

Manager Has to Go

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A very successful businessman decided it was time to make his foray into the hotel business and purchased a renovated property in an urban area. Eight months later he was barely keeping the doors open due to low occupancy and poor guest service scores. He hired me to help him figure out the problem and fix it.

My normal M.O. in such cases is to make a trip or two to the hotel before any of the staff knows who I am. That way I am free to poke around and ask seemingly innocent questions that eventually guide us to the crux of the matter. While I usually pick up a few leads that I can further investigate once I am on the inside, this particular trip revealed the major problem, and left no doubt in my mind that the manager is missing in action.

The Guest Services Representative had numerous piercings in her ears (this is a \$200 per night hotel) and she ignored me for about one minute while she finished a personal phone call. She then asked rather blandly if she could help me. When I asked to see a room, she told me that they were not supposed to let people look at the rooms before they paid, required that I leave my drivers license with her until I returned and then told me to be quiet as I slipped past the managers office on my way to the elevator (so she would not get caught). She was treating a prospective customer for a high priced hotel like a vagabond loitering at the No-Tell Motel. Later, when I asked her to see a meeting room, she told me it was "not her department".

No rocket science here. The manager has to go. I have always been a firm believer that you can judge the competence of a manager by the service level of the staff. Who knows why the employee said what she did, but the manager was obviously cooped up in his office and the staff knew not to bother him.

Your staff is only as good as the expectation levels you set, the training you give them and the daily feedback that guides them towards the company goals. I represented myself as someone who should have warranted a property tour from a sales associate; explaining the benefits of staying in that hotel. Instead, I was treated as an annoyance.

While business success is not necessarily easy to come by, it is very simple when you analyze the basics. Treat your prospects like customers and your customers like the boss (which they are). Management is not for wimps. It is hard. But if you stay focused on the basics and keep an eye on the customer, you can be successful in any market.