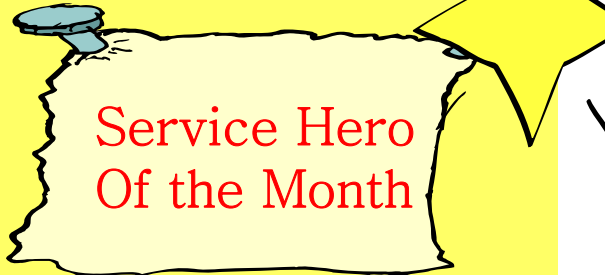


HIRE THE BEST AND RETAIN ONLY THE BEST!



Ritz-Carlton's Team, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia



Service Hero
Of the Month

The Centre for Customer Care (CCC) Malaysia, being the champion for service excellence in Malaysia and Asia, has been randomly visiting service/hospitality outlets for the last 3 years and our objective was to spot employees delivering excellent service to their customers. As a recognition for their excellent service rendered, CCC will accord them the Service Hero of the month award. This month's award goes to the Ritz-Carlton's Team, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

I conducted a Training programme on Multicultural Management for a client recently at Ritz-Carlton and I remembered asking my client why she chose Ritz-Carlton. My client replied: "It's their service that brings us back everytime!. We may pay a bit more compared to other hotels but we have no problem with that." I told my client that I have done much research on Ritz-Carlton for my Best-Practice benchmarking project in Pricewaterhouse Malaysia and Ritz-Carlton is definitely renowned as a service leader in the hotel industry. However, being a "doubting Thomas" as usual, I said I need to check out their service in Kuala Lumpur before I can agree with her. To me, hotels within the same chain may have differing levels of service.

Well, I did my 1 Day workshop at Ritz-Carlton and all I can say is: " I WAS CONVERTED". The Ritz-Carlton team really lived up to their international fame for service excellence. There is something special about Ritz-Carlton. The building is magnificent, the interiors are sumptuous and classy, and there are plenty of Ritz-Carlton employees to help you. What stands out is that the employees are also so well-trained and friendly. There are a few things which I found Ritz-Carlton KL doing differently compared to other hotels. They changed their selection of sweets for participants at every breaktime, even an extra chocolate bar for the 3pm teabreak. The lady Captain Istiqlawaty even remembered the kind of tea I liked – peppermint tea – and brought me a cup when I was too busy to make one for myself. **What was their secret? Was I just being lucky that day?**

When I got back to my office, I retrieved my research folders on Ritz-Carlton and got my answers there. Nothing in Ritz-Carlton happens as an accident or chance. The Ritz-Carlton is designed to provide personalised services to their guests and they focus intensely on the interactions between their employees and guests. The culture, training and quality processes all contribute to the atmosphere – but it all starts with SELECTION. The Ritz-Carlton has experimented with a number of different ways to select employees. They found that, using the "eleven talents" method, they consistently employ staff who have the necessary attitudes and approaches that underpin the delivery of good service and good teamwork. There are two groups of "talents; one for employees within the hotel and the other for people in leadership positions.

To ensure that Ritz-Carlton hires the most qualified and suitable employees, they adopt a very structured approach. There are five questions for each talent area and there is a tightly defined response for each of those questions. An applicant needs to exactly match that response to be able to score points. These points are allocated for each question, and in this way the total point score can be developed. A Talent Intensity Index, a chart showing the scores for each talent, is then created for the applicant and the scores achieved are benchmarked with the top performer in Ritz-Carlton and a Contrast Group. Shortlisted candidates then goes for a second interview with the manager who will then ask 22 specific questions which follow up the information which has been gathered using the talent model. These 22 questions will further probe some of the key areas that will underpin successful delivery of service customers. If the candidate performs well on these further 22 questions, then they are hired. Ritz-Carlton does pay serious attention to the selection and recruitment.

What am I getting at here? What can we learn from Ritz-Carlton? One of the most important Key Success Factor, if not the most important, to becoming a High Performance Service Organisation is **SELECTION! Hire Right and Hire the BEST!** No amount of training and no culture can overcome the characteristics that people bring with them. Selection is critically important but remarkably complicated – it is one of the most complex tasks an organisation needs to perform and that is the very reason why so many organisations fail in service delivery. The People Factor has not been addressed. Sad to say, many organisations still do not realise their error and continue to hire "any warm bodies with hands and legs". Where do you stand?

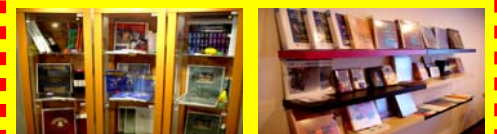
Dr. Allen Teh
CEO, Centre for Customer Care (CCC) Malaysia

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-Jack Mitchell