Unit 11

Complaints

**READING**

Read the passages from a training book for hotel industry staff.

* 1. Complaints

Guest complaints can be divided into four categories of problems: mechanical, attitudinal, service-related, and unusual.

Most guests complain about bad functioning of the hotel equipment. Mechanical complaints usually concern problems with climate control, lighting, electricity, room furnishings, ice machines, vending machines, door keys, plumb-ing, television sets, elevators, and so on.

Guests may make attitudinal complaints when they feel insulted by rude or tactless hotel staff members. Guests who overhear staff conversations or who receive complaints from hotel staff members may also express attitudinal complaints. Guests should not have to listen and attend to the complaints and problems of staff. This can be especially critical to maintaining solid guest rela-tions.

Guests may make service-related complaints when they have a problem with hotel service. Service-related complaints can be about such things as long waiting time for service, lack of assistance with luggage, untidy rooms, phone di–culties, missed wake-up calls, cold or ill-prepared food, or ignored requests for additional supplies. The front o–ce generally receives more service-related complaints when the hotel is operating at or near full occupancy.

Guests may also complain about the absence of a swimming pool, lack of public transportation, bad weather, and so on. Front office management should warn front desk agents that on occasion guests may complain about things the staff can do nothing about. In this way, staff will be better prepared to handle an unusual situation with appropriate guest relations techniques and avoid a di–cult encounter.

It is bad policy to ignore a guest complaint. All guest complaints deserve attention. An excited guest complaining loudly at the front desk requires immediate attention. A guest making a more discreet comment deserves no less attention, although the need for action may be less immediate.

In many hotels, front desk employees are instructed to refer complaints to supervisors or managers. But sometimes, front desk employees may have to deal with such situations.

When expressing a complaint, the guest may be quite angry. Front office staff members should not go alone to a guestroom to investigate a problem or otherwise risk potential danger.

If a problem cannot be solved, front office staff should admit this to the guest early on. Honesty is the best policy when dealing with guest complaints.

Front desk employees should know that some guests complain as part of their nature. So they should learn to deal with such guests.

B. Guidelines for Handling Complaints

* 1. Listen with concern and empathy.
  2. Isolate the guest if possible, so that other guests won’t overhear.
  3. Stay calm. Avoid responding with hostility or defensiveness. Don’t argue with the guest.
  4. Be aware of the guest’s self-esteem. Show a personal interest in the prob-lem. Use the guest’s name frequently. Take the complaint seriously.
  5. Give the guest your undivided attention. Concentrate on the problem, not on placing blame. Do NOT insult the guest.
  6. Take notes. Writing down the key facts saves time if someone else must get involved. Also, guests will tend to slow down when they are speaking faster than you can write. More important, the fact that a front office staff member is concerned enough to write down what they’re saying is reassuring to guests.
  7. Tell the guest what can be done. Officer choices. Don’t promise the impossible, and don’t exceed your authority.
  8. Set an approximate time for completion of corrective actions. Be specific, but do not underestimate the amount of time it will take to resolve the problem.
  9. Check the progress of the corrective action.
  10. Follow up. Even if the complaint was resolved by someone else, contact the guest to ensure that the problem was resolved satisfactorily. Report the entire event, the actions taken, and the conclusion of the incident.

**COMPREHENSION CHECK**

Answer the following questions.

1. Answer the questions.
   1. What are the main kinds of complaints?
   2. What complaints are the most numerous?
   3. What categories of complaints are the most di–cult to deal with?
   4. When does the hotel receive more service-related complaints?
   5. How should you treat an excited guest who complains loudly?
   6. What should a hotel employee do if the problem cannot be solved?

1. Look through the Guidelines for Handling Complaints.
   1. Make a list of the most important rules of behaviour | dos and don’ts | for a hotel receptionist who is dealing with a complaint. Compare your list with your neighbour’s.

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| 1. | Dos |  | 1. | Don’ts |  |
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| 2. |  |  | 2. |  |  |
| 3. |  |  | 3. |  |  |
| 4. |  |  | 4. |  |  |
| 5. |  |  | 5. |  |  |
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b. Use the information from the Guidelines to make up a °ow chart "Han-dling Complaints".