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Social Responsibility- No More Food Waste

by

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A paper submitted to the faculty at the University of Cartagena in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts (English and French) in the Program of Foreign Languages at the Faculty of Human Sciences

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Abstract

The Hilton Cartagena hotel is a luxury hotel where people from all over the world come to relax, to enjoy vacations, meetings, and conferences. The three months of my internship at the hotel gave me a learning experience and skills that I wanted to obtain in a real working environment. With the help of my coworkers and supervisors, those three months became a training that helped me change my outlook on many things.

Food waste is a problem that has been around for a long time in some hotels and restaurants in Colombia. We know that it is not the duty of restaurants and hotels to feed those in need, but fulfilling their social and environmental responsibilities, it is necessary to make good use of food that is in good condition and that has not been consumed. Every day ends up in the garbage tons of food that could be consumed or donated to people suffering from hunger and malnutrition in the city of Cartagena. Through the development of the food donation project to the Colombian food bank, it seeks to minimize hunger and malnutrition that exists in the city of Cartagena.

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Introduction

Hilton Cartagena Hotel is located on the peninsula of El Laguito. This beach hotel borders the Caribbean Sea on three sides, offering a picturesque view and a peaceful atmosphere. the hotel has 341 rooms and suites. Also, two restaurants with different atmospheres, a gym, tennis courts and three swimming pools.

The hotel has the following characteristics:

- It is a hotel and convention center with different rooms for events
- On the tenth floor we find an exclusive executive room with panoramic view of the city
- Modern rooms with relaxing décor, amenities and ample workspace
- Children's playroom and recreational activities every day

This exclusive hotel is not only for important business or political meetings, it is also the perfect place for a family vacation as it has an elegant and modern atmosphere. That's why all kind of families, entrepreneurs, young people and also old people come to this hotel. even, entrance to pets is allowed.

Context and Expectations

Company/organization's

Since being founded in 1919, Hilton Worldwide has been a leader in the hospitality industry. Today, Hilton Worldwide remains a beacon of innovation, quality, and success. This continued leadership is the result of our staying true to our Vision, Mission, and Values.

Our Vision is to fill the earth with the light and warmth of hospitality. Besides, our Mission is to be the first choice of guests, team members, and owners alike and see below our values.

Hospitality: We're passionate about delivering exceptional guest experiences.

Integrity: We do the right thing, all the time.

Leadership: We're leaders in our industry and in our communities.

Teamwork: We're team players in everything we do.

Ownership: We're the owners of our actions and decisions.

Now: We operate with a sense of urgency and discipline.

Organizational structure:



Figure 1. Organization structure of Hilton Cartagena Hotel

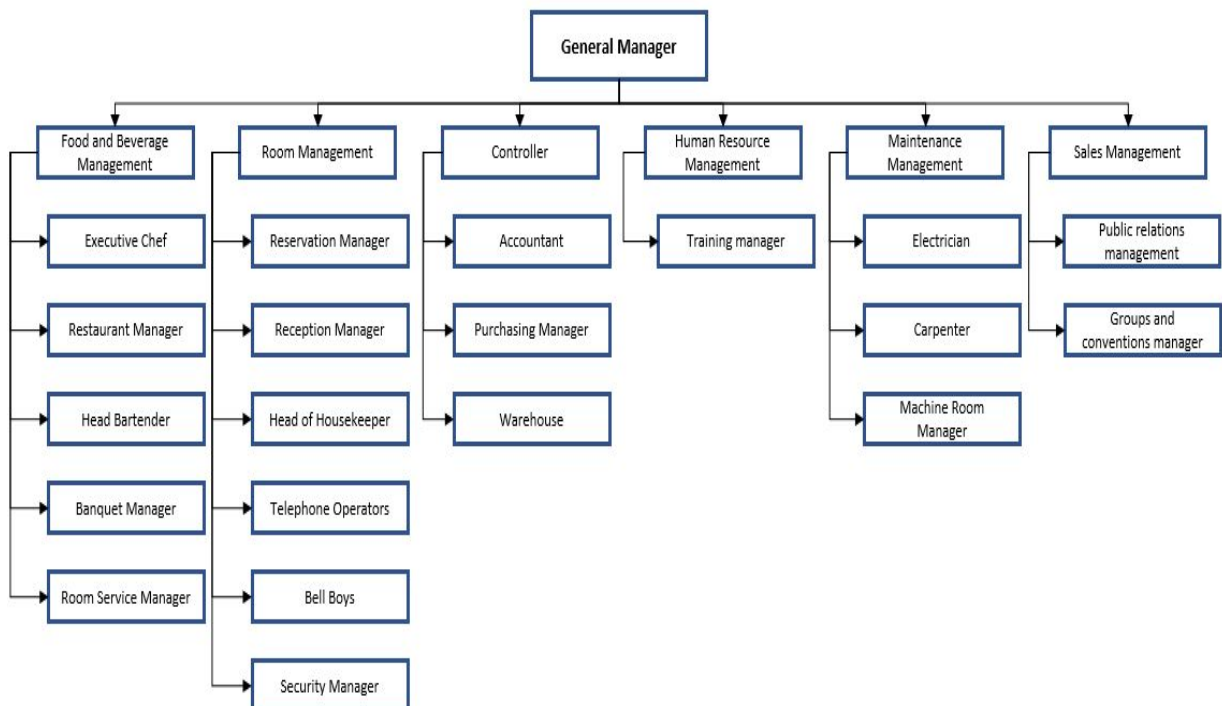


Figure 2. Organization Chart of Hilton Cartagena Hotel

In the figure 1, there is the organizational structure, where the general manager is Mr. Vinod Agarwal (marked in the red box). Also, we can see the directors of the different areas of the hotel. I worked in guest service area, which is under the care of the room manager Mr. Omar Nieves (marked in the yellow box). Those three people are the supervisors of the receptionist's team and the operators of the guest service. There is also the organizational chart shown in the figure 2.

Context and Expectations

My expectations of the hotel were very high. I knew that I would work in a luxury and world class hotel with many professionals. Before starting the internship, my goals were: improve my English, interact with the guests, and develop skills related to the service. When I started my internship, I wanted to learn how to answer phone calls because it was a new skill I had to acquire, and I was a little afraid to do it. As time passed, my goal was changed to prove my boss that I could do my job efficiently and quickly, and I wanted my boss to see that I was a responsible and proactive person.

Clientele & Co-Workers

It is important to note that the Hilton Hotel is one of the most recognized around the world and many people prefer it because of its elegance and innovation. It is the perfect place for a family vacation, a wedding and even the place for business events.

Hilton Hotel is characterized by its hospitality and guest service. During my work at the hotel I could learn that they have become the favorite of many people as they try to satisfy the expectations of the guests. Liliana Torres one night worked overtime making reservations for a group of entrepreneurs who would come to the hotel that week. Her departure time was at 6pm but she decided to stay. She explained to me that the group had made the reservation

late, but even though they reserved later than hotel's official hours, she decided to help that group for them to come to the hotel, so she stayed late to please them. In this way they can realize that the hotel gives special treatment to its guests, making it the favorite hotel.

To talk about my coworkers, they were all supportive during my training. In general terms, it was them who taught me to do each task that I had to do, and they were very patient to me when I asked them to explain certain things again. Also, my coworkers helped me to lose fears and insecurities that I had and felt when working for the first time in such a high-class hotel.

The challenges we had were related to the large number of guests arriving and leaving, from September to November, Because of the many activities, parties, weddings, congresses etc. This indicates that the number of check-outs and receipts that we had to organize was very large. Another challenge was to deal with discourteous people as we should always be kind, patient and try to please them in everything. In case the situation got out of hand, we had to transfer the call to our superiors.

The office had a very good work environment, and it had a professional character. My supervisors and coworkers were kind and helpful people who guided me during my training. I learned that guests should be given very special treatment. Every day I answered calls where the guests asked us for help with things and I was very happy to solve their issues efficiently. The calls were always answered formally and with pleasant tone of voice.

For the hotel, guests are treated the most importantly, so when they arrive, hotel offered a sweet and a complimentary bottle of water. That's what we call hospitality. Also, loyal hotel guests receive benefits by preferring the Hilton Hotel to other hotels. In this way guests can feel that they are valued and respected.

Immediate Supervisor/Mentor

My immediate boss, Mr Marcos Vasquez oversees the reception area, also the team of receptionists and operators. In addition, he takes care of matters related to finance, problems of the guests with invoices, and organizes the schedules of the reception team (bellboys, receptionists and operators).

His management style was very special. He had very good relations with everyone. he is kind but direct when it comes to correcting; he always tried to make our work more enjoyable with conversations, jokes and stories. He evaluated each of the telephone operators three weeks after they arrived at the hotel to make sure they already had the knowledge to do a good job. This methodology seemed essential to me so that I could remember these important data that I would need later and helped me to work effectively.

I can emphasize that he is very good as a leader, he always had the best solution for the different problems that can present in the reception area. His desk was always organized, and he asked us to be like him. Something I really liked is that on Saturdays he would put music in the office so that work could be enjoyable. A pleasant work environment means employees doing their work with efficiency and passion.

I could see that when there were very complex situations, Mr. Marcos thought very well about what he should do and then carried it out in a relevant way. I would like to have these characteristics, to be able to be effective in resolving certain situations calmly even if I am under a lot of pressure. In my view, these characteristics are essential for success in any area. During my internship period, Mr. Marcos was a guide for me, even changed certain ideas and thoughts that I had. He is an example for me to follow, just like Mr. Omar and Mrs. Liliana Torres. It was very meaningful for me to see how they gave me their support and

share their knowledge. It is important to note that they also recognized my achievements and made me feel part of their team even though I would only work for three months. Besides that, Mr. Marcos was my support during very stressful situations that happened at the hotel. I was treated discourteously by the hotel controller and felt like I didn't want to be in the hotel anymore. He helped me to overcome that situation and to create in my mind the strength I needed to continue. I appreciate the advice he gave me. I will keep it in my mind, so in the future, that will help me to go toward my goals and objectives.

My role in the company

My duties in the office were mainly to answer the calls of the guests, the people who wanted information of the hotel and the internal calls of the different areas of the hotel. Other tasks we had to perform were to arrange copies of the exempted, check-outs, receipts for each room, affiliating guests to Hilton honors, supporting Mrs. Liliana in updating guest data, writing letters or notes with information for guests among others.

My biggest challenge was to overcome the fear of answering calls. I didn't feel capable the first few days, I thought I could make a mistake. On the other hand, I had to try to memorize the main or the most frequent telephone extensions, such as: the reception, bellboys, timekeeper, housekeeper, reservations and administrative offices. In this way, I could be more effective during calls, however, it was difficult to memorize phone extensions. Subsequently, I was able to develop my skills as a telephone operator and I was very efficient at giving information and solving problems. I realized that even I could answer calls in English without any problems and that my listening skills had developed much more. Unexpectedly, my two coworkers always began transferring calls in English to my computer, excusing themselves that they could not hear well. The first few times I thought they were

telling the truth but then I realized that headphones didn't have any problems. However, for me, this situation was beneficial for the development of my English listening.

Description of the problem

At Hilton Cartagena Hotel, there are a variety of dining options for their clients in order to give them an innovative, specially designed, nutritious and fresh meals that are present on breakfast, lunch, dinner, and everything in between. During one of my shifts in the Executive Lounge, I saw how the waiter had to throw away all the breakfast food to put out the dinner buffet. I told him that I had seen and read about the food donation campaigns of Hilton hotels around the world and wondered why throwing all this food despite of its good condition. The waiter replied that they tried to eat as much as they could but still there was too much food, they were not allowed to take food out of the hotel, and that in addition, the donation campaigns were stopped because some employees stole food for themselves instead of being donated.

According to an article in December 2018 from El Espectador, about 34% of the food that are produced in Colombia are wasted, resulting in 9,76 million tons of food per year (Maussa, 2018). Although most of the waste is attributed in the agricultural production stage (nearly the 40% of the total), DNP calculations show that 15,6% are because of the last stage, where we have the contribution of hotels, supermarkets, restaurants, and consumers. If we become aware about this situation, we can understand that amount of food is capable of feeding many people in need, and many of our actions are causes of these results (Vega, 2018).

Due to the above, in September 2017 the Congress started a project law which seeks to create public policy against food loss and waste. The project law 301 prohibits the disposal of food suitable for human consumption that couldn't be commercialized and instead, it is promoted to donate it to nonprofit organizations that serve vulnerable people (Semana Sostenible, 2019). They must also take the necessary actions to prevent and reduce the waste generated. In July 2019, the Congress passed the bill and it is waiting for the presidential sanction to establish penalties (Caro, 2019).

The scope of this analysis will cover the Executive Lounge, The Chivas Restaurant and Carnaval Restaurant (employee dining room), all of them are part of Hilton Cartagena. The first one is focused for executive tower guest, they offer a variety of gourmet dining options with an excellent customer service, including buffet options in breakfast and dinner. In the other hand, the second one is for business guests and leisure travelers, offering buffet only at breakfast. Those meals are characterized by their customers for variety and good taste, along with the great attention from their staffs. The last one is for the employees, where they serve buffet menu on the three meals of the day.

A buffet is a meal where guests serve themselves from a variety of dishes set out on a table or sideboard (Mealey, 2018). This way of serving food creates a lot of waste if a restaurant doesn't have a clear waste management policy, or a defined culture where food is valued and handled correctly by their workers and customers (Capel, 2012). The previous paragraph was identified all the occasions where the restaurants studied offer buffet menu to their clients. As I said before, during my internship, I could see many people where they grab a portion of every dish they saw across the serving zone in order to taste it, and then threw away each dish they didn't like, otherwise because they were full, and couldn't eat it at all.

Also there were cases where restaurants had a lot of food left over at the end of the day, so they either threw it away or distributed it among the employees themselves. For some time, the leftover food was donated to people in need. But this activity had to be suspended because the hotel doesn't have a very clear policy that defines how to donate or give the leftover foods or any controls that ensure that the food has been donated.

At the end, there is a serious problem with all the food that are not consumed and are becoming waste, whether because of a lack of production planning or a company culture that encourage internal and external stakeholders to raise awareness of the food waste and how to treat it. All that food wasted makes us aware that there is a great opportunity to feed people in need, many areas where its inhabitants are hungry, and food is not a guarantee. In addition, currently the practices seen in the restaurants in scope are not able to fulfill the requirements of the project law 301 which is about to govern. Because of all mentioned above, I consider the problem under study. For all tourist establishments to have the tourist certification stamp, they must comply with each of the sectoral technical standards of sustainable tourism. The Hilton Hotel has this certification, but they are not being fully sustainable. This is a problem that affects both the environment and the poor communities of the city of Cartagena.

Solution Proposal

The work of Dr. Moez El Shohdi, founder and CEO of the Egyptian food bank is inspiring. He is a person that for years has been working in hotel management and his passion to serve others is an example to follow (Lemos, 2019).

He has founded more than 13 food banks in 13 countries. His mission is to be able to help needy people in the long term, through food donations. One of the pillars of the Egyptian

food bank is "anti-food waste awareness" in which there is an Egyptian Hotel and restaurants Association that undertake to donate the excess food produced in the hotel event, buffets and restaurants (Lemos, 2019). In the official website of the Egyptian food bank, we can see the associated companies and the Hilton Hotel is one of them (Egyptian Food Bank, s.f.). It is important to recognize that Dr. Moez El Shohdi is a very meticulous person in everything he does. He always investigates the NGOs to verify his credibility. He said “-We want to make sure that we are helping people in need”. It’s interesting how Dr. Moez El Shohdi realized how buffets are the main causes of food waste in hotels and restaurants. He mentioned how he decided to create the initiative that succeeded in convincing the Ministry of Tourism to reduce the size of the dishes from 32 cm to 27 cm in the buffets so that people would take less food and reduce significantly the leftovers.

It is a difficult task to convince companies and people that the food to be donated is safe to eat. It is also difficult to notify them about the current situation that thousands of people who have nothing to eat. Dr. Moez El Shohdi said that persistently so they were able to get everyone to understand the essence and importance of the program. In Colombia, it is not a secret that the economic development of companies is the first priority and leaving aside factors that are equal and even more important. All hotels and restaurants must fulfil the social responsibility of contributing to the development of the surrounding communities. In this way, following the model developed by Dr. Moez El Shohdi, which was also implemented since 2014 at Hilton Mexico Hotels, named “Al Rescate,” Hilton hotels in Colombia and specifically Hilton Cartagena can follow the same model that will allow them to help those in need by fulfilling their social responsibilities (RSE, s.f.).

The proposal to solve this problem consists of two parts. The first part focuses on organizing the aid project in detail. The hotel’s human development department can handle

this. First, they must contact the Colombian food bank, which can support the project. Colombian food bank will oversee donating these foods to the foundations that need them. The hotel must be in charge of donating food that was not used and that is in good condition, in an organized way and with strict control of quantities. also take care of the logistics, packaging and the transport of food. A diagram flow of this proposal is shown in the figure 3.



Figure 3. Diagram flow of the coordinated food campaign donations

The second part is to eradicate the lack of knowledge of the employees regarding the Sectoral Technical Standards of Sustainable Tourism since many of them do not know these norms .Through training and an awareness campaign at the hotel, we seek to end the problem of some employees taking food for themselves rather than allowing it to reach those in need. There is no need to hire a sustainable tourism advisor, the person in charge of human resources can study the sectoral technical standard (NTS-TS 004). Based on gastronomic establishments and bars, which shows the sustainability requirements they must have. These requirements are standards that employees of restaurants and bars should comply for the surrounding community and the environment. A diagram flow of this proposal is shown in the figure 4.



Figure 4. Awareness-Rising Campaign

All hotel employees should know that it is a better idea to donate the leftover than to waste all the food. They also should aware that leftover food still is a hotel's property. The awareness campaign should be with a meeting, where it shows the current situation of the problem and the importance of allowing this project to take place. Also highlighting the great job of all employees and make them feel an important part of this aid campaign, also, make an annual activity for employees to go to a foundation and serve food. It is necessary to document everything and measure all the indicators applicable in order to see the results and inspire everyone to continue with the project.

Expected Outcome

I feel that by following the model that Dr. Moez El Shohdi created, the Hotel can help many people in a very organized way and without any inconvenience related to employees. We know that there will always be leftovers, but we also know that those leftovers can be

used for good. I can advise the Hilton Cartagena hotel, to study more about the program "Al Rescate" initiated in Mexico because it is a Latin country who share certain characteristics with our country and who also struggle with problems similar to Colombia: corruption, selfishness, and poverty. This can help to better structure their project and accommodate its needs. After the project is ready, it can be presented to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Tourism of Colombia so that other hotels and restaurants can know and implement the food donation project and thereby reduce hunger in our country. I know that this project can be developed and achieve success. It only takes a lot of commitment and dedication from each of the parties working on it.

During my Internship, I met a lot of people at the hotel, and I know, a lot of them are responsible people, dedicated to their work and also, are people full of love and hospitality. I would like to be like them, to give all of me despite criticism, and harsh words. Patience and goodness are not attributes born with us. We must fight every day to get those attributes that these days are hard to maintain. Professor Hebert Hernandez taught me that we are citizens of the world; not only from Cartagena, Colombia. This makes me think that we are all responsible for our future, of our progress. With Professor Nadia Morales, I was able to know the 17 objectives of sustainable development, also known as global goals, that seek to eliminate poverty by taking care of the planet and to provide peace to all the inhabitants of the world. This knowledge made me think of many actions that I could do to, in order to improve the current situation of my city. We should support each other without any interest and in this way making the world a better place.

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