MEMORANDUM

To: Human Resource Manager

From: Vice President of Operations

Subject: Service Recovery Training

As you know, I am constantly trying to improve customer service in our hotels.  I believe that one of the most important aspects of high quality customer service is service recovery, or how our employees both seek out and respond to customer complaints.  There are two outcomes to a customer complaint:

            the customer complains and is satisfied by the response, or

            the customer complains and is not satisfied with the response.

However, sometimes the customer is dissatisfied, but never makes a complaint.  In my experience, dissatisfied customers don’t complain because (1) they want to avoid confrontation, (2) they don’t have a convenient way to make a complaint, or (3) they don’t believe that complaining will do any good.

I have decided that we need to train our hotel staff in service recovery.  My decision is based on the results of a recent needs assessment my staff conducted by holding focus groups with members of our frequent guest program.  I followed the steps in the article by Ross Tartell that you sent me last year; it helped me and my staff get useful information.  One theme that emerged from these focus groups was that our employees have difficulty in the area of service recovery.  For example, one guest said that last month, in one of our restaurants, he had to wait more than 30 minutes to get a simple cheeseburger, which was cold by the time it was delivered to his table and had cheddar cheese instead of the Swiss cheese the guest requested.  When the guest complained, the waiter rolled his eyes and said that the chef always messed up the cheeseburger orders.  Another guest called the front desk at 6:00 p.m. to request extra towels and was told that all of the housekeepers were gone for the day.  These service failures affect guests’ perceptions of our hotels and discourage repeat visits.

I heard two business process consultants speak at the International Hotel, Motel, and Restaurant Show last year and I thought they were very dynamic.  I contacted them about doing some service recovery training and found out that they have consulted on operational issues for one or two of our competitors.  They have agreed to give a presentation about service recovery.

Here’s what the consultants proposed for the service recovery training.  They will deliver a presentation accompanied by a question and answer period.  The total time for the training session will be approximately three hours: the presentation will last one and a half hours, the question-and-answer period will last approximately 45 minutes, and there will be one 30 minute break.  We will run one session for each shift (day, afternoon, and night shifts).  I would like to pilot this training in the College Inn-Athens before rolling it out to the other two locations.

My expectation is that after this training, the staff will be able to successfully recover from service failures.  Because you are knowledgeable about training, I want your honest feedback on the proposed training session.  Specifically, I want to know whether or not our employees will be able to recover from service problems in their interactions with customers after they complete this training.  If not, what recommendations do you have for improving the training?  I also think the managers need to support the training but I didn’t address that issue with the consultants.  Can you give me some ideas on the best way to engage the managers?

I look forward to hearing your thoughts.  If you need any additional information, please don’t hesitate to contact me.