

Chapter 2

A History of Hospitality and an Inventory of Characteristics: The Hospitality Sector's 21st Century Workforce

ABSTRACT

This chapter discovers the historical origins of the hospitality industry and reviews development and progress through modern times, highlighting the key factors that are prioritized for 21st century markets. Crisis management for a hotel resulting from disruptive technology or external factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic are explored from the perspective of impact on an employee's psychological well-being and their job satisfaction. Next the chapter proposes opportunities to reinvent the traditional role of a hotel front-desk employee to better position those employees for success within a modern framework. The chapter concludes by identifying traditional and innovative benefits to offer a hotel workforce that will be effective in increasing satisfaction and reducing turnover.

A HISTORY OF HOSPITALITY

As far back as Ancient Greece starting at 800 BC, there are archeological reports of the first hotels where thermal baths were developed in villages designed for the weary to rest and recuperate from their travels. The Romans were also known to have developed lavish mansions throughout the empire

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to accommodate travelers conducting business of the government as well as creating thermal baths in many locations including what is modern day England, Switzerland, and the Middle East (Cunliffe, 1969). These accommodations, while not always operating exactly like what one expects from a modern hotel, were the original sparks in the recorded history of the hospitality industry with their grand gestures of extensive and luxurious service. The next distinct historical examples are Caravanserais, which would become common among Middle Eastern routes throughout the Middle Ages, which provided a safe place to rest for caravans. Around the same period in Europe, monasteries and abbeys became the first, formal establishments that would offer refuge for any traveler. Ultimately independently operated Inns, along with hospitals and other enterprising service or retail trades began to appear along well travelled routes to support trading merchants, religious pilgrimages and crusading forces as more mobile tendencies and dynamics transformed societies (Andrews, 2007).

Historical experts often identify the beginning of the fifteenth century as the true start of the modern hospitality industry (Ivanoa, Ivanov, & Magnini, 2016). Around this time, the French, and the English each introduced laws separately that required any establishment providing lodging services to maintain a register. A proliferation of establishments offering services is observed during this century, with inns maintaining some similarities including access through a central point, a kitchen, bedrooms available for rent (usually situated around a courtyard), a kitchen and dining area and stables (Andrews, 2007). Signage was developed as inns created unique characteristics and selling points to stand out from the rest of the offerings. A familiar offering of distinguishing characteristics was touted then (as now) which included unique cuisine, soft pillows and beds and reasonable fares. France even published a guidebook for travelers that showcased all the hospitality choices along well-traveled routes as well as some along less traveled ones (Groth, 1986).

The industrial revolution of the 19th century saw a surge of transition within the developing hospitality industry to resemble operations more familiar to what modern guests anticipate today. With the development of cities, and of a wealthy upper class, hotels began to align their services with the needs of specific target audiences (Davidson, 2005). The emerging wealthy upper class that was prospering from the innovation of the age embraced properties that featured high-end staterooms with luxurious appointments and services. Hotels embraced architectural innovation of the day and the advent of the skyscraper and elevators allowed hotels to become larger and taller (Groth, 1986).

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