

The Ritz-Carlton

What can one of the most prestigious hotels in the world teach us about independent bookselling?

Other than placing a great deal of emphasis on recruiting, interviewing and hiring “nice” people, The Ritz-Carlton has 20 “Basics”, a number of which are summarized below:

The Credo

“The Ritz-Carlton Hotel is a place where the genuine care and comfort of our guests is our highest mission. We pledge to provide the finest personal service and facilities for our guests who will always enjoy a warm, relaxed yet refined ambience. The Ritz-Carlton experience enlivens the senses, instills well-being, and fulfills even the unexpressed wishes and needs of our guests.”

Note that all employees are expected to memorize the credo, and be able to recite it if called upon.

Never Lose a Guest

“Each employee is empowered to never lose a guest. Instant guest pacification is the responsibility of each employee. Whoever receives a complaint will own it, resolve it to the guest’s satisfaction and record it.”

Employees are empowered to move heaven and earth to satisfy a guest, as long as compensation mirrors the complaint.

The Mystique

“To provide the finest personal service for our guests, each employee is responsible for identifying and recording individual guest preferences.”

Other than a database that is used to record personal preferences, the most important customer service is knowing and using the guest’s name.

Environment of Teamwork

“It is the responsibility of each employee to create a work environment of teamwork and lateral service so that the needs of our guests and each other are met.”

As special needs arise, employees are cross-trained and expected to offer “lateral service”, often by volunteering to work overtime.

Confidentiality is Key

“Our Motto is ‘We are Ladies and Gentlemen Serving Ladies and Gentlemen.’ As service professionals, we treat our guest and each other with respect and dignity.”

Talking about guests—who they are, what they said—is grounds for termination.

Three Steps of Service

“The Three Steps of Service are the foundation of Ritz-Carlton hospitality. These steps must be used in every interaction to ensure satisfaction, retention and loyalty. The three steps:

- 1. A warm and sincere greeting. Use the guest name, when possible.*
- 2. Anticipation and compliance with guest needs.*
- 3. Fond farewell. Give them a warm good-bye and use their names, when possible.”*

Employees will be faced with tricky situations, but they will never be wrong if they look at it through the eyes of the guest.

Create Pride in the Workplace

“Company objectives are communicated to all employees. It is everyone’s responsibility to support them. To create pride and joy in the workplace, all employees have the right to be involved in the planning of the work that affects them.”

Employees are prepped with a “daily line-up”, a brief discussion about the day’s events, groups and guests.

Come With Your “A Game”

“The Employee Promise is the basis for our Ritz-Carlton work environment. It will be honored by all employees. The Employee Promise: At the Ritz-Carlton, our Ladies and Gentlemen are the most important resource in our service commitment to our guests. By applying the principles of trust, honesty, respect, integrity and commitment, we nurture and maximize talent to the benefit of each individual and the company. We foster a work environment where diversity is valued, quality of life is enhanced, individual aspirations are fulfilled, and the Ritz-Carlton mystique is strengthened.”

Employees are expected to come to work each and every day with their “A Game.”

Continuously Identify Defects

“Each employee will continuously identify defects throughout the hotel, toward uncompromising levels of cleanliness, a safe, secure and accident-free environment.”

It is every employee’s responsibility to protect the owner’s assets.

Complete Annual Training

“All employees will successfully complete annual Training Certification for their position. New employees train not only for their positions, but also are instructed in diversity, workplace issues, and how to handle guest difficulties and difficult guests.”

We are On Stage

“Smile—We are on stage. Always maintain positive eye-contact. Use the proper vocabulary with guests and each other. (Use words such as ‘Good Morning,’ ‘Certainly,’ ‘I’ll be happy to,’ and ‘My pleasure.’ Do not use words such as ‘OK,’ ‘No Problem.’) Be an ambassador in and outside of the workplace. Take pride in your personal appearance, and convey a professional image.”

Examples of acceptable and unacceptable verbiage take up two pages of the orientation manual, while dress and grooming standards cover nine pages.

Don’t Just Point

“Escort guest rather than pointing out directions to another area of the Hotel. Use phone etiquette: always answer within three rings and with a ‘smile.’ Use the guest’s name when possible. When necessary, ask the caller ‘May I place you on hold?’”

Excerpted from an article by Karen Brune Mathis, *Puttin’ on the Ritz*, that first appeared in the Jacksonville (FL) *Times-Union* on Sunday, January 22, 2006.