

Case Study: The Grand Hotel

The Grand Hotel is an old, established property well known to business travellers and tourists. It has an air of old fashioned splendour which gives it an individual appeal.

For the past twenty years the Grand has been run by the same family under the direction of the family patriarch. A year ago he died and family members have been carrying on the same traditions. However, they have had to admit that profits are falling and they have asked you in to advise them.

You visit the property several times and send in a 'secret guest' who has reported back to you.

On your visits you have noticed that the hotel, though generally well-appointed has a slight edge of scruffiness creeping in. On one occasion you noticed litter in the lobby and coffee cups where guests had been drinking coffee while waiting were left uncleared for a long period of time. In the dining room the tops of the radiators are dusty and there are stains on the carpet. Some of the male staff were wearing their ties untidily and women staff had stains on their blouses. Staff, though apparently efficient, did not smile at guests and did not seem to want to give their time to guests.

Your secret guest reported that she had played the part of a fussy customer when checking in and the receptionist had shown no interest in her requests wanting to move her on as quickly as possible. The bell boy had dropped a heavy case on her foot when they were getting into the lift and she suspected that it was done deliberately. The room was at the back of the hotel when she had specifically requested the front. The bed side light did not work and neither did the TV remote control which she found had no batteries in it. When she phoned reception to complain they said that they would send someone to put matters right but no one arrived. The next morning she found the maid who had come to clean her room in tears. The secret guest had shown sympathy in order to gain information. The maid told her that the housekeeping manager was a bully and kept undermining her telling her that she was stupid and no good at her job though she was very conscientious.

You speak to the personnel manager who tells you that the hotel has no problem in finding new employees because of high unemployment in the area and the hotel is considered to be a prestigious place to work. On closer examination it seems that staff turnover has been increasing. You identify someone who was recently fired for "having his hair too long" though the rest of his employment record was exemplary and arrange to meet him.

The former employee tells you that the style of management in the hotel is autocratic with managers constantly issuing orders and employees who take their own initiative in any way run the risk of dismissal. There is a strong emphasis on discipline which means that mostly employees get away with sloppy behaviour but every so often someone will be arbitrarily dismissed for very little reason as "an example to the others". He also tells you that the housekeeping manager has a drink problem and bullies his better staff while others regularly steal cleaning materials and other supplies. This ex-employee now has a good job at another hotel.

You have been asked to write a report making recommendations to the owners.

Working in groups of three:

- identify the problems that you think the hotel has
- suggest how the hotel ought to be
- suggest ways of bringing about the transition