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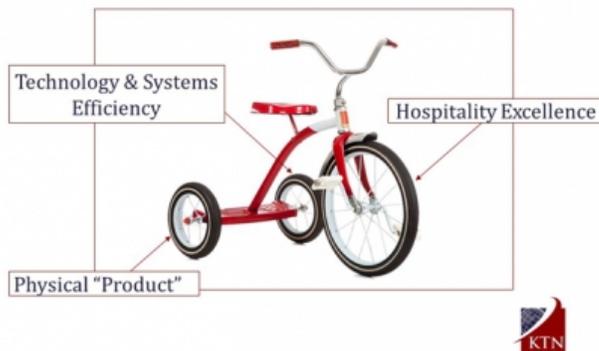
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Get Your Hotel Operations Team Onboard The Tricycle of Guest Service

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The Tricycle Of Guest Service Excellence



By Doug Kennedy

As hospitality industry trainers know, using symbols and models can help trainees grasp abstract concepts and make seemingly-complex paradigms easy to understand. Seems like is a good time for the hotel industry to update its model, so let's get your team onboard *The Tricycle of Guest Service*.

When you think about it, a tricycle is the perfect model for a positive guest experience. For one, it has three wheels, just like the three components of a memorable guest stay. The back wheels represent *Technology and Systems Efficiency* and a quality *Physical "Product,"* while the front wheel stands for *Hospitality and Guest Service Skills*.

The *Physical Product* wheel represents the "bricks and mortar" components of a guest's stay – in our case the guest room, but also the public areas, in-house outlets such as a restaurant, spa, golf course and/or meeting space. Especially during the present cycle where hotels are pushing ADR to record levels, the *Physical Product* must at least meet or exceed what was expected. For a universal example that all hotels share, which is of course a guest room, these components include quality décor and furnishings, comfortable bedding, in-room tech, and of course impeccable cleanliness which always tops the list when you ask guests directly.

The *Technology and Systems Efficiency* wheel represents the automated tools, processes and operational procedures which hotels have in place to enable our staff to deliver the *Physical Product* to our guests. In today's era this includes a website that is both appealing and informative, a solid property management system, and even the telephone communications system. These days there are so many more technology-based systems such as welcome apps, text messaging, and systems for ordering room service from the TV. This wheel also stands for essential procedures and processes such as preventative maintenance, housekeeping inspections and accounting systems.

The two back wheels of the tricycle provide stability and are essential for moving forward. Can you imagine how hard it would be to pedal a tricycle that was missing a wheel?

Yet it's the front wheel, which is appropriately much larger than the back two, that leads the way; the front wheel that steers the tricycle in the right direction; and therefore the front wheel that represents the *Hospitality and Guest Service Excellence*.

What would a guest's experience be like if any of these three "wheels" of the *Tricycle of Guest Service* were missing? Let's say a guest arrives at reception and is promptly greeted by name with a warm, genuine, and authentic welcoming statement and smile. (*Hospitality* wheel, check!) Within minutes your efficient systems allow for your staff to quickly finalize registration and send them on their way to their guest room or suite. (*Technology and Systems Efficiency* wheel, check!) Yet

when they walk in there are problems. The furnishings are beyond “quaint” and instead look downright dated. The AC is slow to cool down or is noisy. The remote control is smudged or has a dead battery. They next day they find long dark hairs in the bathtub and they are a blonde! Surely not a good experience.

Alternatively, can you see in your mind what would happen if the “Systems” wheel was missing on your tricycle? That same guest arrives and is greeted with the same authentic and genuine hospitality, and an impeccable accommodation is cleaned readily awaiting their arrival, but there was a breakdown in the systems so that reception thought it was still being cleaned until after the official check-in time. Or the key provided was not correctly activated and did not work, or the signage was misleading coming off the elevator and the guest got lost. Or the guest was to be billed to master but their credit card was charged for room and tax, using up all of their available credit for their trip. Most certainly not a good experience.

The reality is that most of today’s hotel operators are highly focused on the back wheels of *Physical Product* and *Technology and Systems Efficiency*. I would like to think this is out of a genuine desire for making guests’ stays more memorable and relaxing, but I also think it has much to do with the proliferation of online guest reviews. Either way it’s a good thing for our industry.

Unfortunately, in our obsession with “product” and “process,” we sometimes forget to obsess just as hard on the “people” part. Yet in the end, it’s the front wheel of the tricycle that leads the way, and it’s the front wheel that is the biggest “differentiator” between one hotel brand and another. When it comes down to it, there is usually very little difference in the guest rooms, amenities and services offered by one hotel vs. another, within the same market segment and classification. In other words, guest rooms at major upscale hotel brands sure look a lot alike, as do the guest rooms at lifestyle, luxury, and mid-tier hotels.

So if you want to stand out from the competition, secure more market share and to be able to be a rate leader vs. comp-set, be sure to also obsess on the front wheel of the tricycle. In the end, it’s truly the people that make the difference. It’s the people that the guest will remember - not the logo on their fancy pen, water bottles, or welcome amenity.

It’s the people that answer phone calls to book, or calls from those who booked online but call afterwards with questions, requests to reconfirm. It’s the front of the house reception staff who welcome guests upon arrival. It’s the maintenance staff that fixes what’s broken, and the housekeeper who passes your guests in the hallways. For mid-market hotels it’s the breakfast attendant greeting early risers with a smile, or the fine dining server offering personal recommendations for a picky eater. It’s all of the people on your team that become literally the face of your company.

Finally, the *Tricycle of Guest Service* makes an terrific model because of its seat, which reminds us that more often than not it is our staff that drives the guest experience onward and upward on the journey to hospitality excellence. So share this model at your next team meeting and remind them to climb on board, grab those handlebars and to start peddling down the road to hospitality excellence every time they clock in.

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About Doug Kennedy



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Doug Kennedy is President of the Kennedy Training Network, Inc. a leading provider of hotel sales, guest service, reservations, and front desk training programs and telephone mystery shopping services for the lodging and hospitality industry. Doug continues to be a fixture on the industry’s conference circuit for hotel companies, brands and associations, as he been for over two decades. Since 1996, Doug’s monthly training articles have been published worldwide, making him one of the most widely read hospitality industry authorities. Visit KTN at www.kennedytrainingnetwork.com (<http://www.kennedytrainingnetwork.com/>) or email him directly doug@kennedytrainingnetwork.com

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