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**EMPOWERMENT: AN IMPLEMENTATION FORMULA
FOR SERVICE QUALITY**

by

Pat Bottiglieri

**A project submitted to the
Faculty of the School of Food, Hotel and Travel Management
at
Rochester Institute of Technology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
of
Master of Science**

August, 1994

FORM K

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Abstract

The thrust of this study was to determine a plan for the implementation of an empowerment strategy, for resort hotels. The review of the literature failed to reveal a recipe for implementation of an empowerment plan that is comprehensive or designed for long term benefits. However, there are numerous articles and books which discuss components which, may in fact, be critical aspects to an overall strategy.

The study analyzed successful empowerment strategies from a corporate department of quality, and three resort hotels regarded as leaders in total quality management.

The study used the Delphi Method to obtain consensus of opinion with regard to the necessary ingredients to implement a successful empowerment strategy.

Chapter I

Introduction

Imagine, if you will, checking into a resort hotel for an extended weekend of rest and relaxation. You, the guest, are informed that your room is not quite ready for occupancy, and before you can voice your displeasure, the desk clerk asks if you would like to have a drink in the lounge while you wait. Also, the clerk informs you that a bellperson will deliver your luggage to the room and notify you when the room is available. Your wait should be no more than thirty minutes. The next morning you are unhappy with the doneness of your eggs. The server immediately offers to correct the problem to your satisfaction, without consulting a supervisor. You soon begin to discover that whatever your request is, it is met with enthusiasm and willingness to fulfill your needs immediately, by the employee which you are addressing! You think to yourself; why aren't all hotels like this?

The resort hotel industry has been plagued in recent years with overbuilding, recession, and outside influences affecting travel. These factors have combined to force operators and owners to differentiate their facility from their competitors. The surest method of accomplishing this task is to exceed the guests expectations through elevated service levels that promote repeat business and guest loyalty. The major component in a total quality management initiative, is the empowerment of employees, at all levels.

Guest satisfaction must occur through whatever means are necessary (within defined limits).

This study will attempt to provide the reader with a suggested guideline to implement an empowerment strategy that is successful and manageable for the short and long term.

Background

Resorts that have successfully implemented an empowerment program have done so with a plan which evolved from a vision of the end result. I have provided a glimpse of the end result within the introduction of this study. The vision is shared by all employees. In fact, the vision must become a culture, or "way of life" for the organization.

Empowerment, is a method for the achievement of the vision. Resorts, hotel companies, and independent hotels claim to have guest service programs which have a cliche phrase to assist with their identity. However, many of these programs lack a method of implementation which promotes long term success coupled with a total culture change. Past methods of management, one way communication, and authoritative styles, must change. Management must embrace this change with sincerity and enthusiasm.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the effectiveness of three existing empowerment strategies which are part of a total quality management initiative.

Also, a review of corporate visions of empowerment will be analyzed to ascertain the relationship that exists between a corporate quality department and the hotels that it supports. The analysis of the three hotels and a corporate quality department will assist in the generation of a guideline for the industry to embrace.

Significance of Study

As the resort hotel industry emerges from six years of over supply coupled with the recent economic recession, empowerment of employees has been stressed as a key ingredient to long term success. This study will measure the effectiveness of various approaches to empowerment with the intent of providing an implementation guideline of empowerment for the industry to embrace in its quest for service excellence. Given the importance of empowerment, and total quality management, if a guideline were available, implementation strategies may be adapted at the property or corporate level.

Problem Statement

The concept of empowerment, as part of the total quality management initiative, has become a contemporary management practice within the Hospitality Industry in recent years. Empowerment practiced in its intended form will help to insure a hospitality experience that exceeds guest expectations. How then, might a resort hotel implement an empowerment guideline? Is it possible for the empowerment guideline to be unaffected by turnover, specifically the turnover experienced by resort hotels subjected to shoulder seasons?

Further, is it possible to implement an empowerment guideline that will not "grow old" and become obsolete?

The independent variable will be the various strategies of implementation of each empowerment program. The dependent variable will be guest satisfaction, or the effectiveness of the strategy. The intervening variable will be the ability or willingness of a resort hotel property to implement an empowerment guideline. The intervening variable will include economic limitations which may limit the extensiveness of a total quality management program for a particular property.

Hypothesis

This study will show that employee empowerment strategies are an important and integral part of any total quality management program. The decision to implement an empowerment strategy must be supported by the following criteria:

- A) Senior management (or ownership) support the desire to implement an empowerment strategy. They must also commit the necessary resources for such an initiative;
- B) Empowerment must be afforded the same attention as technical skills for any given position; and
- C) Management's (or ownership) commitment must be evident through the allocation of financial resources and adequate time for training and problem solving.

Effective implementation of empowerment must be the desired result of management and/or ownership.

Assumptions

Ideological:

The Analysis of four surveys submitted by operators of successful empowerment strategies will be utilized to draw reference. It is my feeling that the results are bias free and provide objective data as a basis for a recommended empowerment strategy.

Procedural:

It is assumed that General Managers and Human Resource Directors will possess a working knowledge of empowerment as well as the human and financial resources required to implement the empowerment guideline. Further, it will be assumed that the policy related issues that this study suggest will be implemented as an integral part of the empowerment guidelines. This study will suggest that certain policy issues may be revised to support the long term success of the empowerment guidelines.

Methodology

This study will employ developmental research patterns using the Delphi method. The empowerment strategies of three resort hotels and a hotel corporation's department of total quality management will be analyzed. Surveys will be analyzed to form historical data of the effectiveness of these strategies. The summation of the data will serve as an outline in the formation of the recommended empowerment guideline.

Setting the Study

The study was conducted in June of 1994. The time frame for the study was ideal since the economy was on the verge of rebounding from the recession of 1990-1993. Most of the non performing hotel assets were sold or their debts restructured and the future outlook of the industry was promising. Total quality management programs were in place and a few were successful. This study analyzed the empowerment guidelines of two successful companies. The study was conducted on the East coast of the United States. Specifically within the states of Georgia and Florida. The three hotels are resorts within the state of Florida. All of which are recognized as leading resort hotels.

Study Population

The study population consisted of three resort hotels within the state of Florida. These hotels are: The Ritz Carlton, Amelia Island Florida, The Ritz Carlton, Palm Beach, Florida, and The Peabody Orlando, Orlando Florida. In addition, the study analyzed the empowerment strategies of the Ritz Carlton Hotel Company. The department of Quality Assurance at Ritz Carlton's Corporate offices in Atlanta, Georgia were receptive to the research request.

The three resort hotels range in size from two hundred fifty rooms to eight hundred fifty rooms. The hotels are considered full service resorts that attract upscale travelers. The resorts attract leisure and group business which demand excellence in quality and service.

The Ritz Carlton Hotel Company was selected, since the company was awarded the Malcolm Baldrige Award for quality in 1992. This was the first time that a hotel company was awarded this very prestigious award. Mr. Patrick Mene, Corporate Director of Quality for the Ritz Carlton Company agreed to participate in the study.

The Peabody Orlando Hotel was selected since that hotel is recognized as a leader in total quality management. The Peabody utilized the Roderick Hospitality Skills training program to install its total quality management program. The program installation period was two years. Ms. Rosa Petus, Director of Human Resources, agreed to participate in the study.

Although the population size may be limited, the sample was surely representative of the desired result of total quality management programs that utilize empowerment as a major factor for success. Since total quality management programs within the Hospitality Industry, at the time of the study, were in the beginning stages, the population size was limited to those few that were proven and successful, hence, the limited size of the population may deter wide scale application of the use of empowerment in the resort hotel industry.

Instruments Used

The primary instrument used for the study was a survey questionnaire amplified by open ended questions. The questionnaire provided historical research as a basis for the development of the recommended guideline.

The results of the data collection coupled with the literature review have provided the necessary integration of theory based information along with practical industry experience to form the recommended empowerment guideline.

The questions which were included on the questionnaire were devised from key elements noted in the literature review. The reader will note several key concepts noted by the various authors within the literature review which helped to formulate the questions for the survey. The purpose of the open ended questions was to allow the respondent the freedom to offer suggestions since their particular organization has experienced success in total quality management.

The respondents for the survey research are as follows:

Mr. Patrick Mene, Corporate Director of Quality
Ms. Sue Musselman, Asst. to Corp. Director of Quality
The Ritz Carlton Hotel Company, Atlanta Georgia

Mr. Ric Graham, Quality Leader
The Ritz Carlton Amelia Island, Amelia Island, Florida

Ms. Melanie Marks, Quality Leader
The Ritz Carlton, Palm Beach Palm Beach, Florida

Ms. Rosa Pettus, Director of Human Resources
The Peabody Orlando Hotel, Orlando, Florida

The data collection was performed in June of 1994. The terms used in this study are representative of the Hospitality Industry and accepted management phraseology:

Guideline: The framework or recipe that will be recommended for implementation of an empowerment program.

Empowerment: The transfer of authority to employees who previously did not enjoy that level of authority. Normally, financial limits are defined.

Total Quality Management: A comprehensive approach to quality improvement within an organization that includes, but is not limited to, empowerment, service recovery, and employee motivation.

Culture: The work environment that an organization wishes to create. This culture may be represented by policies, values, and beliefs.

Success: This study will present an empowerment guideline that can be implemented for the short and long term with measurable results.

Resort Hotel: Any hotel that attracts leisure travellers and group business. A resort hotel will typically experience extended stays by guests with different service expectations than the transient hotel guest. Resort hotels typically offer more amenities than a transient hotel.

Critical moment of service: That moment when a guest feels that their expectation is not met for a given item, service, or experience.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

The text book readings along with the numerous journal articles related to empowerment offer descriptions of strategies for its implementation. The authors agree that the empowerment of employees is crucial to the success of a total quality management initiative; however, a comprehensive implementation plan has not been outlined in any one publication reviewed. Therefore, this chapter will extract components and suggestions from several sources in an attempt to understand what attributes an empowerment strategy for hotels should use.

Roderick (1986) suggests that the executive committee of the hotel meet to define a culture that the hotel will operate within. He further suggested that the committee define an identity statement as well as value statements that exemplify the culture. All employees are required to commit to these value statements through a certification process. Teams are formed from a cross section of employees of the hotel and the General Manager is certified first. This process continues until all employees are certified and notation of certification is placed in their file. This exercise, he claimed, will create an environment where empowerment is best realized. An example of an identity statement is as follows: "Through teamwork, pride, personal integrity and respect for each other, our commitment is to provide the total hospitality experience that continually anticipates and exceeds our guests expectations."

The identity statement clearly defines the goal of the hotel, and its purpose. The value statements offer behavior traits that will assist all employees to deliver excellent service. Examples of value statements are:

1. Our guests return because of the special treatment they receive from me.
2. We will treat each other and our guests with respect and dignity.
3. We commit to being honest, open and timely in dealing with each other and out guests.
4. When a problem is encountered, "I own it."
5. I will personally accept, support and implement change to grow and improve.
6. The success of the team depends on me.

Roderick claimed that this exercise will start the evolution of a culture that is focused and customer driven.

"The successful implementation of empowerment by world class firms require enormous changes in the company's culture," Huge (1992). Many managers are not committed to lead a total culture change. In addition Huge explained that many managers turn implementation over to an external facilitator. This he claimed always leads to disaster. Huge further stated that successful implementation of empowerment requires the involvement of all employees as problem solvers, and solution implementers.

Alfus (1993) stated that even though the concept of empowerment has been embraced and understood by many within the Hospitality Industry the problem has been in the commitment, and ability to implement a successful program. He cited possible reasons as an industry plagued by a high turnover rate of employees, and stagnant growth in past years has contributed to employee demoralization. However, he explained that empowerment can help to reduce turnover and provide employees with elevated levels of self esteem but empowerment must originate from the top of the organization or it will surely fail. Alfus also outlined that empowerment can assist a property in implementing the ultimate no cost sales and marketing formula: $R + R = R$ (business Referrals plus Recognition for superior service = Repeat business), the formula simply means that as a hotel generates business through word of mouth and each guest experience meets or exceeds the guests expectations, repeat business will be the end product. Word of mouth business will perpetuate itself, and is the ideal source for new business since absolutely no advertising dollars have been spent. Although Alfus does not provide examples in quantitative terms, the formula certainly lends itself to further study when implementation of empowerment is considered.

Alfus published a follow up article (1993) in which he offered suggestions for implementation of an empowerment strategy. He stated that the first process must be the hiring of the best possible candidate for each job. The job description must be accurate and comprehensive.

Interviewing practices must be tailored to include "hospitality skills awareness." Hospitality skills awareness is the interviewer's ability to identify personality traits that will direct a candidate to a particular job within the hotel.

For example, a candidate that has a friendly, outgoing personality combined with an ability to think out solutions rapidly may be ideal for a front desk position within the hotel. Alfus suggested that the awareness to assess hospitality skills must become as important as technical skills. To clarify this statement he explained that a front desk job requirement may be the ability to work a key pad and computer skills. This ability is surely technical in nature. However, the requirement might also include friendly, understanding, cheerful and sympathetic if the candidate is to deliver service that meets or exceeds guest expectations. In guest contact positions the technical skills requirement simply is not enough. The hotel must hire those employees that possess hospitality skills that can be nurtured and enhanced to provide service that exceed guests expectations.

After the hiring process training must be the next priority according to Alfus. The property must allocate adequate resources for training. A suggested budgetary guideline is 2%-5% of gross sales for training. Although the allocation of training dollars is crucial, management commitment to training is necessary to long term success.

Empowerment training from managers at the department head level and below is vitally important to the success of the overall empowerment strategy. One of the common objections from these managers is that employees will "give the house away." Management must come to the realization that their role as problem solvers or "fire fighter" must change. The decision to solve problems or put out service related "fires" must be granted to all employees, especially those at guest contact positions. Alfus contended that the apprehensive managers must overcome the fear of losing power and realize that empowerment will afford managers more time for strategic planning, goal setting, and increased morale levels. Management must also learn that good ideas do not necessarily originate from the top of the organization. There appears to be a deep seated reluctance by some managers to share responsibilities with those lower in status.

Carlzon (1992) referred to this phenomenon as "Flattening the Pyramid." Carlzon explained that any organization seeking to establish a customer oriented culture must flatten the pyramid, that is to eliminate hierarchial tiers of responsibility in order to respond directly and quickly to customers needs. Managing is shifted from the executive office to the operational level where everyone is a manager of their own situation. When a problem arises each employee has the authority to analyze the situation, determine the appropriate action, and follow up with the action alone or with the help of others.

An example to illustrate this concept could be: A guest approaches the front desk to check out of the hotel. After the clerk presents the bill the guest contests movie charges. The clerk immediately removes the charges without consultation of a manager. The guest was immediately satisfied and taken care of. Carlzon also mentioned that the decentralization of authority (empowerment) of front line employees normally is welcomed, however, middle managers tend to have difficulty in supporting the change. Middle managers must be given viable alternatives to their old role as rule interpreters. The new role of middle managers might at first glance appear to be a demotion. Ideally the role of middle managers is transformed from administration to support and guidance of front line employees.

The potential barrier to making a commitment to empower was also noted by Smith (1993) in the sense that empowerment is by no means acting soft. giving in, or giving away the farm. Most important, managers do not disempower themselves by empowering employees. Management, in fact, exhibits trust when responsibility and authority for decisions, problem solving, and action planning are assigned to employees, Smith made reference to Jones and Barley (1988) in which eight basic dimensions must exist for empowerment to operate efficiently. These dimensions create a managers profile for empowerment (Figure 1). The eight dimensions are as follows: Strengths; include traits such as risk taking, knowledge of rules, political skills, and a manager's comfort level and confidence in their management style and abilities.

The Dimensional Empowerment Model

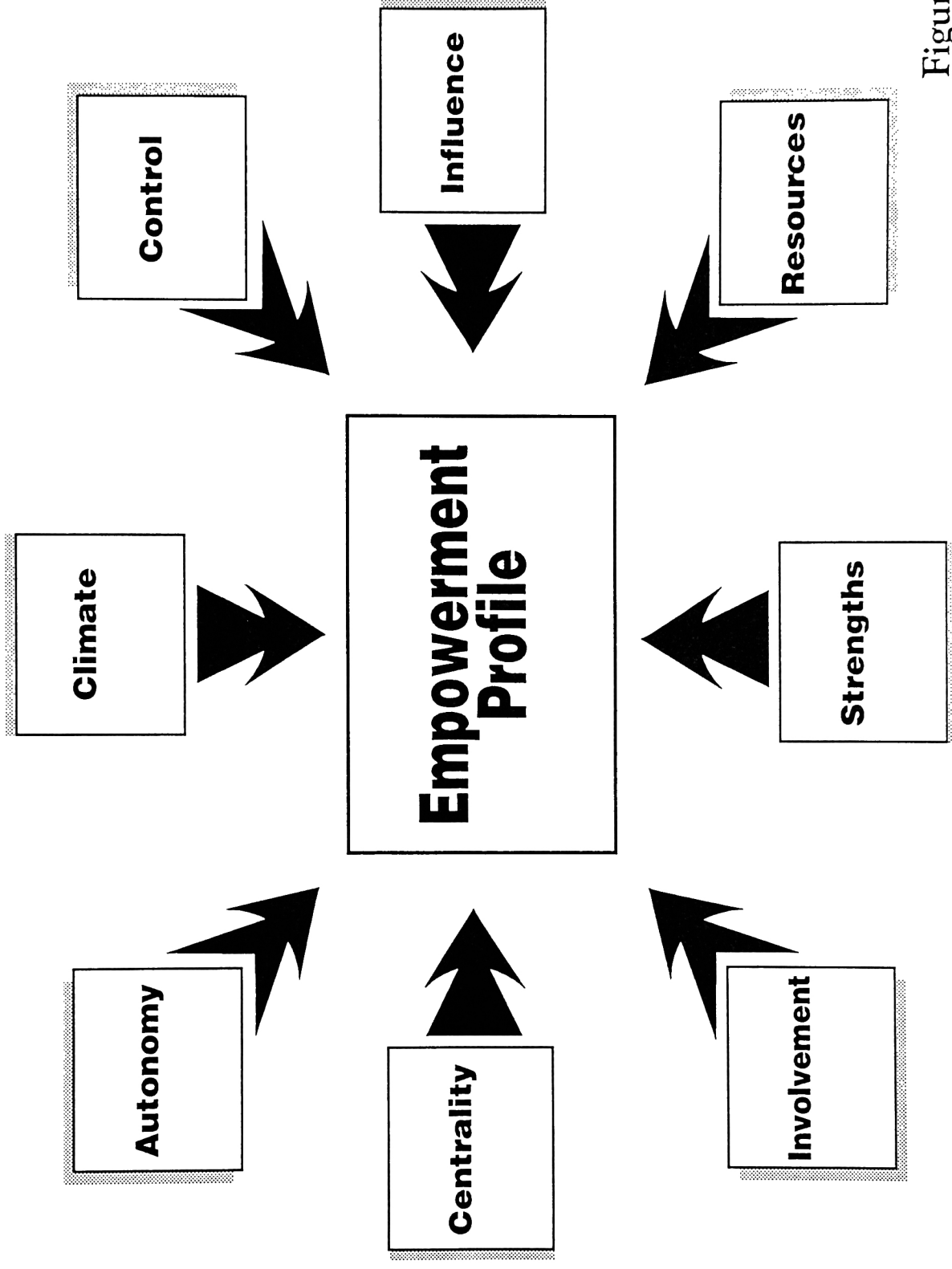


Figure 1

Climate effects how power is wielded within the hotel. Power that is used for the sake of ego nurturing will create an undesirable climate.

Autonomy refers to freedom on the job. The empowered employee should have authority that is equal to their responsibility.

Centrality refers to how critical each employee is to the organization.

Involvement indicates the degree to which one is part of the powerbase in the hotel. Hospitality employees have a deep need to know about events or issues within the organization. The more these employees are involved in decisions that affect their jobs, the more empowered they will feel.

Control, is managements ability to focus employees on the mission and direction of the hotel.

Influence is simply how one exercises their power. All leaders must have followers. Leaders must successfully share the hotel's vision with the followers.

Resources are the supplies, knowledge and information needed to operate successfully.

The dimensional empowerment model can assist a property to evaluate at what stage they currently operate within. The management of the hotel then can decide which areas require more or less culture change or development to support the implementation of empowerment.

Roderick (1986) outlined that once the hotel reached a decision on the identity and value statements and defined a climate to operate within, a mechanism must be in place to offset peaks and valleys of business levels. The identity and value statements of the hotel must be protected from turnover rates and business cycles that could erode the climate. Naturally, the importance of the hiring process must be reemphasized at this point. The hotel must hire the best possible candidate for the job. Therefore, managers must be thoroughly trained on using interviewing skills. The "warm body" syndrome (hiring an individual just to fill a vacancy) must be eradicated. The practice of empowerment must become part of the job description. Roderick further recommends that all newly hired employees be certified in the identity and value statements within thirty days of hire. Also, all newly hired employees are trained on the use of empowerment and are expected to become involved from the onset. In essence, Roderick claims, that new employees will be reviewed on the technical aspects of the job as well as the use of empowerment. All employees will then support the culture established within the hotel. Employees are held accountable for the identity and value statements. Each employee is given a wallet sized card at orientation in which the identity and value statements are printed on. Training must now be ongoing and procedures in place to foster an environment conducive to problem solving, an important element of empowerment.

Roderick refers to service related problems as "critical moments of service".

Missing Page

A popular concern among those employees who hold non guest contact titles (cooks, stewards, some accounting employees) is how do their roles relate to empowerment? Roderick explained that these employees treat the employees that depend on them as guests. For example, cooks would treat food servers as their guests. If a server should return to the kitchen with a menu item deemed unsatisfactory by the guest, the cook must correct the problem without objection. Naturally, this concept is contrary to present day kitchen cultures within most hospitality organizations. The culture change will take time, patience and understanding. A cluster group would then be formed to develop possible solutions if the problem was recurrent.

Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1992) developed four explanations for the existence of "gaps" or critical moments of service:

1. Customer expectations - management perception gap.

In many organizations the service that the customer expects is simply not known to management. The authors explained that in conducting a survey of financial institutions customers were reluctant to discuss their portfolios with brokers because the office area was set in cubicles and not private offices. Management was totally unaware of this situation.

2. Management Perceptions - service quality specification gap.

This gap is usually identified with management's difficulty in the translation of the customers expectations, into service quality. For example, Mothers Day is typically the busiest day for restaurateurs. However it is also the day when families are expected to be together. Many restaurants depend on college and high school students as their employees. These restaurateurs will be at odds for help on the busiest day of the year, because the help would prefer to be with their mothers.

3. Service Quality Specifications - Service Delivery Gap

This gap exists due to guest service personnel that are poorly trained or management's systems that are inadequate, or both.

4. Service Delivery - External Communications Gap

This gap exists when the customer was promised a service and that service cannot be delivered. This gap is ever present in the Hospitality Industry. Sales Managers may promise a guest a product or service when operational departments are not capable of the delivery.

Most critical moments of service or moments of truth will fall within one of the four gaps outlined above. The cluster group will try to identify the problem which can be identified by one of the four gaps. Management must then act to close the gap. The challenge is in the identification of situations that may cause a gap to exist.

Most often than not, management learns of the gap when a critical moment is experienced. This explains why the role of the front line employee is so critical to long term success of empowerment.

Gould (1992) provided an excellent problem solving process entitled "fishboning". Fishboning was first introduced by a Japanese industrialist; Ishikawa. The model resembles the skeletal framework of a fish (figure 2). The problem is written at the tail end of the fish. The area to be "fishboned" or study will be the four major areas of any organization; methods, manpower, materials, or machinery. Any problem would surely have its beginnings rooted within all or some of these four causes. Each cause is fishboned (see figure 3) independently to determine all possible contributions to the problem. Gould advised that each session employ a facilitator and note taker. The facilitator should be an employee or manager neutral to the problem and the attendees. The role of the facilitator is to keep the group focused on the problem. Group size should not exceed ten attendees. The note taker would record detailed minutes of the session to include the attendees, the problem, the process, and the possible solutions arrived at by the group. The concept of fishboning would apparently lend itself to the cluster group sessions outlined by Roderick. The issue of training again manifests itself as an integral component if the process is to be effective.

A review of empowerment should include a brief analysis of possible legal concerns. Rider (1993) an attorney, stated that empowerment should have limits.

Fishbone

Cause - Effect Diagram

Causes

Effect

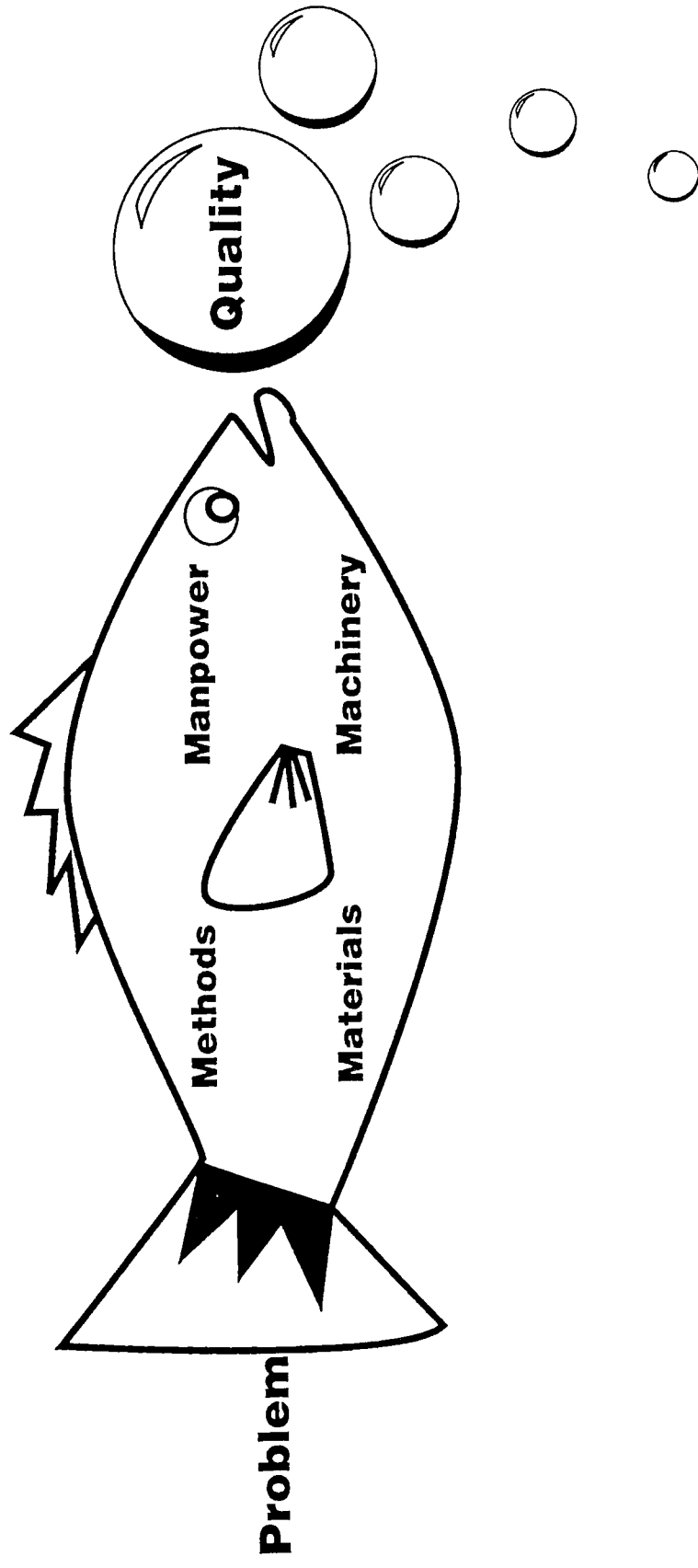
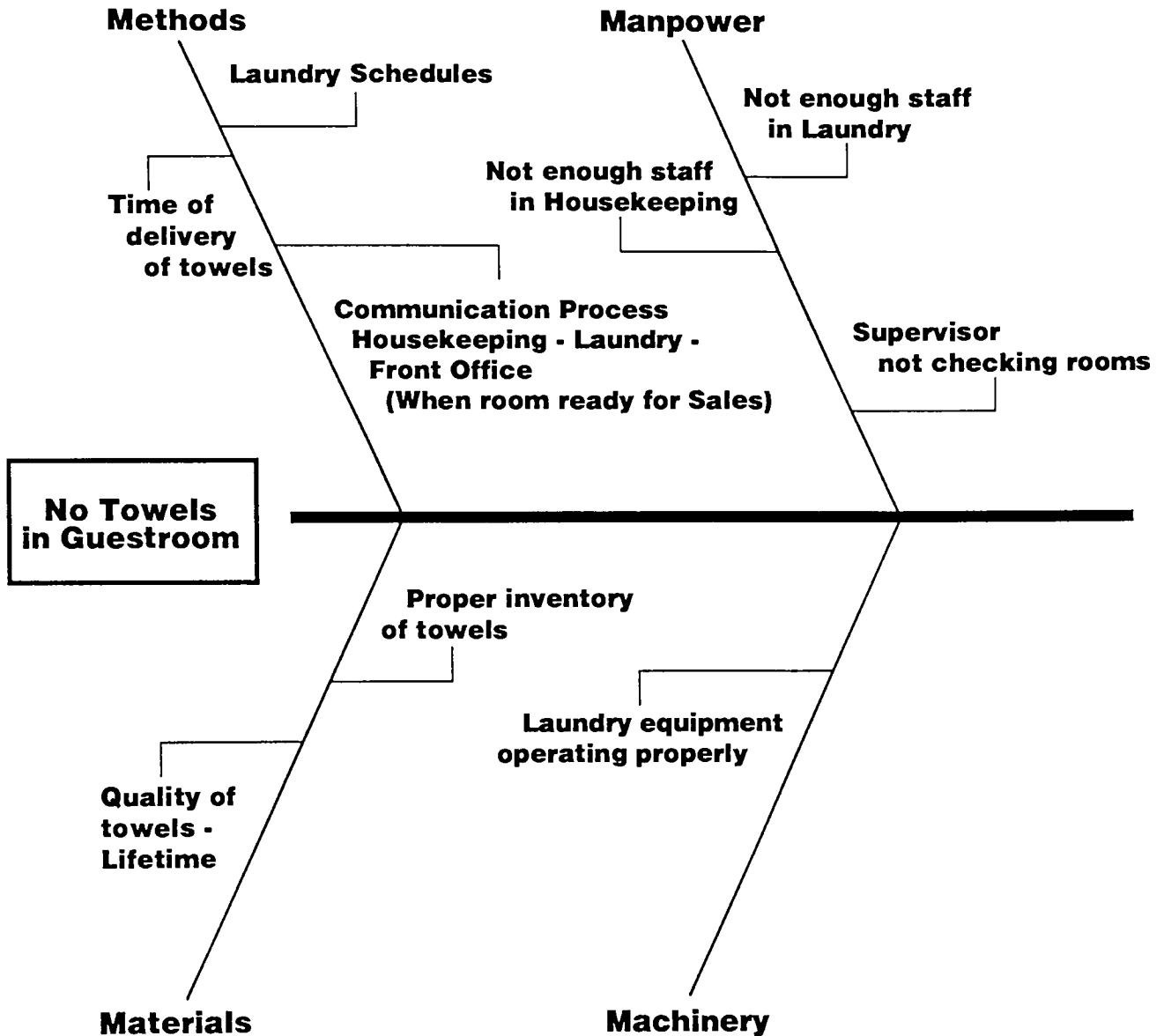


Figure 2

Fishbone

Cause - Effect Diagram



The Problem is to find possible causes of why there are no towels in the guestroom - a recurrent problem

Figure 3

Rider suggested limiting the scope of functions where empowerment, or discretionary authority, will be implemented to those areas where guest contact is most frequent. Empowerment should not mean total democracy. Management may want to limit empowerment in such areas as legal matters, health, safety, security and public relations. Financial liability may be controlled by placing a ceiling on the amount any employee may write off. Dollar limits can be set by each individual hotel. Training again was noted by Rider and further explained that it is critical. Rider suggested the following outline for the incorporation of a training program:

- Set the boundaries of discretionary authority so that employees clearly understand in which areas they have discretion and the monetary limits.
- Make employees aware of the potential liability which their negligence or intentional acts of omission can create for the employees or themselves.
- Provide training in the legal obligation of the hotel and commonly encountered situations.
- Discuss how empowerment interfaces with established, mandated emergency procedures such as hurricanes, fires, and other possible disasters.
- Establish procedures for tracking whether empowerment is working as originally intended. These may include reviews of discounts, employee discussions, customer focus groups and review of guest comment cards and letters.

An analysis of the legal implications of empowerment may be restricted to senior management and legal counsel. This may help to eliminate any decrease in enthusiasm or team spirit that may occur if all employees were involved. It would seem that legal opinion would be gathered prior to the implementation process.

The empowerment strategy should have direction and management. Frohman (1992) suggested that the hotel provide overall direction plans, priorities, and ground rules. Unfortunately, many hotels simply give employees more authority, without providing continuous direction. An empowerment strategy which lacks purpose or direction is off to a very feeble start, and almost certainly an aimless end. A common criticism from lower level employees is that their suggestions are not implemented or responded to. Studies have shown that situations like this, in fact, exist because of a lack of overall directional plans. Effective empowerment, and managed participation do not occur at the expense of structure, direction, priorities, or goal setting. These are necessary ingredients for managed participation.

Frohman Consulting Company and Industry Week conducted two surveys which revealed the following: the first survey of four hundred companies showed that employees want managers to do a better job of setting standards, dealing with unacceptable performance, and provide more feedback. The second survey of senior level executives in more than three hundred organizations judged themselves to be weak in implementation of their own plans.

Specifically, they reported, that their communication practices, performance reviews, and pay systems do not support the direction strategies and goals of the organization. Further, they stated that these same strategies, goals and priorities, were not understood at lower levels. The surveys led Frohman to believe that empowerment must have accountability. This requires some basic management practices:

- Set expectations regarding the desired output or results.
- Communicate these standards along with any timetable to all employees.
- Agree to checkpoints
- Ensure follow up and feedback. Respond to recommendations explain when they will be implemented, if not, why.

Managed participation requires accountability, and accountability requires follow up. Without follow up, derelict management of empowerment will prevail.

Bowen and Lawler III (1992) outlined the possible benefits derived from the empowerment of service employees:

1. Quicker on line responses to customer needs.
2. Quicker on line responses to dissatisfied customers during service recovery.
3. Employees feel better about their jobs and themselves.
4. Employees will interact with customers with enthusiasm and warmth. This is because they have the authority to make decisions that affect the service experience.

5. Empowered employees can be a great source of service ideas.
6. Word of mouth advertising and customer retention will take place.

Albrecht (1988) offered suggestions on how to implement a service management program of which empowerment is an integral component. He outlined this through five phases:

Phase I- understand your customer. This phase certainly interacts with the first and second gaps noted by Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry. Management must truly know what business and marketplace they are in. They must then know their customers expectations without assumption.

Phase II - Clarify your service strategy. This phase interacts with Roderick's suggestion on the definition of identity and value statements. The hotel must have a clear understanding of its vision and culture.

Phase III - Educate the Organization. Albrecht outlined wall to wall training. Again the crucial importance of training and communicating the mission and culture is paramount to the success.

Phase IV - Implement grass roots Improvements. Albrecht talked about planting many seeds to foster growth of the culture throughout the organization. The importance of middle management leadership and their role which relates to Carlzon's concerns as well.

The possible redesigning of service systems to support the culture change must be evaluated.

Phase V - Make it Permanent. The culture change must be designed for the long term. Again, are safeguards in place to protect the culture from turnover rates, peaks and valleys of business, cycles, and stagnation? Employee selection and hiring are noted as well as incentives and recognition.

It is surely interesting to note that Albrecht's five phases interact with those authors noted within this review. The various suggestions and philosophies cited within this review will provide a background and framework for an understanding of the components of an empowerment strategy. This leads to the primary reason for this study: how does a resort hotel implement an empowerment strategy?

Chapter III

Methodology

The methodology used in this study consisted of: (1) identification of the sample, (2) explanation of the Delphi Methodology, (3) instrumentation: preparation of the questionnaire and (4) summarization of the respondents.

The challenge of the interviews was to arrive at key strategic components that are crucial to the implementation of empowerment. Since a comprehensive implementation plan was not uncovered in the literature review, a natural source for this information would be to contact operators that have been identified as successful empowerment practitioners within the Hospitality Industry.

The Sample

The Ritz Carlton Hotel Company was selected as a sample population. The Office of Corporate Quality Management was eager to assist in the study. In addition, Mr. Patrick Mene, Corporate Director of Quality, provided access to the survey. The Ritz Carlton Hotel Company was selected since they are the 1992 Award Winner of the Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award for Service Industries. The Orlando Peabody Hotel was selected as a population sample since The Peabody is recognized as a leading resort hotel for total quality management. The Peabody has adopted the Roderick Pillars of Excellence approach to total quality management.

The Research Approach

The Delphi technique was chosen as the research approach. The essential feature of the Delphi Method is that it places emphasis upon developing expert consensus about a topic. However, this study employed open ended questions through detailed interviews with each respondent. This process allows for independent input from lodging executives viewed as experts within their area of management. The Delphi Method involves the following steps as listed below.

1. Develop the Delphi question or problem
2. Select and contact the respondents
3. Select the Sample size
4. Develop and test the questionnaire
5. Analyze the results of the questionnaire
6. Develop final results

The Research Instrument

The questionnaire (Appendix A) was designed with open ended questions. This was done with the hope that the respondents would voice their views in length as opposed to brief one line responses.

The first eight questions were designed to provide insight to the culture established within the hotel. This information would hopefully establish an understanding of the environment where empowerment was introduced.

The remaining questions were designed to provide information with regards to training issues and strategies to maintain an effective empowerment program.

Analysis

The results of the questionnaire were analyzed by question and respondent for comparison purposes. A comparison analysis was selected for purposes of identifying consistencies of strategies or trends in management practices. This process would allow for the definition of implementation. Steps that are proven and successful.

Chapter IV

Results and Findings

The Sample

The sample for the Delphi was arrived at by the review and selection of resort hotels as the East Coast of the United States which are regarded as expert practitioners of empowerment. In addition, The Ritz Carlton Hotel Company was selected since they were awarded The Malcolm Baldrige Award in 1992 for Service Industries.

The list of respondents are as follows:

- Mr. Patrick Mene, Corporate Director of Quality and Ms. Sue Musselman, Assistant Director of Quality
The Ritz Carlton Hotel Company, Atlanta Georgia
- Mr. Ric Graham, Quality Leader
The Ritz Carlton, Amelia Island, Florida
- Ms. Melanie Marks, Quality Leader
The Ritz Carlton, Palm Beach, Florida
- Ms. Rosa Pettus, Director of Human Resources
The Orlando Peabody Hotel, Orlando, Florida

A comparison of the hotels that each of the three operational respondents are associated with is outlined below:

Hotel Name	Number of Rooms	# of Restaurants	Square Feet of Meeting Space	Amenities
Ritz Carlton, Palm Beach	270	3	11,000	Concierge Floor, Spa, Fitness, Sailing, Golf and Deep Sea Fishing
Ritz Carlton, Amelia Island	449	3	16,000	Spa, Fitness, Tennis, Golf, Concierge Floor
Peabody, Orlando	891	4	54,000	Spa, Golf, Tennis, Athletic Club, Concierge Floor

Each property is considered a luxury resort hotel. The properties represent a wide range of size (number of guest rooms). Resort Hotels typically offer more amenities than transient hotels and the average stay per guest is normally longer than transient hotels.

Analysis of Questionnaire

The responses were paraphrased to reflect the answer to each question while not altering its meaning.

Question #1: Is it important for ownership or top management to fully support the decision to empower employees?

Ritz Carlton Corp.: Yes, senior management must support, practice, and believe in empowerment.

Ritz Carlton, Amelia Island: Yes, I strongly believe that if empowerment is to be successful senior management must support the process.

Ritz Carlton, Palm Beach: The decision to empower employees may originate from Senior management but everyone must support the concept.

Peabody Orlando: Yes, Senior management must originate the process and continue to support the empowerment process.

Question #2: How did your hotel begin the process of empowerment?

Ritz Carlton Corp.: Empowerment was part of a total quality management strategy. It was defined as part of the corporate culture.

Ritz Carlton, Amelia Island: All managers were trained on the concept of empowerment. It was then introduced to employees.

Ritz Carlton, Palm Beach: Empowerment was part of total quality management. The concept was introduced to all staff through training sessions.

Peabody Orlando: Empowerment was part of total quality management. Managers were asked to relinquish some authority. Supervisors were then asked the same. Employees were asked what authority they would like to have.

Question #3: Did your hotel define a culture to operate within?

Ritz Carlton Corp.: It is of utmost importance that each hotel define a culture that supports the company's objective. That is to be customer driven and provide our guests with a total hospitality experience that exceeds their expectations.

Ritz Carlton, Amelia Island: Yes, that culture must be supported by all employees and reflect our company mission.

Ritz Carlton, Palm Beach: Yes, the culture must reflect a strategy of total quality management and support the company objectives.

Peabody, Orlando: Definitely, the definition of a culture that supports empowerment is crucial to success.

Question #4: Were employees receptive to the concept of empowerment?

Ritz Carlton Corp.: In general, yes, employees were receptive however middle managers seemed to be somewhat reluctant.

Ritz Carlton Amelia Island: Many employees were skeptical at first however their fears soon were relieved.

Ritz Carlton Palm Beach: Most employees welcomed the idea of having more authority.

Peabody Orlando: In general, yes, however many employees were cautious. The feelings were that they would be held more accountable and management less accountable.

Question #5: What were the reactions of middle level managers?

Ritz Carlton Corp.: There was a moderate degree of skepticism and fear.

Ritz Carlton Amelia Island: For the most part management was agreeable and welcomed the change.

Ritz Carlton Palm Beach: There was some degree of fear among middle managers.

Peabody Orlando: Managers were afraid to relinquish authority, and were skeptical. However, those feelings changed within three months.

Question #6: How do you learn about your customers needs?

Ritz Carlton Corp.: Employee feedback, comment cards, customer focus groups, We Ask!

Ritz Carlton Amelia Island: Comment cards, Focus groups, employees!

Ritz Carlton Palm Beach: We ask our customers! Also comment cards, focus groups, and employee feedback while guests are in house.

Peabody Orlando: Comment cards, focus groups, letters, employee feedback.

Question #7: Please discuss your training program to maintain an empowerment environment.

Ritz Carlton Corp.: Empowerment must be rolled out from Senior leaders to hotel leaders to line level employees. Ensure standardization and consistency of training. Training must be ongoing.

Ritz Carlton Amelia Island: No response to question provided.

Ritz Carlton Palm Beach: One on one training of employees and a thorough certification program of all employees.

Peabody Orlando: Communication, coaching, feedback and reinforcement with periodic reviews of critical moments of service and their responses.

Question #8: Did your hotel define limits to empowerment? and what were they?

Ritz Carlton Corp: Hotels define limits, however we are very liberal. Our goal is to satisfy the guest by all costs.

Ritz Carlton Amelia Island: No monetary limits, we must satisfy the guest.

Ritz Carlton Palm Beach: No, our goal is to satisfy the guest at all costs.

Peabody Orlando: Yes, dollar limits were set for each write off at \$50.00 per occurrence. However, we want all guests satisfied.

Question #9: Did you establish a training budget? How much?

Ritz Carlton Corp.: We calculate 30% of Sales in waste over several years for errors. Therefore, if we allow 8-10% of sales for ongoing training we are ahead in total savings.

Ritz Carlton Amelia Island: We budget approximately 5% of Sales for training.

Ritz Carlton Palm Beach: We budget training at 4% of Sales for total hotel.

Peabody Orlando: We try to budget 4% of Sales for training to encompass total quality and other hotel related training.

Question #10: Do employees readily use empowerment?

Ritz Carlton Corp.: Yes, employees love the authority they now have.

Ritz Carlton Amelia Island: Yes, employees are eager to please guests and appreciate the power to do so.

Ritz Carlton Palm Beach: Yes, employees generally want to satisfy guests, empowerment allows them to do so.

Peabody Orlando: Definitely, employees were hesitant at first however, the employees love the power to solve guest issues.

Question #11: How did you train your managers?

Ritz Carlton Corp.: Quality leaders are trained in formal training sessions. Property managers are trained in intensive training programs over six weeks.

Ritz Carlton Palm Beach: Training is ongoing and supported by senior management. All managers take part in intensive six week training program with quality as the main ingredient.

Ritz Carlton Amelia Island: All managers are trained for six weeks. Training then is ongoing. Topics include empowerment, service recovery, problem solving, reengineering.

Peabody Orlando: All managers were trained for three weeks on quality management. Training was then ongoing and in phases as each segment of the total quality management program was introduced.

Question #12: Is empowerment part of the job description? How was it instituted?

Ritz Carlton Corp.: Empowerment is part of the total quality management program which is part of an employees job description. Job descriptions were revised to reflect expectations in total quality management.

Ritz Carlton Palm Beach: Yes, it is important to include empowerment as part of an employee's job.

Ritz Carlton Amelia Island: It is part of a total quality management program which is everyone's job.

Peabody Orlando: Yes, the practice of empowerment is expected and part of the overall job description.

Question #13: How do you solve service related problems after empowerment is utilized?

Ritz Carlton Corp.: If the issue cannot be prevented from occurring again by the employee a team is formed consisting of employees and managers to arrive at solutions.

Ritz Carlton Palm Beach: Teams are formed to solve problems then the team is dissolved.

Ritz Carlton Amelia Island: Employees form teams to discuss and solve service related problems.

Peabody Orlando: Employees form "cluster" group problems solving sessions to solve problems.

Question #14: How do you track the effectiveness of empowerment?

Ritz Carlton Corp.: The effectiveness of empowerment is directly related to customer satisfaction levels. Therefore, guest letters, comment cards, focus groups and employee feedback are all indications of the effectiveness of empowerment. Also, the reduction of errors is a good barometer as well.

Ritz Carlton Palm Beach: As the frequency of complaints decrease and guest satisfaction indexes increase we are confident that empowerment is working as intended.

Ritz Carlton Amelia Island: Empowerment is tracked through guest service levels, dollar write offs, frequency of employee action groups and guest letters. As time passes the organization will experience an environment of increased moral and satisfied guests!

Peabody Orlando: The effectiveness of empowerment is tracked through the frequency and results of cluster groups, guest satisfaction levels, employee suggestions and guest letters.

Question #15: What are the obstacles you encountered in the implementation process?

Ritz Carlton Corp.: The main obstacles were cultural resistance to the concept of empowerment and organizational barriers. Managers and employees had to understand that the guest is number one and all efforts must be targeted to guest satisfaction. Organizational barriers can be broken or bent to satisfy the guest.

Ritz Carlton Palm Beach: The three largest obstacles were:
A complete understanding of total quality management at all levels, the meaning of empowerment, and breaking down of paradigms. A great deal of patience, training and understanding is required to successfully overcome these obstacles.

Ritz Carlton Amelia Island: The main obstacles were: the fears of middle management, employee fears and ingrained habits, and the lack of a benchmark company to follow.

Peabody Orlando: The largest obstacles that were experienced were: identifying critical moments of service for each department, instilling a confidence level to employees to take action on empowerment issues and ensuring that supervisors display confidence in allowing employees to practice empowerment.

Question #16: What training tools did you utilize to implement and maintain an empowerment program?

Ritz Carlton Corp.: We used quality leaders in classroom type instruction. Also role plays, focus group research, and management involvement. The sharing of actual events where empowerment was utilized was very helpful.

Ritz Carlton Palm Beach: The employment of quality leaders in the hotel cannot be overemphasized. Also, role plays sharing of actual events, and one on one training.

Ritz Carlton Amelia Island: Training in classroom, role plays, and focus groups are excellent. In addition employee action groups to offer suggestions help foster an excellent environment.

Peabody Orlando: A great deal of coaching and feedback were done. Also, role plays, focus groups and allowing employees to offer suggestions, however management follow up to suggestions is vital.

Question #17: Why is your empowerment program successful?

Ritz Carlton Corp.: It is understood by employees at all levels and supported by senior leaders.

Ritz Carlton Palm Beach: The program is successful because of support at all levels (especially the top).

Ritz Carlton Amelia Island: Trustworthy employees that are trained well and managers that allow the process to work.

Peabody Orlando: It promotes confidence in the abilities of employees and assists with their growth and development. Also, it is supported at all levels.

Questions #18: What would you do differently if you had the opportunity to initiate a new empowerment strategy?

Ritz Carlton Corp.: We would try to do a better job of tracking the use of empowerment to really measure its effectiveness.

Ritz Carlton Palm Beach: Nothing, I assisted with this concept from the beginning so therefore, I have a biased opinion.

Ritz Carlton Amelia Island: I would like to see more management input into the change during implementation.

Peabody Orlando: Nothing

Question #19: What are the most important elements for the success of an empowerment strategy?

Ritz Carlton Corp.: Support from senior management and training, training and training!

Ritz Carlton Palm Beach: The most important elements are, buy into the program at all levels, support from President to Vice Presidents, benchmarking of other service companies, production workshops, and ongoing training.

Ritz Carlton Amelia Island: Support at all levels and a thorough and ongoing training program.

Peabody Orlando: The most important elements are: commitment from all levels, honest open communication, constructive feedback, patience, trust and confidence.

Question #20: How do you compensate for turnover of employees and continue to practice empowerment?

Ritz Carlton Corp.: We try to hire the best possible candidate for the job. Then we train and retrain. We listen to employee suggestions and respond. In short, we try to create an environment where turnover is minimized. The service culture that we practice is part of an employee's job. Therefore the culture is perpetual.

Ritz Carlton Palm Beach: We try to minimize turnover by hiring the right candidate. We train all employees thoroughly.

Ritz Carlton Amelia Island: We reduce turnover through our hiring practices and train all employees judiciously. All employees are expected to buy in to our service culture.

Peabody Orlando: We train our managers on how to interview. We encourage employee participation at all levels. All new employees are expected to buy into the culture. The practice of empowerment and total quality management are part of the job description.

Question #21: Do you recommend empowerment to be limited in areas such as health, safety, security, and public relations? How?

Ritz Carlton Corp.: We do not feel that strict limitations are in order. Our policies did not change with regard to these areas. We simply ask employees to follow normal policies and use their best judgement.

Ritz Carlton Palm Beach: There should be some limitations. Hotel policies should be intact for emergencies. All employees must know these policies.

Ritz Carlton Amelia Island: A moderate degree of limitations. Employees should be aware of policies and use their best judgement.

Peabody Orlando: I agree, there should be limitations set on these issues. Hotel policies should not be dismissed. Employees must know and practice these policies.

Chapter V will extract components from the respondents coupled with expert suggestions from the literature review to present a suggested plan for implementation of empowerment.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Recommendations

Phase I Introduction of Empowerment

The decision to begin an empowerment program must, of course, originate from someone within the organization. The literature review and the respondents concur that ownership or senior management must support the initiative. However, support of a program can take on several meanings from individual to individual. Therefore, it is recommended that support from ownership or senior management must be interpreted as follows:

1. Senior management must truly believe in empowerment.
2. Senior management will commit to the allocation of resources for training.
3. Senior management will be active in the implementation and the practice of empowerment.

Senior management simply cannot delegate empowerment to a facilitator and then go on to additional responsibilities. Empowerment must originate and transcend from the top of the organization. If it is not important enough for those at the top of the organization it will be given that same merit from everyone within the organization.

After the decision to empower has been agreed upon, the respondents clearly are in agreement that a culture must be established. The culture must define a mission statement that reflects a customer driven philosophy.

It is suggested that the Executive Committee meet in a location away from the hotel to define its culture and value statements. The value statements should support the culture and exemplify behaviors that need to be practiced by each employee when on duty. The identity and value statements can be prepared on wallet size cards and issued to each employee. Training sessions must be scheduled and a clear understanding conveyed to all employees. The training sessions may be conducted by the General Manager, Human Resource Director or Director of Quality. However, all managers and employees must be in attendance. Everyone must understand and buy into the identity of value statements. The belief and practice of the value statements should be added to all job descriptions. The respondents concur on this aspect as well. Employees must be made aware of the seriousness of empowerment and the great deal of merit that it is to have. An employee certification process is strongly suggested as a catalyst to create activity and thought about the identity and value statements. Teams can be assembled for certification. Naturally, the General Manager and Executive Committee are certified first. Certification may take several forms: observing the employee over time, quizzing the employee on the identity and value statements, utilization of guest feedback and employee feedback. Regardless of the method of certification the exercise will help to instill a sense of commitment through the hotel.

Training was an issue that created a tremendous amount of attention from the authors as well as the respondents.

Training can be accomplished in many forms: classroom, one on one, role playing, on the job, and off premise. It is suggested that the initial training sessions be a classroom environment with all employees present. Training then should entail the following:

- a) Managers and supervisors together are to be trained on empowerment and how it affects their positions. Carlzon and the respondents agreed that middle managers must truly be comfortable with empowerment. Examples of successful organizations can be utilized through video tapes that reveal management support of empowerment. An example of a new job description can be reviewed that describes their role as supporters and leaders. They support a vision of customer service. The empowerment profile (literature review) can be used as a guide to assist managers in self analyzation of themselves.

Managers must be given time to truly understand their new role. Patience and understanding must be given by senior management. Those managers that are skeptical must be given a chance at their own pace to fit in to their new role as leaders of high performing teams of employees.

- b) Employees should be trained on their new roles as managers of their own area with guest service as the main priority. All employees must be made aware that they serve customers. Those customers may be internal (the server is the cook's customer) or ~~ex~~ternal, (guests). Employees must know exactly what is expected from them.

Ritz Carlton Corp. in question #8 simply said that their goal was to satisfy the guest. Employees must be assured that management will support their practice of empowerment even if the action was deemed to be excessive. Corrections can be made for the future. Again, video tapes are available that show real life practice of empowerment by companies that have experienced success.

Senior management must realize that this introduction stage will take a great deal of time and effort. A time frame for this phase must be from four to six months. The Human Resource Department will have a great deal of work which will entail training and revising job descriptions. The revision of job descriptions will help to prevent the erosion of empowerment for turnover since the culture has been rooted within the organization.

Phase II Defining Critical Issues of Service

Phase II of implementation should be dedicated to identifying the instances where empowerment might be practical and the actions that an employee would utilize.

A training program might include asking each department (managers and employees) to identify five to eight critical issues of service that have taken place within the last year, which caused service related problems. Examples of situations which can be characterized as critical issues of service are:

Front Desk: a) If a guest checked into the hotel and the room was not clean.

- b) If a guest attempts to check in with a reservation at the proper check in time but the room is not ready.

Restaurant: a) A guest orders an entree and the kitchen is out of stock of the item.

- b) A guest complains that the food is cold.

A critical issue of service can be defined as any situation where the guest may experience anxiety due to a lack of service or quality levels normally expected. The departments would also outline recommended actions for an employee to utilize in the event that a critical issue of service were to occur. Naturally there are literally hundreds of potential critical issues of service which can and will occur. This exercise will allow employees and managers to begin the thinking process of identifying common problems and offering possible solutions.

Phase III - Defining the Limits of Empowerment

Although the authors and respondents offer mixed opinions as to the necessity of the limitation of dollar amounts that employees may write off in a critical issue of service, it may be a worthwhile exercise to ask managers and employees to ponder which authoritative powers they would like to have that they currently do not. The process can be instituted as follows:

- a) The General Manager would ask the Executive Committee to respond with two to three items of authority that they would like to have that are currently reserved for General Manager approval.

An example may be: only the General Manager may approve petty cash vouchers in excess of twenty five dollars. The Executive Committee may wish to obtain this power however a dollar ceiling may be added if approved by the General Manager.

- b) The Executive Committee would then perform the same function with their respective department managers. This process would then filter down to all levels within the hotel. As the process reaches the guest contact employees the hotel may find that employees may ask for the authority to provide complimentary drinks or an entree or a guest room. Regardless of the requests, the process again will create thought and discussion. Confidence in the program will be evident. The hotel may, in fact, decide to set limits on empowerment, however it is important to show confidence and trust on the part of employees by management.

Phase IV - Using empowerment as a Tool

Employees and managers must now begin to become skilled at using their new tool; empowerment. Prior to "real life" situations training sessions utilizing role play is suggested. Employees can practice with each other through the utilization of critical issues of service identified in Phase II. Phase IV and V (solving problems) are closely linked and should be introduced together as a unit. It is crucial that when employees begin to utilize empowerment in real life situations that managers are visible to offer support and assist where necessary.

The worst scenario is for employees now to be given more authority and management disappears into the office. Management must remain visible, supportive, and offer assistance where necessary. It is important at this stage that non guest contact employees practice with their internal customers. For example: servers and cooks can practice critical issues of service which relate to them.

A scenario might be if a server returns to the kitchen with food that is unacceptable to the guest. The server and cook can role play this critical issue of service. It is important to instill in all employees and managers during this phase that the practice of empowerment is expected from everyone.

Phase V - Solving Critical issues of Service

The actual practice of empowerment is only part of the process. Unfortunately this area is where many organizations stop the process yet the problems continue to reappear. The authors and the respondents agree that a mechanism be installed to prevent the problems from reoccurring. The satisfaction of the guest is a priority during the critical issue of service. However if the problem may reoccur in the future it must be solved. An example of a critical issue of service that may repeat itself is: in the restaurant a guest receives a cold baked potato. This situation is easily corrected very rapidly however several servers may have experienced the very same problem. Therefore a problem exists that has deeper causes rooted within the organization. The problem must be solved.

If the problem is not addressed the organization will have many unhappy guests and servers even though the employees are solving the critical issues of service (by providing the guest a hot potato) the problem has not been solved.

The literature review revealed an excellent mechanism for the process of solving problems: the cluster group. The cluster group would be formed by the employee that experienced the problem. The employee would notify all employees related to the problem.

If we continue with the same example; cold baked potatoes, the server would announce a cluster group meeting. The attendees might be: a) two additional servers

b) the Chef

c) a Cook

d) Restaurant supervisor

e) A facilitator (an employee neutral to the problem; ie Human Resource Manager)

f) a notetaker (another employee)

The cluster group would meet for as long as necessary and as often as necessary to solve the problem. Solutions would be presented to senior management for approval. The method for solving the problem is crucial. Ideally the problem must be supported from individuals so as not to offend anyone. The problem becomes the issue not the employees. The literature review outlined the fishboning process. However, again training is the issue. The organization may elect to train six to eight employees in fishboning techniques.

They in turn, may train others. It is important that they be qualified facilitators in fishboning. Fishboning is recommended since it is a process that is easily understood, graphed, and thorough.

The successful implementation of Phase V will allow the organization to now satisfy the guest and solve internal problems. The initial stages may require a high frequency of cluster groups. Management must provide the time and resources necessary for this time period. As the program manifests itself the frequency of cluster groups will decline since those problems that have been hindering guest service will be solved.

Phase VI - Tracking Empowerment

The authors and respondents concur that empowerment must be tracked for its effectiveness. Typically guest comment card results are analyzed and compared to past time periods. However, the organization may elect to take a proactive stance to track the effectiveness of empowerment. Suggestions are as follows:

- a) Designate employees that are in constant guest contact positions: ie; bellpersons, front desk staff, service and van drivers, to continually ask for feedback from guests as to the quality of their stay. The employees may simply make notes on a pad and report to their supervisor as needed.
- b) Conduct a focus group once every two weeks of guests currently in the hotel. A cocktail party is an excellent vehicle for this. Valuable information can be obtained as to how empowerment is working.

- c) Treat each guest encounter as an opportunity for constructive feedback. Share the feedback with those employees that benefit from the suggestions.

Regardless of the methods the organization chooses to employ, feedback must be available to all employees. Employees must be assured that their new tool, empowerment, is working as expected. Confidence levels will increase at alarming rates and high morale will begin to become the norm.

Phase VII - Rewards and Recognition

The organization must celebrate and recognize the success that a customer driven empowerment program will produce. Everyone must feel good about their accomplishments. The organization has been down a long frustrating road to reach this point and celebration is in order. The organization will be saving money on expenses and realizing higher sales since a reputation for superior service has now been identified with the property. Therefore, it is surely fair to share the successes with the employees that made it happen! The organization may elect to have periodic parties, picnics or dinners where recognition and progress are discussed. Awards may be given for the best solution to a problem. There are many avenues that the organization can take. However, all employees must share in the success!

Suggested Time Frame for Phases I - VI

The process of implementation is a long and frustrating process. The level of frustration will depend largely on the individual property.

The level of guest satisfaction improvement will not simply appear in any one day. The change is gradual with peaks and valleys of improved performance. It is a culture change, a metamorphosis over time. Therefore, patience, time, understanding and empathy are required. A cookie cutter approach is not an appropriate guideline. However, suggested time frames for each phase may be offered as a framework:

Phase I - Introduction to Empowerment:

Four to six months to allow the culture change to take root.

Phase II - Defining Critical Issues of Service:

One to two months - employees must become comfortable with the culture and what management is asking of them.

Phase III - Defining Limits of Empowerment:

One to two months - managers and employees must analyze their current positions and think of new paradigms.

Phase IV & V - Using Empowerment as a Tool and Solving Critical Issues of Service:

Six to eight months - everyone within the organization must become totally comfortable and proficient with empowerment and problem solving.

Phase VI - Tracking Empowerment:

One month after Phase IV and V - the organization will now be on the road to an elevated level of quality and tracking can be accomplished with proficiency.

Conclusion

Although the implementation program noted within this chapter is confined to several pages, the process will take from 1 1/2 - 2 years to implement successfully. The time and resources must be considered as an investment for the future success of the hotel. As with any investment, the outcome is determined by the intensity and dedication to success of the nurturing process. Senior Management is solely responsible for the success or failure of an empowerment program. Through their allocation of resources, time, energy and dedication to empowerment will their future benefits be determined. The managers and employees will make it happen if senior management is truly dedicated to the process.

The hotel industry is changing rapidly after many years of stagnation and economic turmoil. The customer of the 1990's and beyond will not tolerate inferior service or quality. The future success of a hotel rests with the ability of its staff to exceed their guests expectations. It is surely a time to embrace empowerment and travel the road to service excellence!

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Appendix A
QUESTIONNAIRE

1. It is important for ownership or top management to fully support the decision to empower employees?
2. How did your hotel begin the process of empowerment?
3. Did your hotel define a culture to operate within?
4. Were employees receptive to the concept of empowerment?
5. What were the reactions of middle level managers?
6. How do you learn about your customers needs?
7. Please discuss your training program to maintain an empowerment environment.
8. Did your hotel define limits to empowerment? and what are they?
9. Did you establish a training budget? If so how much was allocated?

10. Do employees readily use empowerment?
11. How did you train your managers?
12. Is empowerment part of the job description? How was it instituted?
13. How do you solve service related problems after empowerment is utilized?
14. How do you track the effectiveness of empowerment?
15. What were the obstacles you encountered in the implementation process?
16. What training tools did you utilize to implement and maintain an empowerment program?
17. Why is your empowerment program successful?
18. What would you do differently if you had the opportunity to initiate a new empowerment strategy?

19. What are the most important elements for the success of an empowerment strategy?
20. How do you compensate for turnover of employees and continue to practice empowerment?
21. Do you recommend that empowerment be limited in areas such as health, safety, security and public relations? How?