



Fundamentals of Hospitality: Delivering Welcome-Home Ambiance

Managing resorts is really about creating incredible experiences. It's ensuring every owner and guest enjoys special moments, high-touch service, and quality vacation time. Resort management does encompass budget, reserve funds, board management, and all the other back-office functions that are integral to success. But you can have it all and still not deliver the hospitable environment that creates and maintains your relationships with your team members, customers, and owners. Front-line team members make or break your hospitality.

Service is all about actions—but it's also *ambiance*. It means that special touch, as well as consistent behavior and standards. It means intuitively anticipating a guest's need for quality that you can directly control and develop among your team members. Practicing a common-sense approach to providing remarkable vacations can be done at all levels, every day, and in every action.

The Environment

Create the right energy with your atmosphere. Whether it's laid back, chic boutique, or family-style



Liki Tiki Village Lifeguard Bradley Holmgren showed blind guest Alyssa Clelland around the resort, so she could navigate on her own.

warmth, it should all be courteous and professional. Assuming that your brand and décor adhere to your chosen atmosphere, your biggest variable is your people.

It all comes down to people serving people, making every moment count and making people feel welcome and that they are privy to something exclusively for them. How do you do this? When you hire your management team members, focus on training and recruitment—hire for attitude, not just skill. This is essential. Each individual should have an intuitive understanding of the old sales adage: "Treat every guest like they are the most important person in your universe, all the time."

Honing a high-touch approach to guest service creates high impact. Image and presentation make or break an experience; happy managers can make happy guests. This begins with establishing your standards at the outset in the recruitment and hiring stages. Each potential team member should understand your mission, values, and corporate culture before they start their first day on the job. If someone is trainable and has the inherent

understanding of the importance of delivering stellar service, the ability will follow. Enthusiasm and passion for people is not so much created as it is nurtured. These traits are contagious and will spur your entire team's energy on; the inverse is also true. Apathy and negativity will hinder a team's ability to deliver great service and seriously hinder your delivery of sincere hospitality.

Training & Development

Expand your mission to enumerate your core values. For example, Island One Resorts Hospitality Group summarized our beliefs of service into four core values of integrity, caring, passion, and innovation. These basic tenets are set for managers to help keep the goal of delivering incredible hospitality. Our managers continually focus teaching behaviors that reinforce these values. This is practically translated into a friendly hello, direct eye contact, a helping hand, a great suggestion, or anything else beyond what's expected.

We then translate those same values into our guest interactions, emphasizing our service commitment through leadership by example. What we found helpful was running an ongoing culture campaign, which has enhanced communication between our back-office and front-line managers. Twice a month, our managers meet to share strategies to keep our service focus front-of-mind. Specialty training programs also have been developed that expand upon each of our values. They take this training to their teams and devise further ways to enhance

Management

a high-touch environment. Focusing upon ongoing daily touches has sparked an incredible energy and creativity throughout our entire team of more than 1250 people, from the senior level to the front-line staff.

What cost can you expect from this kind of a program? It doesn't require tremendous financial investment, we've found, only a true commitment to the values presented and then the goal to keep the momentum going. It helps to also create a strong sense of team where each person is vested in the company's success; this then carries over and positively impacts each daily interaction with every owner and guest.

This kind of energy can add an element of fun into daily operations. For example, our construction crews' new work shirts have a simple slogan on the back: "I build brilliance." Our management team at one resort held a team member car wash, washing all the front-line employees' cars to show appreciation for their daily efforts. We held a "Spring Fling" event at our corporate office, with a cookout, free

food from our café, and interactive games to foster teamwork. Our managers create weekly newsletters and hold meetings briefing their teams on company and resort news specific to their job functions. A dedicated section of our intranet showcases stories of team members' actions that exhibit our core values in action. Again, activities like these require minimal financial investment yet yield a priceless return of more dedicated team members.

Operations & Owners

This kind of togetherness is the same philosophy that then extends to owners. In a sense, our owners are family—even if they don't vacation at the same home resort every year, they *own* a segment of the resort experience. Genuine hospitality makes people want to visit resorts and in turn, they refer family and friends.

This is a simple concept really because it's mainly just common sense. It's offering ultimate service and a welcome-home atmosphere that exists independently of factors like a

resort's age, size, or location—these boundaries shouldn't contain this kind of hospitality. And it can be displayed in simple moments like staff chatting with owners over freshly baked cookies in the lobby every afternoon. Or a front desk clerk taking care of all the details for an owner's surprise anniversary dinner, from the balloons in their villa to the timing of the soufflé arriving in the restaurant. It can be shown when a housekeeper passes a guest and cheerfully says, "Good morning!"

Team Empowerment

It takes a dedication from top to bottom and a plan. Provide a base line of tools, such as management retreats, training workshops, resource materials, regular recognition, and a forum for shared ideas. This is how the culture can begin and remain nourished. You can also inspire a sense of healthy competition among the different managers and their teams as they share their success and work to provide increasingly better working and guest environments. This high-touch environment will take your company from good to great and then great to brilliant! **D**

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Liki Tiki Village's management team washed their employees' cars at a fun-filled event at the resort.