

Learning Log: Food and Beverage department of Ibis Wembley Hotel

Overview

Food and Beverage department of Ibis Wembley Hotel

Situated next to the famous Wembley stadium, the Ibis' restaurant and bar meet a wide variety of customers. They serve breakfast buffet style, while lunch and dinner are a la carte.

Learning objectives

My main learning objective for this placement was to gain the necessary knowledge and insights to manage Food and Beverage Operations effectively and to develop individual core service competencies and key skills required to meet required food and beverage service standards focusing upon task management, self-management, problem solving and communication. I also considered developing my professional network and establishing sustainable relationships during my placement important (Good Practice for Placements Guides, 2010).

Reflection

To structure my reflection, I utilized Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (1984).

Section 1: Reflection on Experience and Personal Development

Concrete experience

I was assigned the role of the waitress, which involved the basic roles such as, cleaning tables, collecting dishes, refilling the buffet, etc. I shadowed the F&B manager, Mr. Rogel, and observed him as he carried out his responsibilities of dealing with the needs of a stream of customers, managing the staff and making the many tactical decisions that are needed to ensure the delivery of an appropriate quality of service at an appropriate cost (Clark & Shulver, 2012). He was also in charge of making sure that the F&B department hit its revenue goals and therefore designed the operational strategies for making sure they were on track.

Reflective observation

It was imperative that I carry out the basic skills and work in the restaurant in order to understand the operational factors that I would need to consider as a manager to manage the department successfully. For example, some operational factors include the minimum ratio of waiters to guests, the amount of food required for a certain number of guests, and how to foster a healthy and positive work culture in order to control employee productivity in the department. This aligned with what Wood suggests in that it is increasingly challenging to maintain a strong revenue flow so that efficiencies of scale take place (2013).

Wood also states that is the duty of every food and beverage manager to maximize the revenue and profit potential (2013). I observed this in our conversations with Mr. Rogel about launching a new sharing platter for events and a kid's menu to be updated on trends and increase the likelihood of guest returns (Camille, 2024). He also showed me a ready-made cocktail tap he implemented to increase the efficiency of bar staff, especially on busy nights where events took place at the Wembley stadium, and I found this to be brilliant. This inspired me to think on the same creative note when I start managing.

I realised the importance of effective teamwork with the other waiters as we had to work as one body in taking initiative in refilling the buffet, the drinks, collecting dishes, etc. and we all supported each other. A positive workplace culture creates a workplace where employees can thrive, grow, and contribute positively to the organization's success (Radu, 2023).

Section 2: Critical Analysis of Work-Based Skills and Technical Knowledge

Abstract conceptualization

Work-based skills encompass a range of competencies essential for effective performance in the hospitality sector. According to Lashley and Morrison (2000), work-based skills encompass both technical competencies and soft skills, emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach to employee development. Technical competencies, such as proficiency in operating point-of-sale systems, knowledge of food safety regulations (such as the "3 Day Rule"), and menu engineering, are vital for executing operational tasks efficiently. These skills ensure smooth service delivery and contribute to overall guest satisfaction. However, technical skills alone may not suffice to exceed guest expectations or foster a positive work environment. Therefore,

it is imperative to complement technical competencies with soft skills, such as communication, problem-solving, and teamwork, which Herzberg's theory categorizes as motivators contributing to employee satisfaction and engagement (Lundberg et al., 2009). This aligns with the principles of service customisation advocated by Pine and Gilmore (2013) in their concept of the Experience Economy, wherein the creation of memorable experiences hinges on the ability to customize services to individual guest needs. service Ibis Wembley's restaurant has adoption of a street restaurant philosophy, where they advertise, have unique décor and ambiance, and the restaurant competes with local competition (such as the nearby Nandos) are all illustrations of the number of ways to revitalize hotel F&B suggested in Allen Hubusch's article (1966).

Active experimentation

Actively participating in team tasks and seeking feedback from experienced colleagues allowed me to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world scenarios. For example, During menu planning sessions and interaction with guests, I recognized the significance of technical knowledge menu engineering in enhancing guest satisfaction. Through my own online independent research and Q&A during my placement to gain a better understanding of menu engineering principles. For example, the placement of high-margin items and the use of descriptive language, staff could effectively upsell menu items, thereby maximizing revenue while providing guests with tailored dining experiences (Walter, 2021). Additionally, I applied communication theories, such as Grice's Maxims of Conversation, during guest interactions to ensure clarity and understanding (Spector, 2013).

This active experimentation facilitated the refinement of my skills and provided insights into the practical nuances of the industry.

Section 3: Reflection on Organisational Issues

Concrete Experience

I was initially given placement at a different branch of Ibis, which gave me the opportunity to notice one crucial organizational issue. This was the inconsistency in management of the food and beverage department across the different branches of Ibis. This leads to inconsistencies in qualities of service and therefore damaging the brand (Bin Latif, 2022). At the first hotel, the

F&B manager was only a surface-level one, and all the department (including F&B) was managed by one singular general manager.

Reflective Observation

This issue impacted the team's efficiency and quality of service since the manager's attention was distributed over many departments, decreasing the level of effective hands-on management, and hence, this negatively affects guest satisfaction. However, from the literature I have studied throughout my course, I know that this leads to a much bigger underlying issue – employee dissatisfaction. This issue snowballs into low employee retention rates which increases the labour size for the remaining employees (Ghani et al., 2022).

Addressing the first issue requires a standardisation of the management of branches of Ibis in order to present a united and consistent brand image, which ultimately leads to an increase in guest attraction to Ibis hotels and their success, both in terms of revenue and in terms of reputation.

Section 4: Future Action Plan

Abstract Conceptualization

My future action plan involves participating in additional training, seeking mentorship, and actively engaging in cross-functional tasks to improve work-based skills, technical knowledge, and address organizational issues.

Active Experimentation

Moving forward, I aim to integrate the insights gained from this experience into my future endeavours within the hospitality industry. I plan to further develop my technical skills, such as proficiency in inventory management systems and point-of-sale software, to enhance operational efficiency. Additionally, I will continue to refine my communication and interpersonal skills through ongoing practice and feedback, recognizing their pivotal role in delivering exceptional guest service. Continuous self-reflections, like this one, and feedback will contribute to enhancing my personal skills and strengthening my ability to learn from everyday experiences.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while I felt that all the managers at Ibis Wembley were doing a very good job, the lack of academic training was very evident, and I feel like that is where the importance of this course shines through. It makes me feel confident in being able to be part of bettering the next generation of hotel management. This placement has allowed me to gain a better understanding of the nuances I wouldn't be taught academically and the hands-on experience I would need as a start to a successful career in international hotel management.