

The Business: Riviera Nautic, Metung

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The Owners : Fred and Jenny Herbert,

To find out more: www.rivieranautic.com.au, www.holidaymakers.com.au

Background

We had been running Riviera Nautic for 17 years when we expanded from boating holidays to include holiday house rentals. In many ways the businesses were similar: like the boats, the houses are remote from our place of business, and are owned individually.

Of all the business skills we have learnt over the years, the development and application of systems and procedures has been the most important. We recognise the indivisible link between customer service and procedures that ensure consistency and high standards.

So right from the start with HolidayMakers, we introduced procedures that would overcome the logistical complications of having houses spread over a 30 kilometre stretch - houses all furnished and equipped in the individual styles of their owners!

The Problem/The Issue

Our practice has been to identify a problem, find a solution that will work to solve the greatest number of eventualities, document the procedure and train to that procedure to ensure consistent application.

House cleaning was a case in point. All the houses are individual and so we first needed to establish a base procedure, then individual add-on procedures and checklists for each house.

We then had to train. It was hard to convince our cleaners that any specific skills were needed beyond how they cleaned their own homes. And we had to introduce them to the concept of time efficiency.

The Solution

We undertook two forms of training. First, we invited a consultant from Melbourne (who had been an executive housekeeper for a number of five-star hotels) to run a full day's training with our cleaners, to impart not only skills and

efficiency, but also respect for the job and their important role in the organisation.

Secondly, we convinced a large Melbourne hotel to let our cleaners work alongside their housekeepers for a day (they were more than a little overwhelmed by the pace). Where they were critical of some of the hotel procedures, we were able to discuss methods more appropriate to our business.

These training modes have worked well in shifting our cleaners' perception from 'just another house to clean', to an understanding that everyone in our organisation/in our team plays an important role in the delivery of high levels of customer service.

Neither of the training events was expensive, yet they have had cost saving consequences. Our house owners are charged a set rate for cleaning, so the more time efficient our cleaners, the better it is for us financially. Also, if the houses are not cleaned to a standard, we lose on repeat business and the risk of an owner removing their house from our portfolio. So while we might not be able to measure the value of the training in exact terms, we know that the return on the investment is well worthwhile.

Your personal contribution to the development of this strategy and associated initiatives is crucial. Various forums and online opportunities have existed since June 2004 for you to have your say.