



Stanford eCorner

Increasing Self-worth of Employees

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In an offsite retreat, Joie de Vivre Hotels asked their housekeeping staff to describe an alternate title for their jobs. Rather than being called a "maid", the staff described themselves as "a mom away from home" or the "piece of mind police". Employees who focus the higher calling, rather than the tasks they do, have a higher sense of purpose and understand the impact of their work.



Transcript

Moving up from here to here from money to recognition to meaning is like moving up from a job to career to calling. And the difference between someone who has a job and someone who has a calling is a difference between someone who's actually focused on the tasks and someone who's focused on the impact on the customer or the purpose of what you're doing. So when you actually move up, so what we did as an exercise with our housekeeping staff is we got 600 of them in a room. We had a lunch for them, brought them all together. So that's half, half of the 1200 housekeeping staff, half of them had to work. So 600 came in the room. We had a big lunch. We have a nice bunch of things happening. And then we set them up into groups of seven. To have conversations from different hotels.

And we had, a lot of them had conversations about what does it mean to be a housekeeper or a maid, or you know whatever their particular hotel called them. And we asked one very provocative question that had a very big impact on them and that was the following: We said if a Martian came down and actually stayed in your hotel tonight and had no idea what your role was or what your title was but tomorrow they check, they got up, they went out for a run, which Martians I guess do. And they actually came back and saw what you'd done for them. And you actually come in and done your normal daily job but they saw what you did for them in their room at this nice hotel. What would they call you if they didn't know you're called a maid or a housekeeper? It was sort of a provocative abstract question. Now I have to tell before we asked that question, we had a lot of conversations because that's what the hard question answer. And you have to remember that the seven people sitting at the table are people, four of the seven are probably from, originally from a different country. Four or five of them probably have English as a second language. One of the seven may have gone and had a little bit of time in college. So it's not a particularly, it's not a group that's used to actually necessarily having that kind of question asked of them.

But what happen in the course of the half hour that they, that they had this breakout time is the following collection of things came up. They said everything from with a mom away from home because generally speaking 98% of our housekeeping staff is women or we're the serenity sisters because that's what we create or the piece of mind police or the clutter busters. And what we really got to is this idea that what they do, it's like, something like this has been done in hospitals. When hospitals give their nurses the sense that they're a patient advocate, which is a calling, being a patient advocate. It's very different than when a hospital makes the nurse feel like they are the person who creates pain with the syringe, which is a job. So if you focus on tasks of people, no matter what part of the organization they're in, if you get focused on the tasks, it will never help people get up to that sense of calling. And by focusing on that sense of calling, what we were able to do is give the housekeeping staff a really great sense of their own self worth and their impact. And then after that exercise, what we did is we came back with all

600 people in the room again and we had five people, five customers come up and tell their story. And so we had a woman, this is an amazing story. We had a woman come up from who, who had lived in Denver.

She flew in for this because she wanted to really tell her story so much. She was from Denver. She had been staying at one of our hotels in San Francisco and she worked for a company in San Francisco, there's headquarter in San Francisco. She decided she's 38 years old. She was single and she wanted to have a baby. And so she figured out in miracles of modern medicine how she could go out and have a baby by herself. And she got pregnant. We saw her, I guess the staffs' are there about two months' before she was going to have the baby and then we didn't see her for a few months because she had twins. About four months after she had twins she came back to work. She's a single mother and she came for a few months.

About four months after she came back to work, she got a call in Denver one day from her boss in San Francisco saying, I need to see you tomorrow in my office. And so she had no idea what it is about. She got to the hotel. She was nervous. She talked with the staff of the hotel because she got to know them a little bit about the fact that she was nervous. And she left the next morning to go into her boss's office where she was fired. Wouldn't get into the details of why she's fired, but she's fired. So she comes back to her hotel room at her hotel. She goes to the lobby very stoically. People sort of know that she had a big day today and they could tell it that something went wrong.

She went to her room. She did not close the door completely. It was about you know, two-thirds closed. And she went in her room and she started sobbing pretty loudly. So loudly that one of the maids, one of the housekeepers walking by heard her sobbing, opened the door a little bit wider and said, are you OK? She didn't respond. The housekeeper went inside and gave her a hug and they hugged for five minutes. Next thing that housekeeper did is she went off and she got all other housekeeping staff in that hotel, which is eight other housekeepers. Brought the eight other housekeepers and they had a group hug for 15 minutes with this woman who had been, you know, a long term guest to the hotel and then they, it was about lunch time and they went out they got her some food. And they said, as a group that they would actually have lunch as a group in her room and I don't know if they clean up after that. You just have to ask him yourself.

But they had lunch with her and they just sort of made her feel like she was with family at the time when she was very stressed..