good salesman, you begin to see why.

What makes a good salesman? Consider the following.

1. **Pride in the product:** An effective salesman shows real pride in his product. It is not for nothing that "love of product" was considered to be one of the characteristics of an excellent company. Without pride in one's own product, you have no credibility, and your guest will never accept the product you want to sell to him, whether it is food, beverage, or service.
2. **Extensive product knowledge:** Ignorance of one's own product tells the customer that you don't care about what you are selling or the services you offer. On the other hand, a knowledgeable person is better able to serve his client when he knows a great deal about his product.
3. **Careful questioning and listening:** High pressure salesmen never leave their customers satisfied because rather than selling the customers what they want, these salesmen sell according to volume. They are more concerned with profit than with serving the customer. Really serving the customer as a true salesman requires one to carefully listen to the guest and ask the appropriate questions in order to find out what the guest wants. A sale really begins here - determining what the guest's needs are.
4. **Helpful in making suggestions:** Because a good salesman can determine the needs of his customer, he is also skilled at making the appropriate suggestion for his client. The right attitude in making the right suggestion at the right time goes a long way in establishing good salesman-and-guest relationships.
5. **Flexibility:** A good salesman bends over backward to ensure the client is getting what he wants. This sometimes requires the salesman to be flexible on the way he does business and to be creative in what he sells.
6. **Positive approach:** The positive approach is another characteristic of a good salesman. When a salesman is positive, he knows there's always a way to meet the client's needs or to solve a problem, and he tries his best to do so.
7. **Follow-up on service:** A good salesman knows the sale is not complete until the guest has expressed satisfaction with what he's paying for. Therefore, he always follows up to ensure that what he has sold continues to give the guest the satisfaction that he deserves.

As you can see, a good guest contact professional would share quite a few points with a good salesman. When you evaluate yourself as a guest contact professional, don't forget to ask yourself about your salesmanship.

Knowledge and Information

Because we are not only Food & Beverage employees but also Tokyo H.I. employees, product knowledge encompasses many things, not only food and beverage but also the entire hotel in general. And because we work in the service industry, we must try to meet our guests' needs, some of which involves knowledge of the city, culture, society, and country we are located in. Therefore, a hotel professional needs to constantly update and expand his or her knowledge in a wide range of subjects. There are a few points which will increase your methods of dealing with product knowledge and information:

1. Compile your own file. You'll find it handy to have information organized in a way that is easy to find, and you'll know what areas need to be updated at a glance.
2. Contribute to your section's information and knowledge. Share what you learn with your fellow workers.
3. Ask your supervisor for advice when you need information. Other sources of assistance include the F & B Office and Training Office.

Product Knowledge

For product knowledge in F & B, there is a range of sources available. Each employee receives specific and detailed information concerning information on his or her outlet and should have good knowledge of the menu items served there. You should have a good working knowledge of not only your own outlet and its operating hours but also other sections. Your knowledge of food and beverage should include basic serving techniques, ingredients, taste, and cuisine served in your outlet, menu changes, new menu concepts, special promotions taking place, etc. But most important is your own personal interest in your working environment and the desire to broaden your knowledge and keep it up-to-date. Below are some sources of information for improving your knowledge.

Food & Beverage Information & Knowledge

- Your superiors
- Daily briefings
- Meetings
- Communications meetings
- In-house workshops and seminars
- Memos
- Minutes of the F & B Department Meeting
- Tokyo H.I. Monthly Newsletter
- Tokyo H.I. Monthly Event Calendar
- Recipes and explanation of menu items
- Flyers, brochures, sales promotional materials, etc.
- F & B Department manuals
- Trade magazines and books
- F & B Trends Magazine
- Microfiche
- Training videos
- Reference materials in the F & B Office and Training Office

Hotel Product Knowledge & General Information

Your knowledge of the hotel as well as the city and country it is in is also essential, and we have provided some sources of information for you.

Hotel Product Knowledge

- Your superiors
- Daily briefing
- Communications meetings
- Employee Handbook
- Tokyo H.I. Monthly Newsletter
- Tokyo H.I. Monthly Event Calendar
- Flyers, brochures, sales promotional materials, etc.
- Food & Beverage Office
- Sales Office
- Assistant Managers and Mail & Information

General Information

- Mass media (television, newspapers, magazines, etc.)
- Maps of Tokyo and Japan
- Books giving information on holidays, customs, and cultural events in Japan
- Books on tourism in Japan
- City guides on Tokyo (including sightseeing spots, shopping areas, etc.)
- Magazine event guides (Pia, City Road, etc.)
- JTB Counter in main lobby

Knowledge of Regular and Long-staying Guests, VIPs, etc.

Just as important as product knowledge is our knowledge of our guests. Without the knowledge about our guests, we could not serve them properly. Our hotel has a reputation built on over twenty years of experience and service, and much of this was due to our ability to recognize individual guests and treat them in an appropriate manner. Each employee should be able to identify and remember our regular, long-staying, and VIP guests. Basic information can be obtained from the "VIP and Special Attention Guest List" which is distributed to all supervisors.

In addition to this, each outlet maintains and updates its guest history file so that our return guests can receive the proper service. By using the guest history file, we are able to remember our guests' needs and desires and prepare for them accordingly. For example, from the guest history file, we learn that Mr. Arnold Smith, a frequent visitor, likes a certain table in the far corner of the restaurant. He also enjoys drinking a particular kind of wine. With this information, we would be able to hold the table for him and prepare his favorite wine ahead of time. When there is something you wish to know something about a particular guest, don't also forget to ask your supervisor. Sometimes he may know more than what is in the guest history through his own personal conversations with the guest.

(Section on courteous Japanese (kotobazukai) to be added in an appendix)

Information and Promotional Materials

The more information a guest receives, the more he knows about the hotel, its facilities, and the services offered. This increases the opportunity for sales and repeat business. The following are tips for your consideration.

Informing the Guest

Take every opportunity to inform the guest about our facilities, events, banquet facilities, and restaurants. When it is appropriate, promote our banquet facilities by offering information and mention our catering services.

Inform the guest about future F & B events, such as food fairs, musical activities, etc.

Inform other outlets about regular guest preferences. To serve the guest properly, an information network is necessary involving the cooperation of all outlets.

After seating the guest: Inform the guest about the special food and beverage promotions or special menu items available in the respective outlet.

Show the guest our buffets if any in your respective outlet.

Promotional Materials

Stock sufficient promotional materials and use them to ensure the guest has good knowledge on what is being offered by the Tokyo H.I.

Distribute promotional material when possible. However, use your judgment to decide who should receive these materials. For example, age or the type of customer may be deciding factors in whether to give a guest promotional materials.

Bring promotional materials to guests who are alone or waiting for someone. For example, a newspaper could be offered with flyers.

When presenting the guest check, offer promotional materials. However, common sense should again be used. For example, in the case where one person pays for the group and they settle their account later, offer enough materials to the person paying for the group so that he or she can offer them to the others.

Show VIP rooms to guests using the facilities for the first time.

Offer information on our pastry counter in the Hankyu Department Store.

Mention our room packages, Fitness Center facilities, etc.

Promote other new Hilton International hotels, especially the Osaka H.I.