

Student Learning Log

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The Conference and banquet operation at Highcliff Marriott Hotel Bournemouth is of utmost importance, since it caters to a wide range of events, including intimate weddings and huge corporate meetings (O'Fallon and Rutherford, 2010). During my time in the department, I followed Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, which emphasises the need of reflecting on events to gain insights and learn (Kolb, 2015; Bell & Bell, 2020).

With specific learning goals in mind, I started my placement at the department with the intention of gaining operational skills in this extremely active division. Additionally, these objectives placed equal importance on enhancing skills such as proficient communication, effective team-building, efficient task management, and personal skill development. These abilities are crucial for achieving success in any industry (A Good Practice Guide for Placement and Other Work-based Learning Opportunities in Higher Education – Good Practice for Placements Guides – Volume 2, 2010; Salmon and Jones, 2004).

Upon entering the room, you carefully observe the environment and meticulously examine the particulars. Identify any things that are not in their proper place and adjust their positioning accordingly. When the client arrives, it is important to pay careful attention to every small aspect (J Christopher Holloway, 2004).

For instance, before the commencement of the meeting, the customer arrived and immediately sought out the kettle to procure hot water. A minor intricacy that distinguishes one thing from another. While associates may consider it a minor element that might easily be overlooked, it holds significant importance for the client (Morrison, 2022). The client promptly expressed his appreciation for having immediate access to hot water, avoiding the need to wait till the issue was resolved (Behara & Gundersen, 2001).

It is essential to anticipate unexpected events and possess the ability to make spontaneous decisions. The organisation successfully and promptly carried out all obligations for this client in a client-focused celebration event (Taylor and Woodhams, 2013). Nevertheless, a guest who was late arrived precisely at the moment when it was time to serve the dessert to the client's guests. She was exhausted after her journey from the northern portion of the country, feeling hungry, and showing clear signs of anxiety. She is requesting nourishment in the shape of food and a cup of coffee. Instead of presenting her with a limited choice, it was decided to provide her a whole menu, beginning with appetisers, followed by the main meal, and concluding

with dessert. Her emotional state underwent a significant shift, and she conveyed appreciation for the favourable transformation, expressing a sense of joy and heightened energy (Salomon & Perkins, 1998).

The supervisor's routine commences upon arrival at work. Generate invoices for completed events, arrange event spaces for the following day, and verify the readiness of all aspects for ongoing events (Hudson, 2015). Coordinate the team and divide it based on the respective events. Once our more experienced associates are involved, the team will be able to autonomously handle the situation upon receiving the necessary information (Emmett, 2011).

To effectively mentor inexperienced associates, it is crucial for the supervisor to be present, provide comprehensive guidance, and closely supervise the execution of the assignment (Smith et. al 2012). The supervisors are accountable for overseeing the training activities conducted in the workplace. They can offer advice on Moving and Handling, COSSH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health), Alcohol, Allergies, PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), and the team (Safety and Health Regulations, 2016).

Mariott International consistently provides avenues for associates to advance their careers, including an apprenticeship programme called Voyager (Voyage EMEA, n.d.). The associates must possess the capacity to transfer from one site to another, spanning the entire country. The programme allows associates to step in temporarily for various operational areas as required (Cascio, 1997). Upon programme completion, the associates will be fully prepared to assume roles of responsibility (Balain and Sparrow, 2009).

Throughout my placement, I came to understand the significance of possessing technical expertise and practical skills to achieve success (Berridge, 2007). Event management extends beyond the mere establishment of venues and encompasses a comprehensive grasp of consumer expectations, proficient utilisation of equipment and technology, and the creation of a suitable environment. Proficiency in workplace skills is just as essential as technical expertise, as effective communication plays a critical role in client comprehension and seamless internal collaboration (Jones and Robinson, 2012). Developing effective teamwork is crucial for ensuring the seamless delivery of services. Both technical and workplace skills are necessary for a prosperous event (Allan, 2007).

The skillful practice of efficient job management introduced concrete organisation and optimisation in the otherwise disorderly and rapidly moving setting inherent to this department. The department's operational efficiency can be enhanced by effectively prioritising responsibilities, setting realistic deadlines, and allocating resources appropriately (Mackenzie and Nickerson, 2009). An equally noteworthy aspect was the significance of human skills in differentiating an extraordinary event planner from an average one. The crucial abilities of empathy, patience, adaptability, and resilience have the potential to significantly impact the experiences of both clients and the team, underscoring their utmost significance (Allen, Harris, & Jago, 2022)

Understaffing during peak periods, in accordance with Herzberg's two-factor theory, can have a substantial impact on employee motivation and job satisfaction. One possible option is to implement a data-driven, strategic scheduling method that coincides with peak operating periods. This will help optimise operational efficiency and enhance the overall quality of work (Herzberg, 1959).

Upon reflection, this event, in addition to my prior industry encounters, emphasised that competencies such as effective communication, teamwork, task management, and personal talents are not solely theoretical concepts. These individuals are the primary factors responsible for effectively managing a department, especially one as complex as Conference and Banqueting. As a component of my future action plan, this experience has emphasised the crucial necessity for ongoing learning and growth. From keeping up with current industry trends to improving my problem-solving abilities, every action I take adds to my continuous progress within the hotel sector (Brownell, 2002).

Concluding this introspective journey, I acknowledge the significant worth that this process has granted me. It has not merely included taking a simple step back to assess the road taken, but it has offered an outstanding opportunity to engage in reflective learning. Engaging in this introspective activity has enabled me to comprehensively assess and comprehend my areas of proficiency and limitations (Bolton and Delderfield, 2018). The technique facilitated an increased level of self-awareness, enhancing comprehension of my strengths, while also emphasising areas that require additional growth. Reflecting on the past has enabled me to recognise and value my personal abilities. My proficiency in swiftly adjusting to a changing environment, proficiently interacting with team members and clients, and adeptly

managing tasks have all proven advantageous in the fast-paced conference and banquet operations. These strengths not only improved my performance but also benefited the general efficiency of the department. Conversely, the approach has also shown other areas that can be enhanced. This encompassed augmenting my technical expertise in the domain, effectively handling stress during periods of high demand, and cultivating more robust interpersonal connections. Identifying these domains is the initial stage in achieving personal and professional development. The confluence of my scholarly knowledge with practical experience was a profound epiphany. The coursework enabled the acquisition of a theoretical framework that established a strong basis for comprehending the operational requirements of Conference and Banqueting (Boud, Keogh and Walker, 2013). The combination of theoretical and practical knowledge improved my understanding of the field, allowing me to effectively oversee the department's operations. The practical application of ideas and principles in real-world situations highlighted the depth of my academic knowledge (Kolb, 2015). It brought intellectual learnings to life, such as the application of Fayol's principles of management in event organisation or the reflection of Maslow's hierarchy of needs in managing guest expectations. To summarise, the extensive engagement with both academic and practical parts of the industry has deeply impacted me, strengthening my belief in continuous learning throughout life. The process of contemplation aligns well with the attitude expressed by Confucius, who stated: "There are three ways to acquire wisdom: first, through reflection, which is the most noble; second, through imitation, which is the easiest; and third, through experience, which is the most bitter" (Confucius, 2023).

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