



Preface

The Engineer

In 1971 the Walt Disney Company opened its brand-new Magic Kingdom in the middle of a 43-square-mile site near the quiet town of Orlando, Florida. Among the many people hired to help operate this venture was a newly graduated industrial engineer from the University of Florida. One of his first jobs was to study the capacity requirements of the monorail system that carried customers from the main parking lot to the Magic Kingdom. Because customer demand had turned out to be higher than expected, long lines of customers had to wait to be transported by monorail train into the Magic Kingdom. Customers hate to wait. The logical solution seemed to be adding more carrying capacity, and the study's original purpose was to help justify the need for and associated cost of an additional monorail train.

This young engineer had just completed his master's thesis on computer simulation, a technique enabling the analysis and optimizing of complex queuing systems. In essence, queuing theory is a mathematical technique for studying and understanding how best to serve people waiting in lines, or queues, at grocery store checkout counters, bank teller windows, and the like. The engineer saw this monorail problem as a perfect opportunity to apply computer simulation to real life. He created a computerized queuing model of the entire Magic Kingdom monorail system and simulated the average waiting time of customers at the parking-lot station wanting to go by monorail to the park entrance.

The engineer's analysis of all possible system configurations led him to a startling conclusion: The computer simulation showed that to increase the system capacity and thereby reduce customer wait times, Disney should not add another monorail train but *eliminate* an existing train. The simulation clearly showed that too many trains were on the system already and, as a result, the trains were never able to get up to full design speeds. Safety control devices on the monorail system prevented trains from getting too close to each other by automatically cutting power to any train that encroached into the zone of the preceding train. Therefore, because too many trains were on the system at a time, the trains were constantly being slowed down and often stopped while waiting for a preceding train to clear its zone. With one less train on the system, incoming trains were able to unload, load, and leave a station immediately and travel at design speed between stations without having to wait before leaving or slow down while in motion (or even stop, sit, and wait between stations), because the preceding train had not cleared its zone. Since overall monorail system capacity is a function of how quickly trains can be dispatched from stations after unloading and then reloading, enabling fewer trains to travel between stations more quickly would increase the system's carrying capacity. Or so the simulation said.

Convincing people unfamiliar with queuing theory and simulation that these results were valid was difficult. But, after much discussion, management decided to let the young engineer try out this crazy idea and agreed to conduct a test. Much to everyone's surprise, it

worked. The lines did decrease and, more amazingly, the customer waiting times predicted by the simulation were accurate within thirty seconds of the actual average wait recorded during the test. Needless to say, this outcome led to some interesting career opportunities with Disney for the young college graduate, who continued to use quantitative models to describe and predict Walt Disney World Resort customer behavior.

Bruce Laval, now Executive Vice President, Operations Planning and Development, Walt Disney Attractions, was that young engineer. During his next twenty-five years with the company, he held various executive operating and planning positions, including Executive Vice President, Operations Planning and Development, Walt Disney World Resort. He and his staff were responsible for studying, measuring, and managing the service experience at Walt Disney World Resort to ensure that customers have the outstanding experience for which Disney is famous. He is the man to whom this book is dedicated.

The Academic

In 1993 Bob Ford went to the University of Central Florida to head the Department of Hospitality Management. Dick Nunis, then President of Walt Disney World Resort, sponsored an internship for Bob with Disney, to help Bob build an academic program to train the next generation of leaders for Disney and other forward-looking hospitality organizations in the area. Bob spent time in the three theme parks (the Magic Kingdom, Epcot, and Disney-MGM Studios), several hotels and restaurants, water parks, Pleasure Island, and the central kitchen and laundry on Disney property, talking to managers and employees about what they did and why. This company is frequently cited as a leader in hospitality management, and the internship was a great way to learn more about the hospitality industry and the Disney approach to managing.

Out of many interesting experiences, the most influential for Bob occurred during the Traditions training program required of all new Disney employees. As the trainee group came out of the underground tunnel onto the square at Main Street, U.S.A., in the Magic Kingdom, the training guide asked an interesting question about the streets that branched off from the square: Could anyone see any difference between the street that went toward Tomorrowland and the street that led to Frontierland? When no one could, she pointed out that the street going off to the customer's right (to Tomorrowland) was slightly wider than the one to the left (to Frontierland); Disney researchers had studied customer behavior and had learned that when customers come to a decision point about which they are really indifferent, they tend to go in the direction of their *handedness*. In designing the park, Disney made the roads wider toward the right (since most people are right-handed) than toward the left.

This explanation excited the academic; it suggested that a rational, scientific process was used to create and manage the park. He set out to find the person behind this thinking.

He found Bruce Laval. Their continuing dialogue was one stimulation for Bob Ford to get together with Cherrill Heaton, coauthor with Bob of *Principles of Management: A Decision-Making Approach* and *Organization Theory: An Integrative Approach*, to write this book. The guest-focused approach to hospitality management, as seen at Disney and other progressive hospitality organizations, is a whole new way of managing. This book blends an explanation of this approach to hospitality management with relevant research findings about managing hospitality organizations.

During the internship, Bob made the mistake (only once!) of referring to park visitors as customers. He was quickly informed that park visitors are Disney's *guests* and are always to be treated that way. Bob heard the term *guestology* used at Disney. It seemed to mean something like "treat our park visitors as our guests. Find out what our guests want and expect from their park experience, and organize all of Walt Disney World Resort's functions, people, attractions, and activities so they provide the park experience that guests expect, and then some." Bruce Laval's monorail study and the study of handedness as it relates to guest choices at intersections are examples of the scientific approaches to discovering and meeting guest needs that Disney and other leading-edge hospitality organizations use.

Bob also met executives from other hospitality organizations and found that many of them, like Disney, also managed their businesses from the customer's or guest's point of view. The way they ran their businesses was not a mere modification of the traditional management principles long taught in business schools; Bob realized they were using principles, practices, and methods that were part of the emerging services literature plus much that was based largely on their acquired knowledge—gained through hard experience—of the differences between the service industry and smokestack industries.

Purpose of the Book

This book is an attempt to organize and present this information, some of which comes from academic studies, some from the school of experience. It was written to meet the needs of college classes devoted to or including exploration of this exciting, undeveloped area: managing hospitality organizations. It should also be of help to executives and managers who want to implement a guest-focused service strategy in any hospitality organization that wants to compete successfully in today's customer-driven market.

The book fills a void. Up until now, instructors and students in hospitality management classes have had to use a text on general services management, with specific applications to restaurants, lodging, and other hospitality areas made by the instructor or by means of handouts and articles on serving guests in hospitality settings. *Managing the Guest Experience in Hospitality* fills that void. It joins between two covers the findings of the most significant research on services and hospitality services in particular with the best practices of leading hospitality organizations like the Walt Disney Company, Marriott, Ritz-Carlton, Darden Restaurants, Southwest Airlines, and many others.

In addition to reviews by numerous college and university instructors of hospitality, the material has been reviewed by practicing executives in many successful hospitality organizations, among them Walt Disney World Resort, Hertz Corporation, Bristol Hotels, Sodexo-Marriott, Boykin Hotel Corp., Planet Hollywood, Tishman Hotel Corporation, Darden Restaurants, Cheesecake Factory, SeaWorld of Florida, Opryland Hotel, and Hilton Hotels. These academic and practitioner reviews have assured that the text content is supported by sound theoretical underpinnings and real-world findings.

The Hospitality Principles

Managing the Guest Experience in Hospitality represents theory that has passed the test of relevance. A proven principle of hospitality management keys each chapter of this book. Leading hospitality organizations have found these principles to be important, workable, and useful. They represent the key points to keep in mind when putting the book's material

into practice. They can guide hospitality organizations and their managers as they seek to reach the levels of excellence achieved by the benchmark organizations.

Systematic Sequence

Its clear structure and organization are major strengths of *Managing the Guest Experience in Hospitality*. A section is devoted to each of hospitality management's three major concerns: **Strategy, Staffing, and Systems**. Each of the fourteen chapters is keyed to a principle of successful hospitality management.

Section 1 (The Hospitality Service Strategy) begins by explaining some of the book's major concepts: some differences between **products** and **services**, what is meant by **guestology**, meeting **customer expectations**, the three parts of the **guest experience**, and the definitions of **quality, value, and cost** in a guest service context. This Section then moves to a thorough coverage of the **planning** processes used to assess and meet guest expectations. Also explained are such essential planning topics as quantitative and qualitative **forecasting tools**, the importance of **demographic trends**, and the organization's service strategy origins in its **vision, purpose, and mission**, which themselves are based on the organization's careful assessment of guest expectations. Chapter 3 is on why the **service setting or environment** is crucial to service success. Many Walt Disney World Resort examples are used to illustrate the principles and best practices of creating an appropriate setting. Disney organizes its parks and attractions around fantasy **themes**. Disney's attention to detail is the benchmark against which other hospitality organizations measure the quality and effectiveness of their own service environments. Therefore we have based our discussion of service environments in general and theming in particular on Disney examples. Part 1 concludes by discussing the importance to the hospitality organization of a total **service culture** and how to achieve it.

Section 2 (The Hospitality Service Staff) covers how to recruit and **hire** "persons who love to serve," and how to **train, motivate, and empower** them to provide outstanding guest service. A section that many students find particularly interesting is devoted to how the hospitality organization can, when the conditions are right, encourage and help guests to **coproduce**, or participate in providing their own experiences!

Section 3 (The Hospitality Service Systems) shows how to glue the different parts of the guest experience together by communicating **information** to the right person at the right time. Because of its obvious importance to the successful guest experience, **service delivery** is the subject of a separate chapter. Because no organization's server/system combinations can match demand perfectly, techniques for managing the inevitable **waits** for service are covered. All organizations want to provide perfect experiences; we cover how to **avoid service failures** and problems. But because no servers and systems have yet been devised that can provide so complex a service as the guest experience perfectly every time, we also cover how to **fix service failures** when they occur. Chapter 13 presents some ways of **measuring results** in terms of service quality and guest satisfaction so organizations and servers know how they are doing.

Section 3 and the book conclude with an explanation of how the organization's people, units, and their efforts are tied together to provide remarkable guest service that delights guests; that blending of parts and people is accomplished by outstanding organizational **leadership**.

Learning Objectives, Key Terms, and Discussion Questions

Every chapter opens with a comprehensive set of **learning objectives** addressing the chapter's main points. The list of **key terms and concepts** serves as a brief preview of the subjects and ideas in the chapter to come. These terms and concepts are boldfaced the first time they appear in the chapter. The **discussion questions** at each chapter's end are designed to provoke thought and classroom interaction about chapter content and to enable students to make self-assessments of how well they understand the material.

Activities and Case Studies

Each chapter includes at least one **hospitality activity** to encourage students to visit local hospitality organizations and study them from the perspective of the book's ideas. Some activities suggest that students talk with guests, employees, and managers to obtain a variety of perspectives on the guest experience. Other activities suggest exploration of the Internet to visit sites established by hospitality organizations and to acquire further information on the book's concepts and ideas. **Case studies** provide an opportunity to discuss hospitality concepts and principles in terms of real (if disguised) and hypothetical hotels, restaurants, and other business types found in the hospitality industry.

Instructor's Guide to Text

The **Instructor's Guide** provides **answers** to the end-of-chapter questions and to the discussion questions following the chapter cases, **additional field exercises** in hospitality, true-false and multiple-choice quizzes, and **additional material** to assist the instructor in preparing course outlines and lesson plans.

To the Student

Managing the Guest Experience in Hospitality is designed for you. The material has been tried out in several classes of students with backgrounds similar to yours. The information presented is based on the best available research on services and hospitality services in particular, and on the best practices of leading hospitality organizations. The book should give you a thorough understanding of the principles of managing a hospitality organization; we think you will want to keep the book with you if you enter the hospitality field.

Primary Support Staff

Once again and always, we thank our wives, Barbara Ford and Marieta Barrow Heaton, for unfailing support and for continuing to exceed our expectations; they put the *wow!* in our lives.

Robert C. Ford
Cherrill P. Heaton