

4 management essentials that will set you apart

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By [Jeff Weinstein](#) on 2/14/2018

If you're thinking about making the jump to hospitality management, you're probably very good at your current job. Whether a front-line guest service employee or head restaurant server, you likely have spent years learning how to become the best at what you do. It's also likely that because of your expertise and effectiveness, management opportunities are starting to come your way. But before you throw your hat into the ring, or if you've recently made the leap, here are four critical skills you'll need to cultivate in order to become an equally excellent hospitality manager.

Communicate with clarity and compassion

Managing people isn't the same as managing tasks. Although you may be talented at talking with guests and creating positive outcomes, those interactions differ greatly from those with employees. Management conversations don't always have "happy endings," and you need to be ready to discuss tough topics—like correcting behaviors, hiring, terminations, disciplinary issues or customer complaints. The ability to communicate clearly, honestly and compassionately with employees is what sets good managers apart from all the rest.

Not sure you can do it? Start by tapping into your resources: read books on the topic and observe people you admire, or those that seem to always keep their cool no matter the situation. Perhaps meet with one of those people, asking them to share their tips. Finally, make difficult conversations a habit. Don't shy away from opportunities to practice your skills and consider enlisting a friend to help you prepare for situations and give you the opportunity to practice your approach.

On the flip side, it's also important for managers to remember that informal socializing and chatting in the office is work too; you need to invest in learning about your staff as people, and this type of communication is vital for building rapport, relationships, trust and a feeling of community.

Work diligently to solve problems

As a manager, you're no longer the "doer." Instead, one of your core responsibilities is uncovering and solving problems that impact your guests and staff. Good managers have a passion for removing the obstacles that can prevent their staff from delivering excellent service; they make it their business that printers have ink and registers have tape. And they advocate for employees' needs, tackle process improvements and create sensible

solutions to promote lasting change. Managers with access to data trends can even use the scientific method to test their hypotheses (small operational changes) and see immediate results.

Yet, this enthusiasm for problem solving isn't about finding the most efficient, cheapest or fastest solution. Instead, managers must recognize short and long-term impacts; one solution may appear easy today, but could create a bigger problem six months from now. The same holds true for handling employees' personal problems. Managers known for developing creative solutions encourage staff to be transparent and truthful.

Disseminate your strengths to develop your people

One of the best pieces of advice I ever received was a reminder that if you're the only person who knows how to do your job, then you will forever be the only person doing that job. This means that, if you don't teach your team—allowing them the opportunity to grow and develop—you might never move into management or see your own career blossom and evolve. As a manager, you must give up your old role as expert technician in exchange for that of coach; your mission is to disseminate your strengths to your team, share your skills and be generous with knowledge and information. One of your biggest measures of success now is the success of your people.

Leave your ego at the door

In management, it's just as critical to invest in learning about yourself as it is to do so for your employees. And the key to accurate self-awareness and self-appraisal is humility. Good managers are able to acknowledge areas in which they need help and are less skilled. They accept the fact they don't know everything and even embrace it. With humility, managers can develop intellectual curiosity and take advantage of every opportunity to learn. This way of working sends an important message: being right is less important than doing the right thing. And this message is one your employees will hear loud and clear.

As you move into hospitality management, remember that it's not all about you. The way you manage is the way your staff will treat each other—and possibly your guests. You want to succeed, and you want to manage a team that is committed, driven by excellence and open to new ideas. In order to achieve these goals, it's your responsibility to lead by example and walk the walk of great management and leadership.

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