Hotel Customer Service Policies

Introduction

The contemporary world is riddled with constant changes on methodologies for operation and management of businesses in a bid to drive profits, sales, revenues, and customer traffic. The latter is the core factor for the success of any business since regardless of a business’ capacity to provide unique and quality products, customer traffic will determine the business overall success. Consequently, companies have changed their modus operandi and strategies to integrate customer service as one of the prime drivers and pillars for the success of the business. According to a research carried out, it was identified that if a person was given quality customer service they would in effect tell an average of 9 or 10 people, but for poor customer service, this person would tell an average of at least 20 people (Yang, 2010, 33).

In the hotel industry, the integration of customer service policies has become an integral aspect in determining the modus operandi and direct care by employees. These policies are crafted to deal with all aspects of a customer’s needs such as accommodation, bookings, foods and beverages, as well as other amenities and facilities being offered by the hotel. In retrospect, major hotels have instigated strict policies that define code of conduct for employees when dealing with customers, and where performance outcomes are lacking, the hotels have provided intensive education and training programs for the employees. Feedback from customers is one strategies being used by the hotels to assess their quality of service and customer experience and make the necessary changes. For instance, the Britannia group of hotels in the UK has been ranked as one of the worst hotels in the UK for years running. Based on this feedback from hotel experts and customers, the hotel group has instigated measures aimed at changing their modus operandi and customer service policies to improve brand image and customer loyalty.

Reasons for Using Customer Service Policies

In the assessment of this issue, focus will be placed on the Marriott group of hotels. Their customer service polices are ingrained into the company’s core functionality. It focuses on issues related to quality service, fair user policy, affordability, legal representation, reservations, and privacy protection. This analogy is also represented by the Intercontinental Group of Hotels that employ almost similar policies, but with varying methodologies of their application. The assessment of customer service polices for the Marriott Group of hotels is important since it has a global presence and hence its service has to be aligned across all its branches globally in a manner that promotes a good brand equity, loyalty, and experience.

## Cost Effectiveness

Poor customer service always results in increased complaints, refunds, and in some instances can result in lawsuits. Further, it could result in some employees being terminated, and the hotel having to begin the hiring and recruitment process that are expensive and time consuming (Steurer, Langer, Konrad, and Martinuzzi, 2005, 272). Therefore, by integrating a sound and effective customer service policy, the hotel can evade these extraneous costs and increase their revenue base.

## Revenue and Profit Generation

Research shows that as long as a customer is given quality service, they are likely to pay at least 10% more. Further, it provides good customer reviews, experience, and loyalty. All these are paramount to ensuring that customers return to the same hotels every time and this maintains a constant stream of customers, revenues, and profits. During instances of economic recessions or off peak tourism, these hotels with quality customer service policies always have a constant stream of customers. The Marriott group of hotels has created global brand equity due to a constant provision of quality customer service over a long time span. This has ensured that the hotels have maintained a constant revenue and profit over the years.

## Brand Equity and Loyalty

A good customer service policy is structured to ensure that customers are treated equitably, fairly, and with care. A constant delivery of such a system of quality products and service is important for creating strong brand equity (Garvare and Johansson, 2010, 738). This strategy has been used by Apple for creating high sales and profits for the company. According to global estimates, Apple is considered to have the strongest brand equity valued at $79 billion in 2013. Apple, like Marriott, have invested in market segmentation and creating customer service policies based on the needs of their select target customers. This creates loyalty and brand experience in the right target market.

Quality Work Environment

A quality work environment is essential in creating a happy and productive work force. This translates to better work output when dealing with customers since the employees are stress free and able to perform their duties unsupervised, unabated, and productively. A favorable work environment is also essential in promoting teamwork and sharing of ideas geared towards improving customer service. For instance, at Marriott, the customer service policy has fair treatment of workers without prejudice, human rights dignity promotion, employment benefits, health, safety, and security, and career advancement for employees based on work output (Marriott business conduct guide, 2013, 35).

Purpose of Evaluating a Customer Service Policy

Assessment of customer service policies is essential to ensure that the programs, systems, and strategies being employed by the company meet their required objectives (Best Western, 2012). This is important since a poor customer service policy would result in poor business results and would affect customer traffic, revenues, brand equity, and employee work output. Therefore, to avert this issue, the Marriott Group of Hotels undertakes regular customer service evaluations reports and assessments. These are based on customer feedback, management performance, and employee performance and suggestions. In this evaluation, the major purpose is to improve service delivery and address all customer and employee needs.

Some of the strategies being utilized to assess customer service policies are such as MCM (Mystery Customer Measurement) or MCS (Mystery Customer Standard), SAS (Serious about Service), and MS (Mystery Shopper). They assess customer reviews, company operations, management capacities, and employee output and link them to the required service policy, which in this instance are customer service policies.

# How Can This Assist Future Staff Training And Development?

## Better Program Implementation and Structuring

Due to the evaluation of the customer service policies, one can identify the areas that relate to employee performance that may affect on customer service outcomes. In this effect, the training program can be integrated to enable the employees develop the necessary skills and knowledge that are in line with current standards. Therefore, using evaluation of the customer service policies, it is possible to assess the viability, usefulness, and practicality of some training programs. If adequate measures are taken by the organization, they can evaluate the areas where the training programs do not seem to be developing the necessary results.

In this context, by evaluating the training programs, it is possible for the company to identify areas acting as impediments to the programs becoming successful within the organization. Therefore, it is possible to improve on this issue acting as an impediment and generates better strategies for ensuring that the training programs are useful to not only the employees, but also the organization and customer service requirements (Hamilton, 2009, 574). Additionally, the evaluation can be useful in promoting a system that ensures that the training program meets the necessary criteria set by the organization during its implementation.

## Positive and Productive Work Environments

Using the customer service policy, it is possible for the organization to create a positive work environment that allows all employees to be productive due to the creation of an enabling work environment. For instance, the customer service policy advocates for the management to change their style to embody a system of coaching and positive feedback for the employees when their performance is deemed as insufficient or optimal, respectively. According to management theories, employees tend to act or mimic the actions of their leaders, and since the leaders are promoting the contents of the quality customer service policies, it is possible for the employees to have better work qualities (Marriott business conduct guide, 2013, 13). Further, it could act as a system of unconscious training of the employees in developing quality behaviors and actions that are essential in providing good customer service. According to research, the development of these skills is referred as the acquisition of soft skills, which are essential to any organization, but are not provided under their education and training programs.

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