



Mr. Albarran

## Managing Service Issues During the Guest Stay Before it Reaches Social Media

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This article, especially the title, suggests service issues as the percentage of actual negative events that can potentially place your business in a detrimental situation. This will help eliminate the need to be consistently investing time, resources and money on monitoring and having to resolve social media sites for inconsistently or negative situations that they can prevent. Dealing with guest challenges can be done proactively by applying certain operating service standards, best suited for the brand and scale, that will prevent normal issues, but we also encounter a lack of consistency and follow up on these proactive service practices. Hence, we get a dissatisfied guest. In reality, the overall sense of general service knowledge, which has been created based on prior experience and social customer expectations, has been the overall reasoning behind all of this expectation levels. That said service recovery needs to be implemented right away, while the guest or customer is experiencing the service. If we don't, what happens? Well, guests pull out their Smartphone and post their experience right away in social media sites of their choice, right?

We observe that this (service awareness) may be common sense to our employees, being that they are, in everyone's expectations and eyes, in a hospitality industry environment, and that they know that they are being watched constantly as to how they perform and give the guest the appropriate attention. It is amazing to see the small fundamental practices, like the 10/5 rule, which have explained in more detailed in prior articles, are not being implemented. Why does the guest need to start the conversation and not the guest service or hospitality professional? What percentages of these are actually aware of this? The word aware is what we can use as a powerful term here. As a reminder of this, the aware hospitality employee may be busy; however, they are knowledgeable and also in tuned with their surroundings and have developed a sense of confidence which can be used to resolve any sort of situation that may arise. We have also expressed in previous articles about the fact that going through an experience (a moment of truth) and documenting this as a case study that can be used as constant training with your team, can help develop their overall understanding of how to resolve not only an issue similar to the one being analyzed, but ten or twenty-like/similar situations like this. These are jus some ideas that will help your organization apply themselves as a high function team, which will deliver the appropriate service levels which are expected of a guest who has done their research, have compared you to the competition and have considered monetary and experience value, even before arrival. Naturally, this is all done mostly via Internet.

With this said, a handful of tips we have applied in the field have worked well for those who have implemented them. Perhaps some of these ideas may actually assist you or perhaps motivate you and your team to brainstorm similar concepts that can work best for your establishment. A third eye can always assist and advise as well.

### **Apply Fundamental Techniques of Service Before Anything Else**

The application of service fundamentals, which are safety, cleanliness and comfort, should always be used as the base. These are the explanations that guests will expect and are most common knowledge or sense. It is interesting that if you see negative comments on any social media site that usually the poor scores tend to reflect these fundamentals. So, the easiest thing to improve your chances of not falling in this situation as a brand is to focus on this. Train your employees on these and do not let them forget this. Based on whatever your brand and location may be, then we build on this to ensure that you can provide any extra service enhancement that promote or position you accordingly. Now that we know this and will use it as a foundation, let's see some other advise that will help you.

### **Technology and How Automation Should then Help Us Train on Intangible Service, Presence, etc.**

This is a very simple aspect of how we can become more aware during a guest experience, and we can pay attention to ensure that we can anticipate the needs and control any potential negative experience that may be featured in a social media website. Hotels normally have PMS systems and restaurants typically have POS systems. For those of us who have been in the biz for some time now have seen the progression of these systems, from manual, to semi automated to now fully automated (and constantly innovating), geez, where does it stop? The point is, these systems facilitate almost everything managerial (and what I mean managerial is our checklists, which line employees need to do daily) to upper management reports which managers and department heads use to make vital decisions. So, we see that our administrative work is minimized drastically. Here is the opportunity then to train heavy on the service aspect and awareness which we have been referring to. Managers can be more hands on, connecting with guests in a genuine manner. The whole hospitality team in your establishment will focus on hospitality service (not as preoccupied with the administrative tasks as back when technology and no automated systems were in place). They will also be engaging and ensuring that guest service is the value that drives the business. Training and education can become more predominate as there is more time for this (part of a continuous improvement process, which I have observed is not as followed up as it should in many establishments). This allows for guests to feel that the brand, the establishment and its hospitality team is on top of their game, making sure our experience is up to par, so their social media communication turns out positive. Also a system like this will help turnover, however even if with this issue, the program you have here will help keep things in order and consistent.

### **Guests That Complain**

We have already established the fact that guests who complain are not only concerned for the issue that they are experiencing, but at most times, they are also concerned that the brand they trusted and confided on so much dropped the ball. Perhaps any of you have experienced this before? Dealing with guests that complain is perhaps the best thing to occur, in the sense that they are playing the blame game fairly. They are communicating to the brand/establishment/representative before posting any sort of outcome on their social media sites. Do not let this opportunity go. Train your staff not to let this opportunity go and use it again as a service adventure or opportunity to ensure that they can apply an appropriate service recovery that can result in a positive social media comment.

### **Guest That Do Not Complain**

This is our worst nightmare, correct? The guest who for whatever reason was not engaged and did not tell us first about their situation. We fear that this is our upcoming challenge with some many folks in tuned with a lesser way of communicating verbally to the staff about their issue and they vent in social media sites. Sure the issue is that something in our service structure did not go well, obviously, however, how fair is it for the establishment or brand to have to find out about it the hard way, or via a third party social media partner or site? One solution to tap into this issue is to somehow express our commitment or open door to ensuring that we will provide what we stand for in terms of service, and also to always come to a manager or employee so we can guide them as soon as possible in the right direction. We can reinforce this message in our website, or when they turn on the TV, or perhaps as we did with a very well known brand, they would blow up the comment card and ask for the guest to tell the brand or establishment during their stay why can't they give a 5 out of 5 on any of the category services. This can increase the percentage or silent complainers to come out and tell us how we can apply a proper action for nay of their concerns.

### **Develop a Sense of Observation to Identify Potential Situations and Resolve in Timely Manner**

Managers and consultants can partner up to walk through the overall facilities and explore situations where they can improve on the intangibles services. Of course, we typically do walk-through for the facilities in terms of physical issues. However if we inadvertently observe how moments of truths are handled, there is opportunity to either take action to remedy a potential situation. If you empower employees, let them work this out as a learning experience. If you don't start an empowerment program and select folks who lead by example. To intervene in any situation as a manger is last choice, however, to make yourself available when needed is also an opportunity to prevent any negative situations which at the end of the day will again minimize that social media negatively and perhaps turn into a positive one.

### **At the End of the Day, Follow Up and Thank Guests for any Opportunity**

This is for all employees, but more so for managers. We need to follow up with all of these situations. Great managers know names of guests and the circumstances, so they are fearless in terms of adding that extra touch of care, which will certain in spire positive comments on a social media site and prevent negative ones from surging.

Let us know how these have also helped you as we like to hear success stories.

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