Communication Issues and Processes at The RIT Inn and Conference Center

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Communication Issues and Processes at The RIT Inn and Conference Center

by

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on communication issues at The RIT Inn and Conference Center, (the Inn). Effective communication is crucial to nearly everything. Communication is the learned skill that makes the difference between an average organization and a great one. A great organization’s management can fully engage staff in operations at a company that achieves maximum efficiency (Williford, 2002).

This study is important because it will identify the root causes of communication gaps between management and staff. In addition, it will identify problems related to disconnects between service staff and management that have caused several service recovery issues. These disconnects may be a limit to growth. The results of the study will be used to construct a technology-based process to enhance communications which may lead to enhanced customer service. The study may enhance service recovery at the Inn.

The technology based communication process enables all staff to anonymously bring issues to the attention of management. The network, along with the analysis of other findings in the project will be used to study the nature of communication issues and potential enhancements at the Inn.

The focus of the project is communication between all levels of staff at the Inn. The project goal is to enhance communication and to understand the relationship between communication (internal as well as external) and customer satisfaction.
INTRODUCTION

Communication can make or break any organization. Studying communication issues at a hospitality property is a method of understanding whether the organization is executing its strategy or it is merely going through the motions.

This report will study communication issues at the Inn. The way a property handles communication issues can determine how successful the organization will be in the long run. Management and staff communication issues play an important role in continuous growth and improvement at all service enterprises. Communication can be useless or it can really be helpful. The content of the communications and the ability of the communicators are critical elements. Good communicators can listen as well as talk (Bossidy & Charan, 2002).

Communication issues are included in the criteria of the coveted Malcolm Baldrige award. The Baldrige award recognizes companies in manufacturing, service, small business, education and health that have achieved overall excellence and growth according to seven criteria.

These criteria are built on eleven core values and concepts. One of these core values centers on Valuing Employees and Partners. This value states that organizational leaders must actively seek to motivate and support their employees. This value also states the organizational leaders must realize that employee input is crucial for any company to grow. Employees who feel they are being heard when they share information will become more interested in the quality of their work than those who feel nobody listens or cares about their work or effort (Young, 2002).
One way to value employees is to actively seek their input and opinions about their work. Studying communication networks at any property may prove to be a valuable tool in understanding organizational effectiveness, process improvements, and customer satisfaction.

**LABOR ISSUES AND THE HOTEL INDUSTRY**

Today there are many jobs available in the hotel segment and highly skilled employees may be more selective about where they work (Forman, 2002). In the service industry, often times, new hires are not trained properly, provided with the necessary information/tools, nor coached to become effective in their jobs. Companies sometimes fail to cultivate the abilities of their employees. This can lead to a high turnover rate. Hotels and other service industries such as fast food restaurants can have turnover rates as high as 300% (Smith, 2004).

It is important to realize that employees must be developed and this investment in human capital typically results in great returns. Organizations that invest properly in their employees will reap the benefits (Mendis, 1998).

A recent Cornell study points to the fact that often times workers with talent leave companies that simply do not take the time to support them. The study goes on to say that taking the time to review employee performance appraisals, with the employee, will help identify root causes of retention issues (Sturman, 2002).

Workers who receive little or no feedback from their management may become disenfranchised with their workplace and move on. Labor shortages may be addressed internally, by the company, through training and by other means, such as enhanced
communications. Management can make the difference if they take the time to communicate with employees and focus on communication and continuous development.

Motivation is a key ingredient in retaining workers. The Hawthorne Studies reveal that employee behavior is linked to their attitudes (Linder, 1998).

Encouraging workers to take ownership of key workplace issues is important to satisfaction, retention, and customer service. The enhanced communication networks at the RIT Inn, upon completing this work; may help to create an environment that fosters growth, retention, and leads to enhanced guest service.

BACKGROUND ON THE RIT INN AND CONFERENCE CENTER

The RIT Inn and Conference Center (The Inn) was originally a Marriot Hotel, built in 1974. The Inn was owned and operated by the Delmonte family who owned and operated seventeen other hotels. In 2001, the Delmonte family gifted the Inn to RIT. In addition to the standard hotel operations, a portion of the Inn was used as a dormitory and still provides accommodations for some RIT students.

The Inn has 304 rooms. It houses 332 students, in 166 rooms, nine months a year. Students are housed in the Court and West towers. From September 1 to October 15, an additional seventy five rooms in the North Tower house students temporarily until on-campus rooms become available. After October 15, the hotel offers the 135 rooms not occupied by full-time students to the public.

The Inn has 10,000 square feet of Conference space. Petals restaurant offers casual dining while the Charades dining room provides fine dining. The hotel has an indoor and outdoor pool, sauna, exercise facility, as well as a small business center.
2001, after the Inn was gifted to RIT, the Delmonte family was awarded a contract to manage the property.

Current Managing Director, Bill Gunther, worked at the Inn, in conjunction with the Delmonte group until April of 2004. At that time, Gunther created his own company, Gunther and Associates, and was awarded the management contract.

The Inn employs between 135-150 people. Eighty to ninety of these employees are full-time. All management and staff at the Inn are employees of Gunther and Associates.

The structure of the management at The RIT Inn is unique, in that three companies essentially are involved in operations. RIT owns the property and lists it as a non-profit enterprise. RIT, however, established an LLC (for profit enterprise) for the business entity that The RIT Inn and Conference Center has become. Gunther and Associates is also an LLC that manages The RIT Inn and Conference Center for the RIT community. Gunther and Associates issues all paychecks.

Gunther has created a learning laboratory and his focus is on developing his management and staff. The operational model at The RIT Inn and Conference Center is thus unique. Typically the groups of owners don’t get involved in the property’s management decisions. At The RIT Inn and Conference Center, Gunther and Associates, RIT, and trustees and other RIT staff normally have input in decision making.

Currently there are communication vehicles in place at The RIT Inn and Conference Center. Daily meetings among managers are held and information from those meetings is e-mailed to staff. Associates of the month are awarded special recognition by management and there is a general feeling of cooperation among staff
members. Social gatherings include the annual Christmas party for all staff members. Managing Director Bill Gunther, however, is always looking to enhance communication at the property. This study, focusing on communication, is being conducted at Mr. Gunther’s request. The goal of this study is to create a new process for communication through the creation of the technology-based communication network.

This communication project is especially important because the unique organizational structure of The RIT Inn presents unique communication challenges. The project provides an opportunity to identify and eliminate problems that might otherwise go undetected and stifle improvement in operations. The goal of the project is to enhance communication at the Inn.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Communication at The RIT Inn and Conference Center is critical in obtaining maximum operation efficiency, in retaining employees, and providing the best guest experience possible. Communication disconnects are not currently identified, nor are they being resolved.

Communication is one of the man ingredients in service quality. Ritz-Carlton was the first and only service company to win the Malcolm Baldrige Award and they accomplished this through consistent, reliable service that was based on sound communication.

A daily SQI (Service Quality Indicator) is displayed in Ritz-Carlton Hotels enabling all departments to monitor the key production and guest service processes. The
SQI of all hotels is displayed on flat screen monitors in the corporate office ensuring immediate communication of hotel issues and strategies (Platt, 1999).

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this study is to create an enhanced communication process that will provide management with the ability to enhance overall operational effectiveness and guest experiences at The RIT Inn and Conference Center.

**LIMITS/DELIMITS**

The study focuses on The RIT Inn and Conference Center and its unique management structure; therefore findings are not transferable to other operations.

**FEATURES OF THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS NETWORK**

The new communication process network will have several features. Each staff member will have access to the system. The member will log into the network and then have several options for communication with the management and staff. Some examples of features of the system include: the system is anonymous, immediate, confidential, and convenient.

The process will enable employees of the Inn to:

1) Register complaints
2) Offer suggestions
3) Provide information for improvements
4) Ask questions
5) Access professional development programs
6) Obtain responses immediately from management
7) Be appraised of implementations based on suggestions
8) Receive feedback about implementations based on suggestions

The Managing Director’s goal is to create a learning organization and to empower staff to make sound decisions that enhance guest experiences.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is significant because it may uncover the root causes of communications problems at The RIT Inn and Conference Center. The study will then work to rectify these communications problems through a series of suggestions and recommendations.

Without the study, many communication problems at the Inn would go undetected. This could lead to many problems in service never being reported to management. The end result of this is inferior service and an inferior product.

The study is also significant because it will pave the way for the creation of a process enhancement feature. The computerized system that will be installed will allow staff at the Inn with the ability to register complaints and suggestions, along with other features. This system will allow staff at the Inn to become directly involved in the development of service enhancements. Employees involved in the creation of services become more satisfied in their jobs and in the service they provide.

The study is also significant because it looks to the future. Innovation and change are crucial elements in the customer service process. This study reinforces the belief that innovation and change must be implemented for products and services to be the best the customer can obtain.
The study chose to compare Las Vegas properties with The RIT Inn and Conference Center in an attempt to identify the most current interfaces for The RIT Inn. Las Vegas properties use state of the art technology and places technology as a high priority. The RIT Inn and Conference Center may learn much from comparing their methods of communication to those of Las Vegas properties. Technology is crucial at Las Vegas properties. The properties are large and must use sophisticated communications.

Networking is very important to the Las Vegas Properties and the global picture of the industry is studied in Vegas. It is the intent of this study to provide The RIT Inn and Conference Center current communication processes used at globally oriented properties. RIT does cater to an international audience. Some of their methods of communication and operations, however, are outdated. A comparison between Las Vegas properties and The RIT Inn will yield results that The RIT community can use to improve their product.
**DEFINITION OF TERMS**

**Communication**- the means by which messages and information is transmitted from one source to another

**Hospitality Organization**- a service enterprise that provides optimum guest experiences and premium accommodations

**Growth**- an increase, expansion, or addition to an existing entity or process

**Root Causes**- the rudimentary elements that form the foundation of a growing problem

**Management**- the group of people who direct an enterprise

**Staff**- the personnel that are chiefly responsible for the internal operations of a business

**Guest experience**- all the elements of service that combine to create an overall impression for a customer

**Gaps**- a separation or break in continuance that creates a void in a service or function

**Process improvement**- an enhancement to an existing service that provided for more efficient production

**Disconnects**- flaws in processes that cause elements in the process to fail to communicate and combine efforts
THESIS OUTLINE

This study will focus on communication issues at The RIT Inn and conference center. Chapter 1 will examine the root causes of communication disconnects, and discuss data collection, process enhancement, design, and analysis. The hypothesis is: communication at The RIT Inn and Conference center (the Inn) can improve to enhance overall effectiveness. Process improvement will not occur when problems, questions, and solutions never reach management.

The purpose statement is to create a process enhancement feature that will allow all issues to be identified and addressed by management.

Chapter 1 will also contain a major questions section and an outline of the study. The chapter will also contain background on the literature review and a section examining the significance of the study.

Chapter 2 will include a literature review of existing communications issues. This review will consist of over fifty articles, texts, and reports.

Chapter 3 will include descriptions of the methodology, survey instrument and data analysis.

Chapter 4 will present the findings of the study.

Chapter 5 will encapsulate the study, review findings and provide recommendations for implementation, as well as further study.
Chapter Two

**INTRODUCTION**

This study focused on communication issues at The RIT Inn and Conference Center. The study examines other properties to gain a richer perspective of communication issues in the hotel industry. A comparison was drawn between the communication issues at The RIT Inn and Conference Center and those of various Las Vegas properties. Suggestions presented will, offer a method of enhancing communication at The RIT Inn.

The literature examined in this study was varied and focused on identifying major components of communication issues as well as major gaps or flaws that could hamper communication and thus business. The use of several sources provided the study with the framework for understanding how the structure of the entire hotel industry has changed from autocratic leadership to more open communications (Woods & King, 1996).

The study reviewed internet materials, journal articles, case studies, professional journal articles and other writings to create a solid picture of what communication means to hotel properties. The internet materials also provide insight regarding the need to balance people and technology (Expert Magazine, 2004).

Hotel industry journal articles were used to isolate large Las Vegas properties as well as to identify particular methods of technology used to enhance communication (Lodging Magazine, 2004).

The literature provided many valuable insights about why communication is so very difficult to coordinate in the workplace (Johlke & Duhan, 2000). Various authors certainly focused on communication problems and potential positive outcomes.
The literature was reviewed to identify trends in the hotel industry as well as to study potential future scenarios.

Employee turnover and its relationship to communication is studied in much of the literature that was reviewed. The combination of books, magazines, special reports and articles all served to provide a more in-depth picture of the relationship of turnover to communication.

Communication is crucial in any industry. At Boeing, for example, in 1995 a sixty-nine day strike cost the company hundreds of millions of dollars. The President of Boeing later admitted that the cause of the strike and thus the loss of revenue was the managements’ failure to communicate concerns with the staff (Turner, 2004).

This study will complete its focus with the recommendations to enhance communication at The RIT Inn and Conference Center. Through the examination and study of Las Vegas properties as well as the other literature, readers will be able to grasp a rich understanding of how communication plays a crucial role in the hotel and hospitality industry.
HISTORY AND STRUCTURE OF COMMUNICATION IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

The study of communication in the hotel industry can stretch as far back as ancient times when the Sumerians the Egyptians first traveled to trading posts that later evolved into cities with lodging (Ismail, 2002). This review, however, will focus primarily on the history of hotel communications and structures in the post World War II era.

Communication in business did not, obviously, pertain just to the hotel industry. For example, the work of William Edwards Deming was a key force in the recovery and growth of Japan after World War II (Woods & King, 1996). Deming’s work applies to the hotel industry and communication in a number of ways. Deming stresses that managers must be leaders and workers must not work in fear of communicating problems. Barriers exist between departments, and removal of the barriers is crucial for business growth. Deming also stresses life-long learning and education as a must for success (Woods & King, 1996).

In many ways Deming’s work is felt to be the start of what can be termed the modern era of communication in the hotel industry.

The work of Joseph M Juran examined quality in business operations. In the hospitality business, for example, Juran points to the service recovery systems on hotels as a way to “put out a fire” instead of providing the premium product. Juran argues that providing a better quality product in the first place will make service recovery more of a positive than a corrective measure (Woods & King, 1996).
Deming and Juran provided a framework for the reworking of many hotel operations. They can be credited with a transformation in the way hotels handle problems in service recovery, training and internal relations.

Communication can be complex in both small and large hotels. The standards and goals of quality in the hotel industry will be the point that this study will focus on. Quality is quality no matter how large or small the property is.

The Ritz Carlton Company, for example is a recent winner of the Malcolm Baldrige Award for quality improvement and service. The Ritz Carlton is thus used as a model for other hotels to emulate in their quality and service practices. The Baldrige Award criteria are a set of twenty for requirements placed into seven categories: Leadership, Information and Analysis, Strategic Planning, Human Resource Development, Process Management, Business Results, and Customer Focus and Satisfaction (Woods & King, 1996).

Communication would certainly be crucial to all of these categories. In the leadership category, for example, top executives at the Ritz Carlton meet with new employees and issue a vision statement to them that will allow new employees to set goals in line with what they stand for. Human resource development and management training development in service recovery methods are stressed. In the business results category, the Ritz suggests use of a very predictive interview instrument to reduce turnover. In each of these cases communication between employee and employer is crucial for success (Woods & King, 1996).

Today’s hospitality organizations are changing the way they communicate their information to employees. The structure of power is decentralizing. Authority is now in
the hands of line employees. Autocratic structures are now being replaced by bottom line lateral. Cross-training is also changing the division of power in the industry (Woods & King, 1998).

Probably the best example of the large scale change in philosophy is shown in the Las Vegas Mega Resort and Casinos. These properties are so large that many divisions and departments must share power to accomplish goals.

**GENERAL COMMON ISSUES**

Communication, as it relates to business, many times starts with a supervisor somewhere. If a supervisor is unapproachable, then a communication gap automatically appears. Nothing will ever change nor improve without interaction between staff and their appropriate supervisors.

A supervisor must present leadership qualities in his or her work to gain the confidence of employees. They must also be able to execute their plans in a manner that produces results. Often times it is this execution strategy that makes or breaks an organization’s business (Bossidy & Charan, 2002).

Leaders must surely have an open mind and be able to take criticism. Many organizations subject their leaders to a continuous improvement appraisal that lists both accomplishments as well as faults. Constructive criticism is the best way to improve according to this method of rating. It is a wise person that can take advantage of constructive criticism. It is also a very wise company that takes the time to present developmental needs of their management staff (Bossidy & Charan 2002).
Communication, then, begins to become a complex thing as management is rated and employees are able to actually rate their management and help in the overall improvement process in a business. Being in charge is a difficult task. Management must not be put in a position where they are in charge of too many people. Too much responsibility dilutes the ability of the management to be effective. The concept of a limited “span of control” works to organize a business and bring the most out of management without stretching their abilities too far (Woods & King, 1996).

Often times communication is also difficult between management and workers simply because of a language barrier. If employees can’t communicate in the same language that their manager speaks, the work situation becomes difficult if not impossible. In the hospitality industry it is not unusual to have many different ethnic groups employed in a single property. The term “something gets lost in the translation” certainly rings true in the business where there is a language barrier. Moreover, in today’s environment and age, business operations are international because geographic distance no longer creates a barrier for business operations (Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons, 2001). Similar to the hotel industry, an executive at Kodak, for example, may find themselves doing business with an employee in Japan that speaks little or no English. Certainly this communication barrier (of language) needs to be explored to understand what can be done to improve communication in a business.

Communication can take avenues other than those we normally view as communication vehicles. Understanding and developing employee motivation can be crucial to establishing a strong network of communication between employees and management (Boyle, 2005).
At Wegmans’s Food markets, for example, the company credo is “Employees first, customers second”. It is the philosophy of Wegmans’s that if the employees are happy, the customers will in turn be happy. This statement certainly goes a long way to emphasize that Wegmans’s cares about their people. Wegmans’s believes in building social capital through developing their employees. The net future value in their staff grows as they offer staff opportunities. At Wegmans the company offers benefits, including scholarships to all staff who qualify. It is a strong network that Wegmans developed by establishing an internal desire in their employees. They have a desire to develop themselves into a learning organization. Everybody, including the customer, wins in this situation. Thus Wegmans has developed themselves into a learning organization. This learning organization continually improves its employees, its products and ultimately the customer is continually satisfied and will return with their business (Boyle, 2005).

Motivation of the employees is important. In today’s global market and in the advent of mega supermarkets, resorts and other places it is important for communication to keep pace with technology. Customers who keep up with the times will appreciate a business that does the same. Casinos, for example, often times must develop ways to improve response time to guest requests. Guests are always impatient. As casinos grow into mega resorts it is important to develop communication vehicles to keep up with growth in size. It is important to communicate with people at multiple casino properties because many casino operations are consolidated today. On the strip in Las Vegas, for example, a group of properties may be geographically one mile apart, but in reality be the same enterprise. This means that technological advances must be put in place to properly
communicate between properties. Wireless communication, digital photographs and modern methods of transmitting information must be employed to keep up with the times (Downey, 2004). Communication includes many issues that must be addressed to gain an overall understanding of the complexity of communication in a very diverse business community.

**IMPACT OF POSITIVE RESOLUTION OF COMMUNICATION ISSUES AT HOTEL PROPERTIES**

Hotel properties will always have communication issues. It is the way these issues are handled that allow a property to succeed. Positive resolution of communication issues begin with the hotel employee. At Ritz-Carlton, for example, employees are empowered to solve a problem and can commit up to $2,000.00 of the hotel’s funds without any special authorization by a supervisor (Lampton, 2003). This empowerment saves a lot of frustration that can accompany a problem that results when approval is needed. Helping a customer is difficult enough without having to find supervisors. Customers want their problems solved as fast as they can be solved. This empowerment allows for a problem to be solved without further delay.

Positive communication was stressed by every host in the 2002 Excellence Live 2002 British Quality Foundation Study Tour (Wilkinson, 2002). This positive communication was best shown by Ritz-Carlton in their daily quality line-up process. This process ensures that every Ritz-Carlton in the world has the same messages reinforced each day.
Problems in communication are often difficult to sort out. In large Las Vegas hotels, for example, important meetings are held between supervisors to stop a problem from growing. At the Flamingo in Las Vegas when a problem in communication develops supervisors try to find the root of that problem themselves (Interview #1). A problem can be between a customer and staff or staff vs. staff. Customer problems at the Flamingo can be recorded on a comment card. Management reviews these comment cards each week and provides solutions to problems.

At the staff end, if a problem exists between departments at the Flamingo, supervisors first try to figure out the root of the issue. If a problem persists then managers and even vice-presidents can be brought in to examine the issue. The problem is always addressed and solved. Flamingo has a very systematic approach to problem solving that is very complete.

Positive problem solving is crucial to customer retention. Staff must be empowered to help solve problems.

**COMMUNICATION ENHANCEMENTS AT MEGA RESORTS AND PRIVATE PROPERTIES**

Both mega resorts and private hotel properties have seen growth in communication vehicles. The needs of large properties and small properties are different. Large properties are, by necessity, in need of communication vehicles that can put people in touch with staff thirty floors away from the front desk. Also, resorts have searched for ways to eliminate using too much time in exchanging data. At Sheraton Egypt, for example, creation of the HITS NAS Pro HR system has eliminated the data redundancy
between different systems (hits-egypt.com). Biometrics has also been introduced to help in the hotel industry. Microsoft has introduced a fingerprint reader to log on a user to a computer and store passwords used at web sites (Peterson, 2005). In-room technology is crucial to guest retention. Internet access, a port for those guests with a lap-top, access to e-mail and integrating use of the internet into the room television are all important uses for technological upgrades in the hotel room.

Hilton Hotels has created a hotel room with a wireless remote control unit that serves as the “brains” of a room (Guardian Newspapers Limite, 2005). The unit controls most of the rooms devices. A menu screen allows a guest to adjust lights, turn on a television, adjust climate and find out housekeeping status with the touch of a screen.

Smaller properties must seek to provide services that their larger competitors can’t in order to stay competitive. At the Hard Rock Hotel in Las Vegas, an internal phone system allows for quick communication. Also, the Hard Rock allows for more personal contact coupled with technology, to provide personal service (Interview #4). The RIT Inn and Conference Center must likewise use technology, personal service, and “extra” services such as special shuttle services to counter the services mega resort properties can offer.

All casino properties offer slot machines or slotless multi-games if state legislation won’t allow traditional slot machines. At casinos a customer will usually register for a player’s card. This card is used to electronically register the player into the slot game. In some casino player’s can book show tickets, dinner reservations, golf dates and other items simply by dialing into a menu. This feature allows for convenience for the guest and more playing time at the machine. Certainly the resort will realize more
revenue from a guest who plays more time (Angelo & Vlajimir, 1994). Larger properties must offer convenience to guests so that they will not get lost in the enormity of the hotel. Small properties stress service.

**FACTORS INFLUENCING COMMUNICATION BARRIERS**

At The RIT Inn and Conference Center there are certainly barriers to communication among staff and disconnects arise. There is a disconnect in the fact that all RIT Inn and Conference Center workers are employed by the Gunther and Associates group yet they serve The RIT community.

The incorporation of an Employee Assistance Program, (EAP) into a business can save enormous amounts of money for a business. An EAP can also reduce absenteeism, reduce theft, lower the turnover rates, and help improve morale (Woods, 97).

An interesting fact concerns the cost of maintaining an EAP. Businesses have found that it actually costs less to maintain an EAP program than it does to cover the losses that would occur if no EAP was in place (Woods, 97).

An EAP can deal with many different types of problems. Alcoholism, stress, drugs and family problems are typical examples of how an EAP can deal with work and the problems people may bring to their jobs. An EAP can serve to identify problems that may go undetected by management. The confidential structure of an EAP will keep problems a person has essentially a secret to employees who need not to know about them. Certainly employees become embarrassed or in some cases ashamed of problems they have. An EAP can serve to relieve the tension and pressure that these problems bring to the workplace.
Communication problems among workers will suffer if a worker has an extreme problem. If for example, a worker uses alcohol to deal with the stress a boss puts on them they only increase the problem at work. They also create another problem; alcoholism.

An EAP can work to eliminate problems in the workplace. An EAP may not be a cure-all, but an EAP can certainly help deal with problems in any workplace.

The study now turns to a description of how the material was gathered for the study. It is important to understand how the survey instrument was constructed. The questions were designed and placed in a certain sequence to allow for the employees to provide information in a systematic and well thought out way.

It is also important to note that gathering information for a study requires a lot of cooperation between the management and the researcher. A relationship was formed in this study between the primary researcher and the Inn. This is important because it led to a cooperative effort.
Chapter Three

This chapter covers the project description, the population and sample, the sample frame, the survey development, survey administration, validity, data collection and analysis.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The study began with a discussion between The RIT Service Management faculty and Bill Gunther. During the meeting Bill Gunther identified a need for a project dealing with communication issues at The RIT Inn and Conference Center.

Dr. Johnson of The RIT faculty and RIT Graduate student Wayne Pater met with Gunther to discuss the project. Pater agreed, as the primary researcher, to work with Dr. Johnson and Bill Gunther on a project studying communication issues at The RIT Inn and Conference Center as his graduate thesis.

The primary researcher then wrote a letter of introduction to Gunther that contained a proposal to Gunther outlining the project. Gunther accepted this letter and the study began.

The primary researcher was advised by Gunther that he would need a letter of introduction to use when conducting interviews at The RIT Inn and Conference Center. The client produced this letter and the primary researcher began his interviews.

The framework for the survey instrument included information from on-site interviews with staff members. These interviews were conducted on January 14th, 2005, and February 11th, 2005, (see appendix).
A twenty question first draft of the survey instrument was produced, based on the initial interviews. Revisions to the instrument were made based on input from Bill Gunther and Dr. Johnson.

The primary researcher then ventured to Las Vegas, Nevada to interview staff members from several hotel-casino resorts and from one golf and tennis center located near a casino-hotel. The results of these interviews were used to compare and contrast the large resorts to The RIT Inn and Conference Center, (see appendix), and develop the final instrument for this study.

The survey instrument was presented to the client for approval in March 2005. The survey was administered to all staff of The RIT Inn and Conference Center in May 2005. The survey was distributed to the staff with their paychecks. The results were analyzed and presented, in aggregate form to the client as well as to RIT community.

Population and Sample – The population and sample, in this case, were the same. The population includes the entire working staff of The RIT Inn and Conference Center. The sample was the same because all 135 workers were issued a survey.

All workers were included in the sampling frame. The approach of surveying all the staff instead of a random sample was used to produce a clear picture of what the Inn’s employee attitudes and beliefs looked like at this time.

SURVEY DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

The survey was developed from information gathered from the informational interviews. The questions were based on what the study of communication issues was
essentially looking for; problems and the roots of communication issues at the Inn, as well as potential enhancements.

The interviews were conducted at The RIT Inn and Conference Center and Las Vegas properties to draw comparisons between large and small properties, as well as to identify state of the art communications systems.

The technology at The RIT Inn and Conference Center has been shown to be inferior to hotel industry leaders. Las Vegas properties have shown to be technologically superior. Drawing comparisons between RIT Inn and Las Vegas properties leads to various suggestions for improvements.

INSTRUMENTATION

The survey questions were selected and placed with the hope of identifying communication problems and their root causes.

Questions 1-5 probed the communication problem and tried to identify a basic understanding of what the worker’s think of communication. Questions 1-5 ranged from a basic question about communication effectiveness to a basic question about problem solution. The questions here were also placed at the beginning of the survey to get the respondents thinking about communication issues in general.

Questions 5-10 asked for employee opinions. These questions probed the question of, “how the worker feels they are being received by their management.” Questions ranged from how management views their suggestions and input to their interpretation of communication breakdowns.
The first ten questions thus established the communication issues and the worker’s interpretations of these issues.

Questions 11-13 were intended to identify the extent of the communication problem. The relationship between communication and conflict was explored. Conflict resolution was explored. These questions were placed in the center of the survey to allow the respondents to use their best thoughts for these questions. These three questions formed the basis for the rest of the study. The management of the Inn must be able to resolve conflicts to improve the efficiency of the Inn.

Questions 14-16 introduced the ideas of experience, education, and personal issues. These questions began to turn the survey to personal opinions about how much management cares and how much management gets involved in the communication process.

Questions 17-25 presented a blend of questions that essentially addressed communication issues and changes recommended. These questions were placed at the end of the survey to seek recommendations from the respondent.

The survey research method was used to protect the anonymity of the respondents. Workers are often intimidated by direct contact that may cause them a problem with their boss or management in general. A questionnaire that is mailed back to the researcher preserves the identity of the respondent and yields more honest input (Salant & Dillman, 1994).
A mail survey was best for this study because it is not sensitive to the normal biases that an interview would present. In the study of The RIT Inn and Conference Center, the interview method may have proved to result in a lot of answers that would have been biased. Sometimes the interviewed person provides answers that are harmless to them or represent what the interviewer wants to hear. Mail questionnaires are more apt to yield true feelings because the respondent will not be subject to controversy regarding what they have said (Salant & Dillman, 1994).

Probably the best way to insure a high response rate was to guarantee anonymity. This was done by producing a mail questionnaire survey. A letter announcing and guaranteeing to the respondents that their answers would be anonymous accompanied the survey instrument.

A pilot test was hand delivered by the primary researcher prior to the mailed survey. This pilot test survey was completed in March at the Inn. Thirty surveys were distributed to a random sample of employees from all departments. Seven surveys were returned to the primary researcher for review.

After initial analysis and consultation with Dr. Johnson and Bill Gunther, the primary researcher changed the wording in four questions. It was shown that these four questions were leading the respondent to answers. For example, the question, “Poor communication between departments leads to conflicts” was changed to, “Lack of effective communication leads to conflict.” The first question assumes that there is poor
communication whereas the second question makes a statement and asks the respondent to comment on this statement. Questions were changed in order to present objective questions that would not lead a respondent to a particular answer. “There is competition between departments”, was changed to, “We work in a competitive environment”. “I regularly offer suggestions that are ignored”, was changed to, “My suggestions are often not considered”. “I don’t feel my education or experience matters to management” was changed to, “My experience and education could be better utilized by management”.

The final survey instrument was delivered by the primary researcher to Bill Gunther. One hundred thirty-five surveys were delivered. The surveys were placed in an envelope with a letter of introduction and a self-addressed stamped envelope addressed to the primary researcher and sent to all employees, along with their paychecks. The survey and the letter of introduction are available for review in appendix of this study.

One hundred thirty-five survey instruments were presented to Bill Gunther on May 9th, 2005 by primary researcher Wayne Pater. One hundred thirty-five were distributed. Thirty one usable surveys were returned to the primary researcher which yielded a response rate of 22.96%.

This Survey was based on informational interviews. The pilot test was reviewed prior to administration insure validity. All workers were surveyed which eliminated any coverage error. There is no sampling error because all people were surveyed.

The range of responses used a five point Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Certainly this range allowed people who felt strongly or indifferently or opposed to a particular question to indeed record that in a manner that could be interpreted as such by the researcher. This addressed measurement error. Probably the
The best way the survey avoided non-response error was to guarantee anonymity and issue self-addressed stamped envelopes.
Chapter Four

INTRODUCTION

Chapter four includes a description of the findings of the study. The initial interviews were structured to probe into the various departments at The RIT Inn and Conference Center with the intent of identifying recurring themes. Each person was asked the same questions and the results were used to construct the initial survey instrument.

The interviews at the Las Vegas properties were structured the same as those at The RIT Inn and Conference Center. Workers from various properties were interviewed to gain a broad picture of what Las Vegas properties do to handle communication issues.

Two of the interviews were unique. The primary researcher spent one morning at the Las Vegas Gold and Tennis Center near the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino. The interview was conducted in an attempt to show how a smaller hotel property can benefit from having retail amenities such as those offered at the Gold and Tennis Center. This research can be applied to The RIT Inn and Conference Center’s attempt to expand its business. If RIT can attract or develop businesses that can compliment the hotel’s service, then they may be able to present a better experience to their customers.

Another interview was conducted using observation techniques. The primary researcher observed Managing Director Bill Gunther as he held a meeting with staff introducing a representative from a long term disability company. It was noted that Gunther was observed to have been very interactive and also looked to involve the group in the decision making process.
The findings in this study were drawn from analysis of the survey responses. The survey results were tallied in an attempt to identify problems and employee recommendations for resolving problems.

Each respondent was asked twenty-five questions and asked to comment on three questions with a written reply. Respondents were allowed to answer each survey question simply by rating their answer using a Likert scale. Each question’s response was entered. The questions showed the degree of importance that each respondent felt for each area. For example; when survey question #3 stated that “There is a clear chain of command for addressing problems” respondents could choose to strongly agree, agree, be neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree. All respondents’ answers to all questions were collected, entered, analyzed, ranked by percentage, and listed in tables. Frequency charts and percentage charts were constructed for each question as well as tables that listed answers according to percentages. Tables list frequencies of responses from strongly agree, and agree to disagree and strongly disagree.

**DATA COLLECTION**

The data collection started with a series of interviews by the primary researcher. On January 14th, 2005, the primary researcher interviewed five staff members from The RIT Inn and Conference Center. On February 11th, 2005, the primary researcher interviewed three staff members at the Inn and also attended a staff meeting and recorded discussion observations. The staff meeting was a long term disability meeting. In attendance were Bill Gunther, the managing director at The RIT Inn and Conference Center. A representative from the company selling the long term disability insurance
spoke to employees about the benefits of the insurance. The primary researcher kept minutes of the meeting and recorded the results.

The observation was unique. The staff meeting including the managing director and the long term disability person did not include questioning and written answers from the staff. The primary researcher took notes on the meeting and used observations to craft the final instrument.

The primary researcher then ventured to Las Vegas, Nevada to interview employees from the casino resorts and one from a golf and tennis center. On February 15th, 2005, the primary researcher interviewed a chef from a major casino resort. On February 16th the primary researcher interviewed three employees from the casino resorts and one employee from a golf and tennis center located near the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino.

The same questions were used for all interviews at The RIT Inn and Conference Center and the various casino resorts in Las Vegas.

The questions were structured to discover recurring themes. Questions dealt with the accessibility of management to staff, conflict and conflict solution, the use of customer feedback, technology and its uses, and the chain of command at the various properties. A final question about communication was inserted to get an overall picture of communication at the various properties.

A unique interview tool place at the Las Vegas Golf and Tennis Center located near the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. The primary researcher spoke informally with a sales staff member and an assistant golf professional also on the sales staff at the center. The primary researcher was looking to gain information about how the
location of a golf and tennis center near a casino property could enhance guest experiences.

The interviews did, in fact, reveal several recurring themes. A number of recurring themes ideas were identified to help improve communication issues. The following list of themes can be reviewed in appendix:

Theme #1 – Leadership at The RIT Inn and Conference Center has many positive qualities.

Theme #2 – There is very little conflict at The RIT Inn and Conference Center.

Theme #3 – The RIT Inn and Conference Center is not technologically advanced.

Theme #4 – There is a clear chain of command at The RIT Inn and Conference Center.

The Las Vegas Interviews produced these themes;

Theme #1 – Las Vegas Hotel – Casinos are technologically upgraded to keep up with the times.

Theme #2 – Conflicts in Las Vegas properties are handled internally by each department.

Theme #3 – E-mail is the main communication vehicle in the large resort, among staff.

These themes, along with probing questions on communications issues were used to devise a pilot survey instrument. The primary researcher created a twenty-five question survey that also included three open-ended questions. The twenty-five questions were either actual questions or statements that the staff could answer or comment on using the Likert scale.
The initial survey instrument, or pilot survey instrument, was hand delivered to The RIT Inn and Conference staff in March of 2005. Thirty surveys were randomly distributed by the primary researcher. Seven surveys were returned to the primary researcher.

These responses along with consultation with Managing director Bill Gunther and Dr. Johnson were used to revise wording on four of the questions.

The final survey instrument was delivered to Bill Gunther by the primary researcher. One hundred thirty-five surveys were delivered. The surveys were placed in an envelope with a letter of introduction and a self-addressed stamped envelope addressed to the primary researcher. The surveys were distributed to all staff when they picked up their paychecks.

One hundred thirty-five surveys were presented to Bill Gunther on May 9th, 2005. One hundred thirty-five surveys were distributed by Bill Gunther, and none were discarded. Thirty-one completed surveys were mailed to the primary researcher, representing a response rate of twenty two point ninety six percent (22.96%). The survey was distributed only once. There were no additional mailings and this may have impacted the response rate.
FINDINGS

Finding #1) There is a direct relationship between communication and conflict at the RIT Inn and Conference Center.

Respondents felt that their job became more difficult when the lines of communication were not open. Seventy-four percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with this statement while nineteen percent were neutral. Six percent disagreed with this statement while none disagreed, (Survey question #8).

Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that the lack of effective communication leads to conflict, (Survey question #11, see the graph below). Sixty-nine percent either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement while twenty-nine percent were neutral.

![Question #11: Poor communication between departments leads to conflict.](image)

Respondents felt that communication breakdowns affected their performance, (Survey question #9). Forty-five percent strongly agreed or agreed with this statement while thirty-nine percent were neutral. Sixteen percent or respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement.

Respondents felt that conflicts tend to repeat themselves due to a lack of communication, (Survey question #12). Fifty-five percent of respondents strongly agreed
with this statement while thirty-two percent were neutral. Thirteen percent strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement.

Finding #2) Respondents feel strongly that employees at the RIT Inn and Conference Center can communicate adequately between themselves, with the other departments, and with management.

Question #3 from the survey instrument stated that there was a clear chain of command for addressing problems. Sixty-four percent of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that there is a strong chain of command for addressing problems while twenty were neutral, (See the pie chart below). Sixteen strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement.

![Pie Chart](image.png)

Question #3: There is a clear chain of command for addressing problems.

- **Strongly Agree:** 30%
- **Agree:** 34%
- **Neutral:** 20%
- **Disagree:** 13%
- **Strongly Disagree:** 3%

Question #5 from the survey instrument stated that reported problems were resolved in a timely fashion. Respondents strongly agreed. Fifty-eight percent strongly agreed or agreed with this statement while twenty-nine percent were neutral. Thirteen percent disagreed while three percent strongly disagreed with this statement.

Question #17 from the survey instrument stated that problems the employees identify were addressed quickly by management. Fifty-eight percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with this statement while thirty-five percent responded neutral.
Six percent of respondents disagreed with this statement while none of them strongly disagreed.

Question #2 from the survey instrument stated that information flowed easily and effectively from one department to another. Forty-one percent strongly agreed or agreed with this statement while thirty-nine percent were neutral. Twenty-six strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement.

Question #1 from the survey instrument asked if communication between departments was effective. Thirty-five percent of the respondents strongly agreed that communication between departments is effective while thirty-eight percent responded neutral. Twenty-six strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement.
**Finding #3** There are problems with conflict resolution at RIT Inn and Conference Center that effect the organization and the service product.

Respondents felt problems they reported were addressed quickly by management. Fifty-eight percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement while thirty-five percent are neutral with this statement. Six percent of respondents disagreed while zero percent strongly disagreed with this statement, (Question #17).

Respondents also felt that problems were resolved in a timely fashion at The RIT Inn and Conference Center, (Question #5). Fifty-eight percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement while twenty-nine percent were neutral. Thirteen percent of respondents disagreed while three percent strongly disagreed with this statement.

Respondents did not feel that conflicts were resolved effectively and permanently by management, (Question #13, see the pie chart below). Thirty-three percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that conflicts between departments are resolved effectively and permanently by management and forty-eight percent responded neutral. Nineteen percent of respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement.

**Question #13: Conflicts between departments are resolved effectively and permanently by management.**

![Pie chart showing responses to Question #13]

- Strongly Agree: 13%
- Agree: 6%
- Neutral: 23%
- Disagree: 10%
- Strongly Disagree: 48%
Finding #4) Employees at the RIT Inn and Conference Center feel that management values their concerns and suggestions.

Employees definitely did feel that management gave attention to their concerns, (Question #25, see the graph below). Sixty-seven percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement while twenty-three percent were neutral. Only ten percent disagreed with this statement.

Respondents felt that their input was valued by management, (Question #6). Fifty-four percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement while nineteen percent were neutral. Thirteen percent of respondents disagreed with this statement while six percent strongly disagreed.

Respondents also felt that their suggestions were taken seriously, (Question #7). Fifty-four percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement while twenty-two percent were neutral. Nineteen percent or respondents disagreed with this statement while three percent strongly disagreed.

Respondents overwhelmingly felt their suggestions were considered by management, (Question #14). Only twelve percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “My suggestions are often not considered”. Thirty-five percent of respondents were neutral with this question while forty-two percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Respondents felt that their opinions and suggestions were heard. The statement “Management rarely seeks my opinions or suggestions”, (Question #24); yielded fifty-four percent of responses in disagreement or strong disagreement. Twenty-nine percent were neutral and only sixteen percent agreed.
Hotels have progressed from an era when one inn keeper did it all to hotels and mega-resorts where systems such as “Expresso” manage to communicate quickly and effectively in a five thousand room Vegas property. Expresso systems, for example, wirelessly manage housekeeping, maintenance, and guests requests. Expresso is used when workers first locate a problem. They use their Nextel to report the problem, to the appropriate department. That department dispatches a worker who remedies the problem and logs the situation into the network (Downey, 2004).

**Finding #5) There is a need to investigate the benefits of The RIT Inn employees to bring them up to par with the RIT employees.**

Respondents in the survey replied that personal issues or problems from home did indeed impact employees at the work, (Question #16, see the pie chart below). Sixty percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed when asked problems outside the workplace affected their work performance while twenty-three percent were neutral. Seventeen percent strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement.

![Pie Chart](image)

**Question #16: Personal issues or problems from home impact employees on the job performance**

- 43% Strongly Agree
- 17% Agree
- 23% Neutral
- 10% Disagree
- 7% Strongly Disagree

Respondents provided no overwhelming replies that a program to help employee deal with personal issues was indeed necessary, (Question #20). Forty-eight percent of respondents were neutral, twenty-six percent agreed or strongly agreed, and twenty-three percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. One percent did not even answer the question.
The respondents indicated that The RIT Inn and Conference Center may need to focus on programs to help people with personal problems, (Question #23). Sixteen percent strongly agreed, twenty percent agreed, forty-five percent were neutral, sixteen percent disagreed, and three percent strongly disagreed when asked if the Inn has adequate programs to deal with personal problems.

When asked if issues from home and outside work negatively effect work (Question #19), respondents were essentially neutral. Thirteen percent agreed or strongly agreed that problems outside work negatively effect work. Forty-eight percent were neutral and thirty-nine percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. This may indicate that employees have problems but don’t want to discuss them at work.
Chapter 5

This chapter contains recommendations and identification of areas for further study.

INTRODUCTION

Communication issues and disconnects are indeed a problem at The RIT Inn and Conference Center. The purpose of this study was to uncover the root causes of these disconnects and to prescribe a service enhancement vehicle to address these problems.

At The RIT Inn and Conference Center the staff and management certainly feel that the job they have becomes more difficult when the lines of communication are compromised. The survey in this study revealed that 74% of the respondents felt that the major concern of their job was indeed communication issues (Survey Question #8).

This lack of communication leads to conflict. The survey reveals that 64% of the respondents felt that conflict could become serious in the workplace (Survey question #11). The survey also reveals that 55% of the respondents felt that these conflicts tend to repeat themselves due to a lack of communication (survey question #12).

Managing director Bill Gunther of The RIT Inn originally identified a problem related to communication at the Inn. Communication problems, then, create conflicts that repeat themselves if there is no remedy. A major recommendation of this study is to develop and implement a service enhancement vehicle that will remedy the communication problem and potentially reduce conflict. The recommendation of this study is that the incorporation of this enhancement vehicle could improve communication in the workplace.
INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

The study identifies the following root causes of communication problems.

Interpretation of Results cause of problems of RIT Inn:

1) Lack of communication is a problem of The RIT Inn and Conference Center.
2) Not reporting problems is an issue at The RIT Inn and Conference Center.
3) Reporting the wrong problem will cause confusion and jeopardize the solution and service recovery process.

The study identifies the following communication disconnects:

1) Regular communication between staff and management could be enhanced.
2) The RIT Inn and Conference Center staff and management work for Gunther and associates and not for RIT.
3) The front desk cannot offer customers full service due to poor technology.
4) Departments at The RIT Inn and Conference Center don’t communicate with one another frequently enough.
5) Coordination is not good between kitchen staff, wait staff, and management.
FINDINGS

1. MANAGEMENT AT THE RIT INN AND CONFERENCE CENTER IS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT PARTICIPATION BY ITS STAFF IN THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

While attending a group meeting at the Inn, the primary researcher noted that Managing Director Bill Gunther was adamant about involving the entire group in a decision about obtaining long-term disability benefits. Gunther asked for a show of hands to decide the fate of long term insurance for the workers. He also presided over a question and answer session with the staff and the plan administrators. There was very good interaction between all the parties participating in the meeting.

While interviewing several of the staff at the Inn, the primary researcher noted a recurring theme of support for Managing Director Bill Gunther. One manager noted that the Inn is “like family” to the workers and that Bill Gunther makes that happen. Gunther is open and honest, according to two kitchen staff members. The best way to describe Gunther is “approachable” according to the front desk staff that was interviewed.

There are differing views about the value of conflict resolution at the Inn. In general the view is that there is not much conflict to begin with. While one interview participant described conflict resolution as constructive, another participant said that nothing gets done and viewed conflict resolution as highly negative at the Inn.

The survey results likewise point to a problem in the conflict resolution category. Question 12 responses support the claim that conflicts tend to repeat themselves due to a lack of communication.
While it is obvious that management is willing to get feedback from staff, the question remains, is management getting the right information to solve problems and are they taking action?

2. **CONFLICT RESOLUTION AT VEGAS PROPERTIES MAY PROVIDE INSIGHT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ENHANCED COMMUNICATION PROCESS AT THE RIT INN AND CONFERENCE CENTER**

Las Vegas properties are very sophisticated in the way they solve problems at their properties. At the Flamingo in Las Vegas, Chef Gert Kvalsund says that “immediate attention is given to every problem” If, for example, food servers are delivering dinners too slowly, then a food service manager will be called in to speak with a chef or kitchen manager immediately.

The chef also related to solving problems through the use of comment cards. “Comment cards are taken very seriously. Each week managers meet to discuss how to curtail problems that are indicated by comments customers make.”

Other Vegas properties also use comment cards to record problems. At the NYNY Vegas property “Bad news gets sent from marketing, who reviews comment cards, to the individual department that it pertains to.” according to the front desk staff at the NYNY.

At the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Vegas the Gaming Shift Managers get immediate and final say in dealing with problems. Although executives and vice-presidents may review issues, it is the shift managers who are on duty who call the shots day to day. The Hard Rock has an extensive internal phone system that can connect a shift manager to any staff member he or she may need to solve a problem.
Although upgrades in technology are needed at the RIT Inn and Conference Center, the Inn must not sacrifice service in their implementation of new methods for dealing with problems.

The front desk at The RIT Inn and conference Center can use upgrades. Training too is lacking in some areas of the front services. All the technology in the world, however, cannot retain a customer.

It is the service that workers provide that retains customer. Some restaurant workers from the RIT Inn commented that “You must treat the place as if it is your own”. It also registers that each and every worker should incorporate that theme into their work.

Technology and service can work together to produce a premium product. The personal service that employees extend must always stand out and be recognizable by the customer.

The RIT Inn and Conference Center could learn much by comparing its services with that of the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. The Hard Rock is a much smaller property than its counterparts on the Strip. The Hard Rock combines amenities and services such as free shuttle service to the strip, the musical theme in the hotel, and much interaction between workers and customers carries the theme to restaurants, gaming tables, etc. A smaller property can compete if they provide superior service.

Technology is important and necessary to compete in the modern world. Sometimes hotel properties may be dealing with older workers who may need time to adjust to modern technology. Hotels also deal with new college graduates who may need time to adjust just to working with customers. Training then, must be a premium if the
new employees are to adjust to new technologies. Employees must be allowed a certain amount of extensive and on-going training, supported by a solid communication program to meet their new job requirements.

4. **MANAGEMENT MUST INTERPRET INFORMATION FROM THE STAFF USING METHODS THAT FOSTER GROWTH AND ENCOURAGE CREATIVITY.**

The problem of interpretation of information is not uncommon. In an article by Kate Sweetman in the MIT Sloan Management Review, it is concluded that even quality managers will often times stunt the growth of an organization by their method of interpreting information (Sweetman, 2001). The article goes on to examine a study done by Christina E. Shallery who is an associate professor of organization behavior at Georgia Institute of Technology’s Dupree College and Ph. D candidate, Jill Perry-Smith.

In the study eighty-one undergraduates were given a test to deal with management problem solving. The subjects were given a series of memos that required creatively addressing human resource problems in a hypothetical steel company.

Half of the subjects were told their answers would be judged in detail by strict human resource experts. They would be scored and tabulations would be recorded.

The other half of the subjects were told that their answers would be reviewed by human resource staff that would share with the students what they like about the information. They might suggest alternatives or ask further questions to best foster an environment of learning and creativity.

Responses were much more creative from the second set of students than from the first. People who expect highly critical evaluation will give much less effort than those
who will be evaluated objectively. Taking information and then using it in a way that compliments the efforts of the staff goes a long way in building morale and trust in an organization. In the same study the subjects were given three sets of responses to a memo. One-third were given a standard response to a memo to be used as a model, one-third were given no sample to assist them, and one-third were given an actually creative sample to assist them with their response to a memo. The subjects who were given the assistance of a creative response were the ones who came up with the most articulate responses of their own. Shalley concludes that “Nothing dampens creative efforts more than judgmental critiques of innovative efforts.” She also states that showing a “standard way of doing things shuts down worker’s ability to think of new approaches” (Sweetman, 2001). The RIT Inn and Conference Center should continue to consider ideas from staff with an open mind.
CREATING A TOTAL EXPERIENCE FOR A CUSTOMER IS A BLEND OF ALL PARTS OF A PROPERTY COMMUNICATING, COOPERATING AND NETWORKING TOGETHER.

Communication takes many forms in a property. Some methods of communication may include:

- A public safety officer giving directions to a customer or students. This person often gives the all important first impression that will impact a person’s judgment of a property. This person must succeed in their “moment of truth” test by the customer.

- A front desk staff with a pleasant personality and good training. They certainly set the stage for the customer’s stay.

- Each department in a property working together. A customer is quick to pick up a gap in communication and identify this flaw with poor service.

Cooperation at The RIT Inn and Conference Center is clearly not a problem. Both the survey results and interviews support the claim that the Inn has a clear chain of command with no service problems with staff communicating messages to management. There is also a solid network at the Inn that supports cooperation between departments as they work.
RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Use technology to create a computerized communication enhancement vehicle. This could be a definite improvement in allowing workers and management the opportunity to continuously exchange ideas and opinions.

2) Institute a more formal job training program that will 24/7, lead to a continuously leaning organization.

3) Develop a program of study that will examine and analyze the benefits of motivating and retaining employees and offering this as a group training for all managers. Follow the ideas of Barbara A. Glanz in her text, Handle with care; Motivating and Retaining employees.

4) Develop a sophisticated system of communication that will allow for a more rapid response to service recovery issues.

5) Offer "Communication Corners" at least once a month that feature at least two directors or managers. Have these management personnel field questions and suggestions from staff for a period of time during the workday in a relaxed setting. For example, have the human resource manager and food and beverage manager sit in the cafeteria for an hour in the morning.

6) Offer seminars in communication enhancement.

7) Create a program that will allow RIT Inn staff and management to enjoy benefits on par with RIT employees.
RECOMMENDATIONS EXAMINED IN DETAIL

1) THE CREATION OF A COMPUTERIZED COMMUNICATION ENHANCEMENT VEHICLE

This computerized enhancement vehicle will allow employees to perform the following:

A) Register complaints: Any employee can **anonymously list** and explain their complaints about any issues. In this way management can have written complaints that they can analyze. Management can then use this material to identify patterns of a problem and then offer a rapid response for the staff to read.

B) Offer suggestions! Management will receive computerized suggestions for service improvement from workers. Management can certainly use any practical material generated by workers and use these strategies to offer methods of training and improvement strategies for workers.

C) Provide information for improvements: Often times employees are the best sources to identify the need for improvements at a property. Physical and managerial problems can be described by workers in a computerized report.

D) Provide information for improvements: Probably the best way to gather information for improvements would be to record comments by the staff who work regularly in the property that you are trying to improve and address these and comment via computer and at staff meetings.

E) Ask questions: Often times the workers in a property want to ask questions about problems they encounter at work or about changes or
improvements they would like to have made. An anonymous recording of these questions allows management to understand where workers are coming from. Management must respond.

F) Workers are always looking for ways to improve. Being able to access an improvement program for any aspect of the property’s staff can only serve as a plus for the property. Often times workers do not have the time. This computerized access makes it rather easy to learn while in the workplace.

G) Obtain responses immediately from management: Too often there exists a gap between communication and resulting improvement involving workers and management. The proposed computerized system will allow management to give immediate feedback to the worker. Workers need to feel that they are being heard. This system is an immediate vehicle to address this problem. Management can read and respond to employees on a daily basis.

H) Be rewarded for implementations based on suggestions: There is no better way to be appreciated in the workplace then to have your work or suggestions noted and used by upper management. Upper management can use these computerized messages to inform workers of their work and how it will be used in the company plan. This will also serve as motivation for the staff.

I) Management can give feedback to staff on the implementation of suggestions through the use of the computerized system. It would be
important to staff to receive prompt and regular feedback from management.

The computer would be set up in the break room at the RIT Inn and Conference Center. Employees would log on using a universal password to protect their identity. As they log on they would be introduced to a screen that offers several choices to offer input. For example, the screen would offer the following choices;

A) Register complaint – When the employee selects this section they are shown a form that allows them to anonymously register a complaint. The form would read;

EMPLOYEE IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT –

Department or Issue of Concern:

_________________________________________________________________________

Explain in detail the problem you are encountering:

_________________________________________________________________________

Describe how you feel this problem could be rectified:

_________________________________________________________________________

Send to manager on duty and Bill Gunther.

B) Offer suggestions – When the employee selects this, the screen reads the followings;

EMPLOYEE SUGGESTION:

Department in which you are suggesting improvement:
Suggestion to be implemented:

Explain how this suggestion would improve the Inn's Service:

Send suggestion to manager on duty and Bill Gunther.

C) Improvement – The screen would read;

IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENTS:

Explain the area of work that needs improvement. For example:

The employee may write: I feel that the front desk staff is overworked and in many cases undertrained.

Explain how you feel this area of concern can be improved:

Send to manager on duty and Bill Gunther

D) Question for management – The screen would read;

Issue to be addressed – Example: I would like to know more about advancement opportunities at the Inn. Who has discussed them?

Send to manager and Bill Gunther.
E) Improvement program – When a worker selects this section they are given a choice of several self-directed improvements. For example;

1) Report Writing – When they choose this they are shown how to write a report concerning an area of concern in their department. Help is provided in wording and actual sentence structure.

2) Case Studies – Employees will be shown a case study based on their department. The case study will cover a problem and ask for a solution. Workers may submit this to the Manager on duty and Bill Gunther. They can then look for a response and critique.

3) Advancement in the industry – When workers select this they will be shown a list of requirements for advancement in different job categories. They will also be shown methods of obtaining these requirements. For example; the employees would like to know how to become a sous chef. This employee is currently a waiter for parties and a not an RIT student. They will be shown that to become a sous chef they must attend two semesters of culinary school and must complete an internship. The classes could be completed at any accredited school but the RIT Inn would offer the internship.

F) Management response – the section would read THE MANAGEMENT’S RESPONSE – This section will contain the daily response by management to worker’s questions and suggestion and also offer other items. For example, when choosing this section the employee would be shown several sub-sections;
1) Complaint responses 2) Suggestion responses 3) Improvement responses
4) Question responses 5) Today at the Inn (this may point out a special party or function that many need special attention 6) the Director’s editorial. A daily look at an issue or upcoming event that the managing director feels everyone should be concerned about.

A software program could be instituted.
Description: This software would be totally anonymous. It would make sure that the employee that uses this software would feel safe that they would be able to give their opinion without anyone else knowing who it came from.
This software would be a database backbone with a webpage front end.

Overview: An employee would sit down in front of the computer that would be located at the Inn. This could be set up in a neutral location such as the break room. The machine would have a special sign in. In this way the employee would not be signed in as themselves and it would not be traced back to who was working on a particular machine at a particular time. On this machine there would be an icon to be linked to what will be called RIT Inn Software. The employee would click on the icon and proceed to fill out a form. This form could be posted on the website linked to the software, and/or e-mail notification could be immediately sent to managing director Bill Gunther and or a designee appointed by Mr. Gunther.

There would be a reply link on the page that would allow Mr. Gunther to reply to the message and post it to the website. Mr. Gunther would be able to sort through the submitted material and choose which to reply to which to discard, which to post, and
which questions he may forward to other managers for advice. Mr. Gunther and his
Designated appointee would be in total control of the material submitted. They would also
be in total control of the replies that would be sent from other managers.

The Form: Once the employee clicks on the icon on the desktop of the machine it would
bring up a welcome page with the campus colors and the name of the program.

Once the next button is clicked, it would then open up the whole program and from there it would ask all sorts of questions. The first thing it would do would be give some options about the kind of problem, question, or improvements the employee wants to address. It would look like this:
Once the employee clicks on the box that pertains to them, they would then fill out that box and click a submit button. At this point, the blog or entry would be emailed to Mr. Gunther and/or his designee.

The Website: The name and school colors would be on the page at the top and on the left there would be titles for each of the categories in the previous picture. There would be an archive button that would hold all the other entries that had been added to the database. Mr. Gunther and his designee could review and reply to these entries and post the replies on the webpage, at their discretion.

The content of the webpage would be as follows;

The left side would have tabs with e folders that take you to other parts of the webpage. Other parts of the page would be Problems, Concerns, Suggestions, Improvements, Questions and Archives. Categories would be identified and revised by the management.

Cost: The cost would be based on the average per hour rate a Webpage creator would charge. This rate is currently, on the average, approximately sixty-five dollars an hour. Normally a webpage creator would work about three hours a day on such a project. It is estimated at this rate it would take approximately 60 days to complete.

Thus the initial project cost would be 60 days x 3 hours a day = 180 hours. 180 hours x 65 dollars an hour = $11,700.00. This cost would be to develop the software and get the project up and running.
Most projects, however, are completed by a team of people rather than just one webpage creator. Employing a database person and a web person to work with a team of managers and staff would be advisable.

Some software and other materials would need to be purchased. Completing the project would involve applying for a patent as well as a trademark. The final cost would thus total $20,000.00 or more. The final cost, as well as the per hour rates would be negotiable.

2) **INSTITUTE JOB TRAINING** – This study has suggested that poor job training may be a cause of poor service. If a cook or server has never been formally trained by staff then in reality they are unskilled or inferior workers. Many workers are also improperly trained by people who were poorly trained themselves. Further, workers may be trained one way by one staff member and another way by another staff member. Uniformity can reduce gaps in service and streamline service. Proper job training by management will give employees what they need to improve themselves and will also serve as a solid method of communication between staff and management (Wood & Kind, 1996).

3) **DEVELOP A PROGRAM OF STUDY FOR MANAGERS THAT TEACHES EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION, AND ENHANCES RETENTION AND MORALE.** Barbara Glanz, in her book, *Handle With Care: motivating and retaining your employee*; identifies several ways to deal with problems in motivating, retaining and obtaining positive morale in
people that are under your employ. The suggestion is to develop a training program for managers that will develop employees.

Writing a small manual modeled after the Glanz work may help managers to develop a working knowledge of how to motivate and retain workers. Combining the study of this manual with a seminar once a month to discuss how implementation of suggestions has worked among staff and keeping results from all managers may help to plot the progress of efforts.

The Glanz work suggests that managers must talk to workers and also listen to what workers have to say. Glanz suggests the use of storytelling to workers to ease into information and to make it more manageable and thus retained by the worker.

Glanz suggests the use of e-mail by all employees. The managing director should allow all employees the benefit of e-mailing the boss. The director can then search for recurring themes among messages and use this information for the future.

Glanz also suggests gripe sessions to be held once a month away from the workplace. Allowing the workers to vent is helpful in understanding where true problems come from.

Glanz says to send a message, not a directive, when sending e-mail. Use no capitals in e-mails and people will receive the message as communication and not a direct order.

Glanz also suggests the use of other methods to improve morale:

A) A surprise day off will make people energetic when they return.

B) Catch employees doing something right and praise them.

C) Nominate an employee of the month.

D) Have senior managers assist workers in part of their work.
E) At an employee birthday skip the card – Find out what they like and try to arrange a gift that resembles that desire.

F) Sponsor a bring child to work, bring spouses to work to show workers that the family will appreciate their efforts (Glanz, 2002, p.180-181).

All these suggestions by Glanz can be incorporated into a manual that can be used by managers. This manual can then be reviewed/updated and used over and over to create a more worker friendly atmosphere at the workplace (Glanz, 2002).

4) DEVELOP A SOPHISTICATED SYSTEM AND A MORE RAPID COMUNICATION SERVICE RECOVERY SYSTEM – Communication problems at a hotel property can lead to further problems in security, housekeeping, maintenance, service recovery and guest requests. It is very important to establish a communication network at a hotel property to ensure that problems are addressed immediately. At the 2010 room Borgata hotel in Atlantic City N.J., CEO Bob Boughner established an employee Intranet that allows communication quickly and accurately to address any concern. Many hotel properties use radios, walkie-talkies, and other systems that are expensive and limited in functionally. At the Borgata, they have incorporated a wireless system that establishes instant communication that has led to efficient service. The Borgata uses a Nextel phone in partnership with an Espresso solution supplied by a Miami based Management Technology company. When, for example, a housekeeper enters a room and finds a problem, they dial into their Espresso system on their phone and log a maintenance request. A worker is contacted and the problem is addressed.
This same Espresso service is used for security communication, communication with management, and to address guest requests. Nextel is also working with hotels to install bar code scanning in hotel rooms as well as scanning room keys for remote charges (Downer, 2004). At the RIT Inn and Conference Center, it may be very useful to install a Nextel network into their communication network. This would eliminate delays in service between departments and also improve service recovery.

5) **OFFER COMMUNICATION CORNERS THAT FEATURE AT LEAST TWO DIRECTORS OR MANAGERS** – At least once a month, offer a communication corner that will enable workers to meet with the management voice their opinions on issues that concern them, and participate in developing solutions. Offer the corner in a relaxed setting. At the RIT Inn and Conference Center the employee cafeteria or one of the meeting rooms. Giving the employee direct contact with the management will bolster their confidence and make them more motivated. It will also give the management the opportunity to learn first hand what the employees experience while working. It would be advisable to print out the questions and answers to the communication corner and post them. In this way the staff will know that their opinions were taken seriously.

6) **OFFER SEMINARS IN COMMUNICATION ENHANCEMENT** – A day long training session that offers communication training would work to make the staff aware of the importance of communication in the service industry. Specific training could include introducing methods of dealing with difficult
customers, improvising in a situation that requires action that is not the norm, and methods of suggestion that work in service recovery and customer retention. An afternoon session would take this information and apply to scenarios and situations that may need attention. Breakout sessions that feature teams made up of people from different departments would create a synergy that may not currently exist. Activities such as brainstorming and scenario planning would certainly add some future orientation to the staff and their work.

7) **CREATE A PROGRAM THAT WILL ALLOW RIT INN STAFF AND MANAGEMENT TO ENJOY BENEFITS ON PAR WITH RIT EMPLOYEES** – The RIT Inn and Conference Center must bring its benefits on par with those of the RIT main campus. In the workplace people are constantly aware of who gets the best jobs and who gets the best bonus, reward, etc. If, in the same workplace, some employees get better benefits than others it can create some tension. At the RIT Inn and Conference Center there are employees who enjoy the RIT benefit package who are placed at the Inn. These employees work for RIT and not Gunther and Associates. The Inn’s employees do not enjoy the full benefit package that the RIT employees have. Consequently many Inn employees may become frustrated. The RIT Inn and Conference Center employees may not be motivated to give their best performance and ultimately may seek to leave the Inn because the Inn offers inferior benefits. If the Inn can incorporate itself into the RIT benefit package it will elevate itself as an employer. Many small properties cannot ever really
improve because they never get the chance to enjoy the benefits of linking into a large company. The Inn can link into the RIT benefit program and thus attract employees along the way. It should be noted that Gunther and Associates is an independent company that seeks to be efficient in its costs. So truthfully it would be very prudent for them to incorporate themselves into the RIT benefit package.

**LIMITS OF THE STUDY**

This study is focused on the RIT Inn and Conference Center and its unique management style. Therefore it would be very difficult to apply any of the work to another property. The concepts and ideas and certainly the format could serve as a guide for someone to create another study. Any future study would have to insert their own property’s unique style and situations. This would create a whole new design for any other study.

Many of the suggestions and solutions provided in this study are tailored to specific issues at the RIT Inn and Conference Center. Therefore any other property would find it difficult to use the actual solutions this study provides. An interested reader could draw some ideas about how to design a study of their own. The study can serve as an example of how one property can deal with its issues. Future researchers would have to create a new document and design of their own to complete work on another property.

As the primary researcher concludes, it is obvious that the study would not have been possible without the support and cooperation of Mr. Bill Gunther. As the managing
director of the RIT Inn and Conference Center he has extended himself and his staff to this study.

The researcher thanks Mr. Gunther for his help and hopes the study will offer him some ideas to enhance his ever improving operation.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


A Appendix: Interview Summary
Interview # 1

Food and Beverage at a large resort, Las Vegas

1) Is the management accessible and cooperative when dealing with problems?
   Answer: There are a lot of important meetings when dealing with situations. Quick reactions will stop problems from growing and then they work to solve these problems.

2) Are conflicts and conflict resolution dealt with properly?
   Answer: The department supervisors and managers will first try to solve a problem that develops between the two departments. If it is not resolved then the assistant vice president and the vice president will attempt to solve the problem.

3) Does the resort effectively use customer service feedback to improve service?
   Answer: they use comment cards and a check out survey. Marketing meets once a week to see if problems are developing. They address problems by taking the problem back to the particular department.

4) Do you feel that the property has continually upgraded its technology and training to keep up with the times?
   Answer: The use of cell phones and pagers is in place. Radios with several channels to communicate with all departments are also in place.

5) Is there a clear chain of command for filtering problems through at the resort?
   Answer: the manager to manger network is in place.

6) Thought question-communication is a key ingredient in the success of a hospitality property. Described how you best use communication to your benefit?
   Answer: E-mail is the largest communication vehicle. Employees can access their e-mail even if they are not at work.

7) If you have personal problems that you could use help with, is help rapidly available by your employer?
   Answer: Human resources has a wellness center where people can take classes for stress, diet, and alcohol problems.

Additional information received from the property’s Chef;
Workers have a pre-shift meeting; have one on one meeting with supervisors, and a coffee with the boss opportunity.
Supervisors motivate their employees by listening to their problems.
Restaurant mangers come up with a weekly business plan that they take to the vice president.
Employees can go to the company website where properties the worldwide are illustrated. They can locate any other property in the chain. Employees can also ask questions to corporate.
Interview #2

Front desk at 2nd large resort, in Las Vegas

1) Is your immediate supervisor accessible and cooperative when dealing with problems?
   Answer: there are no problems in this area.
2) Are conflicts and conflict resolutions dealt with properly?
   Answer: Most of the problems are handled internally.
3) Does the resort effectively use customer feedback to improve service?
   Answer: they use comment cards, e-mail questionnaires, and then marketing takes this information and filters through it.
4) Do you feel that the property has continually upgraded its technology and training to keep up with the times?
   Answer: radios with channels to communicate with each department are in place.
5) Is there a clear chain of command for filtering problems?
   Answer: empowerment is the key here. The resort empowers people.
6) Thought question-communication is a key ingredient in the success of a hospitality property. Describe how you best use communication to your benefit.
   Answer: E-mail within the staff.
7) If you have personal problems that you could use help with, is help rapidly available by your employer?
   Answer: This is outsourced, contracted.

Interview #3

Gaming employee at a small casino resort in Las Vegas

1) Is your immediate supervisor accessible and cooperative when dealing with problems?
   Answer: Yes
2) Is there a clear chain of command for filtering problems?
   Answer: yes
3) Communication is a key ingredient in the success of a hospitality property. Describe how you best use communication to your benefit.
   Answer: personality is a plus. You also have to use that personality to work your way into other jobs.
Interview # 4

Gaming management at a small casino resort in Las Vegas

1) Is your immediate supervisor accessible and cooperative when dealing with problems?
   Answer: He is the Gaming Shift Manager and he makes himself accessible to everyone.
2) Are conflicts and conflict resolutions dealt with properly?
   Answer: there have been no real problems in this area.
3) Does the property effectively use customer feedback to improve service?
   Answer: did not answer.
4) Do you feel that the property has continually upgraded its technology and training to keep up with the times?
   Answer: yes. They have an internal phone system. The property in Vegas is only 10 years old so upgrades are not really an issue.
5) Is there a clear chain of command for filtering problems?
   Answer: The shift manager calls the shots. He gets the final say.
6) If you have personal problems that you could use help with, is help rapidly available by your employer?
   Answer: there is an HR person at the property that works as a liaison with the outside program that the resort contracts with.
7) It is more difficult to advance out in Las Vegas because there is more competition and more experienced help?
   Answer: did not answer this question.

It is interesting to note that the comparison can be made between the large mega hotels and smaller casino resort. The large hotels make their mark with efficiency vs. the small hotel making their mark with service.

Interview # 5

A Golf and Tennis center in Las Vegas

In the immediate vicinity of the small casino resort studied is a Golf and Tennis Center. At this property I spoke with two staff members who both were extremely motivated and energetic in their respective positions. The first was the front desk clerk; she was very educated in sports and was very willing to share her information
with me regarding sports and recreation. I found this to be a big plus to the area that surrounded the small casino resort.

Placing a sports store near a hotel property is very good way to make both that hotel and the sports store prosper. Guests of the hotel property may wish to enrich their hotel experience by visiting the Golf and Tennis Store. Likewise visitors to the Golf and Tennis Store will also want to visit the casino property. Having these two properties near each other is a perfect fit.

The personality of the front desk clerk should also be noted. Her attitude and enthusiasm made my visit to her store real experience vs., just going to a golf and tennis store to buy sports products.

The second individual I spoke with was an aspiring golf club pro who was working as a salesman at the store. His knowledge of the golf products as well as his ability to speak about business was another reason why I had a great experience at this center.

The small casino property was definitely enriched by having this store near it. Small properties need to have other attractions to make it a place people want to go to. The large casino resorts or strip properties have many different experiences there. But smaller properties must rely on the surrounding businesses to also prosper for their property to survive. The main point in this set of interviews was to establish the fact that small properties must look for every added attraction around them to create a better overall product and thus experience for the customer.

Interview # 6
Housekeeping at RIT Inn

1) Is your immediate supervisor accessible and cooperative when dealing with problems at the RIT Inn and Conference Center?
   Answer: Yes, the situation is good. Dealing with Bill is good. People are also cross trained to help the times when people call in etc.

2) Are conflicts and conflict resolutions dealt with properly at the Inn?
   Answer: There is not much conflict. It is like family.

3) Does the RIT Inn and Conference Center effectively use customer feedback to improve service?
   Answer: There is a lot of good customer feedback. I don’t know if it is recorded somewhere, but I think the feedback is positive.

4) Do you feel that the RIT Inn and Conference Center had continually upgraded its technology and training to keep up with the times?
Answer: Yes. They have a TT deaf machine at the front desk, the automatic folding machines in the laundry room, and the housekeeping supplies are up to date.

5) Is there a clear chain of command for filtering problems through at the RIT Inn and Conference Center?
   Answer: Problems go from HR to Debbie to Bill.

6) Communication is a key ingredient in the success of a hospitality property. Describe how you best use communication to your benefit at the RIT Inn and Conference Center.
   Answer: we are open and honest. Managers work just like the line staff.

There is newness with Bill Gunther that is not a problem but rather a challenge that is exciting. The procedures, orientation, and daily meetings all create a good working atmosphere. Rotating employees is also a plus.

Interview #7

Bill Gunther at Long Term Disability Meeting

Bill announced to his staff about what I was doing at the RIT Inn and explained to the staff that I was trying to help establish a new program to enhance communication at the Inn.

Bill essentially introduced me to the staff and said that I would be conducting interviews later.

The best thing that I took form Bill’s work here was the fact that he told the group that he wanted the group to make the decision about the insurance as opposed to him making the decision for them.

The meeting was set up to bring the whole staff in attendance (about 15 people) in connection with the long term disability people that would issue a policy for them. This person went over the proposed coverage with them and then had them ask questions about the coverage.

There was a lot of good interaction during this meeting between Bill and his staff. I noticed a sense of cohesion rather then a sense of discomfort.

Interview #8

Food and Beverage personnel at the RIT Inn and Conference Center

1) Is your immediate supervisor accessible and cooperative when dealing with problems at the RIT Inn and Conference Center?
   Answer: Yes, he is open to everybody.

2) Are conflicts and conflict resolutions dealt with properly at the Inn?
Answer: Conflicts are resolved in a positive manner.

3) Does the RIT Inn and Conference Center effectively use customer feedback to improve service?
   Answer: Yes, when customers comment to them as kitchen staff they try to consider their remarks and work to improve service.

4) Do you feel that the RIT Inn and Conference Center had continually upgraded its technology and training to keep up with the times?
   Answer: The budget constricts a lot of improvement but efforts are being made to continually upgrade, with the Delmonte Group it took forever to get anything. Now we have a 30 day waiting period before a decision on actions are made.

5) Is there a clear chain of command for filtering problems through at the RIT Inn and Conference Center?
   Answer: Bill had improved the chain of command. If they can they will work to help to improve any situation.

When asked what department they worked for they responded Kitchen Staff.

Interview #9

Food and Beverage Continued

1) Is management accessible and cooperative when dealing with problems at the RIT Inn and Conference Center?
   Answer: Yes, she is easy and receptive to deal with. Treat the place like it belongs to you, according to the person I interviewed.

2) Are conflicts and conflict resolutions dealt with properly at the Inn?
   Answer: Yes, but generally speaking people get along.

3) Does the RIT Inn and Conference Center effectively use customer feedback to improve service?
   Answer: Not too much. The kids, however, are great. They treat us well.

4) Do you feel that the RIT Inn and Conference Center had continually upgraded its technology and training to keep up with the times?
   Answer: They are modern.

Interview #10

Sales/PR/Executive Offices at the RIT Inn

1) Is your immediate supervisor accessible and cooperative when dealing with problems at the RIT Inn and Conference Center?
Answer: Yes, Definitely, reachable.

2) Are conflicts and conflict resolutions dealt with properly at the Inn?
   Answer: Yes, they are constructive, and daily meetings are good.

3) Does the RIT Inn and Conference Center effectively use customer feedback to improve service?
   Answer: Yes, they try to repeat service that has been noted as good.

4) Do you feel that the RIT Inn and Conference Center had continually upgraded its technology and training to keep up with the times?
   Answer: They could do better, there is a gap in technology used and the technology needed.

5) Is there a clear chain of command for filtering problems through at the RIT Inn and Conference Center?
   Answer: There are good relations with the staff at the RIT Inn.

6) Communication is a key ingredient in the success of a hospitality property. Describe how you best use communication to your benefit at the RIT Inn and Conference Center.
   Answer: Face to face contact with the workers is a plus. Also, I allow others to vent their frustrations to me.

Interview # 11

Front Desk at RIT Inn and Conference Center

1) Is your immediate supervisor accessible and cooperative when dealing with problems at the RIT Inn and Conference Center?
   Answer: Yes, they are positive and approachable.

2) Are conflicts and conflict resolutions dealt with properly at the Inn?
   Answer: Conflict resolution is not good, Negative situation arise. They must develop a better way to develop conflict resolution.

3) Does the RIT Inn and Conference Center effectively use customer feedback to improve service?
   Answer: Yes, they have comment cards.

4) Do you feel that the RIT Inn and Conference Center had continually upgraded its technology and training to keep up with the times?
   Answer: No, training is bad. There is no preparation or training period that allows workers to learn.

5) Is there a clear chain of command for filtering problems through at the RIT Inn and Conference Center?
   Answer: It is difficult to say.

6) Communication is a key ingredient in the success of a hospitality property. Describe how you best use communication to your benefit at the RIT Inn and Conference Center.
Answer: E-mail, department cell-phones, but the network is technologically backward.

Interview #12

A university officer (campus police)

1) Is your management accessible and cooperative when dealing with problems at the RIT Inn and Conference Center?
   Answer: They have a good network of communication.

2) Are conflicts and conflict resolutions dealt with properly at the Inn?
   Answer: Others cooperate and there are very few conflicts.

3) Does the RIT Inn and Conference Center effectively use customer feedback to improve service?
   Answer: The students are very vocal about things and they get their message across to us.

4) Do you feel that the RIT Inn and Conference Center had continually upgraded its technology and training to keep up with the times?
   Answer: No. It needs to improve. The hotel needs upgrades in wireless, ect. to get with the times.

5) Is there a clear chain of command for filtering problems through at the RIT Inn and Conference Center?
   Answer: There are good relations with the staff at the RIT Inn.

6) Communication is a key ingredient in the success of a hospitality property. Describe how you best use communication to your benefit at the RIT Inn and Conference Center.
   Answer: the physical appearance of the Public Safety says a lot. Verbal skills, calm attitude, and an ability to mediate in tough situation are all valuable skills.

Additional Comments
The development of College Town, store front and townhouses along with Division 1 hockey will even more improve an already good positive image at the RIT Inn.

Interview #13

Housekeeping at the RIT Inn

1) Is your immediate supervisor accessible and cooperative when dealing with problems at the RIT Inn and Conference Center?
Answer: Yes, they are very good about helping us.

2) Are conflicts and conflict resolutions dealt with properly at the Inn?
   Answer: There are good relations at the RIT Inn and Conference Center and very few conflicts.

3) Does the RIT Inn and Conference Center effectively use customer feedback to improve service?
   Answer: The feedback is good.

4) Do you feel that the RIT Inn and Conference Center had continually upgraded its technology and training to keep up with the times?
   Answer: They could use some upgrades.

5) Is there a clear chain of command for filtering problems through at the RIT Inn and Conference Center?
   Answer: They take care of everything.

6) Communication is a key ingredient in the success of a hospitality property. Describe how you best use communication to your benefit at the RIT Inn and Conference Center.
   Answer: Managers work with each department directly instead of through channels. It is a good work atmosphere.

Interview #14

Food and Beverage, front of the house at the RIT Inn

1) Is your immediate supervisor accessible and cooperative when dealing with problems at the RIT Inn and Conference Center?
   Answer: Yes, they are very easy to work with at the RIT Inn.

2) Are conflicts and conflict resolutions dealt with properly at the Inn?
   Answer: Debbie is very receptive to me.

3) Does the RIT Inn and Conference Center effectively use customer feedback to improve service?
   Answer: They use customer feedback as a gauge to understand where problems arise. Then they take those problems to Bill.

4) Do you feel that the RIT Inn and Conference Center had continually upgraded its technology and training to keep up with the times?
   Answer: It is pretty modern. There are no significant problems on the restaurant side.

5) Is there a clear chain of command for filtering problems through at the RIT Inn and Conference Center?
   Answer: Bill is very approachable.

Additional comments – people feel empowered. The personality of the server is important. Guest service at the Inn is a big point. The network of people from the bottom up is very good.
B Appendix: Recurring Themes
Recurring Themes

This section will identify recurring themes about the communication issues presented in the survey instrument. These themes are based on analysis of the results of on-site interviews at various hotel properties.

At the RIT Inn and Conference Center, it was the primary researcher’s findings through the interview that the property is trying to change from a command and control organization to a learning organization that develops social capital.

THEME#1 ~ Leadership at the RIT Inn and Conference Center has many positive qualities.
   A) Leadership is very cooperative
   B) Leadership is open to ideas
   C) Leadership is understanding and compassionate
   D) Leadership delegates and empowers employees
   E) Leadership is progressive and looking to change things

The interviews at the RIT Inn and Conference Center revealed that leadership is easy to work with and open to suggestions. Leadership is committed to help the RIT Inn change, grow and profit. The very nature of this study suggests that leadership is open to experimentation, security, and suggestions regarding change.

Throughout the interview process, leadership was never mentioned in a negative tone. Certainly there is a level of intellect that would reason that people never speak negatively about their leaders. Even with this in mind, it is the impression of the primary researcher, that the leadership has developed trust and respect from the staff. Also a chain of command that accomplishes things has been created. This makes the organization grow.

Normally in small properties the owner or operator usually has to work long hours. At the RIT Inn and Conference Center the job gets done with a network of empowered employees. This study will identify potential communication enhancements. These enhancements will allow an additional vehicle for communication. Leadership has earned the respect and trust of the staff. On-site observation of management and staffs interaction, regarding decision making, reveals that the management and the staff work in a cohesive unit.

Management delegates a lot of authority and allows for extensive freedom for the staff regarding decision making. By virtue of allowing this paper to be published, management certainly opens up to students to allow them input into the organization. Management is looking to the future and for progress. Management’s goals for this project are to allow staff to contribute to the new growth at the Inn by making suggestions for change. Management is also looking for the staff to identify problems, bring these problems to the attention of management, and let the management work to redeem these issues and concerns. This is an extensive process.
THEME #2 ~ There is very little conflict at the RIT Inn and Conference Center.

The RIT Inn and Conference Center has a friendly atmosphere. There is a good ingredient for cohesive work and present a good foundation for growth and progress. Evidence of this cohesive is as follows:

A) The housekeeping staff commented that the RIT Inn and Conference Center is like family. The staff is open and honest. Managers work just like line staff and they are cross-trained. The people that handle problems have a good chain of command. Problems go from HR to managers. There is a good flow of communication and that does not complicate problems but rater work to solve them.

B) The primary researcher observed at the long term disability meeting that management looks for interaction and input from the staff. The staff was free to ask question, management welcomes thoughts from the staff.

C) Rotation of employees and cross-training allows for employees to essentially become members of several departments.

D) The kitchen staff said conflicts are resolved positively. Management explains that budget restrains often restrict growth.
C Appendix: Letter of Introduction by Primary researcher
April 15, 2005

Wayne Pater
15 8th Street
Yorkville, NY 13495
(315) 736-6910
WXP3283@rit.edu

Dear Associates of the RIT Inn & Conference Center:

My name is Wayne Pater, and I am a student of the RIT Service Management Program. Currently I am working on my thesis to complete my Masters Degree. The goal of the project is to enhance communications at the RIT Inn and Conference Center. Mr. Gunther has granted me permission to complete this project.

My thesis involves studying communication issues at the RIT Inn and Conference Center. Enclosed please find my survey. Please take a few minutes to complete the survey and mail it back to me in the self-addressed, stamped envelope.

All information that you provide to me will be anonymous. No specific individual will be identified. I guarantee anonymity and confidentiality. Results from my project (the findings) will be presented in aggregate form only, to Mr. Gunther. Again, I guarantee that no specific individual will be identified. The results will be used to design a service process enhancement instrument that will benefit all employees.

I look forward to receiving your input concerning communications issues at the inn. If you have any questions about this project, you may contact me at the email address above.

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

Sincerely,

Wayne Pater
D Appendix: Letter of Introduction by Managing Director of RIT and Conference Center
January 14, 2005

Dear Associate,

This letter serves to introduce Wayne Paters who is assisting me with a project that I hope will provide a better and more timely platform for communication within our company. To start, he is surveying several individuals over the next few days to get some baseline information.

Please accept this letter as his legitimacy and feel free to answer his questions. However if you are uncomfortable, you simply need to let him know and he will move on to other associates. Everything he collects in confidential. Do not give your name and even if you have your name tag, Wayne will not write that down.

Thank you in advance for your time –

K. William Gunther
E Appendix: Survey Instrument
1. Housekeeping  __  Pool  __  Food & Beverage  __  Kitchen  __  Accounting
   __  Sales & Marketing  __  Restaurant  __  Banquets
2. How many years have you worked for the RIT Inn? __________
3. Gender  __ M  __ F
4. Are you:  _____ Full Time  _____ Part Time
5. Is your position:  _____ Management  _____ Staff
6. Do you use a computer at home or at work?  _____ Yes  _____ No

For each question below use the following scale to answer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>NEUTRAL</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
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<td>There is a clear</td>
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<td>chain of command</td>
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<td>problems.</td>
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<td>My suggestions for</td>
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<td>improvement are</td>
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<td>Poor communication</td>
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<td>between departments</td>
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<td>and permanently by</td>
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<td>suggestions that are</td>
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<td>ignored.</td>
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I don't feel my experience or education matters to management.  

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Personal issues or problems from home impact employees on the job performance.

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<th>OVER PLEASE-----&gt;</th>
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<th>AGREE</th>
<th>NEUTRAL</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
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Problems I identify are addressed quickly by management.

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I would like an opportunity to share information with upper management anonymously.

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</table>

Issues from home and outside my job negatively impact my work performance.

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</table>

There is a need for a better program to help employees address personal issues.

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</table>

Often times I feel overwhelmed by my work load.

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<th>1</th>
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<th>5</th>
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</thead>
</table>

I feel that I work too many hours.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>5</th>
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</thead>
</table>

If I have personal problems, the RIT Inn and Conference has great programs that will help me.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>1</th>
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<th>5</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Management rarely seeks my opinions or suggestions.

<table>
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<th>1</th>
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I feel my manager gives attention to my concerns.

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</table>

Please answer the following as honestly as possible.

The number one communication issue at the RIT Inn and Conference Center is

If I could change one thing to enhance communication between employees and management at the RIT Inn and Conference Center, I would
Please share any additional thoughts and ideas:


Thank You!
Table 1: Questions Ranked By Strongly Agree
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question #</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>I feel my manager gives attention to my concerns.</td>
<td>41.93</td>
<td>25.80</td>
<td>22.58</td>
<td>9.67</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>There is a clear chain of command for addressing problems.</td>
<td>29.00</td>
<td>32.25</td>
<td>19.35</td>
<td>12.90</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Reported problems are resolved in a timely fashion.</td>
<td>29.00</td>
<td>29.03</td>
<td>29.00</td>
<td>12.90</td>
<td>2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Problems I identify are addressed quickly by management.</td>
<td>29.00</td>
<td>29.03</td>
<td>35.40</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>My suggestions for improvement are taken seriously.</td>
<td>25.80</td>
<td>29.03</td>
<td>22.58</td>
<td>19.35</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Poor communication between departments leads to conflict.</td>
<td>22.58</td>
<td>41.93</td>
<td>29.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Conflicts between departments are resolved effectively and permanently by management.</td>
<td>22.58</td>
<td>9.67</td>
<td>48.38</td>
<td>12.90</td>
<td>6.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I am often asked for my input.</td>
<td>19.35</td>
<td>35.48</td>
<td>19.35</td>
<td>12.90</td>
<td>6.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>My job becomes more difficult when the lines of communication are not open.</td>
<td>19.35</td>
<td>54.83</td>
<td>19.35</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Communication between departments is effective.</td>
<td>16.13</td>
<td>19.35</td>
<td>38.71</td>
<td>22.58</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Information flows easily and effectively from one department to another.</td>
<td>15.15</td>
<td>24.24</td>
<td>36.36</td>
<td>18.18</td>
<td>6.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Personal issues or problems from home impact employees on the job performance</td>
<td>16.13</td>
<td>41.96</td>
<td>22.58</td>
<td>9.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>If I have personal problems, the RIT Inn and Conference has great programs that will help me.</td>
<td>16.13</td>
<td>19.67</td>
<td>45.10</td>
<td>16.12</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>There is competition between departments.</td>
<td>12.90</td>
<td>25.80</td>
<td>51.60</td>
<td>12.87</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>I would like an opportunity to share information with upper management anonymously.</td>
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<td>32.25</td>
<td>41.90</td>
<td>9.67</td>
<td>3.22</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>In the past 12 months a problem at the Inn has impacted my work?</td>
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<td>16.10</td>
<td>25.80</td>
<td>29.00</td>
<td>12.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Communication breakdowns effect my performance.</td>
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<td>35.48</td>
<td>38.70</td>
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<td>6.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I don't feel my experience or education matters to management.</td>
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<td>35.48</td>
<td>51.60</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>3.22</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Conflicts tend to repeat themselves due to a lack of communication.</td>
<td>6.45</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>I regularly offer suggestions that are ignored.</td>
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<td>35.40</td>
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</table>
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<tr>
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Table 3: Questions Ranked By Strongly Disagree
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<td>6.45</td>
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<td>Personal issues or problems from home impact employees on the job performance</td>
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Table 4: Questions Ranked By Strongly Disagree and Disagree
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Table for Percentages
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<th>Disagree</th>
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<td>I would like an opportunity to share information with upper management anonymously.</td>
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Table for Frequencies
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<th>Disagree</th>
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Table Combining Percentages and Frequencies
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<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Communication between departments is effective.</td>
<td>16.13%</td>
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<td>38.71%</td>
<td>22.58%</td>
<td>3.23%</td>
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<td>My suggestions for improvement are taken seriously.</td>
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<td>Poor communication between departments leads to conflict.</td>
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<td>44.83%</td>
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<td>0.00%</td>
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<td>Conflicts tend to repeat themselves due to a lack of communication.</td>
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<td>48.39%</td>
<td>32.26%</td>
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<td>Conflicts between departments are resolved effectively and permanently by management.</td>
<td>22.58%</td>
<td>9.68%</td>
<td>48.39%</td>
<td>12.90%</td>
<td>6.45%</td>
</tr>
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<td>I don't feel my experience or education matters to management.</td>
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<td>Personal issues or problems from home impact employees on the job performance</td>
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<td><strong>Problems I identify are addressed quickly by management.</strong></td>
<td>29.03%</td>
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<td>Often times I feel overwhelmed by my work load.</td>
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<td>16.67%</td>
<td>23.33%</td>
<td>43.33%</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
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<td>0.00%</td>
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</table>
Graphs of Each Question by Frequency
Question #1: Communication between departments is effective.

Question #2: Information flows easily and effectively from one department to another.
Question #3: There is a clear chain of command for addressing problems.

Question #4: In the past 12 months a problem at the Inn has impacted my work?
Question #5: Reported problems are resolved in a timely fashion.

Question #6: I am often asked for my input.
Question #7: My suggestions for improvement are taken seriously.

- Strongly Agree: 8
- Agree: 9
- Neutral: 7
- Disagree: 6
- Strongly Disagree: 1

Question #8: My job becomes more difficult when the lines of communication are not open.

- Strongly Agree: 6
- Agree: 17
- Neutral: 6
- Disagree: 2
- Strongly Disagree: 0
Question #9: Communication breakdowns affect my performance.

Question #10: There is competition between departments.
Question #11: Poor communication between departments leads to conflict.

Question #12: Conflicts tend to repeat themselves due to a lack of communication.
Question #13: Conflicts between departments are resolved effectively and permanently by management.

Question #14: I regularly offer suggestions that are ignored.
Question #15: I don't feel my experience or education matters to management.

- Strongly Agree: 3
- Agree: 11
- Neutral: 16
- Disagree: 0
- Strongly Disagree: 1

Question #16: Personal issues or problems from home impact employees on the job performance

- Strongly Agree: 5
- Agree: 13
- Neutral: 7
- Disagree: 3
- Strongly Disagree: 2
Question #17: Problems I identify are addressed quickly by management.

- Strongly Agree: 9
- Agree: 9
- Neutral: 11
- Disagree: 2
- Strongly Disagree: 0

Question #18: I would like an opportunity to share information with upper management anonymously.

- Strongly Agree: 4
- Agree: 10
- Neutral: 13
- Disagree: 3
- Strongly Disagree: 1
Question #19: Issues from home and outside my job negatively impact my work performance.

Question #20: There is a need for a better program to help employees address personal issues.
Question #21: Often times I feel overwhelmed by my work load.

- Strongly Agree: 1
- Agree: 5
- Neutral: 7
- Disagree: 13
- Strongly Disagree: 4

Question #22: I feel that I work too many hours.

- Strongly Agree: 1
- Agree: 2
- Neutral: 11
- Disagree: 8
- Strongly Disagree: 9
**Question #23:** If I have personal problems, the RIT Inn and Conference has great programs that will help me.

- Strongly Agree: 5
- Agree: 6
- Neutral: 14
- Disagree: 5
- Strongly Disagree: 1

**Question #24:** Management rarely seeks my opinions or suggestions.

- Strongly Agree: 0
- Agree: 5
- Neutral: 9
- Disagree: 8
- Strongly Disagree: 9
Question #25: I feel my manager gives attention to my concerns.

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RIT Inn and Conference Center

Presented by Wayne Pater
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Labor Issues and the Hotel Industry

- Cornell Study
Background on the RIT Inn and Conference Center

- 304 Rooms
- 10,000 sq. feet of Conference space
- Inn employs 135-150 people 80-90 of which are full time
- Managing Director is Bill Gunther
Problem Statement

- Communication at the RIT Inn and Conference Center is critical in obtaining maximum operation efficiency in retaining employees, and providing the best guest experience.
- Communication disconnects are not currently identified, nor are they being resolved.
RIT Inn and Conference Center

RIT Inn and Conference Center enhance guest experiences at the RIT ability to enhance overall operational process that will provide management with an enhanced communication to create an enhanced communication.

Purpose Statement
Limits/Delimits

- The study focuses on the RIT Inn and Conference Center and its unique management structure
  - Findings are not transferable to other operations.
Features of the Communication Process Network

- The process will enable employees of the Inn to:
  - Register complaints
  - Offer suggestions
  - Provide information for improvements
  - Ask questions
  - Access professional development programs
  - Obtain responses immediately from management
  - Be appraised of implementations based on suggestions
  - Receive feedback of implementations based on suggestions
Chapter 2

~Literature Review~
Literature Review

- It includes:
  - Internet Articles
  - Journal Articles
  - Case Studies
  - Professional Journal Articles
  - Textbooks
History and Structure of Communication in the Hotel Industry

- **William Edwards Deming**
  - Managers must be leaders
  - Workers must not work in fear of communicating problems
  - Removal of communication barriers is crucial for growth
  - Life long learning and education a must

- **Joseph M Juran**
  - Examines quality in business operations
  - Quality products vs. Service recovery
Ritz-Carlton Case

- Ritz-Carlton wins Malcolm Baldgrige Award for quality improvement and service.
- Baldgrige Award criteria are a set of requirements placed into seven categories:
  1. *Leadership*
  2. *Information and Analysis*
  3. *Strategic Planning*
  4. *Human Resource Development*
  5. *Process Management*
  6. *Business Results*
  7. *Customer Focus and Satisfaction*
General Common Issues

- Gaps in communication exist
- Execution strategies
- Constructive criticism
- “Span of control”
- Language barriers
- Wegman’s credo
  - “Employees first, customers second”
- Technological advances in communication
  - Digital photographs
  - Wireless communication
Factors Influencing Communication Barriers and Enhancements

- **Barriers:**
  - Workers are employed by Gunther and Associates and not RIT.
  - Workers use an outsource employee assistance program (EAP).

- **Enhancements:**
  - Creation of a computerized communication enhancement vehicle.
  - Employee Intranet
  - Creation of a paperless, wireless system to report service orders.
  - Use of “rapid response” number into Nextel units for faster service
  - 24 hrs CCTV system
Impact of Positive Resolution of Communication Issues at Hotel Properties

- Positive resolution of issues begins with the employee
- Ritz-Carlton empowers all employees $2,000 without special approval to solve problems
- Positive communication stressed by Ritz-Carlton in daily quality line-up process
- Supervisors meet to sort out problems at Flamingo in Las Vegas.
  - Comment cards are also used to identify problems to management.
Communication Enhancements at Mega Resorts and Private Properties

- Sheraton Egypt:
  - HITS, NAS, and Pro HR system eliminates data redundancy
- Biometrics
  - Fingerprint reader
- Internet Access
- Hilton’s wireless remote control unit serves as “brain” of room
- Hard Rock Hotel in Las Vegas uses internal phone system
- Player’s card for use at Casino resorts.
Factors Influencing Communication Barriers

- RIT Inn and Conference Center staff work for Gunther and Associates and not RIT
- RIT Inn and Conference Center use an outsourced Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
Chapter 3

Methodology
This chapter contains:

- Project Description
- The Population, Sample and Sample Frame
- The Survey Development and Administration
- Validity
- Data Collection and Analysis
Project Description

- Discussion between RIT service management faculty and RIT Inn and Conference Center Managing Director Bill Gunther
  - Gunther identifies a need for a project dealing with communication issues at the RIT Inn and Conference Center.
- Dr. Johnson and graduate student, Wayne Pater meet with Bill Gunther to discuss project.
  - Wayne Pater agrees to work with Dr. Johnson and Bill Gunther on a project studying communication issues at the RIT Inn and Conference Center as his graduate thesis.
Project Description (cont’d)

- Primary researcher writes letter of introduction to Gunther which contains project proposal.
- Gunther produces a letter of introduction for primary researcher to use to validate his interviews.
- RIT on-site interviews conducted by primary researcher on January 14th, 2005, and February 11th, 2005.
Project Description (cont’d)

- A 20 Question first draft of the survey instrument was produced from initial interviews. Revisions to the instrument were made based on advise from Bill Gunther and Dr. Johnson

- The primary researcher travels to Las Vegas, Nevada, to interview casino resort employees and a golf and tennis center staff located near a casino. These interviews took place on February 15th, and 16th, 2005 in Las Vegas

- Survey instrument was presented to client for approval in March 2005.

- Survey administered to full staff of the RIT Inn and Conference Center in May 2005.
The Population = The Sample

- The population includes the full staff of 135 at the RIT Inn and Conference Center.
- The sample is the same because all 135 workers were issued a survey.
- All workers were included in the sample frame.
Survey Development and Administration

- The survey was developed from information gathered during the interviews.
- Las Vegas properties were used in the project to draw comparisons between *technology, service recovery, and problem solving techniques* in Las Vegas properties vs. what the RIT Inn and Conference Center uses.
Survey Development and Administration

- Questions 1-5: probe the communication problem.
- Questions 5-10: ask the respondent to comment on how they receive and work with their management.
- Questions 11-13: are intended to identify the extent of the communication problem.
- Questions 14-16: introduce the ideas of experience, education and personal issues.
- Questions 17-25: probe the problem in communication and ask for recommendations for recovery.
Administration

- A pilot test was issued directly by the primary researcher prior to the Final Mailed Survey. 30 Surveys were distributed
  - 7 responded
- After consulting with Dr. Johnson and Bill Gunther, the primary researcher changed the wording in 4 questions
- 135 surveys were presented to Bill Gunther on May 9th, 2005 by primary researcher, Wayne Pater.
- 135 surveys were distributed. 31 completed surveys were mailed to the primary researcher for a response rate of 22.96%
Administration (cont’d)

- A mail survey was used to preserve anonymity and eliminate the biases interviews bring
Validity

- The pilot test and reviews prior to administration ensure validity.
- All workers were surveyed to eliminate any converge error.
- No sampling error because all people were surveyed.
- The range of responses from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree allow for respondents to record their answers for interpretation.
  - This eliminates measurement error.
- Survey avoids non-response error by guarantee of anonymity through mail-in result.
Data Collection

- The surveys were completed and mailed to the primary researcher.
Chapter 4

~Findings~
Data Collection

- Jan. 14th, 2005 – interviewed 5 staff members from RIT Inn
- Feb. 11th, 2005 – interviewed 3 staff members at the RIT Inn and attended one staff meeting
- Feb. 15th, 2005 – chef at Flamingo casino resort in Las Vegas, Nevada, was interviewed
- Feb. 16th, 2005 – interviewed 3 employees from casino resorts in Las Vegas and one employee from a golf and tennis resort
Structure of Interview Questions:

- Written to discover recurring themes
- Questions dealt with:
  - Accessibility of management to staff
  - Conflict and conflict resolution
  - Sue of customer feedback
  - Technology of the properties
  - The chain of command at the properties
Findings

Finding #1

- There is a direct relation between communication and conflict at the RIT Inn and Conference Center.

Question #11: Poor communication between departments leads to conflict.
Finding #2

- Respondents feel strongly that employees at the RIT Inn and Conference can communicate adequately between themselves, with the other departments, and with management.

Question #3: There is a clear chain of command for addressing problems.

- Strongly Agree: 30%
- Agree: 34%
- Neutral: 20%
- Disagree: 3%
- Strongly Disagree: 13%
Finding #3

- There are problems in conflict resolution at the RIT Inn and Conference Center that effect the organization and the service product.

Question #13: Conflicts between departments are resolved effectively and permanently by management.
Question #25: I feel my manager gives attention to my concerns.

Finding #4
- Employees at the RIT Inn and Conference Center feel that management values their concerns and suggestions
Finding #5

- There is a need to investigate the validity of installing an in house Employee Assistance Program at the RIT Inn and Conference Center

Question #16: Personal issues or problems from home impact employees on the job performance

- Strongly Agree: 23%
- Agree: 43%
- Neutral: 17%
- Disagree: 7%
- Strongly Disagree: 10%
Chapter 5
~Conclusion and Recommendations~
Conclusion

- Management at the RIT Inn and Conference Center is very concerned about participation by its staff in the decision making process.

- Conflict resolution at Las Vegas properties may provide insight to the development of an enhancement communication process at the RIT Inn and Conference Center.

- Although upgrades in technology are needed at the RIT Inn and Conference Center, the Inn must not sacrifice service in their implementation of new methods of dealing with problems.

- Management must interpret information from the staff using methods that foster growth and encourage creativity.

- Creating a total experience for a customer is a blend of all parts of a property communicating, cooperating, and networking together.
Recommendations

- Using technology to create a computerized communication enhancement vehicle would be a definite improvement in allowing workers and management the opportunity to exchange ideas and opinions.
- Institute more formal job training and continuous learning.
- Develop a program of study that will examine and analyze the benefits of motivating and retaining employees and offer this as a group training for all managers.
- Develop a sophisticated system of communication that will allow for a more rapid response to service recovery issues.
Recommendations (cont’d)

- Offer communication Corners at least once a month that feature at least 2 directors or managers. Have these management personnel field questions and suggestions from staff for a period of time during the workday in a relaxed setting. For example, have the HR manager and Food and Beverage manager sit in the cafeteria for an hour in the morning.

- Offer seminars in communication enhancement.

- Create a program that will allow RIT Inn staff and management to enjoy benefits on par with RIT employees.