

12-2005

Grand Hyatt Hong Kong training academy: Achieving business results

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Grand Hyatt Hong Kong
Training Academy Achieving Business Results

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A professional paper submitted towards partial completion of the
Executive Master of Hospitality Administration Program

William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration

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December 2005

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PART ONE

Introduction

Grand Hyatt Hong Kong (www.hongkong.grand.hyatt.com) is the Hyatt International's flagship hotel property with 556 rooms and suites, a diverse array of dining and entertainment options, as well as function space, wellness and recreational facilities. Since its opening in 1989, the hotel has welcomed royalty, heads of state, corporate leaders, and a host of international celebrities such as President Bill Clinton of the United States, President Ziang Zemin of China, and renowned opera artist Luciano Pavarotti. The hotel's reputation has been reinforced by a number of international awards over the years. The plaques for the "Best Business Hotel in Hong Kong" awarded by Business Asia in 2005, and the 15th "World's Best Hotels" by Institutional Investor in 2002, are displayed at the Hall of Fame located next to the employee entrance.

The vision of the hotel is to be recognized as a stylish grand residence, managed by a team of dynamic professionals, who are united in spirit and attitude in exceeding the expectations of the successful business and leisure travelers. The Grand Hyatt Hong Kong manages total hotel revenue through an integral approach in business development and marketing in acquiring, developing, and retaining profitable customer segments in rooms, spa, and food and beverage. The brand vision is to build long-term loyalty and a competitive advantage in the consumers' mind and global marketplace by positioning Grand Hyatt Hong Kong as the luxury and lifestyle brand leader. Committed to the corporate mission, the hotel strives to differentiate itself from the competition in maximizing revenue opportunities, and in consistently outperforming competition in employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, and financial returns. Driven by this mission, the training academy was founded in 2001 at the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong to embrace the life long learning culture, and to equip the employees as the brand ambassadors. Brand ambassadors play a significant role in providing

and owning a unique Hyatt experience which cannot be replicated, one that enhances the lifestyle, attitude, values, and aspirations of Hyatt guests.

This paper will explore the development and evolution of the training academy model covering the following elements:

- a. mission,
- b. training prospectus,
- c. organizational structure,
- d. physical layout,
- e. core and electives training,
- f. safety, security, and hygiene training,
- g. learning management system, and
- h. employee recognition to support service excellence.

Critical issues will also be identified to formulate conclusions and recommendations in this training model.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to identify the essential elements, both tangible and intangible, of establishing a training academy at the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong in order to achieve business objectives in a rapidly changing and competitive global environment in the hospitality industry. With the phenomenal growth of the tourism industry in Hong Kong, Macau, and the neighboring area in China, there is a growing competition in acquiring, retaining, and developing talents in the labor market. Having a well-established training academy is not only be critical in consistently delivering the brand promises to the external customers, it is also fundamental in maximizing the fullest potential of the internal customers (employees).

Justification

Brand

Davies (2004) stated that hotel operators were increasingly turning to new and innovative ways to produce returns during this challenging economy. One effective and low-cost training technique that could create substantial results was internal branding. There must be a focused message and goal behind all the elements of training. It was essential to collaborate with operational managers to produce an end objective and measurable results. Focus on desired training outcomes, not merely bottom-line numbers. Determine the goal behavior and establish measures. Hotel employees drive a customer brand experience. When employees are fully engaged in living and providing the brand experience, guests will consistently receive all brand promises, and hotels will receive better returns for the efforts.

According to the brand standards of Hyatt International illustrated in the internet site in October 2005, there are four different types of brands in Hyatt International:

- a. Grand Hyatt,
- b. Hyatt Regency,
- c. Park Hyatt, and
- d. Hyatt Resort and Casino www.hyatt.com.

Grand Hyatt hotels are situated in the best areas of premier cities and resort locations. These hotels have 300 or more guestrooms with high average rates sustained over time. Grand Hyatt hotels command stately architecture, dramatic lobbies and public spaces, fine dining options, exceptional meeting, conference and event facilities, and outstanding personal guest service. Rooms and bathrooms are spacious. Full spa facilities are offered. Competitors identified in this brand segment include Shangri-la, Regent, and Ritz Carlton. The brand promise is to deliver a magnificent experience.

Consumer Audit

To achieve the brand mission, Hyatt International has adopted an external audit approach to evaluate the hotel brand standards since 2001. A contracted professional audit company would visit a given hotel three times a year and produce a comprehensive report on where and how the hotel performs in exercising the brand standards. The visit would cover room accommodation, food and beverage, reservations and guest contacts experience during a 24 hours stay. The scores and the results of each visit are a reflection of the hotel brand standards.

Summary

With the significant number of hotel openings in the near future, it is important that the training academy model is established and included in the critical paths of future hotel openings. To maintain the leading position in the market, hotel managers should consider implementation of this training model in their existing operation.

PART TWO

Introduction

Having identified the purpose and justification of the training academy model, Part Two presents the specifics of the training academy established at the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong supported by a review of the relevant literature review.

Vision

The training academy is a brand guardian focused on training and career development of the employees. The faculty and students, i.e. the management team and the employees, understand and value the established brands and brand promises, and deliver a consistent level of service that is excellent, innovative, and customer driven.

Mission

The mission of the human resources supporting strategy in service delivery is to incorporate the brand strategy into training and development programs to ensure all employees deliver a consistent level of service. A wide range of relevant training programs, manuals, and activities are implemented to meet the needs, aspirations, and expectations of the employees. The training programs are designed to support the business objectives of the hotel, and encourage personal and professional development. The training academy is responsible for supporting the division heads in achieving the targeted scores in the consumer audit. Flexibility, the use of initiative, outstanding teamwork as well as genuine and warm sincerity would be the distinguishing characteristics of the culture throughout the academy and the hotel.

Training Prospectus

The training academy is Grand Hyatt Hong Kong's own "university" operated within the hotel. The university terminology is used to give the stamp of professionalism and raise its profile in the organization. On joining the hotel, each employee is enrolled into the

training academy, and is given the opportunity to learn, develop, and grow within their department, hotel, and the company. A logo specifically designed for the academy is displayed at the cover of the training academy prospectus binder. This information is given to each new employee on the first day of work. The prospectus includes:

- a. introduction to the training academy,
- b. registry,
- c. syllabus and awards,
- d. facilities, and
- e. professional attitudes.

Introduction to the training academy

This section sets the scene of the training academy. The introduction begins with the welcome letters from the general manager and the dean (training manager). The faculty name list, training cycle (hotel orientation, departmental orientation, 3-month probation), core and elective training options, and awards are covered in this segment.

Registry

On joining the hotel, all new employees are registered with the training academy. During orientation, a member of the training academy would assist the new employees to electronically register as students using the employee identification card. The system administration and lesson enrollment procedures are highlighted. By viewing the training calendar on the training academy intranet, students would be able to see which lessons relevant to the personal syllabus would be scheduled for the coming month. With the department heads' consent that the students could be released from duty, students would then be able to enroll for the lesson via the training academy intranet or through assistance from the training academy office. Meanwhile, students could access their personal training records via the training academy intranet.

Syllabus and Awards

A personal syllabus is designed to fit the designated role. Departmental orientation schedule, relevant skills training checklist, and class codes are provided in this section.

Training Academy Facilities

Training room floor plans and guidelines in using the training facilities are illustrated in Appendix B.

Professional attitude

Professional code of conduct including punctuality, personal responsibility, and ownership in participating in training as well as dress code are discussed in this segment.

Organizational Structure

The human resource division is comprised of personnel, training academy, and the employee restaurant. Please refer to Appendix A for the organizational chart. Reporting to the director of human resources, the training manager serves as the dean, an honorary title bestowed on the person in charge of the training academy. Based on a branding of a grand hotel of over 500 rooms, the ideal manning in the training academy would be four persons. The dean leads a team of two assistant managers primarily in charge of the training activities of the rooms and food and beverage divisions respectively. A human resources assistant takes on an administration role. In addition to the full time faculty members of the training academy, departmental tutors nominated by the division heads play a significant part in fulfilling the training roles and responsibilities. A ratio of one departmental tutor to every fifteen employees is recommended. In larger departments, the “lead departmental tutor” leads the training activities conducted by other departmental tutors. Designated team leaders are the departmental tutors whereby designated assistant manager or managers are the lead departmental tutors.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Dean

To support the vision and mission of the training academy, the dean is the guardian of the brand standards. Working closely with all the division heads as business partners, the dean identifies, plans, develops, implements, and monitors any relevant training activities to nourish a training and development culture throughout the hotel, and to market the needs and capability of the training academy. Based on the external and internal customers feedback and the results of the consumer audit, a mystery shopper program, the dean works with the division heads to identify training needs, ascertain performance issues, evaluate any operational procedures requiring change and update training materials where necessary. In addition, the dean drives the specialist training in discipline other than rooms and food and beverage.

Assistant Manager

Demonstrating strong administrative and communication skills as well as possessing solid operational background, the assistant managers update the training materials and task breakdowns to ensure they continue to meet the business needs. The two assistant managers are training specialists assigned to either the rooms or food and beverage division to actively work with departmental tutors to prepare and deliver training activities.

Human Resources Assistant

Roles of human resources assistant in the hierarchy are the key administrator of the storage and retrieval of training records in the learning management system. This administrator maintains the training academy intranet site, assists department heads and tutors to enroll students in training programs, update lessons into the total syllabus, and update employee information. Responsible for the set up of the training venues, the human

resources assistant also assists the dean to update training task breakdowns and lesson material as required.

Physical Layout

To support the needs of the training academy, the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong allocated resources to set aside two training rooms for theoretical or practical training sessions, and one dedicated technology training room sufficient to accommodate training for eight persons on various computer systems. All computers are equipped with broadband access. The technology room allows employees to access the intranet, learning management system and approved e-learning training materials on a 24 hours basis. Reference books are also available at the library in the academy. Please refer to Appendix B for the floor plan.

Core Training

A number of core training courses are driven by the corporate office and further tailored by the training academy to meet the needs of the local business environment. They include:

- a. hotel orientation,
- b. departmental orientation,
- c. leadership training,
- d. service excellence,
- e. coaching,
- f. performance development plan,
- g. selection interviews,
- h. human resources competency model, and
- i. managers guide to training.

In addition, a number of specialized trainings are also created for each specific department in culinary, engineering, finance, food and beverage, human resources, information systems, rooms, spa aestheticians as well as sales and marketing.

The training academy is also involved in facilitating cross exposure programs within the hotel or other sister hotels for personal and professional development. To ensure that there is a formalised and consistent inclusion of relevant knowledge and skills training during the departmental orientation phase, the training academy has been working on a departmental orientation prototype with the division heads. The prototype is targeted for completion by the end of 2005.

Elective Training

A number of special interest courses conducted by outsourced trainers include conversational Putonghua, conversational Japanese, Microsoft excel and access as well as wine appreciation courses. Subject to the approval of the department heads, these classes could be taken during the normal working hours.

Safety, Security, and Hygiene Training

Working hand in hand with the resident manager, security manager and hygiene manager as well as outside consultants, the training academy runs a series of training concerning fire prevention and safety, crisis management, security and employee hygiene in the workplace. Refresher training sessions are scheduled on a bi-annual basis.

Learning Management System

The training academy has worked with an outsourced company since 2000 to design an intranet program to maintain centralized record keeping and facilitate user-friendly retrieval of these training records of the employees. Accessibility of intranet is instrumental to encourage the departmental tutors to update the record in a timely manner.

Self Studies Subsidy Scheme

Grand Hyatt Hong Kong supports continuing education and training as being certificate, diploma, degree, master, or PhD programs that are relevant to the current job and the hospitality industry. To encourage our employees to pursue continuing education opportunities, the hotel would provide eligible employees with financial and other tangible benefits. A maximum of HK\$1,000 (US\$125) could be claimed in any one calendar year i.e. 1 January – 31 December.

Employee Recognition to Support Service Excellence

Eligible employees who have successfully completed the required training are awarded with certification. The training academy also recognizes employees who participate in pre-opening hotel support assignment and cross exposure program. The general manager presents the employees the awards and celebrates the significant achievement with the employees at receptions attended by the awardees, and executive committee members on a quarterly basis. The training academy strives to recognize and celebrate successes and achievements of the employees involved in the various training initiatives.

Human Resources Development

The integration of training and development into wider business planning is important. There has been increased investment in human resources development that requires the active participation of top management. A close integration needs to exist between human resources development and other human resources management activities. Garavan (1991) concluded that benefits that might be gained via strategic and well-planned human resources development efforts included the following:

- a. greater extrinsic and intrinsic job satisfaction,
- b. fewer accidents, lower turnover, and less absenteeism,
- c. greater customer and client satisfaction,

- d. improved job performance and the enhancement of career and promotion prospects both within and outside the organization,
- e. shorter learning times and more effective use of resources, and
- f. creation of a learning organization that can cope with present and future demands.

Training Challenges

Due to a decentralized management approach at Hyatt, each hotel would take on its own initiative to manage its training programs. The down side of such flexibility means that each hotel would reinvent the wheel by preparing the task lists and task breakdowns in each location. Prior to the establishment of the training academy and the commitment to rollout the training standard to other hotels in recent months, the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong was no exception. It was a daunting experience for departmental trainers to prepare training materials. At times, the standards of performance would change due to staff turnover and different interpretation and requirements by each trainer. Specific service sequence might be missed when there was turnover of experienced trainers. The training materials were not required to be signed off by senior management before training commenced. Training material was not always updated and maintained in a centralized and systematic manner. As such, there was an inconsistency in training delivery, hence inconsistent service delivery to the customers.

To tackle this issue, the hotel recognized an imminent need to invest in the resources to focus on setting up the service sequence standards, phraseology, and scripts as well as standards of performance. In 2000, 11 years after the hotel opened, the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong realized that skills training material was not available to ensure service delivery met all brand standards. The hotel pre-opening departmental policy and procedures were no longer applicable due to the changing economies, markets, and technology. It was important that

departmental trainers should not and could not train any new recruits based on what they remembered they had been taught. In addition, with the intense competition from other industries and other competing hotels poaching Hyatt employees, it was evident that we needed to show clear career development opportunities to attract potential recruits as well as to retain and develop existing employees.

The training academy began consolidating the syllabus by identifying the tasks performed by the general employees in the food and beverage and rooms division that would have the greatest impact on guests. The endorsement by the division heads and resident manager or general manager was essential to ensure brand standards were met and the training material mirrored what the hotel actually wanted, not what a junior departmental trainer “thought” the hotel wanted. This was particularly important for guest contact tasks where verbal scripts were involved. Approved task breakdowns were created, showing standards of performance, phraseology, and scripts. It was the training academy that took command of the training materials through a systematic process involving top management. It was the training academy that nurtured the learning culture throughout the hotel.

Setting up the Training Academy

It is critical to gain the understanding and support of the management team to make the training academy work. The general manager, the director of human resources and the dean jointly chaired a two-day workshop with the executive committee members and department heads to spearhead the training academy in 2001. The objective of the workshop was to identify and agree on the following:

- a. hotel’s vision and mission,
- b. unique selling points (UPS) differentiating the hotel from the competition,
- c. target customers, their needs and expectations,

- d. service delivery gaps and what service standards differentiate the hotel from the competition,
- e. factors to attract, retain, and develop employees,
- f. the training academy's vision, mission, and culture,
- g. the training academy resources commitment including core team members, departmental tutors, budget, facility, equipment, learning management system, and
- h. managers' responsibilities in training.

In order to deliver a consistent and excellent level of excellent service, it is fundamental to have a committed and passionate leadership team which leads by example. The entire management team must be united and focused on their attitude and behaviour in meeting or exceeding the needs and expectations of the guests. Employees watch closely what the leaders say and do. Being able to walk the walk is the first step in getting the commitment from the employees to embrace the hotel standards. This is why an annual hotel management strategy workshop is critical in redefining the hotel vision, mission, and strategic priorities to better manage the business, the people, and the change. A detailed operational approach must be "root focused".

Managers must get to the true source of operational challenge first hand. A broad-brush approach is less likely to work when building a service culture. In addition, it is also important to develop a culture of accountability, i.e. who is responsible for what and how to avoid over delegation. Lastly, continual assessment of customer satisfaction is done via checking the standards, soliciting guest comments, and investing in a consumer audit hotel operational review program.

Training Needs Analysis

Identifying needs and establishing objectives are tasks crucial to business survival. A needs analysis, or evaluation of a problem, must occur early to find the proper remedy. Swist (2001) indicated that a need is not a want or desire. It is a gap between "what is" and "what ought to be". The needs assessment serves to identify the gaps, and considers if training can solve the problem. An assessment is part of a planning process focusing on identifying and solving performance problems. It is critical to conduct training needs assessment to:

- a. determine what training will improve performance,
- b. determine if training will make a difference,
- c. distinguish training needs from organizational problems, and
- d. link improved job performance with the organization's goals and bottom line.

Training Needs

Skills training, attitudinal training, and personal development are the three major training needs categories identified at the training academy. Due to the limited resources, it is essential to differentiate the "must know", the "could know", and the "nice to know". As there are over thousands of guest contact tasks and processes in service delivery, it is essential to focus on those that would have the most impact in the target audience experience. It is also essential to direct attention to the areas that would provide competitive differentiation. Based on the vision, mission, and unique selling points agreed and endorsed by management, the training specialists must thoroughly understand operational challenges and work requirements. They have to work closely with lead departmental tutors and tutors to present cost efficient training solutions to current and future business challenges. Ultimately, training activities must address essential business needs rather than ad hoc training desired by employees. Skills training materials must be user friendly, easy to access, current, accurate, professionally presented, and well protected from unauthorized changes. They include

service sequence detailing the process, task list, task breakdown, training handouts and visual training aids. It is important that attractive and professional visuals are used to enhance the task breakdown presentation.

In today's litigious world, it is important the hotel can demonstrate compliance with "international" company standards as well as compliance with local government regulations. An accurate, detailed and appropriate record keeping of training, and due diligence in all aspects of safety and security are critical. Therefore, it is the training academy's role to develop and adapt timely and suitable training materials meeting the changing business needs.

Consumer Audit

The scores of each visit are sent to the general manager who would share with the divisional heads and the training academy the results. Low score areas indicated in the report would be the basis for identifying the training needs, reorganizing the work procedures, upgrading the facilities and equipment, or editing the training materials.

Training Roles

Perspectives in organization-development are changing. Training cannot be left to the few individuals on the training team. Managers must bear more responsibility for employees' effectiveness. The manager's function is to see that employees are increasingly effective in achieving organizational goals. As such, the training roles are not restricted to the four core team members of the training academy, i.e. dean, assistant manager, and human resources assistant. The training role to cover over 800 full time employees must be shared among the managers and the leadership team.

Departmental Tutors

At the training academy, executive committee members, director of human resources, training manager, and the assistant manager – training academy are regarded as the

professors of the academy. Departmental tutors are selected among department heads by the respective division heads. These department heads must be conversant in operational policies, procedures and brand standards as well as equipped with sound experience and communication skills before they would be considered credible training leaders in driving training activities in the departments. All departmental tutors are required to complete the group training skills course in order to ensure a professional training delivery.

Requirements

Nominated by the department head and subsequently endorsed by the division head and the training manager, a departmental tutor is recommended based on the following criteria:

- a. sound technical skills,
- b. respect and trust of their colleagues and employees,
- c. ability to motivate employees,
- d. conversant in operational policies, procedures and brand standards,
- e. knowledgeable in training strategies, and
- f. qualified skills trainers who have attended the skills training module.

Responsibilities

Despite the different nature of operations in each department, departmental tutors share the same training responsibilities in their respective departments. The areas of responsibilities include:

- a. Conducting and auditing task breakdowns and lesson material endorsed by the training academy.
- b. Communicating with the training specialists to modify any task breakdowns due to alterations to operational procedures.

- c. Identifying any service delivery gaps with the managers and training specialists, evaluate the training needs, and plan the monthly training activities.
- d. Using learning management system to assign students and record successful completion of courses.
- e. Utilizing departmental briefings to reinforce core material.
- f. Checking standards of performance.

Standards of Performance

Prior to the day of the lesson, departmental tutors must ensure a venue has been arranged and all relevant team members are informed of the scheduled training session. On the day of the lesson, departmental tutors must arrive at the training venue in time to prepare the presentation and set up before the arrival of students. After a lesson, it is the responsibility of departmental tutors to update records in the learning management system and audit the standards of performance of students once they return to the operation.

Teamwork

To ensure tutors are not forgotten soldiers, a monthly training meeting would be scheduled among departmental tutors to share experiences and best practices. Training specialists should also announce any training updates in this meeting. It has been a long and tedious process in putting together the hundreds of task breakdowns defined by the brand standards. Nevertheless, the active involvement from departmental tutors to division heads and the training academy reinforce the training culture across all levels of the organization.

PART THREE

Introduction

Since the opening of the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong, the hotel has made great efforts to achieve service excellence and brand recognition. Through the experience of establishing the training academy, we have adopted a five-phase approach in targeting success. At the Hyatt International Asia Pacific General Managers' Meeting held in August 2005, the five-phase process was presented to all general managers to reinforce the significance of a systematic approach to achieving service excellence. In driving the training culture and brand standards, we believe that a hotel which does not have the training academy would need to go through a similar approach in establishing a training academy.

Questioning Phase

The questioning phase is a time for introspective thought. As a first step, the hotel management team would stage a management strategic workshop. All executive committee members, department heads, and training specialists attend this workshop to discuss the following:

- a. Define the hotel's target customers as well as their needs and expectations.
- b. Define what the hotel's unique selling points and key benefits which meet the needs of the target customers at the present time and the near future.
- c. Define what gaps exist between existing products, services and target customers needs and expectations.
- d. Define what the hotel's vision and mission would also support and compliment corporate vision and mission.

By clearly answering the above questions, the management team would create a platform through which common goals and objectives could be formulated. This process helps to build team unity and target success. In January 2001, such strategy workshop was

initiated at the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong. It was this particular workshop that became the driving force of the establishment of the training academy. The workshop allows key stakeholders of the training academy to define the vision, mission, key milestones, timelines and responsibilities of the academy. It is evident that a vision is the starting point of everything we do from an operational, human resources, finance and marketing perspective. In a sense, it is the “inspirational definition” of the organization. Everything we do in the hotel should be aligned to it. Prior to the strategic workshop, the management team was unclear about the hotel’s identity. No one could confidently describe the hotel, its unique selling points, or its most profitable customer segments. It was difficult for the team to deliver good service, let alone deliver it consistently.

Defining Phase

Coyne found that a company obtained a competitive edge through improved service, provided that the improvement was hard to replicate and based on inherent corporate characteristics (1993). One way was to develop a reputation for regularly providing superior service in an industry where good service was very difficult to achieve. Companies accomplished this either through rigorously centralizing and standardizing products, systems, and procedures or by training and empowering contact personnel to deliver good service directly to customers. The choices are mutually exclusive and the appropriate one would depend on the nature of the business.

In order to exercise the appropriate level of training, it is critical to define the training subjects. The second stage begins by defining key guest contact tasks and processes. As there are literally hundreds of them, the management team has to be very selective in focusing on those tasks having the most impact, both positively and negatively, on the target customer experience and competitive differentiation.

For example, in a check out process, a positive experience of a stay could be totally undermined by a cashier who does not look up from the computer, acknowledge the customer, and comes across as rude or insincere to the customer. The cashier might not realize that her or his behavior would cause such damage but the perception by the customer is the reality. Therefore, it is important to break down tasks into a sequence of steps. For each step, set a standard of performance that is clear and well defined. In 2001-2002, the general manager and division heads sat together for numerous hours to jointly review the standards, agree to “one version of the truth” and to take out the element of assumption. This was a very painstaking and laborious task. Nevertheless, by doing so, standards of performance were formally approved. The management team could have complete confidence in their operating standards.

The appointed training team needs to conduct a training needs analysis to identify prioritized training needs. Task lists of identified positions need to be compiled following the approved template, formats and designs. Training materials need to be prepared, rehearsed and endorsed by the management team. Meanwhile, a learning management system must be well thought out to provide a secure and accessible storage of all published training materials for trainers and trainees. Control mechanism must be in place to restrict any unauthorized editing.

Communicating Phase

Once the vision, mission and unique selling points are agreed and endorsed by the management team, it is critical to present to the hotel employees. A dynamic marketing campaign needs to be launched to:

- a. Explain why the vision, mission and unique selling points are so important.
- b. Present targeted customer segments.

- c. Define what role each manager and employee plays in meeting the customers' expectations.

Some employees might use slang names such as “small potato” and “little peanut” to define what they consider to be their insignificant role within the organization. It is the goal of the marketing campaign to remind employees that these “items” are eaten and do not have a role in service. Employees need to be reassured that each team member plays an integral role in excellent customer service delivery. There are marketing communications managers, public relations managers, and public relations agencies focused on sending consistent and positive brand messages to our external customers. Likewise, it is essential a clear communication be established to get every internal customer on the same page. The more familiar each is with the game plan, the higher the scoring potential is.

Fitzgerald (2004) indicated that pressure on guest satisfaction, revenue per available room and average daily rate, a company's survival would depend on the ability to make those employees true brand ambassadors. It would be critical that the entire organization was part of an internal branding effort. Management should take the time to communicate and keep employees informed about how the business performed and where challenges were foreseen. Communication is the key to success.

To get the training academy off to the right start, we need to launch a marketing campaign to communicate the vision, mission and the key milestones of a training academy. The needs and benefits of a training academy to the hotel and to each employee need to be presented to the general employees and department heads. By this time, the training prospectus would be ready for distribution. The training room and facilities would be open to the faculty members and fellow employees. Departmental tutors and professors should be introduced in the campaign. It is essential that messages communicated in the open forum need to be appealing, precise and easy to understand.

Educating Phase

Building a service excellence culture in a hotel takes careful planning, teamwork, efforts, and attention to details. It is a comprehensive “total hotel” initiative. Prior to 2001, the training operation was lack of focus, effectiveness, and resources. It was agreed at the management strategic workshop that resources in terms of people, time and money had to be invested so as to prepare and develop the right tools. Based on the hotel vision and mission, a training academy was established. A hotel school was born within a hotel property.

At the training academy, every employee would be given the opportunity to learn, develop and grow within their department, the hotel and company. A training academy team, comprising of core and supporting members, needs to be recruited. The curriculum included in the training academy prospectus is designed to include core and elective training. The approved guest service standards of performance described previously become the heart and soul of the training academy’s syllabus. There is a focus on providing highly relevant training delivered in a fun, relaxed, supportive atmosphere. An employees training progress is recorded in a dedicated training academy intranet. The employees can access the intranet and view required and available courses. He or she can take the initiative to enrol and track his/her personal development. The employee receives certificates of merit for key courses as they progress. Overall, the training academy is an educational tool, totally committed to the development of all employees endeavouring to maximise both their skills and job satisfaction. This establishment directly supports the hotel’s overall objective of providing consistently high levels of service to all guests.

Auditing Phase

Return of investment is of paramount importance to any venture. While it is critical to actively solicit guest feedback, it is more important to act on the feedback to further improve the service delivery. Discussion at the departmental morning briefing would shift from

merely talking about yesterday's historical figures to sharing customer feedback received and how the feedback could be used to correct problems and take better care of these customers to be serviced today. The comments from the customers would often reveal the finer details of the standards or service deficiency. If these comments are taken constructively, shortfalls in service could be resolved. Good service would subsequently bring repeat customers, motivate employees and increase revenue.

Consistent excellent service is the means to achieving many ends. It would reinforce quality assurance, reputation, repeat patronage, brand credibility and ultimately profit maximization. At the training academy, it is critical to develop an ongoing procedure for reviewing, editing and updating training material and prospectus to ensure they are up to date. As a guardian of the brand and hotel standards, the training academy team must take an active role as a business partner in interpreting each consumer audit report, listing areas for improvement and identifying training needs to rectify the concerns. The results of the consumer audits would be a reflection of how well the training academy performs.

Results

The training academy will celebrate its 5th anniversary in June 2006. On 29 – 30 September 2005, the vice president of human resources, vice president of operations of Hyatt International as well as the dean of the training academy launched the first training academy workshop at the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong on 29-30 September 2005. This was a significant achievement of the Hong Kong team. The objective was to introduce the training philosophy and share the best practices with other directors of human resources and training managers at other Hyatt hotels in Asia Pacific. After this workshop, it was likely the workshop will be rolled out in other parts of the world to make the training academy a standard in all other hotels.

In an ongoing exercise to ensure the academy is on the right track, the dean and the director of human resources has consolidated the following priorities in the last quarter of 2005:

- a. Develop a departmental orientation program prototype for all divisions.
- b. Edit training academy prospectus.
- c. Incorporate updated hotel vision, mission, and unique selling points into relevant training materials, e.g. hotel orientation, service excellence.
- d. Re-launch a gold award for all new hires who complete their personal syllabus.
- e. Review, edit and simplify task lists for employees in food and beverage, spa and rooms divisions.
- f. Increase number of departmental tutors.
- g. Compile 2006 annual training plans for all specialists training.
- h. Re-launch library, i.e. replace old books with new reference materials.
- i. Phased approach to re-designing existing training materials and handouts to more attractive and simplified format.
- j. Revise training materials to be stored on central drive in PDF format with access levels confined to respective division.
- k. Develop recognition program for departmental tutors.
- l. Introduce a quarterly meeting for departmental tutors from specialists departments.
- m. Track training activities to target areas of concerns from the recent consumer audit results

On October 17, 2005, the general manager called upon a board of directors among the selected division heads to ensure the training academy continues to meet the needs of the

changing business demands and brands delivery. Monthly board meetings will be scheduled to keep track of the training priorities and action plans. The board of directors includes the following executive committee members:

- a. dean,
- b. director of human resources,
- c. assistant manager – training academy,
- d. general manager,
- e. resident manager,
- f. director of rooms,
- g. director of food and beverage,
- h. director of spa, and
- i. director of events.

Conclusion

Hyatt believes that people are the principle asset and key to success. It aims to continually acknowledge and enhance peoples' capabilities to ensure a positive experience for employees, guests and owners. Since the establishment of the training academy, a training culture has been increasingly evident at the hotel. The academy demonstrates the long-term commitment to personal and professional development of the employees. The professionally packaged training academy prospectus and the academic standing marked an important marketing brand in training to each new employee. The academy has become an integral part of a hotel operation with the training specialists being the business partners of the divisional heads.

While the objective is to equip employees to provide customers a consistent level of excellent experience, the academy also reinforces recognition, retention, and development of employees. Despite the opening of the Four Seasons Hong Kong, Landmark Mandarin

Oriental and the Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel in recent months in 2005, the year-to-date employee turnover rate dropped from 15.95% in September 2004 to 14.55% in 2005.

Employees look for more opportunities for professional development, become more diverse, and expect more flexibility and support in the workplace. There will be increased awareness of the value of human capital and the challenges associated with competency building and the need to develop the capacity and expertise of the current workforce.

As human resource management is reshaped, the training academy will move forward to manage and retain the best people to meet mission-critical needs and develop the core competencies essential to effective leadership culture. To this end, it becomes increasingly important to ensure that the employees have the skills necessary to meet these challenges. The academy will continue to evolve in responding to the changing global market, advanced technology, increased emphasis on business results, and rising expectations of customer service. It will continue to demand astute self-authorizing leadership with courage, vision, and discipline to manage change among its people and business to meet its many new challenges.

Compelling Vision

As the first step in the formal strategic planning process, it is imperative that vision must be sought, developed, evaluated, and communicated in order to motivate the people to their highest level of excellence. A vision provides a general framework of future direction that will guide and unite our efforts towards excellence. It should not be built upon existing resources but onto extended boundary. As such, an annual strategic workshop to review the vision, mission, and goals to infuse direction and to identify any compelling reasons for change should be held among the training specialists, executive committee and manager level in the hotel.

Learning Culture

A learning organization is defined as an organization that facilitates the learning of all its members and transforms itself (Kotelnikov, 2005). In a learning culture, people take responsibility and support one another (Maccoby, 2003). They share experience and learn from mistakes as well as successes. Good ideas are heard, acted on and rewarded. A learning culture can only be developed from the top of the organization. If supervisors are themselves afraid of being punished for mistakes, if they fear giving their boss bad news, if their roles are unclear and they are confused about organizational purpose, then their ability to develop teamwork will be crippled.

Leadership and Direction

Learning culture starts at the top of the firm. The success of the training academy depends on leadership and commitment from the management. Without the commitment of the general manager and the division heads, it is difficult, if not impossible, to build a training and learning Culture. Business and training partners must “talk the talk” and “walk the walk” to ensure the future success of the firm. It is important that the senior executives take part in the training activities to ensure trainees have a "real world" education as well as a theoretical understanding of the business. For instance, having the director of human resources, resident manager or the food and beverage manager involved in conducting the core training programs such as the hotel orientation workshop and leadership training sends a strong signal to employees the training emphasis in the organization.

Communication

Training entails communication, commitment, and cooperation. Training specialists and departmental tutors must be given the support, the tools and the empowerment to take risks and initiate actions in a process that is based on continuous evaluation, reinvention and realignment of goals. Excellence entails good communication, cooperation, high expectations,

risk, and trust. Periodic review of the training materials among the business partners is critical to ensure they meet the brand standards and address the service deficiency issues. Training materials, like policies and procedures, may have a limited shelf life. Only by designing a review process and making a commitment to continuous updates can an internal brand keep making a lasting organizational impact. Design a review process for the training efforts should include as many levels and departments as possible. By taking a 360-degree view, the academy makes the necessary adjustments to keep the training activities relevant.

Recognition

Department tutors are the core trainers in the operation. They must be given the guidance, support, and recognition to keep them motivated to carry out the roles and responsibilities. Recognition program needs to be in place to reinforce teamwork and learning together.

Performance

According to www.hyatt.com in October 2005, there are 213 Hyatt hotels and resorts (over 90,000 rooms) in 44 countries around the world, operating under the Hyatt®, Hyatt Regency®, Grand Hyatt® and Park Hyatt® brands. Currently, there are an additional 29 Hyatt hotels and resorts under development, including 10 new hotels in China. As Hyatt continues to grow and expand with new hotels worldwide at a rapid rate, it is critical to effectively recruit and train individuals to be future leaders in all areas of Hyatt management. There must be an ongoing investment in – and commitment to – effective training at all levels. Training not only ensures that our employees attain the desired standards of attitude, skill and knowledge; it also helps them identify strongly with the company's values and goals. Training outcomes must align with and improve business processes for the organizations they serve. Ultimately, the training academy needs to provide training evaluation tools to verify that the training programs meet the organizational needs.

Recommendations

Based on the development and the results of the training academy at the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong, the followings are recommended for implementation of a training academy:

- a. Follow the five-phase approach in setting up the training academy.
- b. Make an objective assessment of organizational and training needs. For any hotels to adopt the training academy approach, it must conduct an accurate assessment of where the hotel and employees are today and where the firm wants to go in the future. Without an analysis, it will be difficult for the firm to prioritize initiatives and focus resources on those priorities.
- c. Training specialists should work with the management team to formulate the hotel vision and mission statement for improved internal communication and direct marketing efforts.
- d. Develop strategies with the business partners to retain, recognize, motivate and develop employees.
- e. Attain performance excellence through organizational development, improved internal communication, and customer service training.
- f. Evaluate and invest in training tools to ensure they are user friendly to meet the needs of the e-learning trends and provide a dynamic learning environment.
- g. Develop and facilitate customized training programs, seminars, workshops and employee communication sessions.
- h. Develop and recognize departmental tutors.
- i. Focus on customer needs and expectations. Adopt an integrative approach and help achieve marketing and business objectives.

- j. Update and evaluate training materials and programs on a regular basis to ensure they meet current and projected business needs and address service consistency gaps.

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Appendix A
Grand Hyatt Hong Kong
Human Resources Organizational Chart



Appendix B

Grand Hyatt Hong Kong

Training academy Physical Layout

