

... Managing a luxury hotel

As hotelier Nigel Pace takes his first extended holiday in years Brian Berkman asked him what he loved about being a five-star hotel general manager.

 By Brian Berkman: contributing editor, travel ^{13 Apr 2012}



10 Things I Love About Being a GM

By Nigel Pace, five-star hotel GM

1. *Empathy and understanding*: No industry like the hotel industry puts you in a situation where you will work with people from such diverse walks of life and backgrounds. It certainly helps build character.
2. *Down to earth*: Seeing how unassuming the wealthiest and most important guests can be. I have looked after celebrities and CEOs of multi-national corporations, and their booking agents will inevitably bill them as very difficult and demanding people. Without fail, they always turn out to be the most easy-going and appreciative guests.
3. *Compliments*: Receiving praise from guests for a specific staff member and passing that feedback on to the person concerned. It is a frequent mistake to forget to celebrate what is right with the hotel.
4. *Complaints*: Not something one loves but I certainly take great pleasure in turning situations around. No guest should ever be allowed to walk away from a negative experience until you've tried absolutely everything to turn it around.
5. *Social stature*: I always seem to be perceived as the most interesting person at a dinner party. People are curious to hear about hotel secrets, but generally assume that my job involves nothing but glitz, glamour and wealth. No doubt, it's a whole lot better than a mundane Monday to Friday office job!
6. *Realising people's dreams*: Anybody who travels to Southern Africa, is likely to have dreamt of this moment for a very long time. Helping to deliver on those expectations is a huge thrill
7. *Empowering people*: When I'm on the receiving end of service, one of my biggest pet hates is being told "I'll ask my manager". I am a firm believer in promoting a strong culture of empowerment, where the most junior person is given the confidence to make on-the-spot decisions without having to ask a superior whether it is right or wrong.
8. *Dispelling the myth*: When considering a career in the hotel industry, young people very often get put off by the voice of doom, telling them that they can kiss goodbye a social life! I always enjoy chatting with hotel school trainees once they have come to the realisation that the hours are not that bad!
9. *Eye for detail*: Working in a luxury hotel environment gives you 360° vision. Next time you notice a chandelier with a blown light bulb, wait and see how long it takes to be replaced. If it is longer than an hour,

then you are not in a luxury hotel!

10. *Little guests*: Families in hotels might sound like a nightmare to some - but I love it. Over the years, I have noticed that children are actually generally better behaved than adults! Moreover, if you keep children happy, then their parents are inevitably delighted.

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