Hotel Placement – Managing Food and Beverage Operations

Student Name: PELLITA FERNANDES

Student ID:1921695

BMIH6002

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Introduction

The Ritz-Carlton Food and Beverage (F&B) department is a central component of the luxury hospitality experience, and contributes a wide range of services, including fine dining establishments, banquet services, in-room dining, and premium bar experiences. Its high standards of service, culinary excellence, and attention to detail affirm that the guests receive world-class dining experiences suited to their tastes. Serving multiple outlets from fine dining, lounges, private, and large banquet events, the F&B department is diverse and fast-paced.

Placement Learning Objectives

- My learning objectives around working in F&B during my placement were:
- To get acquainted with the operational flow of luxury food and beverage service.
- To master lifesaving communication and team management skills on high volume, high pressure F&B.
- To learn more about POS systems, menu planning, and order management.
- To study and implement guest service recovery techniques of complaint and special requests handling.
- Actual service conditions to develop leadership and problem solving skills.

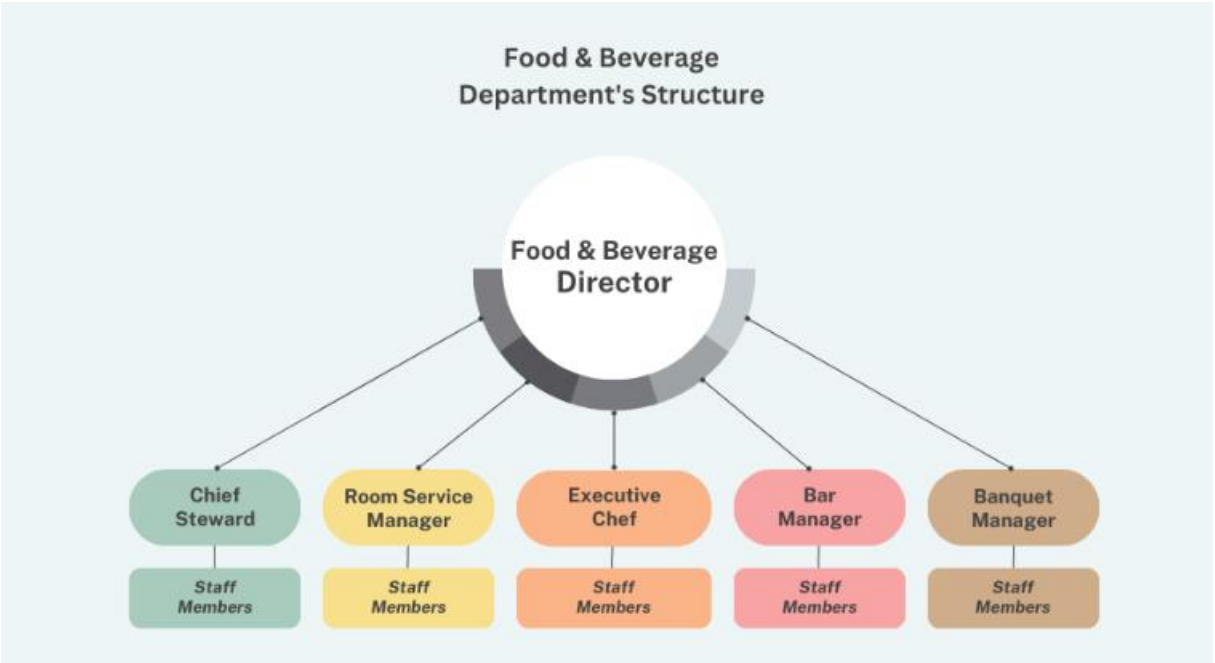

Image: The Food and Beverage (F&B) department Structure (RMC Asia, 2023)

Section 1: Reflection on Experience and Personal Development

Shadowing a Supervisory Role (Food and Beverage Department) at The Ritz-Carlton: My Reflection

I had a chance to do some shadowing in The Ritz-Carlton's F&B (Food and Beverage) department and learned that technical knowledge and work-based skills are essential in reaching the high guest service standards they strive for (Jones, 2021). Presenting my reflection, I used Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988) as my framework, highlighting communication, teamwork, task management, personal skills and guest service.

<u>Work-Based Skills and Technical Knowledge</u>

Description : Experience in the F&B Department

Not recently, but in a corporate banquet, I witnessed how the F&B supervisor organized staff, perfect flow of table service and real-time queries from guests (Rutherford et al., 2007). Utilizing POS (Point-of-Sale) systems and reservation management software effectively by the supervisor to facilitate service. One of the biggest challenges was when a VIP guest with dietary restrictions called demanding an immediate menu adjustment which had to be orchestrated on the spot by the kitchen and service teams.

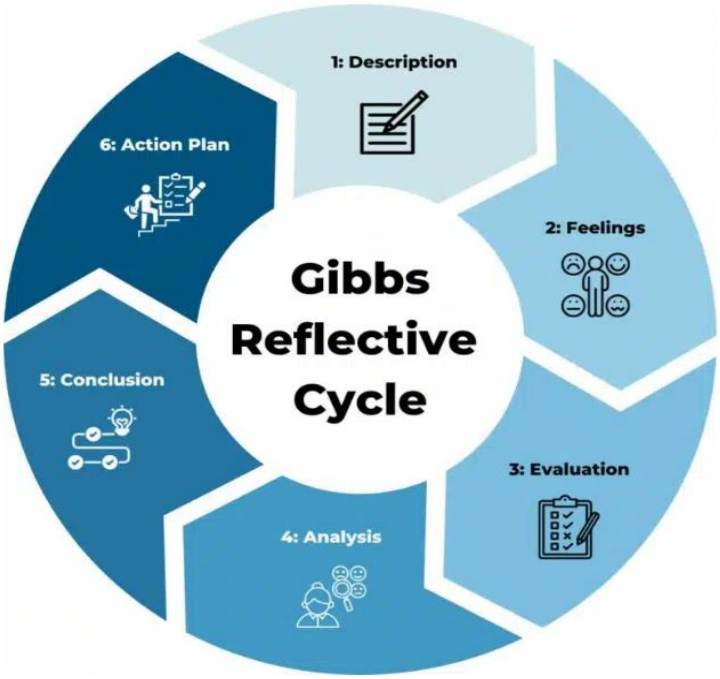

Image : Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (Channell, 2023)

Feelings : Personal Response

I was overwhelmed at first with the pace of how quickly decisions are made and how one context tends to bounce into the other, especially in a luxury environment (Walker, 2020). But with careful review of how the supervisor allocated duties and interacted with both employees and patrons, I built confidence in my understanding of how technical proficiency and people skills need to synchronize to deliver a seamless dining experience.

Assessment In The Field : Competencies

Communication and Teamwork : Systematic communications between front-of-house and back-of-house to ensure orders are fulfilled accurately and served on time.

Task Management :The use of pre-service briefings and digital systems to keep track of table assignments and meal pacing.

Service Recovery and Problem-Solving :After offering an optional selection to a VIP guest who was unhappy with his wine pairing, the supervisor came back around herself to ensure the guest was satisfied, which fits within Gronroos' Service Quality Model (1984) (Heathfield, 2021).

Discussion : Academic Learning & Industry Experience

Despite this experience, I would go on to see that my academic training as a hospitality operations specialist (level 5-6) would aid my growth in analyzing workflow efficiency and team dynamics. As Schön describes in his Reflection-in-Action, the supervisor was highly adaptative, responding to challenges in the moment, and Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle reminded me that I learned by going through observation to applying it directly (Rutherford et al., 2007).

Effect on Personal and Vocational Development

It was this experience that made me realize technical skills (POS little menus, planning, revenue management) need to be complimented by the attributes necessary for leadership and the guest experience. Moving forward, I plan to:

- Get certification in revenue management and digital hospitality software
- Receive just-in-time management training to build your leadership skills.

- Develop scenario-based training to help solidify strategies to resolve problems or redeem guests.

This placement has allowed me to hone my ability to administer high-end guest experiences and team processes within luxury hospitality through the amalgamation of theoretical learning with real-world application of the skills acquired.

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

In the world of luxury hospitality, work-based skills mastered alongside technical knowledge, are paramount to maintaining the highest of guest service expectations. These elements work, and my shadowing experience at The Ritz-Carlton in the Food and Beverage (F&B) department demonstrated how all of these elements come together for better operational efficiency and guest satisfaction.

Work-Related Skills and Technical Knowledge

Communication and Teamwork

Good interdepartmental communication leads to good service delivery. There was a delay in serving the mains during a five-star wedding banquet due to a miscommunication between the kitchen and service team (Heathfield, 2021). The F&B supervisor gathered the team quickly, reassigned servers and personally updated guests of the status, avoiding complaints. This indicates Tuckman's Team Development Model, where proper role allocation followed by collaboration forms the bedrock of effective teamwork.

Task Tracking and Problem Solving

Fine dining involves precision planning and scheduling things so that they are available when a guest needs them, as shown this week at a media corporation's high-profile event where a guest's pre-ordered vegan meal was not served (Johnston, Clark and Shulver, 2012). Instead, the supervisor employed real-time problem-solving, collaborating with the chef to fashion a replacement dish in ten minutes flat, keeping the guests happy. It presents service recovery frameworks, where timely redressals keep damaging experiences at bay.

Technical Knowhow: POS & Inventory Management

Knowledge of Point-of-Sale (POS) systems for the ability to track orders and facilitate payment processing. During a busy evening service, the POS system experienced an unexpected failure and simply was unable to process orders in the usual time frame (Wikström, 2021). The supervisor, a system troubleshooting whiz, moved into a manual order-tracking mode that helped to keep disruptions to a minimum. Technical knowledge guarantees that even the flow of service will go smoothly in crisis times.

Through my shadowing experience, I learned that guest service excellence is a function of a combination of work-based competencies such as communication, problem solving, task management and technical competencies namely POS, menu planning, service recovery strategies. My experience in real-world applications of these skills has increased my comprehension of service efficiency and leadership in luxury hospitality.

Section 3: Reflection on Organisational Issues

One significant organisational issue I observed during my time in the Food and Beverage (F&B) department shadowing at The Ritz-Carlton was a shortage of staff during peak service periods, especially for larger events and fine dining (Channell, 2023). These mistakes were born out of understaffing, which resulted in longer wait times, miscommunication between departments, and increased workload for existing staff, all of which affected guest satisfaction and operational efficiency.

At a recent high-profile gala dinner, for example, way more last-minute reservation requests than expected taxed the available staff. This led to delays in food delivery, servers being overwhelmed, and fluctuating guest service quality (Heathfield, 2021). Some diners sat longer than they should have before their courses arrived; others received the wrong orders when the kitchen and service teams lost the thread of who was where in the experience. Staff shortages also hindered table turnover efficiency, in turn limiting the number of guests a restaurant could take.

Impact and Solutions

To address staffing challenges, The Ritz-Carlton can do the following:

Workforce Planning and Flexible Scheduling : By forecasting demand to anticipate peak periods, – based on Queuing Theory, which is a branch of mathematics that studies and models the wait time and its application in operations when queuing be used to proactively schedule on-call staff.

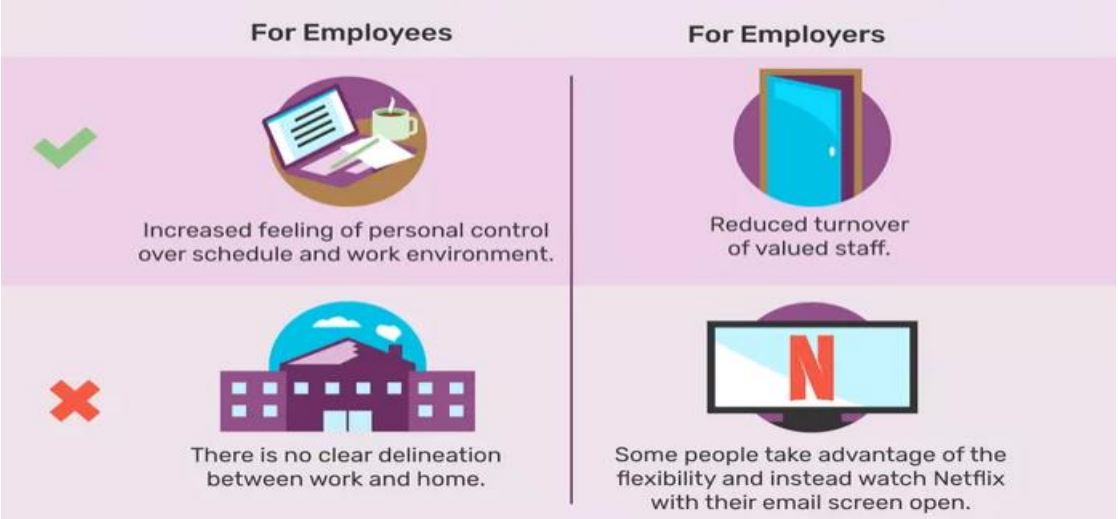

Image : **Workforce Planning and Flexible Scheduling** (Heathfield, 2021)

Cross-Training Staff: Teaching your employees how to do each other's jobs allows team members to cover for one another as needed, thus also increasing operational flexibility, consistency, and service continuity (Toh and Potapova, 2013). The Situational Leadership Model by Blanchard underpins this approach by advising on developing skills for role agility.

Technology Integration: Incorporating AI-based POS and order management systems that enable more efficient workflows, less room for human error, and better communication between the back and front of the house.

Utilizing these solutions in my future profession will enable me to deliver better workforce efficiency, streamline service pathway, and higher guest satisfactions in a high-end atmosphere such as luxury hospitality venues.

Conclusion and Action Plan

From this experience as a Student Hotelier at The Ritz-Carlton's Food and Beverage (F&B) department, I realised that maintaining high-quality service standards requires a balance between work-based skills and technical knowledge. It underscored the importance of soft skills such as communication, teamwork and adaptability for success in fast-paced service environments, while technical knowledge of operating POS systems, menu planning and service recovery processes drove operational efficiency.

Working in an entrepreneurial environment considerably accelerated beyond development growth in ways that are less traditional, helping me learn to parallel process operating a business and solve real-time hospitality problem solving and manage service flow while upholding luxury sense of hospitality. Witnessing leadership techniques deepened my insight into orchestrating staff and nurturing guests in prestigious dining establishments.

Next on my agenda to get better is:

- Scenario-based training to develop crisis management skills
- Learn and get certified in food and beverage management, and digital hospitality tools.
- Acquire practical experience in leading guests in service decision management.

These will aid in my future career in luxury hospitality to provide excellence of service as well as efficiency of operations.

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