



## **Elevating the Guest Experience: Training Tips for Active Listening, Open-Ended Questions, and Anticipating Guest Needs**

In today's competitive hospitality landscape, creating a memorable guest experience is more crucial than ever. At hihotels, we recognize that a warm smile and a comfortable room are just the beginning. True guest satisfaction is achieved when feel valued and understood.

Going above and beyond for guests begins with empowering your team to master three essential skills: active listening, asking open-ended questions, and anticipating guest needs. By investing in these areas, you can foster lasting loyalty, improve guest satisfaction, and stand out in a competitive market.

### **1. Active Listening: Building Connection and Trust**

Active listening isn't just about hearing words; it's about fully engaging in the conversation and understanding guests' emotions and needs. When guests feel heard, they also feel valued, which builds trust and enhances their experience. For hihotels franchisees, training staff on active listening helps to build a foundation for excellent service, whether it's at check-in or when resolving an issue.

#### **How to Train for Active Listening**

- **Role-Play Exercises:** Create scenarios where your team listens to guest concerns and responds in a way that shows empathy. These exercises can focus on handling complaints, making recommendations, or simply engaging in small talk.
- **Body Language Training:** Teach staff to maintain eye contact, nod, and avoid distractions. These nonverbal cues convey genuine interest and attentiveness.
- **Paraphrasing Practice:** Encourage team members to repeat back key points from a guest, such as confirming, "So, if I understand correctly, you'd like a late check-out tomorrow?" This shows that they are fully engaged and understand what the guest wants.

### **2. Open-Ended Questions: Discovering Guest Preferences**

Open-ended questions encourage guests to share more about their preferences. By personalizing interactions, your team members will not only gather valuable insights, they'll also makes guests feel more involved and valued.

#### **How to Train for Asking Open-Ended Questions**

- **Create Cheat Sheets:** Develop a list of open-ended questions for different situations. For example, during check-in, questions like "What brings you to town?" or "How can we make your stay more enjoyable?" help staff learn more about the guest's needs and preferences.

- **Training with Feedback:** Pair up team members to practice open-ended questions and provide each other with feedback on how well their questions invite guests to share.
- **Encourage Curiosity:** Frame open-ended questions to show genuine curiosity about the guest's experience. When staff are curious, guests feel valued and are more likely to open up.

### 3. **Anticipating Guest Needs: Exceeding Expectations**

The ability to anticipate guest needs before they're vocalized is one of the most impactful skills in hospitality. This "extra step" surprises and delights guests, creating memorable experiences that can translate into positive reviews and repeat visits. For hihotels, anticipating needs is a way to exceed guest expectations and create a lasting impression.

#### **How to Train for Anticipating Needs**

- **Study Guest Profiles:** Train staff to quickly assess guest profiles and preferences from previous stays or preferences noted at booking. Recognizing returning guests and preparing accordingly demonstrates attention to detail and personalized service.
- **"What If" Scenarios:** Use scenario-based training to help staff think ahead about what a guest might need. For example, if a guest mentions a celebration, they might appreciate a complimentary early check-in/late-checkout
- **Daily Huddles:** Start each shift with a brief team meeting to discuss potential VIP guests, special requests, or events that might require additional attention. This habit encourages a proactive, rather than reactive, approach.

### 4. **Reinforcing the Skills in Daily Operations**

Integrating these skills into daily operations is key to long-term success. Here are a few ways to reinforce them:

- **Weekly Refresher Sessions:** Dedicate time each week to practice and discuss active listening, open-ended questions, and anticipating needs.
- **Recognition and Rewards:** Acknowledge and reward team members who go the extra mile. This could be through a "Guest Experience Star" program, where staff receive recognition for exceptional service or even a gift card to a restaurant.
- **Gather Guest Feedback:** Encourage guests to provide feedback on their experience. Positive feedback reinforces these skills, and constructive feedback helps identify areas for improvement.

## **Conclusion**

In hospitality, the little things make a big difference. By training your team in active listening, open-ended questions, and anticipating guest needs, you transform each guest interaction into an unforgettable experience. Implementing these training practices not only increases guest satisfaction but also fosters a positive workplace culture where staff feel equipped and motivated to deliver outstanding service every day.