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Insider: Culture – It's Not Just for Anthropologists Anymore

By Rob Rush, CEO, LRA Worldwide



The title of my article in the [Hotel Business Review](#) – "[Culture – It's Not Just for Anthropologists Anymore](#)" – was certainly meant to be tongue in cheek. The concept of a corporate culture, and in the hospitality industry one specifically focused on guest service, has long ceased to be the exclusive domain of the Louis Leakey's and Margaret Mead's of the world. In fact, as my article discusses, the terminology involving "culture" has become so ubiquitous as to risk rendering it somewhat meaningless.

So my goal for this article, you ask? Define and demystify "culture," so that it avoids the fate of other popular buzzwords du jour and is recognized for what it is. Less a solution, more an evolution requiring a consistent definition and communication of common knowledge, belief and behaviors....over time.

At LRA, a client inquiring about our "Customer Experience Management" offering and point of view is often code for "we have terrible customer service...help!" In the situational assessment that we might perform for such a client, we might identify the issue as one of culture – the knowledge, belief, behaviors and means of transferring all of the above from generation to generation – are not aligned around the delivery of a consistent, optimal customer service experience, and thus the manifestation of the problem in poor customer service. And while we might submit a proposal to help them "build" or "change" their service culture, what we are really proposing (and make very clear at that time) is a means to begin what promises to be a very long process.

The danger, however, is always that the person who is charged with "implementing the culture" is going to feel the pressure of expectation and hear what he/she wants to hear. If, at the end of a three month process to lay the cultural foundation (or shift it from its previous bed of cinderblocks), the "are we almost there yet?" question begins to sound from the back of the station wagon, it is imperative to make sure that everyone involved understands that "time" is the non-negotiable ingredient in this process.

For everything else in the culture stew, you can create content, tools, strategy, etc. To make a culture meaningful, resonant and sustainable, there is no shortcut. And anyone who suggests otherwise is ensuring that the concept of "culture" will end up on the business buzzword bargain rack.

As always, give the article a read and forward me your feedback. Feel free to reach out with questions or for discussion – my e-mail box is always open!

Cheers,

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