Carving Out a New Culture of Safety

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Owning and operating a hotel can be a risky venture. There are several factors to consider, including loss prevention, safety, and liability. Hotel managers need to be diligent ensuring that the strategies in place have a minimal impact on the overall guest experience. Effective risk prevention strategies are about expecting the unexpected. This includes having both the tools and strategies in place to prevent risks not only from occurring but also escalating.

Evaluating Risks

Ideally, risk prevention strategies should be specifically tailored to the needs of your business. This ensures that the recommended strategies will not only be implemented but also will be effective. To accurately estimate potential risks, Nusrat Andersen, vice president enterprise, risk management, Diamond Resorts International, recommends conducting a job hazard analysis (JHA). The JHA will detail all work activities across the operation, and the steps involved, from climbing ladders to cleaning pools.

Once completed, the hotel will have detailed introspection into the possible risks and challenges throughout the hotel. "The idea is to put a plan in place that can help mitigate risks at each of these steps," Andersen says. This will pave the way for safe performance management, protecting employees, guests, and the hotel's assets. However; these plans are only effective if used.

Safe Performance Management

Safety management practices need to make sense for both the management team and frontline workers. "When you are sitting behind a desk, it's easy to say, 'Let's do that,'" Andersen says. "But until you are out there on the ladder, you can't tell that the ladder won't attach to any item on the building." All too often, safety plans are created without firsthand knowledge of the environment, causing the plan to fail before it is even rolled out. Effective safety practices are most often created when there is a dialogue between management and the frontline workers. "Listen to your people and solicit advice from them about how to create a safer environment," Andersen says.

This engagement of frontline staff is key. In order to do just that, Diamond Resorts works in conjunction with its insurance company to cultivate employee subject matter experts as safety protocol advocates. These advocates help ensure that the plan is both effective and implemented.

Having the Right Tools in Place

Safety management practices include strategies, safety equipment, and specialized tools. One of the elements of incorporating safe practices is to make them a part of the routine. "We can give someone the right equipment but if we don't train them on how to use it, we are not going to mitigate the risks," Andersen says. "If we train them but we don't follow up with safe performance practices, we are not fully mitigating it."

Creating a Safety Culture

When frontline staff becomes involved in the conversation, they start to think of their role in risk prevention. Safety evolves from a conversation into a behavior. "Now you have people besides your safety coordinators and risk managers that are thinking toward how to better implement the safety practices," Andersen says.

Effective risk management is about providing the tools and training that will integrate both a culture and behavioral shift. "If you can generate a safety-minded culture that is widely known among your staff at your location, it's going to become second nature for them and it will evolve into a safer environment for your guests as well," Andersen says. Creating a risk prevention culture will help cultivate a safe environment that keeps the guest experience top of mind.

About the Author
Greg Patterson is a founding partner of Technicraft Product Design Inc. and co-inventor of Shutgun.