

Fall 2012

## Luxury as Culture: A Leader's Guide to Luxury Service

Aldo Contreras Alba  
*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/thesesdissertations>



Part of the [Hospitality Administration and Management Commons](#), and the [Tourism and Travel Commons](#)

---

### Repository Citation

Alba, Aldo Contreras, "Luxury as Culture: A Leader's Guide to Luxury Service" (2012). *UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones*. 1463.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.34917/3553585>

This Professional Paper is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Scholarship@UNLV with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Professional Paper in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Professional Paper has been accepted for inclusion in UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact [digitalscholarship@unlv.edu](mailto:digitalscholarship@unlv.edu).

LUXURY AS CULTURE: A LEADER'S GUIDE TO LUXURY SERVICE

by

Aldo Contreras Alba

Bachelor of Business Administration  
Pacific Union College  
2006

A professional paper submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

Master of Hospitality Administration  
William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration

Graduate College  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
December 2012  
Chair: Dr. Curtis Love

## **PART ONE**

### **Introduction**

The luxury guest is a sophisticated world traveler, loaded with high expectations, hungry for the next must-see hot spot for business or leisure. As such, international hotel companies are on a quest to find unforgettable locations worldwide in order to provide their loyal followers an unrivaled experience, and stay one-step ahead of the competition. Orchestrated of high-end tangible comforts, beautiful structures, and elegantly appointed décor, the luxury segment may be defined by the words “Five-Star” and “Five-Diamond” – as these are the global synonyms to luxury that creates the ultimate upgrade to travel and leisure. However, the most commonly known element and the driving force to extraordinary properties worldwide is a simple word that evokes the feeling of being pampered and treated as a royal: service. Hence, its employees define true luxury – they are those that deliver the service, exceed the guest’s expectations, build rapport, and create memories of emotional proportions.

Yet as the industry and its clientele are global, the people are local; each with unique tradition, lifestyle, and way of thought that varies from one border to another. This then creates a dichotomy: the top echelon of the wealthy is paying for top service that is generally provided by the humble. It is these differences that can create a barrier that may result in discrepancies and flaws to a guest’s high-expectation mindset.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to provide a manager’s guide to leading the hotel or resort’s multi-cultural staff to improve and enhance service delivery; through proper onboarding and training, meeting the luxury level standards will be comprehensive, experiential, and adopted as culture.

### **Statement of problem**

The hospitality industry is dynamic, complex, and global. The economic vitality of a community can thrive on business levels of a hotel zone, while luring a varied workforce from international borders. Specific examples manifest the most in Hawaii, where three major cultures add to the complexity of the pursuit of seamless luxury service: Hawaii's Aloha Spirit and the Asian modesty meet in American soil. As a result, cultural elements of the employee population create intricacies – and barriers – to the service delivery for the discerning guest.

### **Statement of Objective**

Through implementing an onboarding process that promotes learning as an experience, the proposed method fosters a focus on cultural understanding of both staff and guests while proposing luxury as a culture.

### **Justifications**

As the most important element to financial success is delivering great service, making a strong financial investment on the importance of the people is foundational. Therefore, understanding the culture of the workforce will help manage and train them better, which in result, will manifest in an enhanced team spirit that motivates each to meet luxury standards, and ultimately exceed guest expectations.

### **Constraints**

As evident in the nature of the travel and hospitality industry, the service sector counts on high turnover as a normal element to the business practice. Hence, changes in leadership and management add a constraint that includes: turnover, resignations, transfers, and career progression. In addition, a higher-level of complexity is indicated by ownership and financial decrees.

## **Glossary**

The AAA Diamond Rating is a rating system that includes over 31,000 properties in North America. Less than one-third of one percent makes the AAA Five Diamond list. The five-star rating is through Forbes wealth publication magazine (American Automobile Association, 2011).

## **PART TWO**

### **Literature Review**

The scope of this research is to identify the principal stimuli that influence service in the luxury hospitality sector by understanding the cultural characteristics of the guest and employee. Various elements exist when defining the culture of the luxury sector and of the personnel that service it; as a global industry, hospitality is fueled by multinational employees and globe-trotting guests, “day-to-day interaction with people from other cultures has become a reality for most of us living in developed nations, whether we or the others we encounter are travelers or residents” (Novinger, 2001, p.152).

The end result of this professional paper will serve as a guide for managers to lead a team by creating and tailoring an onboarding training program for a staff population of cross cultural and ethnic perspectives of the five-diamond/five-star luxury guest. For a complete foundational understanding of the employee’s role in servicing the luxury market, this guide is composed of presenting and analyzing factors that influence service in the five-star luxury sector spread over two sections. Section one reveals concepts that will describe the major differences in employees and guests that will be clarified by a monetary analysis of the luxury guest, followed by the same of the hotel staff. Section two explores cultural and ethnic variations of the workforce through a focus on the relationship between how the local culture and ethnic perspectives of the staff – specifically, using Hawaii as an example of cultural dynamic – can affect world-class service demands. Part Three will focus on a training guide to lead this complex team composition through best practices, training methods, and proposing a winning training plan for the employee to successfully integrate into the luxury arena.

## **The Luxury Guest**

The luxury Five-Star, Five-Diamond accolade isn't solely a representation of the expensive. Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines the term *world-class* as, "being of the highest caliber in the world" (Merriam-Webster). The wealthy traveler can be identified as adopting a similar culture of discernment and world-class taste as a normal part of daily life: Gastronomy, Viniculture, Sotheby's, Christie's, the Upper East Side, Bel-Air, Cannes. All these words have powerful meanings that the top echelon of culture is intimately familiar with, regardless of the country of origin. A global standard of quality, service, and exclusivity envelops a culture shared by an international clientele; the luxury guest and their shared culture is weaved into the global influence of status quo. As such, this paper proposes luxury as a culture in itself. Richard Coniff presents a study that denotes,

Whether they want it or not, the dynamic of being rich invariably sets people apart. It isolates them from the general population...and it inexorably causes them to be different. They enter into a community with its own behaviors, its own codes, its own language, its own habits. (Coniff, 2002, p. 24)

The luxury hotel guest – the rich – sees life differently. They've seen the world lavishly and are unfamiliar with life from the perspective of the paycheck-to-paycheck worker struggling to get by, "...there is a significant relationship between culture and perceptions. Perceptions of the world are influenced by the culture into which one has been socialized..." (King & Truong, 2006, p. 68). For example, a Dubai super-rich owns a villa and yacht in the South of France, shops in New York, and vacations on holiday in the Maldives. Although the Middle Eastern culture is vastly different than that of the United States or Europe, this individual assimilates well into a familiar culture of exclusivity, wealth, and attention.

First, defining the luxury guest through income earnings will put into perspective the difference between the guest and the employees that are hired to serve them. These individuals spend more than the average consumer, mostly due to extra disposable income, yet their way of life and normalcy involves "...a deep and abiding passion for travel. They crave a unique combination of excitement and relaxation, and the opportunity to explore and experience everything a destination has to offer—shopping, dining and recreational activities" (Four Seasons Magazine, 2012, p. 2). The Luxury Institute (2012) defines the high-income shopper of having reported average income of \$310,000 and average net worth of \$3.6 million. Taking it a step above, the top layer of this demographic is the elite in which only a few percent claim belonging, as reported by the Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts. A data survey conducted for the Four Seasons Global Advisory Panel defines their target market as exuberant spenders of more than \$4,100 on personal travel expenses annually. The guest that frequents luxury hotels and resorts internationally is an individual identified in this demographic with an average annual income of \$479,000 and an average net worth of \$4 million. These numbers expose a high social status that interconnects with power and influence in their environments. Additionally, high sophistication is revealed as approximately 61% of this demographic has graduate degrees. As a result, the lifestyle, personal habits, and perspectives of life differ greatly from the rest of the other demographics, since the luxury guest accounts for only 20% of the total population of the United States (Four Seasons Magazine, 2012, p. 2).

Second, the luxury guest's power and influence greatly impacts the mainstream popular culture: "The large-scale rise of consumerism in India among the country's elite, and efforts by new members of the growing middle class to embrace a similar consumer culture" (Kamadar, 2011, ¶ 1) illustrates this point from a global perspective into how culture and wealth, equality



and inequality, correlates and collides. In today's world of mainstream and viral-fast technology, the financially dominant culture – such as American Pop Culture – is forced upon the masses in the most interconnected and unequal ways. Although the elite is only a small percentage of the entire American population, perceptions from the lower tax brackets can generalize the luxury guests' behavior that can create a mimic effect to those striving to become affluent themselves, “A consumer culture, however, focuses on community: Fit in, don't stand out. Be cool. The standard of judgment becomes the ability to interact effectively with others, to win their affection and admiration--to merge with others of the same lifestyle” (Twitchell, 2002, ¶ 15). Reality television glamourizing the lifestyles of the rich, as is the case of Bravo's *Real Housewives* franchise has heightened the term “keeping up with the Joneses.” Even in middle to upper-middle classes, this behavior is perhaps most apparent,

In fact, maybe the rich have only two genuine luxury items left: time and philanthropy.

The rest of us are having a go at all their stuff, albeit for a knockoff to be held only a short time. I can't afford a casita on Bermuda, but my timeshare can get it for me at least for a week. I can't own a limo, but I can rent one. If I can't fly on the Concorde, I can upgrade to first class with the miles I "earn" by using my American Express card. I can lease a Lexus. (Twitchell, 2002, ¶ 36)

Like most developed nations, the gap between rich and poor is narrow; yet the difference is that the reality of “judging a book by its cover” reveals that the cover is designed by the affluent.

### **The Employee**

In this paper, the employee will be defined in two categories: management and line-staff. First, consider the manager. Being the forefront of building rapport, solving guest complaints, representing the organization, and leading the line-staff, the management's place in the social

world within the hospitality realm teeters in between the guest and employee perspectives. Nevertheless, being in the presence of luxury doesn't necessarily mean one is of luxury. In 2007, 12.4 million people were reported to work in the entire hospitality industry (Zupek, 2007). In terms of income, the U.S. Census Bureau reports that the median household income in 2011 was approximately \$50,054 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2012). Specific to the hospitality sector, online resource CareerBuilder reports an average general manager's salary to be \$149,456 as reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (Zupek, 2007). The salary ranges of lower to mid level managers, like a front desk manager, cascade from approximately \$34,000 - \$49,000 (HCareers, 2012). Although salaries are generally higher at five-star establishments, there is still a drastic difference to the average luxury guest's annual income.

Second, the line-staff employee's salary has much more disparity than management. For example, the U.S. national average of a hotel housekeeper is reported to be \$20,124 per year, while a maitre d' pulls in up to \$45,000, depending on the establishment (Zupek, 2007). One can assume the lifestyle of a high net worth individual – through popular TV shows, movies, and music videos – that brings home an income of upwards of \$300,000 per year; the same can be oppositely assumed of someone with only \$20,000 per year. In this case, the average housekeeper's work life, although in a luxurious environment, rarely interacts with the guest. When the opportunity arises, a clear unspoken separation of culture – not culture derived from language or national origin – is apparent; history has “detailed how the structure of the workplace, the cultural aspects of community, and spatial patterning all impact class consciousness” (Tabb, 2012, p. 57).

There are two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in

different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws...the rich and the poor. (Ferguson, 2012, ¶ 2 )

As suggested, attention is key at the five-star level and it is given – in abundance. Those responsible to create personalized experiences are the frontline staff: generalized by perhaps less traveled, less educated, less fortunate people that provide the backbone of a luxury property's existence, "...the front line: clerks, bell staff, bartenders, waiters, cooks, housekeepers, and dishwashers, the lowest-paid and in most companies the least-motivated people, but the ones who would make or break a five-star service reputation" (Sharp, 2009, p. 98). A disparity paradigm is created by this very basis that reflects polar opposite perspectives from both the guest and employee. The employees may see the guest as pompous and insatiable; the guest may see the employee as sub-citizens employed due to their financial success. Dublanica observes and describes this behavior in the fine dining environment, "Most customers care about only one thing – getting what they want when they want it [...] they don't realize restaurants are places where people struggle to make a living...most people are cravenly indifferent to what happens in the back alleys of affluence" (Dublanica, 2008, p. 101). In the movie *Maid in Manhattan*, the life of a hotel housekeeper reveals a tough commute, family crises, and a struggle to financially succeed. Here lies the challenge: to create a solution on how these two extreme examples of wealth and culture come together to deliver a mutually benefitting stellar service product.

### **Cultural Variations**

As suggested above, economic cultural variations directly impact service at the luxury level. Naturally, these variations will exist in a population matrix like that of the United States, a country founded by immigrants. This section will focus on bringing awareness to the local culture

of the hotel employee as well as realizing implications of proper managing them that then ripples to affect the larger luxury culture of the property.

First, contemplate the cultural variations that might be present in a couple's dining experience at the Olive Garden in any major city in the U.S. versus another dining at the French Laundry in the Napa Valley; perhaps the Olive Garden is a splurge and a dress-up occasion for some, while for others, is an off-putting commercialized version of Italian cuisine. Next, consider the following scenario: a newly hired hostess, with experience at the Cheesecake Factory, is new to the luxury-level dining outlet. In this case, there is consideration for an ethnic cultural background, a work ethic, and skillset to build upon. As the crucial first weeks carry on, the employee draws upon her own professional experiences to correlate tasks in her new work environment, but falls short. There appears to be a steep learning curve. What management may not realize is that this employee has not only entered a new corporate culture equipped with a mission and motto, but also into another layer of a culture in which attention to detail and eloquent speech are the normal environments of the clientele – something perhaps abnormal to the employee's natural behavior, upbringing, or cultural background. Last scenario: a newly transferred manager to Hawaii must lead his new team in the housekeeping department – this time, the team is made up of Asian members as opposed to the Hispanic members he supervised on the West Coast. As time goes on, the employee opinion survey reports negative performance reviews and reveals relationship conflicts that were a surprise to the manager. In this case, the cultural variations in the Asian community – such as understanding that the manager's team is composed of a high-context culture – are much different than the Hispanic, which should have been learned first in order to best lead the team.

To bring this awareness to life, management's training curriculum must include culture in order to identify and extract the best learning from each culture represented in the hotel or resort property to apply as management practices, "Understanding ethno cultural issues is critical in decision making..." (Baker & Helm, 2011, ¶ 1). Similarly, learning negative perceptions of the local cultures present in the property will "indicate how they may be changed or modified leading to better responses to the needs of tourists from different cultural backgrounds" (King & Truong, 2006, p. 69). As cultures cross in the broader travel industry, the modern manager must now be more educated and sensitive to these differences than ever before. The most common misunderstandings with guests and employees occur due to cultural ignorance, rather than language, "to be effective in two cultures is like handling two swords at the same time. In one culture you must be assertive, quick, and to the point. The other culture may require you to be unassertive, patient, and indirect" (Novinger, 2001, p. 153). One of the main areas of opportunity to improve management practices that directly impacts service across the entire industry is simply an attention and awareness of the local culture. The basic principle of public speaking techniques is to know your audience, "managers, marketers, and employees in the hotel and restaurant industry that are aware of the needs of people from different cultures will be able to better direct their efforts at product development, provide better guest services, and thereby offer a means of developing competitive advantage" (Jogaratham & Manzur, 2006, ¶ 1). Knowing the team, not just by surface, but also by truly understanding their foundational cultural makeup allows the manager to gain a perspective on their behavior and decision-making. To illustrate, the best example of a varied environment within the hospitality market is found in the State of Hawaii that has a complex makeup due to its three main intertwining sub cultures: Hawaiian, Asian, and American.

The Hawaiian culture is based on words representing values. Predominantly, *Aloha* is a value of community, sharing, and love for self and others. It is a philosophy and self-managing practice, which employs your personal values (Say, 2012) it drives behaviors and guides relationships. Author and self-proclaimed Culture Coach, Rosa Say (2012) defines the essence of these values: *Ho'okipa* is the term representing the essence of hospitality and complete giving; *Mahalo* as the embodiment of 'Thank You' and appreciative living. Although ancient, these deeply rooted Hawaiian values have survived through the years and manifest in the tourist mecca of Hawaii that is composed of an ethnically mixed workforce. Historically, the decrease in population of the native peoples from Polynesia is due to the amalgamation of Caucasian and Asian elements (Adams, 1923, p. 311) that created a unique cultural climate; it is a place where the cultural variations represented collide to create a localized culture defined by ancient Hawaiian values and Asian principles that are housed by the American Flag. As such, a shift evolves and adapts to outside influences.

Amongst all of the United States, Hawaii is by far the most unique for its isolation and former monarchy; further more, the people of the island archipelago represent many ethnicities and cultures yet primordially of Asian ancestry (Chou, 2010). In so many ways, Hawaii's ancient past and modern present is like the mainland United States' own birth. In both places, people came to present-day existence through voyages of economic hardships, in search of adventure, or reaching a dream. From the ancient voyages of the Polynesians to the modern mix of field workers from China, Japan, and the Philippines – the second predominant culture present in Hawaii is clearly Asian. Due to the labor groups brought to Hawaii in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Chinese reached 17.7 percent of the population numbers in 1896, followed by the Japanese surpassing to a population percentage of 42.7 in 1920 (Adams, 1923, p. 311). Similar to the

Hawaiian values, Asian cultures manifests in different ways than the American. Humility, patience, and harmony are the overarching tones of many countries in Asia, while agility, assertiveness, and ambition thrive in the American culture. A major population group within the Asian community is Filipino. “For the Filipino, the family stands at the heart of social life...one of the mechanisms to maintain the good order of the family is its hierarchical organization, expressing respect for status and seniority” (Mulder, 1994, p. 81). This perfectly explains that a mother will introduce her friends to her child as “uncle” and “auntie.” In the close-knit community of life in Hawaii’s islands and their humble people, the Japanese virtue of humility shared with the Filipino family values mix beautifully with *Aloha*. In the workplace, the family values along with harmony create a non-confrontational approach to this high-context culture, “People from high-context cultures see themselves primarily as members of a group, often with the family, learn to restrain to overcome their to maintain harmony in the family. The family is the prototype of all social organizations” (Everest & Kennedy, 1996, p. 13).

Last, as a member state of the Union, American culture dominates the islands through government, financial influence, infrastructure, media, and hotel business conglomerates. As such, the American way of life – of shopping malls, movies, and prosperity – must be defined from the autocracy of the Old World that gave way for a birth of a new place; a place founded on the principle of freedom yet not primordially on social or class equality, “conditions in the country favored acceptance of optimism rather than skepticism, an emphasis on liberation rather than equality” (Shepard Jr., 2008, p. 659). The result fueled the travels and voyages of international migrants; hence, the United States of America has been shaped into a country that has a blatant adaptation of world ethnic cultures ranging from food, music, language, and art.

## **PART THREE**

### **Introduction**

Gumbo in the South, Philly Cheesesteak in the North: cultural variations in America certainly vary by city, region, and state. This paper has thus illustrated major cultural variations surrounding a tourist travel destination that can be similarly analyzed in any market across the United States. The proposed notion of studying these similarities and differences in order to properly implement sensitivity in management, will allow the business organization to create an effective development tool and even enhance the pride in the workforce, and by extension, the community's cultural values (Doggett, 1993). This paper, however, does not propose to change the employee's personal beliefs or ethnic cultural image to that of the guest or the organization; but it does propose a guide to both improve service deficiencies and enhance management leadership by focusing on the people. The people's culture, behavior, and thought process must be honored and understood.

Finding a solution to marry different worlds of thought and behavior evidences to be difficult, especially in places disconnected from the mainstream. The answer is simply complex; treat others, as you would like to be treated. The Four Season's Golden Rule philosophy has proven to be successful for this international prestige brand, "The trust generated from living by the Golden Rule became the core of what we would later call our culture, a belief system we did our best to live by. It began to shape our attitudes, corporate and individual, setting a standard of trust and resultant behavior within the company" (Sharp, 2009, p. 107). For every guest and employee interaction, positive or negative, the Golden Rule suggests "would I like it if it were me?" Consider a new employee on their first-day of the job. He or she is probably nervous about everything: getting to work on time, finding parking, not getting lost, meeting new people,



a new environment that is intimidating and a new culture that is unfamiliar. The Golden Rule suggests if you were in their shoes, how would you like to be treated? A “sink or swim” approach certainly has no place in *Ho’okipa*, or hospitality. The following guide is a recommendation for luxury hotel organizations to adopt into their training programs. It is a three-part approach to marrying varied behaviors and cultural customs to a positive guest and employee-focused outcome.

### **A Leader’s Guide to Luxury Service**

First, the training plan should mirror a comprehensive orientation on Day One – at the initial start of employment – so the new hire will know what to expect. All elements of the hotel property should be discussed where the organization’s own corporate culture is explained, along with an informative lecture of defining the luxury guest and their lifestyle’s normalcy, as pointed out earlier in this paper. The goal of this method is to expose the employee to an understanding of the audience that they will be serving, and by extension, why the service standards are in place (see Appendix A for details of the Day One Orientation). Day Two should focus on property-specific information presented by the rest of the executive leadership team. This foundation will enlighten the audience to see the “bigger picture” and clearly see their importance in the organization’s success (see Appendix B for details of the Day Two Orientation).

Second, start the 90-day onboarding program; “Research conducted in 2005 by the Recruiting Roundtable revealed that effective onboarding programs can improve employee performance by up to 11.3 %...Hewitt Associates found that companies that invested the most time and resources in onboarding enjoyed the highest levels of employee engagement” (Booz et al, 2008, p. 2). During these crucial moments in the employee’s life, they will slowly be exposed to the intimidating luxuries surrounding them, measure and adjust their behaviors, and adapt

through assimilation of the new work culture in the luxury setting. Within this period, a separate manager training session should be conducted that will focus on the cultural variations of the employee and guest, management and staff, and finally the ethnic cultural components of the luxury culture (see Appendix C for details on the manager learning class). Next, ascertain top employee performers to champion and conduct departmental training: "...consistency – drove the development of the designated trainer position at Four Seasons & Regent. A period of rapid growth caused inconsistent communication and training regarding service standards" (Enz, 2010, pp. 484-485). Viewed as a peer, the concept of a Designated Trainer – ultimately responsible for consistency while fostering an environment of camaraderie and cultural correlation – must be Train-the-Trainer certified by a facilitated classroom session. The Designated Trainer's guidance will be essential to the staffer in providing a handholding approach to the overwhelmingly high luxury standards. Through various training methods such as feedback, verbiage coaching, role-plays, quizzes, and incentives the employee will be set up for success (see Appendix D for full details of the on-boarding guide).

Third is the culminating element and final training piece of the onboarding program. Beyond an ethnic cultural awareness and sensitivity to build relationships, rapport, and establish collaborative leadership, there's another element to culture that must be felt and experienced: luxury. At the five-star level, the service standards, sequence of service, and policies and procedures are academic; they reflect a theory of luxury and provide guidelines to follow. They do not, however, adequately create emotional connections nor inspire memories to cherish for a lifetime – those belong to the guests on the receiving end. Why not for the employee as well? Make the employee a luxury guest. Golden Rule applies here too. The final training piece, the

Familiarization Stay, is a method that requires serious financial commitment rendering long-term results:

“Luxury can be a powerful tool to reach and win a greater share of customers' wealth and the loyalty of employees.” It is not surprising that luxury travel and merchandise are strong motivators for incentive programs. These are highly coveted awards that most people typically would not or could not afford for themselves. In turn, some companies are going to great lengths to give top employees, clients and partners a taste of the good life. (Casion, 2007, p. 3)

Provide the employee with an overnight stay in standard accommodations; throw in dinner for two in the restaurant, and a cup of imported artisan coffee in the morning (see Appendix E for the employee familiarization critique form). Notwithstanding their own ethnic cultural barriers, their perception as well as the organizations, will uncover the big picture:

Great experiences so rare and sensually orchestrated, the experience and memories of them so precious, that they are luxury products, packaged and sold in exactly the same way. These include travel, sensual comforts--tastes, smells, touches, sights that produce elevated or elevating physical and emotional states. (Casion, 2007, ¶ 5)

The last component to this is a manager follow-up meeting. As an essential part of the learning process, the manager must follow-up post familiarization stay as it is crucial to engage the employee during a fifteen-minute one-on-one meeting and gather feedback on his/her experience (see Appendix E for general discussion questionnaire). The end result to this proposal will provide something that the training budget can not buy: enriching the employee's work life through feelings, emotional connections, and memories that will harvest motivation, loyalty, and longevity; in turn, will create stellar service, elevate the guest experience and increase survey

scores though the employee's genuine passion for service. Figure one illustrates this three-step process, from a new hire to an accomplished professional, which will maximize employee commitment to create stellar service.



### **Conclusion**

A service provider at the luxury level is a contrast; the lifestyle of the wealthy guest and that of the employee can vary by extremes. By understanding the dynamic of how local culture and ethnic perspectives influence employee behavior, the leader's interactions will be tailored by audience, thus resulting in an infectious, attentive and nurturing corporate culture. This concept is proposed as foundational and requires it as a basic guideline in this industry, the people business. The recommendation of this professional paper is to provide a leader's guide to managing a cross-cultural team, the practice of taking the time to expose, train, and enlighten self and the employee to the world of the wealthy – by experiencing luxury first-hand – creates cognizance of the guest's luxury culture lifestyle and further bridges the gap of cultural

misinterpretation. Furthermore, proper hiring, onboarding, and sequential training are key elements to creating quality service cross divisionally. Moreover, exceeding the expectations of the properties' own employees – through eye opening programs such as the Familiarization Stay – catapults the philosophy of leading by example.

Luxury hospitality thrives on the discerning guest and the polished professional. Furthermore, more than just an obedience to sequence of service, standards, and accolade mandates, the service providers have something within themselves that money can not buy – and the rich want, “When we serve other unselfishly, in a way that is genuine, gracious and satisfying, our guests will return often for the experience we offer...our business will thrive, for it will be known as a place that delivers on the promise of exceptional service” (Say, 2004, p.79).

### **Recommendations**

This guide is intended to both initiate and/or enhance current hotel/resort training programs. Although the study uses Hawaii as an example of ethnic workforce dynamics, the suggested method of analyzing the intricacies of a particular hotel/resort's own employee population's local culture remains as a basic and foundational guideline to leading a team at the luxury five-star level. Done properly, this method builds rapport with the staff and opens the door to various channels of communication. By extension, exposing the employee to the lifestyle, behaviors, and traits of the luxury guest, a solid awareness of their audience is manifested.

Appendix A. New Hire Orientation, Day One

<b>Day One</b>	<b>Presenter</b>	<b>Topic</b>	
<b>Welcome</b>	General Manager	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Congratulations on being selected</li> <li>2. Career Trajectory</li> <li>3. Importance of team spirit</li> <li>4. Questions &amp; Answers</li> </ol>	Goal: set tone for passion and service
<b>Introduction &amp; Class Ice Breaker</b>	Training Manager	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “Cocktail Party” Mingle with classmates.</li> </ol> Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hometown</li> <li>• Hobbies</li> <li>• Favorite Drink</li> </ul>	Goal: set camaraderie and comfortable environment
<b>The Luxury Guest</b>	Training Manager	Group Discussion  Lecture	“What is Luxury to You”?  The Culture of Luxury <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guest: Income and Perspectives</li> <li>• Lifestyle</li> </ul>
<b>Luxury Exposure</b>	Dir. of Rooms	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Career Trajectory</li> <li>2. Explanation of Rooms Division</li> <li>3. Property Tour</li> </ol>	Initial exposure to luxury environment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hotel Property Site</li> <li>• Luxury Suite visit</li> </ul>
<b>Lunch</b>	Dir. of F&B	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Career Trajectory</li> <li>2. Explanation of F&amp;B Division</li> <li>3. Outlet Tour</li> </ol>	Luncheon: in restaurant Private Dining Room.  Goal: experience culinary arts and fine dining
<b>Luxury Service</b>	Hotel Manager	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Career Trajectory</li> <li>2. Importance of employee’s role</li> <li>3. Company Philosophies</li> </ol>	Present: Quality and Service, Mission, Vision, and company Brand elements.
<b>Luxury Standards</b>	Training Manager	Group Discussion  Lecture	Review from Tour: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were your impressions?</li> <li>• What did you find luxurious?</li> </ul> Introduce AAA & Forbes Five-Diamond, Five-Star concept and Standards
<b>Conclusion</b>	Training Manager	Group Discussion	Round-robin: “One thing that I learned today and stood out to me”
<b>End of Day One</b>		Homework	Review Hotel Fact Sheet & department-specific service standards

Appendix B. New Hire Orientation, Day Two

<b>Day Two</b>	<b>Presenter</b>	<b>Topic</b>	
<b>Welcome Back</b>	Training Manager	Review Agenda	Focus: Hotel-specific information by various presenters
<b>Review</b>	Training Manager	Group Discussion	Comment on specific Standards that might seem difficult to you. Why?
<b>Sales &amp; Marketing</b>	Director of Sales & Marketing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Career Trajectory</li> <li>2. Explanation of Sales &amp; Marketing roles</li> <li>3. Market segments and competitive set</li> </ol>	Motivate: everyone is on the sales team: through excellent service, clients come back.
<b>Spa</b>	Dir. of Spa	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Career Trajectory</li> <li>2. Explanation of Spa</li> <li>3. Products and Therapies</li> </ol>	Goal: exposure to wellness and luxury environments.
<b>Finance</b>	Director of Finance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Career Trajectory</li> <li>2. Explanation of Finance/Accounting</li> <li>3. Importance of efficiency</li> </ol>	Goal: understand labor as #1 expense to company. Motivate: ways to be more efficient and eliminate waste.
<b>Lunch</b>		Employee Cafeteria	Experience employee daily life at work
<b>Back of House Tour</b>	Employee of the Month	Orientation of hallways and corridors	Corporate culture: point out bulletin boards and important areas
<b>Concierge</b>	Chef Concierge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Career Trajectory</li> <li>2. Explanation of role and Les Clefs d'Or</li> <li>3. Importance of guest/client/vendor relationships</li> </ol>	Round Robin: "One thing that I learned today and stood out to me"
<b>Human Resources</b>	Director of Human Resources	Policies & Procedures, Benefits presentation	Highlight important elements to employee handbook
<b>Conclusion</b>	Executive Committee	Closing remarks by GM. Leadership's welcome aboard and group pictures	Goal: motivate and instill sense of team spirit

Appendix C. Manager Learning: Foundational Training Class

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Learning Outcome</b>
<b>Welcome</b>		Review Agenda	
<b>Ice-Breaker</b>	Group Activity	“Speed Dating”	Where am I from? What do you know about my culture?
<b>Module 1</b>	The Luxury Guest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial &amp; Statistical examination of clientele and target market</li> <li>• Global behavioral similarities of wealthy</li> </ul>	Goal: propose luxury as a culture
<b>Break</b>	10 Minutes		
<b>Module 2</b>	The Employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial &amp; Statistical examination of                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Management</li> <li>○ Line-Staff</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Localized behavior differences of staff</li> </ul>	Goal: bring awareness to cultural similarities and differences of self and employee population
<b>Lunch</b>			
<b>Module 3</b>	Cultural Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examination of staff ethnic cultures represented in the property</li> </ul>	Goal: understanding cultural behaviors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eastern: high context</li> <li>• Western: low context</li> </ul>
<b>Break</b>	10 Minutes		
<b>Module 4</b>	Conquering the Challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication best practices cross-culturally</li> <li>• Experiential Learning                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Luxury as an experience</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Goal: to build rapport and sensitivity to cultural dimensions Support: employee’s own luxury experience through Familiarization Stay.
<b>Conclusion</b>	Moving Forward & Next Steps	Present steps to Five-Star service through training for luxury culture assimilation	Goal: to train the manager for increased understanding of the Luxury Guest and the differences the Employee’s own cultural perspectives can interfere with luxury service.



## Appendix D. On boarding Guide

Introductory Training			
Front of House Employees			
<b>Positions:</b> Front Desk, Concierge, Guest Services (Valet, Bell, Door), Housekeeping Coordinator, Server, Server Assistant, Food Runner, Hostess, Bartender, Sommelier, Room Service Coordinator, Room Service Server, Pool Attendant, Pool Server			
Required:	Completion Timeline	Frequency	Instruction Method
New Hire Orientation	First Two Days	Initial	Classroom
Luxury Culture Training: 5-Diamond/Star Standards	2 weeks of hire	On-going	Designated Trainer
Department Training Checklist	60 days of hire	2 Years	Designated Trainer
OSHA/Safety Training (per local laws)	2 weeks of hire	On-going	Security & Engineering
ServSafe/Alcohol Training (F&B Staff)	60 days of hire	1 time/as needed	Online
CPR/First Aid (F&B, Pool staff)	90 days of hire	1 time/as needed	Instructor
ADA Compliance Training	30 days	1 time/as needed	Document
Orientation, Part Two: Art of Customer Service	90 days	1 time; post Introductory Period	Classroom
Recommended:			
Training for Trainers	After 1 year of service	Quarterly	Classroom
Conflict Resolution	After 90 days	1 time	Classroom
Public Speaking	First Year	1 time/as needed	Classroom
Service Recovery	90 days of hire	1 time/as needed	Classroom
Leadership Training			
Assistant Manager to Department Head			
<b>Job Titles:</b> Assistant Manager to Department Head (new hires, outside company, transferred personnel)			
Required:	Completion Timeline	Frequency	Instruction Method
Manager's Guide to Luxury Service	30 days after hire	As needed	Classroom
HR 101	Within 30 days of hire	As needed	Classroom
Harassment Training	30 days	2 years	Online
How to Coach & Counsel	90 days	1 time/as needed	Classroom
3-D Interviewing	90 days	1 time/as needed	Classroom
Payroll	30 days	As needed	Instructor
Scheduling	30 days	1 time/as needed	Classroom
Recommended:			
Giving Recognition	First Year	1 time/as needed	Classroom
Delegating	First Year	1 time/as needed	Classroom
Conflict Resolution	First Year	1 time/as needed	Classroom
Basic Business Acumen	First Year	1 time/as needed	Classroom
Time Management	60 days	1 time/as needed	Classroom
Business Writing	First Year	1 time/as needed	Classroom
Public Speaking	First Year	1 time/as needed	Classroom
Meeting Management	First Year	1 time/as needed	Classroom

Appendix E. Sample Familiarization Stay Critique

Check In Services		
Check In Services	Service Level	
	YES	NO
		Attendant provides a warm and sincere greeting; recognizes guest appropriately
		Attendant inquires about guest's name
		Attendant addresses guest by name during initial greeting without inquiry
		Attendant uses guest's name at least once prior to closing
		Staff associate acknowledges (with a warm and welcoming greeting) guests waiting in line
		Registered guests are not asked for duplicate information
		Attendant confirms rate and type of room
		Attendant provides room number discreetly
		Attendant places all registration materials into the guest's hand
		Attendant exhibits a sincere desire and compliance to all guest requests
		Attendant anticipates guest's needs or offers a personalized recommendation
		Attendant is efficient yet unhurried and sensitive to the manner of the guest
		Attendant arranges escort of guest and belongings to room
		Attendant provides introduction to escort
		Attendant provides a warm and sincere closing
		Attendant addresses guest by name during closing
		The guest feels well served
GENERAL		

- Were the staff well groomed and wearing name badges in all area? YES/NO  
If "NO", please identify any areas which need follow-up.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- As a guest in our resort, what are your first impressions?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What did you learn that you can now use to enhance your service delivery?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What kind of information do you now have to increase your conversion?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Please note any other comments below.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Did you enjoy your stay with us? YES/NO

## References

- Adams, R. (1923). Some statistics on the Japanese in Hawaii. *Foreign Affairs*, 2 (2), 310-318.
- American Automobile Association. (2011). *Diamond Ratings*. Retrieved from AAA NewsRoom.
- Baker, C. K., & Helm, S. (2011). The Need to Consider Ethnocultural Context in Prevention Programming: A Case Example from Hawai'i. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 20 (2), 131-149.
- Booz, Allen, Hamilton. (May 2008). Getting On Board. A Model for Integrating and Engaging New Employees. *Partnership for Public Service*.
- Casison, J. (2007, December). True Luxury. *Incentive*, 181, pp. 2-8.
- Chou, M. P. (2010). Ethnicity and Elections in Hawai'i. *Chinese America: History & Perspectives*, pp. 105-111.
- Coniff, R. (2002). *The Natural History of the Rich: A Field Guide*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Doggett, L. (1993). Multi-cultural tourism development offers a new dimension in travel. *Business America*, 114 (18), 8.
- Dublanica, S. (2008). *Waiter Rant*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Enz, C. A. (2010). The Cornell School of Hotel Administration. *Handbook of Applied Hospitality Strategy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Everest, A., & Kennedy, J. (1996). Put Diversity in Context. *Personnel Journal*, 75 (3), 13.
- Ferguson, N. (2012, January 23). Rich America, Poor America. *Newsweek*, 159 (4), pp. 42-47.
- Four Seasons Magazine. (2012) Media Kit.

- HCareers. (2012, November 18). Salary Center. Retrieved from HCareers.com:  
<http://www.hcareers.com/us/salary-tools.html>
- Jogaratnam, G., & Manzur, L. (2006). Impression Management and the Hospitality Service Encounter: Cross-Cultural Differences. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 20 (3/4), 21-32.
- Kamadar, M. (2011, June). The Pleasures of Excess. *World Policy Journal*, 15-19.
- King, B., & Truong, T.-H. (2006). Comparing Cross-Cultural Dimensions of the Experiences of International Tourists in Vietnam. *Journal of Business Systems, Governance and Ethics*, 65-75.
- Luxury Institute. (2012, October 12). High-Income Shoppers Talk Openly About Luxury Salespeople; Relationships With Wealthy Customers Blossom When Staff Shows Knowledge, Professionalism and Courtesy. *Luxury Institute News*. Retrieved from:  
<http://luxuryinstitute.com/blog/?cat=42>
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). *World-Class*. Retrieved from m-w.com: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/world-class?show=0&t=1353195464>
- Mulder, N. (1994). Filipino Culture and Social Analysis. *Philippine Studies*, 42 (1), 80-90.
- Novinger, T. (2001). *Transcending Culture*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Say, R. (2012). *Managing with Aloha, Bringing Hawaii's Universal Values to the Art of Business*. Waikoloa, HI, USA: Ho'ohana Publishing.
- Sharp, I. (2009). *Four Seasons: The Story of a Business Philosophy*. New York: Penguin Group.
- Shepard Jr., J. W. (2008). The European Background of American Freedom. *Journal of Church & State*, 50 (4), 647-659.

Tabb, W. (2012, Summer). Getting Serious About Class Dynamics: Culture, Politics and Class. *New Politics*, 14 (53), pp. 57-63.

Twitchell, J. B. (2002, Aug/Sept). Needing the Unnecessary. *Reason*, 34 (4).

U.S. Department of Commerce. (2012, September 12). *Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2011*. Retrieved from United States Census Bureau Newsroom: [http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/income\\_wealth/cb12-172.html](http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/income_wealth/cb12-172.html)

Zupek, R. (2007, 12 17). *Top 10 Jobs in Hospitality*. Retrieved from CareerBuilder.com: <http://www.careerbuilder.com/Article/CB-775-Who-is-Hiring-Top-10-Jobs-in-Hospitality/>