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Part 2: Reflective Learning Log: Managing Guest Service Operations at Premier Inn London Hayes, Heathrow

Introduction

During my 10-week internship at the Premier Inn London Hayes, Heathrow (North A4020), I gained practical experience in customer service, issue resolution, and collaboration. A top budget hotel chain, Premier Inn is noted for its constant service standards and customer-centric approach (Whitbread PLC, 2023). It is a part of Whitbread PLC. This hotel has a constantly high occupancy rate because to its convenient location near Heathrow Airport, which is popular with both business travelers and families as well as tourists (Statista, 2023). In order to objectively examine my experiences and progress throughout the placement, this reflective journal follows Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (2014)—concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

Concrete Experience

While on placement, I assisted with day-to-day operations and shadowed supervisors in the areas of housekeeping, maintenance, and meetings and events. I ensured that Premier Inn's cleanliness standards—essential to guest happiness—were met by conducting room inspections as part of my housekeeping duties (Kasavana, 2017). The cleaning staff is under constant pressure to do their tasks quickly while yet maintaining excellent standards, due to the hotel's high occupancy rate of 82.2% (Statista, 2023). Dealing with a visitor who had severe allergies was a turning point; it required teamwork between cleaning and maintenance to create a hypoallergenic space. I learned more about providing individualised service to guests when I stepped up to the plate to arrange for extensive cleaning operations and customized bedding arrangements. The value of preventive maintenance and quick response systems was driven home to me in Maintenance. A major problem that needed fixing right away to keep guests from being unhappy was the air conditioning going out in a number of the premium rooms. Jones and Lockwood (1989) noted that the engineering team balanced the comfort of guests with operational efficiency by prioritizing work based on urgency. Quick thinking and problem-solving are crucial for sustaining high-quality service, as

this example demonstrated. The Meetings & Events division was the busiest and most stressful. I coordinated with corporate customers, helped set up meeting rooms, and made sure events ran well. An important takeaway was the need for rapid thinking, delegation, and clear communication in responding to a last-minute request to rearrange seating for 150 participants. The significance of working together as a team and being able to quickly adjust to changing circumstances was highlighted by this experience (Stutts, 2001).

Reflective Observation

Looking back, I see that giving excellent service to guests is more than just meeting their expectations; it also involves being proactive in identifying their needs and finding answers before they even know they have them. My takeaway from the housekeeping challenge is the importance of being empathetic and paying close attention to detail in order to ensure happy guests. The need of technical expertise, clear communication, and collaboration in maintaining efficient hotel operations was highlighted during the maintenance crisis. The event management challenge highlighted the importance of being well-organized and having the ability to solve problems quickly in a pressure-filled setting. Different departments also had different management methods, which I noticed. While Meetings & Events depended on a flexible, delegative paradigm that promoted individual decision-making, Housekeeping followed a rigorous, authoritative methodology that ensured operational efficiency. By comparing and contrasting the two, I was able to better grasp the ways in which various leadership styles affect the efficiency and enthusiasm of a team (Gibbs, 1988).

Abstract Conceptualization

By using Kolb's model to these introspections, I am able to discern the ways in which my knowledge of hospitality management was molded by hands-on experience. The chance to apply what I had learned in the classroom came with each new obstacle. While on my internship, I saw first how individualized attention increased client loyalty, a concept I had previously learned about in my hospitality classes (Stutts, 2001). Housekeeping and maintenance procedures were also improved by using operations management concepts including performance monitoring and resource allocation (Jones and Lockwood, 1989). In addition, the maintenance crisis was the

turning point when the idea of service recovery was made clear. Brand reputation might take a blow if complaints go unanswered for too long, but good customer service can make all the difference (Whitbread PLC, 2023). The importance of guest service techniques to a company's success was driven home by this hands-on experience.

Active Experimentation

I want to put everything I've learned here to use in my future profession by enhancing my abilities in leadership, communication, and problem-solving. My goal is to get better at proactively handling guest problems so that service can be quickly restored and customers are satisfied. In order to thrive in a variety of management contexts, I will also investigate the effects of various leadership styles on team output and morale. In addition, I want to educate myself more on the ins and outs of hotel operations technology, particularly automated guest service platforms and property management systems (PMS) (Kasavana, 2017). The growing importance of data-driven decisions motivates me to hone my analytical abilities so I can make meaningful contributions to efforts to improve hotel performance.

Conclusion

I gained invaluable experience in leadership development, operations coordination, and guest service management during my 10-week job at the Premier Inn London Hayes. By using Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, I was able to reflect on the ways in which my real-world experiences complemented my theoretical understanding, enhancing my understanding of methods for ensuring guests' happiness, resolving issues, and carrying out events. Working in a team, being flexible, and being proactive in service management were all skills I honed while handling a variety of challenges, such as maintaining housekeeping standards, handling maintenance problems, and performing high-pressure events. Going forward in my career in hospitality, I am determined to put these lessons to use, keep improving my abilities, and help create unforgettable experiences for guests.

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