

## Training

This is the aspect of the Ritz-Carlton approach which has received most attention, and deservedly so, due to its recognition that any hotel or resort needs quality staff to bring the best out of quality facilities and products. After the first Baldrige Award Schulze (n.d.: 8) reports how the training manager and senior hotel executives worked as an orientation team over a two-day period to instill the company's Gold Standards service values in all new employees. These Gold Standards incorporate three pocket-sized memory prompters and the more detailed Ritz-Carlton Basics.

Within the Gold Standards 'three steps of service' define the activities and decisions of the customer interface. The 'Credo' acts as a guide, reaffirming that personalized customer satisfaction is the company's goal and that staff are an essential part of that process. The 'Motto' that staff are ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen is a succinct and clever summary of the guest-server relationship. 'It is a culture, effectively created by senior leaders and experienced by (both) customers and employees' (Schulze, n.d.: 4). The Ritz-Carlton Basics describe their guest problem-solving process and the expected standards for personal grooming and safety procedures. After the orientation comes extensive on-the-job training, followed by job certification that requires constant upgrading.

The actual training for each position has evolved into a continuous improvement process where every employee receives an average of 284 hours of training each year (over 35 days a year), consisting of face-to-face training along with CD-Rom and Web-based training that leads to certification and regular updating.

'This process has allowed the housekeeping department to replace annual training certification with just-in-time training while increasing their customer satisfaction scores in guest-room cleanliness,' Oreck (Vice President of Ritz-Carlton's Leadership Centre) says. One Ritz-Carlton property increased its satisfaction with guest-room cleanliness from 82 to 92 per cent within six months.

(trainingmag.com, 2006: 2)

The commitment to and continuous nature of the training enables Ritz-Carlton to keep up with changing technical specifications and customer tastes, as illustrated by Schulze's remarks:

Things are changing dramatically. I can tell you that only three years ago, no customer asked for high-speed Internet access. Today, every