



UNIT-5

Interpersonal Skills

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Understand why every guest is also your 'boss' as a hotel receptionist
- ✓ Discuss the importance of acknowledging that no two customers are the same
- ✓ Work comfortably and confidently with colleagues, irrespective of personal differences

Unit 5

Interpersonal Skills

This unit will discuss the way in which you interact with other people in 2 separate categories – Colleagues and Guests.

Colleagues

When you work with people and work within a team, you sometimes find it hard at first to ‘fit in’. This can be daunting and frightening to some; however you need to remember that everyone has been through the same experience when they first started

You may find that there are people in your team or hotel that you get on with better than others; this is perfectly natural – human nature is not designed to suit everyone, and each person has their own personality and preferences.

You must remember above all, to remain professional at all times. How you feel towards someone can be interpreted fairly easily from your vocal tone, mannerisms, body language and what you actually say.

Let’s take a look at a fairly common statement that you may hear (say this in your head):

“Can you enter this reservation for me please?”

Normally, people will react with an ‘affirmative’ (positive) response, but surely your response depends on how something has been stated to you in the first place?

Think about where the tone and emphasis is placed in the sentence if the emphasis was on “can”, how would it make you feel? Probably you would feel as though your ability is being questioned as the emphasis is on whether or not you are able to do the task.

Now how about if the emphasis was on “you”? This may make you feel more important and trusted as the emphasis is about you personally completing the task.

What if the emphasis was on “please”? Depending on the tone, you may feel belittled by the request, or that the person requesting the task is pleading with you.

This is not definitive, it is to help you realise just how important it is to place the emphasis correctly within sentences to avoid making requests or statements that could be misinterpreted. Let’s take a look at how others can interpret what you say....

How would you feel if someone said that you were rude to them? Would you think you were rude to them? Even though you were as nice as possible to them?

Let's take a statement and look at how it could be interpreted:

"Unfortunately, I can't do that because I will not have the time"

If this was said as nicely as possible and in as fair a manner as possible how could it be rude? The truth is that regardless of how you say something, or how it was intended, if the person you are saying it to perceives the statement as rude, then it *is* rude.

Sound strange? How could something not intended as rude, *be* rude? The answer is simple, as the resulting effect does not stem from intent or delivery; it is caused by the interpretation by the recipient.

So how can we stop ourselves from being misinterpreted? There is no 'magic bullet'; you have to rely on the entire set-up of the conversation. You need to ensure that when you are declining a request or saying something that *potentially* could be construed as negative (e.g. "I can't do that" or "Unfortunately, that is not possible") you must ensure that you do not emphasise the 'negative' word in the sentence (such as those underlined).

Key Note:

Above all else, you must be professional with your colleagues. This means that, even if you do not like someone you work with, you must still acknowledge them, work with them and co-operate with them. Failing to do so will cause more friction than is necessary. If you have a genuine complaint about someone's behaviour, this should be brought to the attention of your manager and examples provided so that this may be dealt with professionally.

You should also extend your professionalism to those colleagues who are your friends outside of work. Whilst it is encouraged to enjoy yourself at work, you should always be aware that guests could be within earshot of your conversation (and usually they will not be too interested in what you did last night), so where possible, keep it professional! This also helps to reduce conflicts in work because of incidents that happen outside of work (imagine the atmosphere if you fell out as friends then had to work a shift together – keeping it professional inside work will reduce tension).

Finally, and this is common sense but sometimes people need reminding – NEVER swear at a colleague or use nicknames for colleagues whilst in areas that guests can access or hear you.

Guests

A lot of this section will be common sense, but this will help you in understanding guest interaction and how to deal with the majority of clientele:

1. Each guest is unique

No two guests are the same, even if they are twins! Everyone differs in how they interact with you, other guests and the hotel as a whole and you should never try to treat 2 guests as the same – doing so will make the guest feel undervalued and unappreciated.

You may have had previous training that says you should always greet a guest with 'Hello, welcome to Hotel A' or similar and this phrase is fine for the first time guest, but begins to wear thin for long term or regular guests.

To put this in to context, think about something that annoys a lot of people – automated telephone menu systems! What happens when you hear the menu? Do you switch off or listen intently just to realise that the option you needed was the first one that was given? You either know what is going to be said, or you have listened to what seems like irrelevant information and wasted your time. That is how a guest may feel if they have stayed in hotels regularly, which renders your speech redundant and in turn can be just plain annoying to the guest!

2. Every guest has the right to have high expectations of you

We have all met them – the people who 'look down on you' or who expect you to do everything and 'spoon-feed' them.

Sometimes you may find guests condescending, or downright rude, so what do you do about it? The answer is simple....nothing! Remain non-reactive to the situation. By doing so you will not give away any signals to an aggressive or emotive person that could be misread or misinterpreted, by being calm and responding in a polite way, you are less likely to become emotionally guarded or aggressive to the guest, and the guest is more likely to become politer towards you – so here is a first golden nugget to remember: Behaviour Breeds behaviour! If you are aggressive to a guest, they will be aggressive in response; if you are friendly and helpful to a guest, they will (usually) be the same in return.

No matter how frustrating, or obnoxious you may find a guest, you should never let them know this is how you feel about them, neither should you openly discuss their behaviour in public areas.

3. Every guest has the right to complain

No matter how trivial, a guest will complain because they feel it is necessary to do so.

All you need to remember is, despite how you may feel, every guest has the basic right to complain about elements of their stay.

4. Each guest is your boss

This may seem confusing; surely your manager is your boss? Not strictly true – your manager delegates roles and tasks to you, but it is the guest who actually dictates the majority of your role. Sometimes guests may seemingly ‘overstep the mark’ and become extremely bossy or blunt towards you, sometimes they will be your best friend, but they are ‘master and commander’ of you for their stay.

To summarise these points:

Every guest is unique, has high expectations as your boss and has the right to tell you if they are unhappy!

Further Reading:

- ✓ *Elizabeth Arnold, (1989), Interpersonal Relationships.*