

Looks Matter: Enhancing Your Guest Experience And Satisfaction Ratings

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As the old saying so wisely notes, you only get one chance to make a first impression. And in the hospitality industry, you always want this first impression to be a great one. Because what do your guests invariably do when they enter your hotel's lobby and rooms? They open their eyes wide and look around, tour the grounds and peek behind curtains and under beds to see all that your facility has to offer – and what might be hidden as well.

But if you tend to the look, feel, and smell of your hotel, then you're well on your way to receiving the high customer satisfaction rating your business deserves.

HOW TO HAVE YOUR HOTEL LOOK GOOD AND SCORE WELL

When conducting their North America Hotel Guest Satisfaction Index Study, J.D. Power examines seven key factors to determine overall guest satisfaction – reservation, check-in/check-out, guest room, food & beverage, hotel services, hotel facilities and cost & fees. And by dedicating your time and effort to the three items below, you'll be able to excel across nearly all of these major categories, increasing your guest satisfaction all the while.

FOCUS ON CLEANLINESS AND UPKEEP

"When guests open the doors to their rooms, the first thing they notice, even if it's dark, is the smell. If there is an unpleasant odor, guests are immediately uncomfortable, regardless of how the rooms may look," says Bree Lewis, National Accounts Manager for HD Supply Hospitality Solutions. "And once they turn the lights on, seeing scuffed walls and peeling wallpaper are an immediate, visual

indicator of lax maintenance – and these make guests wonder what else is wrong that they can't see."

Lewis manages HD Supply's TRU Perspective program, which was specifically designed to help hoteliers see their property from a guest's perspective, to provide feedback on what's working well – and what isn't – across every facet of the property. In her years of experience and assessments, she's noticed the issues mentioned above time and time again, and she's learned that one key way to avoid any visible (or hidden) issues with foul odors and peeling wallpaper is to regularly maintain your PTAC air conditioning and heating units. "By changing their air filters, thwarting water leaks and servicing them seasonally, you'll catch most odor and moisture issues before they ever have a chance to become major, guest-satisfaction-killing problems," says Lewis. Because the nose knows, and if your guest rooms are clean and smell fresh, you're already a step ahead.

And should any mess or maintenance issue arise, keep your maintenance staff well stocked with quality janitorial equipment and cleaning supplies, such as odor-control solutions, moisture-absorbing products and other essential cleaners.

INCORPORATE MODERN TECHNOLOGY

Hospitality guests of the future are increasingly demanding more technology-driven amenities in their hotels. The good news for you is that more and more of these guests are already carrying in their pockets a piece of technology that you can use as well – their smartphones.

Mobile technology gives guests the ability to interact with their rooms in specific, and the hotel overall, in a number of different ways. Guests smartphones can act as everything from their wallets and hotel room keys to their in-room phones and entertainment; virtual

concierge desk; and centralized control hub for thermostats, light switches and more – all from a hotel's mobile app.

By giving your guests what they're already looking for – a smooth, simple and streamlined experience throughout your hotel – you're setting the stage for a performance that's bound to get rave reviews.

PERSONALIZE EACH GUEST EXPERIENCE

The hospitality industry is a highly competitive one, and what each traveler is specifically seeking from a hotel will vary. Personalization, however, gives you the opportunity to tailor each guest journey for every one who walks in your door. And the way to achieve this is by providing personal touches to guests in exchange for their data.

In a recent study, more than half of guests indicated that they'd be willing to provide data to hotels in order to receive a more personalized customer experience during future stays. Using these insights and data enables you to better predict, meet and exceed guests' expectations through personalized service, thereby improving the customer experience. As an added bonus, this study also found that personalization is the biggest factor in driving brand preference and fostering brand loyalty. Thus, by asking what your guests want – and then providing that for them – you're taking the guesswork out of customer satisfaction, meeting your guests needs and improving your ratings simultaneously.

Keep in mind that, in order to make a great first impression on your future guests, you'll need to tend to the tasks of focusing on cleanliness and upkeep, incorporating modern technology and personalizing each guest experience before they walk in your door. And when you see happy looks on your guests' faces, and the high marks on your hotel's ratings, you'll know it was all well worth the effort.

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