

Case Study

ARAMARK Harrison Lodging



The Client

ARAMARK Harrison Lodging (AHL) operates more than 45 conference centers in North America including conference and training centers near major business destinations. This prestigious group includes recognized public and private client Conference Centers as well as AHL's Collegiate Collection of ten independent facilities found on the campuses of some of America's most prestigious colleges and universities. Representative properties include The R. David Thomas Executive Conference Center at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business, The Fluno Center for Executive Education at The University of Wisconsin, and The Paul J. Rizzo Conference Center at The University of North Carolina. AHL was formed when ARAMARK Conference Center Management acquired Harrison Conference Centers in 2002, and today is the largest operator in the business. AHL operates as a division of ARAMARK Corporation (NYSE:RMK), a world-leader in food and facilities management services.

ARAMARK Harrison Lodging launched a powerful and innovative strategic initiative in 2004, called the AHL Global Performance System. This innovative program helps manage and communicate our standards and customer service philosophies across our entire portfolio. The AHL-GPS helps guide our team of employees to a higher level of performance. LRA helped us design and deploy an integrated Web site of standards, compliance measurements and customer feedback that keeps us on track; we know exactly where we want to go and are better positioned to continuously track our operating gains and progress towards our goals.

Polly Millan, Manager of Brand Operations, ARAMARK Harrison Lodging



The Situation

As a result of the merger between ARAMARK Conference Centers and Harrison Conference Centers, the company was operating with two different sets of corporate standards, procedures and processes. In order to produce consistent, branded experiences at all of their conference centers, AHL recognized the need to establish a unified platform for articulating and communicating the combined company's standards, business practices and desired outcomes. To succeed, every employee would need to be reading from the same book, and speaking in "one voice." In addition, AHL wanted to design and implement customer satisfaction tracking and performance measurement systems that would consistently measure and trend performance at all properties in the portfolio. These performance metrics were to be used to populate a balanced scorecard to be used for performance evaluations, compensation plans and recognition programs.

The Solution

Step 1 - Led by Polly Millan, AHL's Manager of Brand Operations, AHL assembled a team to craft distinctive standards reflecting the AHL philosophy of a "Local Culture, Global Brand" to unite the resources of the company. LRA assisted in building an integrated Web site that provides AHL managers and employees a powerful resource, available 24/7 from any computer. AHL employees have a true advantage in better understanding our company's strategies. AHL provides the tools and practices to implement the guest focus philosophy and it really makes a difference to clients.



Step 2 - Crafting standards was only the first step. What makes the AHL Global Performance System powerful is the integration of standards with customer feedback. Understanding the needs and expectations of AHL customers - both conference attendees and meeting planners - was the next logical step to success. LRA provided a customized version of its SurveySmart customer satisfaction and loyalty tracking program, helping build the AHL Customer Loyalty Measurement Program. Each AHL property receives e-Survey feedback via a Real Time Reporting Suite. This tool allows General Managers to perform advanced analysis to pinpoint data trends and correlation between survey questions and customer demographics. The “Real Time Alert” feature makes a difference in responsiveness to customer concerns, allowing AHL properties the opportunity to contact customers shortly after they submit their thoughts.

Step 3 - “Putting strength behind our programs has brought our standards to life” said Millan. “Shortly after our Standards were launched on our AHL-GPS site, we followed up with property visits by an LRA Consultant. The AHL Quality Assurance Evaluation reviews AHL standards and makes certain our General Managers and employees are focused in the right direction. Our team has been very responsive to these visits.”

The Results

“The benefits of the AHL-GPS are ongoing,” notes Millan. “This was not a one-time program, but rather an investment strategy for long-term success. Improving and managing the AHL Customer Experience will keep us at the top of our business. Our teams use the AHL-GPS everyday and we can monitor this activity. We know what information is being viewed and how often our people are accessing the information. For instance, we know our users are accessing over 10,000 pages each month. The benefits are coming to life and continue to trend upward as we add new content. Our Customers are telling us that Overall Satisfaction has increased year-over-year and General Managers are carefully reviewing this progress at each property. We continue to monitor feedback and design a corrective strategy that is unique for each local property and supports the global brand.”



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