

How to hire quality staff

AND KEEP THEM?

BY STUART MULLINS

An age old question to an age old problem. Answer: Bugged if I know but let's give it a go.

When anyone books a room at a hotel or resort, the first two things we do when opening the door is check for cleanliness, then the mini bar or the other way around.

The mini bar for some strange reason we believe is free or we suspend belief that it costs an arm and a leg. Why we do this? I'll never know. The gods of mini bar must shake their head in bemusement. It's not till the checkout, do we step back into reality and blame the kids, except they do not drink Corona's dad.

The other thing we do by habit is check the bathroom for hair, the toilet bowl for... and under the bed for fluff, a throw back from our mothers and from our mothers mother.

The guest complaints are not about the corona's costing \$10 a pop BUT the about the room not being clean. This is the one thing that irks guests, shoddy housekeeping work. Just view trip advisor comments.

HOUSEKEEPING? EVERYONE CALLS.

Housekeeping is where you creep up to the cart outside the next room and nick soap, coffee and sugar, or get the kids to do it.

Housekeeping are the people you ask for directions to the museum, or where the restaurant or pool is. Or are the people you will have a chat with on your floor. They are the front line. Housekeeping is an intricate, highly important part of running a great hotel.

Then why treat staff like they are mere cleaners. They are not. Why have a uniform that is more suited to prison?

Of course this is not indicative of all hotels BUT if this even sounds faintly like your hotel then there are already a few reasons one cannot keep staff. It's difficult enough to keep Housekeeping staff without the above occurring. Your uniform should be as professional, fashionable and as vibrant or as classy or as trendy as your hotel, should it not? And easy to work in.



If you have or believe you have Cr#@ uniforms then have a staff meeting, discuss and engage staff. With the ideas collected inform HR or the GM. I mean most Housekeeping

departments are made up of the united nations so image the expertise and ideas!

The uniform is an intricate part of the front line image for Virgin, Jet Star and Qantas then it should be the same for Housekeeping staff cause that's who the guest see's most. If you cannot go to work in your uniform and feel good then it ain't a great uniform. So come up with something you are proud to wear.

Your staff room/uniform room, you know, the place where you all meet, talk, gossip. Is it a room you like being in when on a break? If not, change it... As the ones I have seen remind me of a hospital ward. Not a great enticer for staff retention or staff hiring.

If one is spending 8 to 10 hours a day at work, then make the work environment, especially the HK staff room/linen room, a place you like to meet; to have a "nice" coffee to have a chat. It should be a social environment, this is where team work is built.

When hiring, age is out the window. Yes it says in Australia we are Equal opportunity, yeah right... bollocks. Hire on passion, enthusiasm, energy and drive, you can teach everything else. It's simple, the older you are the more of life experiences you have and can spot dust particles at 50 paces, ask my 80 year old mum. Bloody amazing.

Ever thought of hiring physical disabilities person. A missing limb doesn't stop one from being an excellent housekeeper. Or hiring other people with some disabilities, give it a try it may surprise you and may show us up which ain't a bad thing. Look what they are doing at the Olympics, imagine then how quick and well done a room will be cleaned.

If someone applies, you interview and they remind you of your mum, provided they have drive and passion, hire them. Their eye for detail would be astonishing, and an eye for detail is something this job needs.

In this current environment when there is a shortage of available people in the market, go on your intuition. Put the resume aside when interviewing and go on your intuitive instincts, IF your gut feel says don't hire, DON'T. No matter what's on the resume. And also do the opposite, the CV may not read well but gut instinct will tell you, trust it. Your intuition is very rarely wrong... Trust yourself.

"Intuition is the highest form of intelligence, transcending all individual abilities and skills", Sylvia Clare.

When hiring and keeping staff, have a well set out plan, direction, vision, for your department personnel. A career plan.

Ongoing effective accredited training courses than mean something on a resume. 3 to 6 month reviews and feedback to the staff member and working closely with HR.

Clear direction to the staff. What they need to achieve to get to where they want to go.

"Effective organisational leadership is simple:

1. Have a vision of where you want to get to.
2. Clearly and persuasively communicate that vision to employees.
3. Be consistent in your behaviours as you strive to achieve that vision." – from A Roadmap for Employee Engagement by Andy Parsley.

KPI's set and discussed is so important. Again engage your people. Staff leave because after all is met and performance is there nothing happens.

If you make a promise and KPIs met, then honour that promise. Word gets around in the industry if promises are broken, especially when it comes to renegeing on bonus's.

So when hiring, do not BS. Do not make promises you cannot or the hotel cannot keep. This, above all is why people leave.

Some staff will be quite happy doing Housekeeping for a long time. Many though wish to climb the ladder and move over to Rooms Division and Front Office. You should happily facilitate this. Life is a journey always learning and developing. Help them along the way. Great leaders lead and develop their staff.

Regular meetings with staff. Engaging staff and hire people that are recommended by your effective, efficient Housekeeping staff. Quality recommends quality. Let your staff in on the hiring process.

"According to the Corporate Leadership Council, employees with lower engagement levels are four times more likely to leave their jobs than those who are highly engaged. But the importance of employee engagement isn't just increased employee retention; it's also about higher productivity. One study by HR strategy firm Kenexa found that of 64 organisations studied, the organisations with highly engaged employees achieved twice the annual net income of organisations whose employees were less engaged."

Motivating staff is not a one off. Motivation is not a one off. People want to have a reason to come to work, they want to feel part of a team. They want to feel good about what they do.

Wonder why many in this world feel negative? Because we are fed negatively 24/7. I have heard people say, I read a motivational book, was pumped for a while then it waned. Of course it does. To get fit you must regularly feed yourself quality food and exercise. To get fat do the opposite.

For motivation it is a constant feed also. If you want to be negative listen to shock jocks, read the newspaper and watch the news. Feed yourself this every day and you wonder why the world is the way it is?

WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH YOUR DEPARTMENT? A HELL OF A LOT.

Simple, motivational sayings with recent staff photos rotating on a TV in the Housekeeping/staff room or ironing store room really brightens ones day. It works. You see them at gyms all the time, always changing and always motivating with many positive sayings. You will be amazed how much positivity it creates and makes one proud of what they do.

When I am not at my best at the gym, reading the sayings, ever changing on the screen in front of me inspires me and lift my game. It works, and yours will do the same and lift staff morale more than you know.

Change the environment the staff work in. They spend most of the week there. Do you have a nice modern coffee machine in there, nice fridge all well set out? If not why not! Do you have a sports tipping completion? Horse racing betting club, an agreement with the local gym for cheaper membership? And that's just the tip of a great iceberg.

Be positive even on the worst days as being positive and leading this way, the worst day becomes the best day. It's all in the mind and staff are looking at you for leadership. A quality motivational leader will have low staff turnover.

And when was the last time you took the staff out for dinner? To say thank you, to give awards? We all love awards and as a recruiter we do notice them on a resume, believe me. We love seeing ongoing courses completed there on the resume. It displays commitment, desire and passion.

Do you have a room card with the Housekeeper/Attendants name on them, and it's not too difficult to have their picture on also. Personalise it. i.e. Dear MR Smith, Tom here, how was your room today? Can you let me know?... and end the card with a motivational saying. These can be actually done now at home on an Apple, have you asked your staff? Talk to your marketing department or GM for approval.

I mean really where would we be without housekeepers? In a real mess.

If one views positive humorous quotes every day, positivity quickly follows, it has too.

"I hate housework. You make the beds, you wash the dishes and six months later you have to start all over again." Joan Rivers.

"I'm not going to vacuum 'til Harvey Norman makes one you can ride on." Roseanne Barr.

"My ex-husband taught me housekeeping; when I divorce I keep the house." Zsa Zsa Gabor.

"I like to insist that hotel housekeeping make the bed with me still in it." Anon

"Housekeepers have the agility, are the fittest and quickest. You try making 10 beds every morning, dodge and weave around the mess on the floor then tell me you ain't." S.M.

"Wipe on Wipe Off" Cleaning made the Karate Kid a Champion. S.M.

"If you work really hard and are kind, amazing things will happen." Anon.

When advertising for Housekeeping staff use humorous quotes. Set yourself apart from the crowd. Make one believe your hotel is the best place to work.

Please, No more hum drum, bland ads. Spice them up. Most ads are downright boring and not enticing at all. The old way of hiring is gone, break the mold.

Use of face book, twitter and your staffs mobile data base phone numbers. Let your staff know first there is a vacancy so they inform their friends. 70% of hiring is done by word of mouth/recommendation.

Using face book? Display the faces of your staff at work, why not.

Using Seek or Career One the same, brighten it up, write like you are in real estate, you know, the hook... "Beach front glimpses", you are there to get someone's attention, are you not?

AND do not discard a candidate simply by their name, shock, horror. As we use Seek or Career One we all know that CVs are received from all over the globe. They, the candidate does not read the ad they just see the word "AUSTRALIA" and you are swamped. However, do open and read as there are always the ones that have emigrated here with excellent experience from groups such as TAJ, Kempinski, Fairmont, Hyatt etc. Yes it takes time but there are always diamonds in the rough.

Yes, staff will move on, that's life, but you can slow this down and keep more of your staff by doing some of the above. Coming to work should not be a chore, it should be rewarding and engaging SO make it so.

To the hirer, if you are not happy in your job because you have been there too long, or you think you need the security, you don't.

You can choose Freedom or Security, choose the latter and you will get neither.

If you are not motivated, neither will your staff be. Have a think of where you want to be because in the end the buck stops with you.

Great teams have great leaders.

BE ONE ■