

Summer 2010

# New front desk manual development protocols for millennials working in the hotel industry

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New Front Desk Manual Development Protocols for Millennials Working in the Hotel Industry

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## **PART ONE**

### *Introduction*

Over the past year, the hotel manager of the Westin Versa, Napa, a 179 room franchised hotel located in the city of Napa, California has struggled with conveying to his younger agents (aged 18 to 24) the concept of empowerment. They have had a difficult time with what he defines as "basic common sense" when providing company brand standards to guest recovery situations that go beyond the usual five minutes of a guest interaction. In these scenarios, the young agent is forced to balance the operational needs of the hotel with the wants of the guest and find a middle ground that will satisfy both parties. While the agent has received empowerment training and the concept has been reinforced with the necessary tools needed to make personal decisions to solve guests' problems, in many cases a supervisor or manager will be called to cope with guest issues which clearly could have been handled by the young agent. Guest dissatisfaction is then often escalated as the guest looking for resolution from one individual is instead handed-off to another member of staff thus invalidating the time spent with the first agent.

The concept of empowerment is grounded in the general belief that a company needs to provide employees with the knowledge and the resources to be able to make common sense decisions that are incentivized by making the right decisions (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2009). This implies that empowerment provides all workers with a sense of responsibility to own and manage most customer related situations to the best of their ability and to not pass off that responsibility to another employee. Therefore, common sense is rooted in a framework of one's individual reality and what is common sense to the individual is dictated by personal and social values (Anderson, 2009). Many hotel brands dictate that each desk agent not just react to a situation with a cookie cutter mentality, but instead approach each guest recovery issue as

“unique” and not take the stance that what was satisfactory for one guest will necessarily be the same answer for another. It is during these types of guest interactions that the concept of empowerment is exchanged by the young agent for the very real worry that a wrong decision or choice will be made; the mindset of the young agent is that if it was not read in the manual or presented during training then the unusual situation cannot be managed by the agent.

This loss or disconnect of the preceded use of common sense coupled with an unclear understanding of how to use empowerment is attributed to a generation that were raised during a time in American history that has never been experienced by any of the current generations active in the workforce today. Having grown up during a time of economic prosperity, Generation Y'ers, also known as Millennials (born between 1981 and 2000) were parented using a consulting model that actively encouraged participation in the family decision-making process and provided tutors and coaches if they did not meet or exceed their educational expectations (McGlynn, 2005). Some educators have described Millennials' parents as "helicopter parents" due to their need to quickly come to their child's defense at a moment's notice which has led to Millennials having a greater trust in their parents and in those holding positions of authority (McAlister, 2009). This coupled with government and consumer safety regulations unknown to previous generations has developed a highly scheduled, generation free from the variables that other generations have had to overcome (McGlynn, 2005). Sheltered from making individual life choices without the input or advice of parents or other authority figures, it is a generation that does not know how to take into account the importance of an individual's critical thinking skills and applying what has been learned in real world situations. Thus many young adults are entering the work force requiring that they be shown how to connect all of the dots as they struggle to connect them on their own when encountering new situations and must constantly

seek advice from those in authority to give them the answers. This means that younger agents need a different training model that will bridge how they may have been conditioned to learn and think through the cooperative learning model with the concept of empowerment that requires on-the-spot decision making using an individual's critical thinking skills.

### *Purpose*

This paper will identify the training protocols needed to develop a front desk manual that provides a hotels brand's "common sense" as to empower an agent to handle work retaliated situations and provide confidence that they made the right decision grounded in the organizations "common sense". It will be designed to provide the learning style needed to reach the target audience of workers in the age group of 18-24 on how to run the front desk at a luxury hotel. It will be predicated on developing skills that will instill in these employees ownership of their job so that little to no supervisory interaction is required based on the learning objectives of the operation.

### *Justification*

The impact of this kind of new training protocols has far reaching implications as the industry perceived attributes for successfully managing a front desk have evolved to lean towards a generic communication skill set and less focused on a traditional administrative skill set (Baum & Devine, 2005). Having the desired communication skill set creates the need for training that will demonstrate empowerment and the proper application of it. This is essential as communication styles differ from generation to generation and it cannot be assumed that one will know how to communicate effectively based on a theory to use "common sense" when common sense is based on a groups' collective shared experiences.

The Millennials represent 80 million Americans and are the largest generation of young people since the 1960's (Leung, 2005). They compose the majority of the front line workers within the industry whose main responsibility is to make sure that the operation of the brand runs smoothly, efficiently, and profitably. With that in mind, the way in which the brand deploys its training program to the front line workers needs to always adapt to the way in which young people are developing due to their cultural environment. Hospitality companies cannot assume that current training styles and assumed professional work standards that have been applied for previous generations are universal in nature. Millennials work related characteristics and attitudes are radically different from those of previous generations entering the work force (Solnet & Hood, 2008). If job training is grounded on the premise of what worked for previous generations, it leads to instruction that does not effectively meet the needs of the organization as the training is based on assumption of facts rather than grounded on shared common understanding. It also has lasting effects on the long term viability of the hospitality company as one's perception of training quality coupled with the satisfaction of one's training has been found to influence overall job satisfaction. With the average turnover rate of 300%, financial effects can be felt through the loss in productivity, knowledge through experience, as well as the replacement and training costs associated with bringing on a new employee (Frash, Kline, Almanza, & Antun, 2008). By not adapting new training strategies, brands are in danger of constantly perpetuating the escalation of guest recovery situations beyond what is needed, losing qualified employees due to dissatisfaction with training and delivering service that do not meet the needs of the customers being served.

## **PART TWO**

### *Introduction*

In Part One, an overview was made as to the current state of Millennials using "common sense" in the workplace and a need for the training protocols needed to develop a front desk manual was discussed.

In Part Two, a review of literature that is related to the following topics is needed in order to develop an effective a training protocols to be used by the Millennials.

### *Literature Review*

Existing literature was reviewed related to the topics of common sense as relates to decision making; an understanding and definition of Millennials within the hospitality industry, and effective learning approaches for Millennials.

### *Common Sense*

What is common sense? Zhao (2009) examined from a management perspective the development and origins of common sense as it applies to the decision-making process to develop better use of common sense strategies. He found a lack of scholarly work on the subject. This could be in part due to the subjective nature of common sense as it requires all parties involved to have a common reference point of what it means to be "sensible" because one person's decision based on "good common sense" may be viewed by others as a lack of common sense. Zhao contends that common sense is developed by individual experiences that are either intentional or unintentional in social sharing (Zhao, 2009). There is a difference between common sense, experience, knowledge and intuition. Zhao states that though experiences are the major source of common sense, common sense is not necessarily learned through experience



because experience is an individual behavior while common sense is socially transmittable experiences or knowledge (Zhao, p. 445).

Common sense is governed by the majority having similar or pure beliefs and experiences among a group, but "common" does not imply universal expectances. At its core, common sense coupled with knowledge is the mental ability to make partial or sound judgments, either by innate rational capability or by inference based on certain facts. Common sense would suggest that the way in which one conducts a business meeting in the USA may not be the best way to conduct that meeting in China. That concept was learned and shared through group communication and individual trial and error by companies using American business models in other countries and then finding the results were less than expected. This example shows how common sense changes as humans develop and share their experiences and find common denominators that transform one person's experience into something that is seen as common to all who are in the same situation. Zhao's findings suggest that the term common sense is used for an unintended meaning defined by common knowledge and the ability to make sound judgments or judgments in general which dilutes the phrase's true meaning and value. Common sense is based on an individual learning's that are then shared through social communications that become the basis for how a group, society or individual approaches a situation. Since it is a natural phenomena using social communication, it can be rapidly developed by individuals taking ownership of decisions, observing the outcomes, and sharing those experiences with others which would lead to discussions of differences and similarities in the shared experiences.

The implications of the study suggests that for common sense to be truly effect it must be approached in a shared way through dialogs of the experiences with other individuals. Decisions are judgments based on what one knows. For someone to be held to a standard of using common

sense, it must be understood by all which are the basic responses that have previously occurred as these minimize the risk of making a decision that is wrong. For common sense to be incorporated into training protocols, the author must find a way to include a variety of hospitality industry workers' experiences which mirror the key elements that the organization thinks are the basis of a common sense approach to effective decision making. This will then give the agent reviewing the manual a baseline that is common for all in the organization that is based on the training protocol.

How would one test for the use of common sense? Salter & Highhouse's (2009) research suggests that the use of situational judgment tests can be an effective method of determining if an individual's common sense is congruent with an organization's view common sense. A situational judgment test (SJTs) asks questions of respondents that provoke them to share their beliefs regarding the effectiveness of the response along with behavioral intentions. By combining these within the context of a typical work setting, SJT's are able to assess work relevant judgments along with the possible outcome of the particular action (Salter & Highhouse, 2009). An example of a test question is as follows:

Everyone in your work group has received a new computer except you. What would you do?

- A. Assume it was a mistake and speak to your supervisor.
- B. Confront your supervisor regarding why you are being treated unfairly.
- C. Take a new computer from a co-worker's desk.
- D. Complain to human resources.
- E. Quit.

(Situational judgment test, 2007)

Each response will have a different behavioral reaction to the alternative actions that have been presented, which means forward thinking as to the outcome of each alternative is measured based on the organization's common desired responses which support its own operational values.

When developing the protocols it would be prudent to incorporate some type of test that demonstrates that the agent reviewing the front desk manual is absorbing the information that is being presented and at the same time incorporate SJT questions that assess work scenarios using the information learned from the manual to determine if the decisions being made are in line with the common sense view of the organization.

### *Millennia Generation*

In the hospitality industry an organization's success is based on the ability of its front line workers to perform the basic functions of hospitality in a flawless manner. These jobs tend to pay low and rely heavily on the relatively young labor force. Increasingly the Millennials are fulfilling those roles (Solnet & Hood, 2008). Maier & Chi, 2008 conducted a series of focus groups with many different working generations from over 50 name brand hotels within North America in order to understand the current generational differences and similarities among their employees. This would then lead to developing the leadership strategies that would increase work capacity and cooperation among the different generations. The findings from the Millennial generation suggest that this generation is in search of role models as they seek opportunities for professional development and yearn for mentoring from those who have experience (Gursoy et al., 2008). The study found they tend to trust centralized authority, prefer collaboration and team work that is optimistic in nature and grounded in personal contacts, strong leadership and focused direction that allows them to be recognized for their contributions. This group dislikes

being micromanaged as they crave autonomy along with constructive feedback and praise. On and off the work clock they tend to congregate with other Millennials (Gursoy et al.).

Milliron (2008) found in a study of 275 college enrolled Millennials that student ratings on a question regarding core value selection indicate relatively low importance is attached to developing skills associated with professional success rather than other generations that were surveyed. Also the group was drawn to classes that had, "...clearly defined assignments and testing requirements"(Milliron, p. 410). He quotes Levey and Murnane (2004)

"The growing complexity of work has made uncertainty and disagreement far more prevalent in the workplace...a growing percentage of jobs in the American economy cannot be described in rules... the innovative of the work -- the source of valued added--- requires the interpretation of new and complex information" (Milliron, 2008, p. 414).

Milliron contends that in the work place, assignments are not so straightforward as Millennials might want them to be and to be competitive they will need to balance their desire for a clear direction towards a grade balanced with the needs of developing the cognitive skills needed for the jobs of the future (Milliron, 2008).

The challenge to employers from American Millennials is rooted in the basic fact that as a generation many have not had to really want or need for much as a great deal has been provided to them by their parents and American society. They have learned that when you need something to just "ask" which is counterproductive to a work environment that demands that when one doesn't know something then one finds an answer without necessarily asking others for help. The challenge will be developing training protocol that is based more than just the basic concepts of hotel essential skills, but also helps to develop societal and organizational

common sense for this generation so far unchallenged to go beyond what they have asked for and been given by their parents and society.

### *Effective Learning Style*

Jill Poulston's 2008 research surveyed prominent Millennials living in New Zealand who were working in the hospitality industry. She found that that poor training was the second most common issue that Millennials had in the hospitality work force with understaffing usually based on unfair dismissals due to poor training (Poulston, 2008). Within the hospitality industry a company's success can be traced its culture by providing extensive training and development skills as these activities reinforce critical behaviors and beliefs that are essential to facilitating the company's desired service quality goals (Vokie, 2008). Effective training is a blending of teaching and learning that connects with one's learning style so that the information is synthesized (Magnini, 2009).

The concept of an individual's "learning style" was developed by psychologist Carl Jung who contended that humans have "personality types" that use various ways to learn. He theorized that teaching styles would have to be modified to accommodate for the multiple learning styles as one type of teaching style could not be effective for all of the different "personality types" (Weiler, 2004). Traditionally within education a focus has been in teaching students through lectures and rote memorization that tends to favor students who use learning styles that incorporate verbal-linguistics and logical-mathematical styles that are the skills most used in problem solving like those found in the SAT test. This style of teaching however would be a disadvantage to a student that problem solves visually (visual-spatial) or who must perform an activity (body-kinesthetic) to learn or solve a problem (Weiler, 2004). Taking Jung's theory one step further it has been argued that to continue to teach or instruct Millennials in a way that is

traditional or linear in design (traditional approaches to learning that is heavily based on teacher-centered learning that include lectures and text book) is to not acknowledging that their learning style demands an approach that is non-sequential in nature and includes instructional media such as video, CD-ROM's, websites, and blogs with the students actively engaged in their own leaning by developing personalized learning by construction (Sandars & Morrison, 2007). Nicholas (2008) conducted a study of 106 student (102 were Millennials) asking them what teaching format they preferred. 86.8% found they learned best using video clips related to the class material while 91.3% liked using a combinations of lectures, group and other discussion activities. Web based instruction or hyper media-based instruction allows for the synthesis of hypertext markup, interactivity that allows users to engage in simulations that provide immediate results when pre- and post-tests are conducted, along with multimodal interactivity that incorporates audio and video components (Case, Bauder, & Simmons, 2001).

In a study conducted by Faust et al. (2001), found that Millennials want to learn in ways that are non-linear and non-sequential in approach by using a “perceiving, thinking, and investigating” process. For example, researchers saw an increase in effective project ideas by forty- four percent when students were asked to graphically illustrate different options to narrow solutions instead of asking them to write a paper on how to solve a problem.

A study conducted by Kivela and Kivela (2005) looked at problem-based learning (PBL) which is a self-directed approach to learning in teaching curriculum as opposed to teacher-centered learning in an undergraduate hospitality program. PBL is based on students indentifying areas of known skills and determining the knowledge that needs to be acquired and learned. Researchers found that a PBL approach to learning encouraged and fostered

independent learning and a more analytical approach to problem solving skills (Kivela & Kivela, 2005).

In developing the framework it's imperative that that it not be based on text alone as this will not insure that cognitive understanding of the material has occurred. This generation has grown up with additional forms of Information Communication Technology (ICT), to include video, CD-ROM's, websites, blogs, etc., which allows them to take in information as they see fit-- thus making it possible for them to take an active role in their overall learning process. No longer are they confined to one form of text to give them the information they need. The point is to engage the learner with the appropriate tools to ensure that what is being presented is synthesized with previous knowledge and can then be applied to real work situations. Therefore Millennials need to be given opportunities to "dig" for additional information on their own which can then be shared in a collective environment. Positive feedback for their increased knowledge in their ability to do the job will build their confidence to apply what was learned to daily work situations.

## **PART THREE**

### *Introduction*

Based on the current research, the following protocols will be present when developing a front desk manual. These will ensure that Millennials have a base line of the organization's "common sense" that has been integrated with policy. In general the manual must be web based to take advantage of all of the ICT's that are currently available. This will also make it relevant and easy to use as it allows for the integration of blogs, video, and other forms of social media that foster on-demand learning options. With their reduced attention spans, the additional interactive channels will allow Millennials to explore and engage with the concepts beyond the printed word. This will lead to a deeper understanding of the concept being presented. Based on these protocols, the reader of the manual will be trained through interactive opportunities that will be subtle in nature as the online manual will be represented in a framework they have grown-up with and are comfortable engaging with as it includes the use of familiar technologies.

*New Training Manual Development Protocols (see Appendix A and B)*

### *Present and Clarify the Concept*

When presenting a policy concept it should be no longer than a paragraph or two at the most as anything longer will be lost by the reader. As it is the base-line, it does not need to be detailed in nature because imbedded in the concept will be hyperlinks that will provide multiple layers of understanding for additional clarification if it is needed to grasp the overall concept. This puts the Millennials in charge of how deeply they want to go when developing an understanding of the concept. This provides them with a sense of control throughout the training process as it is not a requirement to read the multi-levels that are the basis for the concept, but they are available as needed. An example is as follows:



*Check Cashing Policy:*

Check cashing is unavailable to guests who are not Starwood Preferred Guests members. Only SPG Gold and Platinum Members are eligible for personal check-cashing privileges of up to \$300 U.S. or the equivalent per day. As applicable, checks may be cashed in local currency only. All checks cashed must include a driver's license number, contact number and birth date.

All guests are able to use American Express Traveler Checks with check-cashing privileges of up to \$300.00 U.S. or equivalent per day.

Cashing checks for guests who are not SPG members or cashing America Express Travelers Checks beyond the \$300.00 amount allotted per day may result in disciplinary action, including termination.

As you can see each underlined item would correspond to a hyperlink that would provide detailed information with an example of the word's or words' meaning. For instance, if one clicked on the "checks cashed" a screen would pop-up that would show a voided check with all of the information that would need to be provided on a check. This visual representation would help reinforce the language within the overall policy.

*Reinforce the Concept Through Examples of Brand Applied Behaviors*

The policy concept is the base line of knowledge and the "organization's common sense" comes into how that concept is applied. The content of the manual has to include a demonstration of the application of that content. To assume that Millennials understand the

universal contexts of content being provided without a demonstration of it being applied is not valid with this generation group. All front desk manuals should have video examples as to how to deal with a negative guest situation when applying a policy appropriately. This video will help to reinforce the standards being taught while communicating why this policy is in place at the hotel. Some policies are generic in nature and a standardized video that reinforces the hotel's guest service talking points may be used while other policies will need video demonstrations that show step-by-step how to interact with guests based on the hotel's standards of practices. An example is as follows:

*Amenity Fee:*

Room prices do not include the 14% tourism tax or the daily twenty dollar amenity fee. The amenity fee includes the following services: valet parking, wireless internet in the hotel room, lobby, and pool area. The fee also gives guests' access to the WestinWORKOUT Room and Business Center. The amenity fee is to be paid by all guests that use the hotel. It is not to be waived\* and this policy must be explained to each guest when checking-in to the hotel

Video: How to Explain the Amenity Fee

The amenity fee covers 24 hour valet parking, access to the WestinWORKOUT Room and Business Center along with wireless internet access throughout the hotel!

Video: How to dispute a guest asking to waive the Amenity Fee

I'm sorry, but all guests pay the amenity fee as we provide open access to these services that I mentioned without monitoring your use of them. Valet is available to you 24 hours a day during your stay which is covered under that amenity fee along with the wireless internet access throughout the hotel. We also provided information regarding the amenity fee on your confirmation, as well.

\*Video: When to waive the Amenity Fee [Click Here](#)

I can see that the charge of the Amenity Fee is becoming a source of discomfort for you. While it is not our policy to waive the amenity fee I am going to make this exception as a way to jumpstart your journey to rest and renewal.

By reading, viewing, and hearing the concept, the agent will be able to engage several senses which will allow them to better mimic "on-brand behaviors" while also reinforcing the concept through different sensory channels to the brain. It also conceptualizes the content so learners are able to see how it is relevant to the functionality of their job. This is critical because when Millennials are not able to see how the concept is relevant to their job performance they will not perform the duties of the concept effectively. They must have clear references for the concept's overall application in performing the job function.

### *Assess the Behaviors Through Real World Experiences*

Millennials want to work collaboratively and ensure that the decisions that they make will always put them in the best light. They need to see real world applications of the policy concept being applied through on-brand behavior that demonstrates it being performed effectively and ineffectively so they can develop confidence in delivering that behavior without having to second guess themselves. After each policy concept there will be a link that will connect agents to a blog on that particular topic. There they will be able to read real world examples of how that concept has been implemented either positively or negatively. Hotel agents who have been working at the hotel for over three months will be asked to input experiences on the concepts within the manual. These experiences can be in the form of tips on how to implement the concept effectively, situations that have occurred to be aware of when implementing the policy concept, and reflections on how the concept has helped them in their daily work life. An example is as follows:

#### *Cancellation Policy*

Cancellations must be received by 4:00 p.m. local hotel time 72 hours prior to arrival in order to avoid a one night room charge plus tax.

##### Blog Entry

Janice: June 14, 2010

I had a guest call today saying that wanted to cancel their reservation without having to pay the for the first night stay. I tried to explain to him that he could not cancel without having to pay for the first night stay as we had already taken a deposit. Then I remembered that Jim said we could start letting the guests know that they could move the deposit to a later date. They would have to contact central reservations and then we could apply the deposit. That really seemed to

help alleviate the frustration that the guest was having with the hotel. I think this is will help us all!.

The blogging will help define the concepts in real world applications that will foster peer interaction and add a social component to the manual. It will also help set the tone for the concept of "common sense". When the videos show the appropriate use of brand behavior, the blogs will provide a history of what has worked and failed on the concept thus helping to immerse the agents in the company culture. It will provide a record of past experiences to fall back on when implementing the concept rather than trying to implement it with no reference point as to what has been successful or has failed in that implementation. The blogging will also help in providing confidence in implementing the concept as the reader will be able to extract enough information to formulate solutions that are based on real applications of the concept. The need to ask a supervisor for assistance would be diminished as the agents will have access to historical data that they can refer to in real time.

Millennials are driven by goal setting and praise and like to work in a collective manner. The online manual must have constant updates of new content to support the concept for it not to be considered "out of date" and non-relevant, therefore the whole department must be engaged in providing updated information through blogging. That being said, there must be a reward or recognition program that is put into place to help motivate participation in the blogging of the concepts. If a manager is the only one that is providing content to the blog it will lose the perspective that the reader is engaged in a community conversation as they would be only reviewing and possibly responding to a community of one.

Triggering communication alerts to the entire staff that someone has added something to a section of the manual with the name of the person that has added the information is one way of providing recognition. Another way is by having a goal each month that ensures that at least two updates on a concept are done through the blog program by all members of the department. Also when someone has provided exceptional information, that agent should be singled-out through additional praising opportunities.

### *Evaluation Component*

The online manual's evaluation component will assess the situational judgments of agents as part of their overall introductory training program at the hotel. This will ensure that the concepts and behaviors are being absorbed and are leading to a decision making process that is in line with the hotel's "common sense" point of view.

An example of a test question is as follows:

#### **1.1 Questions 3 and 4**

You and a co-worker are working on a complex project that demands a great deal of effort from both of you. Your co-worker is frequently absent as a result of burnout and stress from his personal problems. You do not know much about the circumstances, nor have you known him for long. Your co-worker contributes very little to the project, and, as a result you are putting in an excessive amount of overtime in order to keep the project moving ahead. You feel that your health may begin to suffer if you continue to work as many hours.

**Q.3** The **most** effective response to this situation would be:

**Q.4** The **least** effective response to this situation would be:

1. Ask other co-workers to help you manage your workload.
2. Raise the issue with your manager and request additional help to ensure that the project is completed on schedule.

3. Meet with your co-worker to request that he does his share of the work.
4. Continue to put in overtime to keep the project moving ahead.
5. Offer to help your co-worker deal with his personal problems.

Number **2** is the most effective response, so you would darken circle number **2** on your answer sheet as illustrated below:

**Q.3** The **most** effective response to this situation would be:



Number **4** is the least effective response, so you would darken circle number **4** on your answer sheet as illustrated below:

**Q.4** The **least** effective response to this situation would be:



(Public Service Commission of Canada, 7.08).

Each response will have a different behavioral reaction to the alternative actions that have been presented. This develops forward thinking because the outcome of each alternative is measured based on the organization's common desired responses which will support its own operational values.

A review of the test must be done through dialog as each agent's work relevant judgments must be discussed in a way that fosters and reinforces the common sense approach of the organization. This cannot be done with a simple written pass or fail approach because answers that the organization might determine as incorrect could be considered using common sense for the agent based on societal or individual approaches to a given situation. It is only through dialogue that focuses on demonstrating why the alternative correct answer, that was not selected, would be a better choice for the guest and the hotel based on its organizational goals and objectives, that the common sense viewpoint of the organization can be instilled in an agent.

## *Conclusion*

Millennials represent 80 million Americans that are fundamentally different than previous generations and as such must be treated in a way that fosters the best desired actions for organizational outcomes. What is viewed as "common sense" is not common for them as they have not had the same shared experiences as generations past. To hold someone accountable to common sense, personal experience must be transformed into something that is seen as common to all who are in the same situation. Again, that shared experience cannot be assumed. It cannot also be assumed that the Millennials will be able to apply an organization's policies and service behaviors through the traditional model of reading, comprehending and executing what was stated in text as sound judgment because their comprehension is subjective and personal viewpoints of how to apply hotel policies could be counter intuitive to the organization's goals and objectives. For a hotel manual to be effective, it must go beyond dictating policy. It must assist in developing the cognitive thinking skills needed for Millennials to effectively apply the policies and procedures confidently and effectively without having to include management in the process of finding a solution to a situation in which they have the tools to solve on their own.

Hotel companies must acknowledge the learning styles that the Millennials have been accustomed to using to develop skills. Their way of learning and comprehending information is very different than previous generations which makes updating the protocols set within a training manual even more important. This is not to say that Millennials should be coddled using an educational process that is designed to force feed ideas and concepts that will then be applied by rote as they are unable to synthesis what was learned. Instead, the information needs to be presented in a way that makes connections and shows the process. Once the concepts are



understood, Millennials will execute the expectations of the organization because of their strong desire to be praised by authority.

The new training manual protocols are a different way of packaging informational content for a generation that has defined the way in which they need the content to be communicated to them. If companies do not embrace these demands, they are then put in the position of having to spend more time retraining and trying to enforce policy and organizational behaviors that have not gone beyond surface understanding. Confidence in the workplace is grounded in knowing that the decisions being made will be backed by the company being represented. Millennials must be taught confidence through an integrated process that allows them to embrace a company's own view of "common sense" using an interactive approach to learning which these new protocols provide.

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## APPENDICE A

### *New Front Desk Manual Development Protocols*

#### *Present and Clarify the Concept*

When presenting a policy concept it should be no longer than a paragraph or two at the most as anything longer will be lost by the reader. As it is the base-line, it does not need to be detailed in nature because imbedded in the concept will be hyperlinks that will provide multiple layers of understanding for additional clarification if it is needed to grasp the overall concept. This puts the Millennials in charge of how deeply they want to go when developing an understanding of the concept. This provides them with a sense of control throughout the training process as it is not a requirement to read the multi-levels that are the basis for the concept, but they are available as needed.

#### *Reinforce the Concept Through Examples of Brand Applied Behaviors*

The policy concept is the base-line of knowledge and the "organization's common sense" comes into how that concept is applied. The content of the manual has to include a demonstration of the application of that content. To assume that Millennials understand the universal contexts of content being provided without a demonstration of it being applied is not valid with this generation group. All front desk manuals should have video examples as to how to deal with a negative guest situation when applying a policy appropriately. This video will help to reinforce the standards being taught while communicating why this policy is in place at the hotel. Some policies are generic in nature and a standardized video that reinforces the hotel's guest service talking points may be used while other policies will need video demonstrations that show step-by-step how to interact with guests based on the hotel's standards of practices.

### *Assess the Behaviors Through Real World Experiences*

Millennials want to work collaboratively and ensure that the decisions that they make will always put them in the best light. They need to see real world applications of the policy concept being applied through on-brand behavior that demonstrates it being performed effectively and ineffectively so they can develop confidence in delivering that behavior without having to second guess themselves. After each policy concept there will be a link that will connect agents to a blog on that particular topic. There, they will be able to read real world examples of how that concept has been implemented either positively or negatively. Hotel agents who have been working at the hotel for over three months will be asked to input experiences on the concepts within the manual. These experiences can be in the form of tips on how to implement the concept effectively, situations that have occurred to be aware of when implementing the policy concept, and reflections on how the concept has helped them in their daily work life.

### *Evaluation Component*

The online manual must have an evaluation component that tests for situational judgment for agents that have been given the manual as part of an overall introductory training program at the hotel. This will ensure from a checks and balance point of view that the concepts and behaviors are being absorbed in a way that are leading to decision making process that are in-line with the "common sense views" of the hotel.

## APPENDICE B

### *What the Front Desk Manual Would Cover*

- 1 Welcome
  - Company Introduction
  - Mission Statement
  - Values
  
- 2 What is a Guest Service Representative?
  - Activities Prior to Starting a Shift
  - Preparing For and Taking Over a Shift
  - Closing a Shift
  
- 3 Room Assignments
  - Review Arrival Report
  - Blocking a Room
  - Block Special Requests
  
- 4 Procedure for Checking a Guest into the Hotel
  - Welcoming the Guest
  - Registration Procedures
  - Group Check-In Procedures
  - Room Type Not Available
  - Room Not Ready
  
- 5 Procedures for Checking Out a Guest
  - Asking About Their Experience
  - Checkout at the Front Desk
  - Checkout via the TV
  - Express Checkout
  - Checkout Cash Payment
  - Checkout Refund
  - Checkout Credit card

## 6 Billing

- Third Party Billing
- Correction and Adjusting Charges
- Transferring Charges from Room to Room
- Room Charges
- Room Upgrade Charges
- Cash Policy