

Interviewing for Customer Service Attitude

Since the year 2000, Delta Winnipeg has implemented an interview process to help find new employees with the right customer service attitude. The interview, however, is only the start of the systematic approach by the hotel to hire, train, and retain quality employees.

“We have a very thorough process to recruit,” explains Helen Halliday, General Manager, at Delta Winnipeg. “It starts with verifying the information on resumé’s, particularly the candidate’s experience, and then recommending a maximum of three people for a short list.”

The relevant department manager interviews the short-listed candidates and then recommends the top candidate for an interview by the manager’s superior. A set of interview questions are used for specific positions to ensure a fair comparison among candidates.

Anyone being hired for ‘front of house’ also is interviewed by the general manager since they really are the first contact and present ‘personality’ of the hotel. Having interviews conducted by three or more management helps sift through the candidates and identify those people who are most likely to meet the hotel’s standards for not only the position the candidate is applying for but for other career opportunities within the hotel as well. The process may seem to involve many hotel employees but it can save time in the end from having to re-conduct interviews if the wrong person is hired.

The candidate’s references are checked as well, with a focus on confirming whether the candidate’s declared competencies were demonstrated in the person’s performance elsewhere.

“We also use a Gallup Pre-Employment Assessment Interview for approximately an hour. It is designed to provide managers with more information about a candidate’s strengths and talents” says Halliday. “This helps develop a profile of the person for selection, development and promotion decisions.”

Once hired, a new employee receives ongoing monitoring for customer service attitude and competencies. The hotel works hard to help ensure the person succeeds. The first day on the job is an orientation day. Employees receive a package with job-specific and more general information, including checklists to help the employee know the focus of their job, company expectations, and where to obtain support. Within two weeks, more in-depth training is held for specific departments.

Managers mark off a checklist when they complete training components for new employees and submit this to the People Resources department. Halliday and People Resources also conducts informal assessments by talking to new employees to ask them how they are doing and if they need any additional support.

“These check-lists help us train, coach, and assess the individual,” continues Halliday, “to see if there are areas we need to work in coaching the person to help them do extremely well in their job.”

The ‘formal’ coaching period continues for the first three months, which is the probation period.

As an overall corporate 'checklist,' Delta Winnipeg also have a four hour hotel orientation program and two Employee Service Guarantees. The first is a commitment to conduct an annual performance review and the second is to provide 12 hours of training every year. An employee will be given one week's pay for each of these if the guarantee is not met.

"We want to be honest at the start about what the job is and our expectations to make sure the new person understands the position and really want to work at Delta Winnipeg because we will be investing time and energy in training," Halliday says.