

the authority to identify and solve customer problems on the spot and to improve work processes' (Partlow, 1993: 23). For Ritz-Carlton 'effective involvement and empowerment grew in part from effective quality training' (Schulze, n.d.: 9).

At Ritz-Carlton each employee is trained to:

1. move heaven and earth to satisfy a customer;
2. contact appropriate employees to help resolve a problem swiftly (lateral service concept);
3. spend up to \$2000 in order to satisfy a guest;
4. decide the acceptability of products and services;
5. decide the business terms of a sale (sales and marketing);
6. become involved in setting the plans of their work area;
7. speak with anyone regarding a problem.

(Schulze, n.d.: 9)

With such training and responsibility goes accountability, so in each instance when the empowerment function is used there needs to be a report and subsequent analysis of the actions taken. With thorough training and the detailed analysis referred to above these situations do not occur too frequently and are generally resolved without major time or cost impacts. In most cases it simply requires a caring person who is prepared to listen to a guest's request or problem and then proceed to have it granted or expedited as effectively and efficiently as possible – the traits of good management.

Staff perspective

While the Baldrige Award represents the official recognition of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company's overall TQM success; Paul Hemp, a senior editor at the *Harvard Business Review*, spent a week as a room-service waiter at a Ritz-Carlton Hotel to view the process from a staff member's perspective. As he says:

Managers love to talk about delighting their customers. But how does it feel to be one of the people who actually have to deliver the goods?

(Hemp, 2002: 50)

His assessment after his exposure to the Gold Standards, practicing under the tutelage of experienced co-workers, and going solo at the end of the week is that Ritz-Carlton's success in customer service involves an emotional partnership, which requires several ingredients.