

New Breed of Hotel Sales Associates Lacking Curiosity? Maybe it's Not a Generational Thing

By David M. Brudney, ISHC, July 2006

I wrote an article a few years back critical of limited service front desk personnel (“[Front Desk Fails to Catch America’s Hospitality Spirit](#)”) and received so much reader feedback that I was compelled to do a follow up piece.

The original piece angered more than a few front desk associates (and some of their supervisors as well!) and many were quick to write that my criticism was very unfair and that I had little to no appreciation for the job challenges and lack of support.

But this time (“[Generation X Hotel Sales Associates: All Important Curiosity Factor Missing?](#)”) I heard no rebuttal arguments at all from Gen X (or Gen Y or even any Millennials - - those born since 1980) which made me wonder two things: 1) none of them read the article or 2) those that did dismissed it as nonsense or prejudice. I would love to hear from more of you.

Feedback from the New Generation

A *brand new hotel Sales associate* wrote: “Your article was really insightful as I am new to the Sales world (only two months into it). I am starting to develop a new territory that has not been touched which has been a bit overwhelming as there are so many avenues to go. I was starting to get a bit frazzled as I thought I was going into so many different directions not knowing if I was heading down the right path. But your article really was enlightening. Thank you for giving me some insight as I move forward in my Sales career.”

And a very *recent graduate of one of the major hotel schools* who has already landed her first job in hotel Sales: “Your list of questions to look for in a new Sales associate is very helpful, even to me. These are questions that I know I will have to answer myself next month. If you ever want to know what is going on in a ‘novice’ Sales office, just let me know. I will give you the scoop!”

Sample: Other Readers had to Say

A *hospitality public relations veteran*: “You got right back to the basics and I hope that particularly, the younger readers will assimilate it and learn.”

A *director of Sales and marketing* from a southwestern U.S. resort: “You put into easily understandable language my frustration with new Sales people which I will use to address those challenges more effectively . . . I passed on to my staff reminding all no matter the age, it’s always a good time to be open to learning.”

A realtor read the article and passed it on to a family member employed in the hotel business. “The wisdom and information is applicable to any business or product selling.” *The hospitality son*: “Sometimes you just need to read (articles like these) to remember to practice the basics.”

A retired university professor: “Good advice for life.”

A hospitality Sales trainer: “Nicely written and on target.”

A consultant colleague: “I’m forwarding it to my son (a director of Sales & marketing for a branded luxury hotel in California). As a proud Dad, I feel sure he has the qualities that you describe, but it never hurts to take inventory plus I’m sure he will pass it on to his Sales team.”

And sure enough, the *director of Sales & marketing son* wrote, too: “It’s very straightforward and on the mark. My next e-mail will be to my Sales team!!!”

Availability of instant information impacts curiosity

A hotel owner and operator: “It’s more than just a lack of curiosity. It’s a lack of passion.”

A retired hotel senior executive: “The problem isn’t a lack of curiosity. This new generation doesn’t read anymore!”

A hotel senior executive: “I predict that curiosity questioning will continue to weaken because of the prolific availability of instant information. It’s simply easier to point and click at what’s on the screen.”

Perhaps the *chairman of one of the leading 3rd party Sales representation firms* said it best: “I would say that a number of older people are not listening either. I am not sure if I can attribute it to one generation. The people today are choosing which calls they return and which e-mails that they return. It is a real problem for many of us who are just trying to get simple answers.”

So, is it a lack of curiosity? Passion? An over-dependency on the Internet for “instant information”? Or is it more of a non-generational issue? Is it more a case whereby all of us have become so conditioned to search the Internet for anything we need to know that we have forgotten the valuable life and career lessons from trainers and mentors? What do you think?

Do we spend so much time “Googling” and e-mailing that we have no time left to observe the best Sales professionals with years of empirical knowledge and successful track records?

A concern to those of us who have made the hospitality Sales profession our life's work and to all who care about its future, is that an entire new generation of hotel Sales associates will miss an opportunity to learn and master their craft.

True, we are in a recovery mode now, but let us not forget that good times never last. When tough times return, you can be sure that owners and asset managers will focus again on the day-to-day performance and skill levels of the unit Sales teams.

© copyright 2006