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Article: Customer Service "Blitz" Improves Service, Provides Ongoing Training

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A luxury boutique hotel basks in the high altitude sun and snow of the Rockies and caters to skiers and snowboarders all winter; fly-fishers, mountain hikers and bikers in the summer. Guests who pay the hotel's \$700+ room rates demand very high levels of service.

The hotel's ownership and management demand no less, as they are in hot pursuit of AAA's coveted five-diamond status. Adding pressure to the equation, the resort area is rapidly growing and the employee pool is both limited and in high demand. Employers must select good people, develop their employees internally and work hard to keep them.

For the past two years, the property has used the Step One Survey™ to help select high-quality employees and has also used the ProfileXT™ to insure good fit and high probability of success in building their management team. In the fall of 2004 before the ski season, the hotel embarked on a full scale 'blitz' designed to identify the common characteristics of their top customer service people and to provide coaching input for each staff member to improve individual customer service.

Since many of these answers differ with perspective and situation, these were often lively discussions.

The program also included training and feedback to ensure every member of the team was on the same page when it came to delivering five-diamond class service. The core of this intensive effort was Profiles International's Customer Service Perspective™ (aka CSP) Assessment. Before the kickoff, management identified the hotel's top performers in customer service. The CSP was administered to the group and a Success Pattern was created. These top performers met with management to create the Company Service Perspective – their consensus answers the 49 very tough questions on service issues contained in the assessment – a thoughtful guide to 'how we do it here.' Built on this foundation and implemented over a one-month timeline, the initiative followed this sequence:

In week one, all employees completed the CSP, requiring about one-half hour each, online. In week two, all supervisors received training on proper use of the CSP's Coaching Report. During the third week, every employee met with their supervisor to discuss the Coaching Report results and how to improve each employee's customer service delivery.

The employee's answers to the Company Service Perspective questions were discussed, with emphasis on where their responses differed from those developed by the top performers and management. Since many of these answers differ with perspective and situation, these were often lively discussions.

Week four was devoted to small group workshops of 20 employees or fewer and focused on the Company Service Perspective, the company's answers and the situations and circumstances leading individuals to have differing answers to these questions. The atmosphere was one of encouraging the individual opinion, as the questions often have no one 'right' answer. Participation was high and the groups generally agreed. Their awareness of the complexities of service issues had been greatly increased. Finally, as follow up to the initiative, individual working groups continued to discuss these questions and issues, one question at a time, through the winter as they held routine staff meetings. The Hotel participates in a third-party customer satisfaction measurement program, which provides a numerical summary of customer feedback on a monthly basis. Results of the program below.

