

A Study on the Role of the Housekeeping Department in the Pre-Opening Stage of a Hotel

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Abstract: *During the pre-opening phase of a hotel, the role of the Housekeeping Department is of utmost importance in ensuring the establishment's successful launch and smooth operations. Apart from the obvious task of cleaning and maintaining guest rooms, this phase involves various other responsibilities that require detailed attention and careful execution. The Housekeeping Department is responsible for coordinating with other departments to ensure the timely procurement of supplies, equipment, and amenities. They are also responsible for creating and implementing housekeeping procedures, policies, and standards that align with the hotel's vision and goals. Additionally, the department plays a vital role in training and supervising the housekeeping staff, as well as ensuring their adherence to safety and hygiene protocols. Overall, the Housekeeping Department's contribution during the pre-opening phase is crucial for establishing a positive reputation, building guest loyalty, and achieving profitability in the long run*

Keywords: Pre-Opening, Training and Supervising, Safety and Hygiene, Achieving Profitability, Guest Loyalty

I. INTRODUCTION

As an executive housekeeper, you have a unique opportunity to shape the departments of a new property that has not yet planned its operations. This experience can be both fulfilling and demanding, as it requires careful consideration and planning. It is crucial to keep in mind that achieving positive outcomes without proper planning is a matter of chance rather than effective management. Therefore, it is essential to approach the planning process of a new property with caution and diligence to ensure that all aspects are carefully considered and well-organized.

Objective:

To study Critical Aspects of the hotel's pre-opening stage and also to understand the Importance of planning during pre-opening Property.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research paper is based on secondary data. The data is collected from research journals, articles, and websites.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Author Amrik Singh has explained in the article that the housekeeping department is no more a back-of-the-house department. Housekeepers are the front runners and they can contribute to the growth of a hotel. So various challenges like the use of Advanced technology, retention of employees, trends and best practices as eco-friendly practices, outsourcing, IT savvy housekeeping, training, retention of employees, and payroll performance during the pre-opening phase are faced.

Author Dino Bruza has explained in this article that establishing a hotel is a challenging undertaking that calls for knowledgeable partners. There are steps and processes that need to be respected and followed, regardless of the size of the hotel. Getting the highest possible score in each stage is essential. Given the large number of stakeholders involved in this project, every step must be meticulously planned to satisfy their requests. Every aspect and potential risk must be taken into account and integrated with the strategy. In this instance, every action and process that is done during the pre-opening stage will be demonstrated via an example. Before a hotel has a soft opening, all planned measures are typically implemented over a period of three to six months

According to the University of Uttarakhand a hotel's guestroom is its primary product since it accounts for over 50% of total sales, which results in a very high profit margin from room sales. When a room is sold, it indicates that it is rented out for a full day at a certain price. As a result, money is made for a given day when a room is sold, after which it can be sold repeatedly. Sometimes, rooms are described as extremely perishable goods, such as rooms that aren't rented for the day, lose out on the money that daily. Apart from generating income, guestrooms also contribute to the establishment of the hotel's reputation.

Author- Professor JP Spencer has explained in this article that major challenges experienced during the initial period of a hotel's life cycle. Further, the study assessed whether there were significant differences between the success factors and challenges experienced. This study investigated the critical and the secondary success factors or advantages that may be encountered and applied for consideration when opening a hotel, specifically those corporately owned- versus privately owned hotels, or large versus small accommodation establishments. The findings revealed no significant differences between corporately owned hotels versus privately owned hotels or large versus small hotels. The research approach was inductive and the purpose exploratory, thus it was a qualitative study. The interview results are compared and analysed and the results are discussed within specific themes. The results should be of interest to practitioners and operators who could apply the insights gained from these interviews in their pre-opening strategies, and to academics in the fields of hotel management, general management, strategic planning, project management, and new business development

Author- Elsevier mentioned in his article that the study of different criteria for being a departmental head in hotel pre-opening projects in China. As research in this field is relatively rare, the writer attempts to ascertain some distinct managerial roles that are not found in day-to-day hotel operations. Various positions including General Manager, Financial Controller, Chief Engineer, Personnel and Training Manager, Sales and Marketing Manager, Food and Beverage Manager, as well as Executive Housekeeper, are examined in this study. Some common attributes are raised in the final parts. Primary data are derived from the writer's on-the-job observations in several hotel pre-opening projects.

Author Mr. Pritesh Chatterjee has said that Hotel Housekeeping is one of the most extensive and labor-intensive departments. It requires not only proper planning of manpower but also regular training to minimize accidents and hazards. Due to the current dynamic situation, hotel operations have undergone several changes, and it is expected to continue evolving. However, some of the enhanced precautionary measures adopted by five-star hotels, including non-invasive thermal screening, health declaration forms, frequent sanitization, contactless processes, and physical distancing measures, are here to stay. The hotel has classified all public areas, including the lobby, reception area, banquets, and elevators, based on the risk due to the frequency of traffic and human interactions. Cleaning protocols within guest rooms involve sanitizing over seventy touchpoints daily.

Author vanzyl, Gerrit alder has said that this study looked at what makes a hotel successful when it opens. It focuses on hotels in Cape Town from 2008 to 2010 and also looks at the challenges they faced when starting out. The study checked if there were any big differences between hotels that were owned by companies and hotels that were privately owned, or between big hotels and small ones. The study found no big differences between these types of hotels. The study used a qualitative approach and was exploratory in nature. The study compared the information from interviews to figure out what makes a hotel successful. The study found some extra things that can help make a hotel successful, as well as the main things that are important.

Aspects of hotels pre-opening:-

Critical aspects that a study on the hotel pre-opening phase should cover:

In the pre-opening phase of a hotel, it is important to understand its significance and the goals it aims to achieve, which typically involve establishing a strong foundation for future operations.

During the pre-opening phase, the Housekeeping Department plays a crucial role in ensuring a positive first impression for guests by fulfilling specific responsibilities and contributing to creating a welcoming atmosphere.

Recruiting, hiring, and training housekeeping staff for the new hotel is a critical process that involves inculcating the hotel's culture and service standards during the training process.

Procurement of linens, cleaning supplies, and guest amenities is a crucial aspect that the Housekeeping Department manages while establishing vendor relationships and ensuring cost-effective sourcing.

The Housekeeping Department collaborates with the hotel's design and construction teams to ensure optimal room layouts and storage solutions and oversees the installation of furniture, fixtures, and equipment in guest rooms.

Developing cleaning standards and procedures tailored to the hotel's specific needs is crucial, especially in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and complying with health and safety regulations is essential.

The department establishes quality control mechanisms for cleaning and maintenance, conducts pre-opening inspections and snagging, and ensures that rooms and public areas meet high standards.

Technology integration, such as property management systems, key card systems, and communication tools, plays a vital role in improving efficiency within the Housekeeping Department.

Implementing eco-friendly and sustainable practices within the housekeeping department aligns with modern hospitality industry trends and is essential for the long-term success of the hotel.

Managing the department's budget and keeping costs under control during the pre-opening phase is critical, and cost-effective practices contribute to the hotel's long-term financial health.

The Housekeeping Department cooperates with other departments like the front office, maintenance, and F&B to ensure a smooth pre-opening phase.

The Housekeeping Department conducts specific training and preparation activities in the days leading up to the hotel's opening, which are crucial for its success.

Identifying common challenges faced by the Housekeeping Department during the pre-opening phase and proposing strategies to overcome them is essential.

Providing real-world examples of successful hotel pre-opening initiatives where the Housekeeping Department played a pivotal role can offer valuable insights.

Summarizing the critical role of the Housekeeping Department in the pre-opening phase and offering recommendations and best practices for ensuring a seamless launch and long-term success is crucial.

Importance of pre-opening Property planning:-

Financial Planning: Proper is crucial during the pre-opening phase to ensure the hotel has the necessary funding and resources for its development. This includes budgeting for construction, furnishings, staffing, and marketing.

Marketing Research: Conducting thorough market research helps the hotel management understand the local market, identify potential competitors, and determine the demand for specific services and room types. This data informs pricing and marketing strategies.

Branding and positioning: Establishing the hotel's brand identity and positioning in the market is critical during this phase. It helps define the hotel's target audience, style, and overall guest experience.

Recruitment and training: Hiring and training the right staff is crucial for providing high-quality service. During the pre-opening phase, key personnel can be identified and trained, ensuring they are well-prepared for the grand opening.

Marketing and promotion: Building brand awareness and generating buzz in the market are key aspects of the pre-opening phase. Effective marketing and promotional activities can help generate advance bookings and create a loyal customer base.

Systems and technology: Installing and testing reservation systems, property management systems, and other technology infrastructure is essential to ensure a smooth and efficient operation from day one.

Quality assurance: The pre-opening phase allows for the thorough inspection and testing of all facilities and services to ensure they meet the expected standards of quality and comfort.

Guest experience: Designing a positive and memorable guest experience is vital. This involves everything from room layout and amenities to food and beverage offerings and customer service.

Regulatory compliance: Ensuring that the hotel complies with all local, state, and national regulations and permits is essential to avoid legal issues that could disrupt operations.

Soft opening: A soft opening or a trial run allows the hotel to address any operational issues, fine-tune services, and gather feedback from early guests before the grand opening.

Revenue management: Developing a pricing strategy and revenue management plan is critical to optimizing revenue and occupancy rates during the pre-opening phase.

Risk mitigation: Identifying potential risks and developing contingency plans can help the hotel management deal with unforeseen challenges and crises effectively.

Supply chain management: Establishing relationships with suppliers, securing reliable sources for food, linens, and other supplies, and negotiating favorable contracts can help control costs.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Housekeeping Department plays a crucial role in the pre-opening phase of a hotel. From managing inventory to training staff, from ensuring compliance with safety and hygiene protocols to collaborating with other departments, the Housekeeping Department's contributions are vital for creating a positive first impression for guests and establishing a foundation for long-term profitability. Therefore, it is essential to approach the planning process of a new property with caution and diligence, giving due consideration to all aspects covered in this study. By doing so, hoteliers can set themselves up for success and deliver exceptional guest experiences.

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