

A teal banner with a white cube icon and the word 'BEEKEEPER' on the left. In the center is a white paper cover titled 'HOTEL CRISIS PLANNING AND COMMUNICATION' with a photo of a hotel. To the right, the text reads 'BE PREPARED FOR HOTEL CRISIS SITUATIONS BEFORE THEY HAPPEN.' and a red button says 'Get Your Fr'.

OPINION ARTICLE

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Empathy in Leadership, Life, and the Hospitality Industry

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understand and share someone else's feelings, and in a time where machines replacing people in the workforce has become quotidian, stands



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out as uniquely, and beautifully human. This topic was chosen, because in the context of hospitality, empathy is observed as a fundamental part of becoming an effective leader in the industry, and in a broader context, anywhere. The lead author's course of action in moving up, and becoming more influential in the field, is largely based on the idea that empathy is lost upon a considerable amount of current managers. To effectively manage someone in hotels, one would need to have experienced trials and tribulations similar to that of his/her employees. The fastest way to achieve this, is to have worked in the position those employees are currently working. This is the quickest method to fully understanding the responsibilities of the people one would manage, the amount of effort/trouble a request one may have for them will give, and in turn, allows a manager to share valuable insight as to how he/she handled certain situations when they were in a similar position (as opposed to reciting information from a training manual). Information from managers to employees will resonate much better if you can relay personal-experience-esque advice, and as a result, your relationship with your employees will improve. In any context, eliciting empathetic behavior is the optimal method for getting someone to feel understood, move towards discovering their personal values, and gearing their heads towards a common goal (and in turn leading them to achieve that goal). This applies directly to leadership, key to improving relati



someone feel as if they are understood, or adequately heard out by you, it is much easier to rationalize with them, make them understand where you are coming from, potentially with verbiage that will stick better if framed in a way that suits their own personal interest, and in turn, lead.

Two perpendicular scenarios are provided here, in aims to exemplify the importance of empathy in the hospitality industry. Scenario one illustrates a five-star hotel in the U.S., and a bellman who is originally from China, that is new to the work context of that hotel. A front desk manager is responsible for addressing and correcting a recent mishap of the foreign worker. The bellman was getting bogged down with D.T.S calls (small errands assigned to bellmen such as bringing a rollaway bed up to a room), and check-ins, which resulted in a guest's request remaining unfulfilled for hours. The front desk manager is an american man, with no experience outside of the country, years of front-desk experience, but no prior bellman experience. He addresses the situation by calling the bellman into his office, making the worker aware of his/her mistake, referring back to the formal training each staff member was required to take prior to working in their position, and sending the bellman back to work once it appears he/she understands what transpired as a result of his/her mishap.

In scenario two, the same two characters are present, and the same issue unfolds, but this time, the american worker had an internship abroad a few years prior, and worked for one year as a bellman. With these experiences, this manager has the tools to make a lasting impression on the bellman, by utilizing empathy. Instead of being so quick to tell the bellman what happened as a result of his/her mishap, and referring back to a training course, this manager considers that the worker is new and talks with him/her for a bit, to better understand his/her



not only keep in mind the culture of an entirely different country, but perform your job on par with the staff around you. It is also possible that the pace or size of the hotel is greater than any hotel that bellman had worked at previously (making it more difficult than he/she presumed, to navigate the hotel and accomplish tasks in a speedy fashion). Therefore, thanks to the prior bellman-experience of the manager, he is able to relay personal insight as to how he juggled D.T.S calls and check-ins when he was in the same position, such as finding optimal room routes to efficiently deliver items, learning little shortcuts around the hotel, avidly communicating staff as to your whereabouts and current workload, so you can either help another bellman out or be helped out, etc..

Knowing and expressing these aspects is integral in getting to the root of a problem, and eradicating said problem. Also, as a result of related experience, this manager can not only make the associate feel understood, but manifest a connection, reinforcing that he/she is more than welcome to approach and address any concerns or confusion in the future. By contrast, a manager with no similar background or experience to the foreign worker, may have trouble leveling with him/her, and truly understanding his/her circumstances, or the efficiency and time-management required by the bellmen position. This is not to suggest that anyone who has not worked abroad is ill-prepared to manage international personnel, but to piggyback on empathy as a concept, it would be invaluable to a manager to have experience working in every position they are currently overseeing. Unfortunately, this is a huge oversight in the hospitality industry, as many try to work to the top, as fast as possible, but something we must consider is how much different learning course, or manual is to

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It would be deplorable if the feeling of "he doesn't get it, he's never been in my spot, etc." obstructed your relationship with your employees. This is a barrier that will remain, because clearly you can't just discard your managerial position to work as bellman for a year, so it would be forward-thinking to get experience early-on in positions you one day hope to supervise.

Although empathy is not pushed very much as an essential management tool, the value it provides is fairly intrinsic. At this time, it is acknowledged by the hospitality industry to some degree, but few hotels have actually made strides to improve upon it. There have been difficulties, however. In summation, "Measuring empathy within hotel employees" (Shaveli, 2016) is both an acknowledgement, and inquisition in empathetic behavior (specifically in hotels and by hotel employees). This academic article acknowledges that in a profession such as hospitality services, positive/personable emotional experiences, in pairing with well-executed service, are important in influencing whether the guest has a negative or positive perception of their stay. In its acknowledgement of empathy, and its pertinence in the industry, the article also entertains that a means to quantify empathy is yet to be developed. The author ascertains that it is difficult to improve upon anything as an industry if there is no metric to go by, to decipher whether or not improvement has been attained. This is important to researchers and practitioners, not only to qualify the importance of empathy in hospitality services, but to provide potential causality for the lackluster fashion in which empathy has been employed (and therefore leaves grounds for a potential solution to be developed later).

In addition to the seemingly unquantifiable nature of empathy, "Empathy ar (Tucker, 2016), as the name implies, veives into the outer

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different types of empathy ("unquestioned or non-reflective empathy and a more 'unsettled' empathy, which is reflective and renders possible a productive sense of shame") and the implications of applying these to the industry, as well as the potential positives to come out of implementing a training regime that supports the teachings of empathy in guest service. The article considers the possibilities of and for empathy within tourism service and tourism studies, and suggests means to move the conversation of parallels between tourism and empathy forward. This piece further qualifies the importance of empathy in hospitality services, and stresses the complexity of something such as empathy. It is important to understand how difficult something rather arbitrary, but still critical to effective service is, to get a grasp on why it may not be as widely stressed or taught as one would hope.

As it pertains to the research, it is important to explicitly outline the fundamentals of empathetic behavior. "Empathy in early childhood: Genetic, environmental, and affective contributions" (Knafo, 2009) takes the psychological approach to empathy. Before acknowledging what exactly empathy could contribute to the hospitality and tourism industry if stressed more heavily, or expressed in employee training, it is important to distinguish what empathy is, why we do it, what it does to the human psyche, and why it is an effective means of communication, leveling, or conveying emotion. This article achieves just this by investigating the origins of children's empathy towards someone in an unfavorable, or inherently different situation than themselves, and how that correlates with emotional symptoms and affective knowledge. Knowledge about emotions greatly impacted the gravity of empathy shown in this study, which suggests that we should encourage employees to empathize effectively.

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a problem arises, and aren't so quick to throw money or comped rooms at big issues, we can truly understand why a guest is upset, and make them feel as if we want to do everything we can to understand their issue, and put our best foot forward to amend it.

Empathy and empathetic behavior is an integral part of hospitality management, but akin to that, it is imperative, in going through life, to master. Being able to relate your work and life experiences to someone else's, to better understand their perspective, can augment anyone's relations, outlook, and being. Moreso, as a leader, having this skill enables you to effectively evaluate members of a group or team, allocate responsibilities, and put staff in a position to best contribute to the overall goal of said group/team. Based on the sources provided, experience in the hospitality field, and our preconceived notion of empathy, this human skill strikes us as preeminent in building relationships and understanding people outside as well as within the workplace.

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