

Hire for ATTITUDE and train for APTITUDE

Four Seasons: Our key competitive difference is our people

I often talk about how "respect for people" is the oft-forgotten, but primary pillar of lean - and how lean fails when that concept isn't embraced. Now we have another example of the power of people. Four Seasons has long been a favourite hotel chain. . The service is unbelievable - and damn near psychic if you ask me. Now an article in [their magazine](#) explains why and how - and their method for hiring such exemplary team members.

"We've identified that our key competitive difference is our people," says Annabell Shaw, Hotel Manager at Four Seasons Hotel London at Park Lane. "We spend a great deal of time finding the right people and making sure they're equipped to give our guests an excellent experience."

How do they do that?

Since the company was founded in 1961, the heart of Four Seasons culture has been the Golden Rule, the belief in treating other people the way you'd like to be treated yourself. To identify candidates possessing this quality, Four Seasons makes hiring choices based on personality. In fact, attitude takes precedence over skill sets.

As part of the standard screening process, every prospective employee is interviewed by up to four Four Seasons executives, including the Hotel's General Manager. Questions focus on the essential character attributes of the Golden Rule, seeking individuals who are warm and caring, ethical and well-intentioned.

Attitude over skills. I know several manufacturers that hire for attitude - and creativity - over basic skills. The GM interviews hundreds - sometimes even thousands if it's for a new hotel like the one described in the article. Do the executives at your operation do that? Think about how it ensures the right culture, the right attitude - as well as showing the prospective employee the importance that management places on those attributes.

But that's not all. The article goes on to describe the importance of standard work - standardization as a baseline that is continually improved.

All new staff are instructed on "core standards," including step-by-step procedures on everything from how to make a bed to how to serve a bottle of wine. Far from feeling like strict rules, these standards are seen as guidelines in the art of doing each small thing very well. They're a proven way to demonstrate quality and caring.

At the same time, all staff are encouraged to be perceptive about each guest's individual preferences—and to anticipate any possible requests. That might mean a housekeeper noticing that you prefer to sleep on the left side of the bed, so your slippers are placed there the next night. Perhaps, you like to leave the cap off your toothpaste. Or that you always eat apples but never touch bananas. The next day, you might get more apples!

"Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow."

Ronald. E. Osborn

Where Lean Thoughts can become Reality

ATTITUDE always trumps APTITUDE

There's real employee empowerment. Not "you're empowered, but don't cost us anything." *When the opportunity arises, staff are empowered to go beyond the call of duty and make independent decisions to assist guests—whether that means offering the house car for the drive to an important meeting, replacing a missing button on your jacket or giving your child a teddy bear.*

It all boils down to respect.

Four Seasons regularly appears on Fortune magazine's list of the 100 best companies to work for in the United States, and the company is known to treat employees with the same level of respect that they in turn are expected to give their guests.

There are daily staff meetings with the General Manager to discuss any issues from the day before. That's when many new ideas emerge. In fact, the majority of innovation comes directly from employees, ranging from improving energy efficiency to new ways for removing wrinkles from a duvet cover. Staff always feel supported by management. And when they feel good about their jobs, they're happy to share those good feelings with guests.

Daily meetings, embracing suggestions from the team, treating team members like you want to be treated - and how you want your customers to be treated.

Don't forget the importance of people ... They truly are your company

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Mixed Model scheduling -----

Not for Factories anymore !!



Lean Thoughts