

case study

The Paramus Inn

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Introduction

Diversity is the norm rather than the exception in today's workforce. Many people think of diversity as it relates to race, ethnicity, gender, age, and/or religion. Today, however, the definition must also encompass other factors such as communication style, work style, organizational role/level, economic status, sexual orientation, disability, political beliefs, family structure, geographic origin, work and individual experiences, and value systems.

The case study begins with the hiring of a new general manager, Julia Jones. Julia has been tasked with improving the working relationships of the management team in a small hotel in order to improve employee satisfaction, reduce the likelihood of management turnover, and improve overall operations.

The Paramus Inn

The Paramus Inn is a 100 room limited service hotel property in Paramus, NJ. It is one of 14 hotels in CMC's (Colcordia Management Company) portfolio of hotels. Since unemployment is high in Paramus, there has been little management turnover in the past several years. The hotel currently maintains a 71% occupancy rate during the week and a 35% occupancy rate on weekends. The occupancy has slipped in the current economic environment, but due to little staff turnover, has maintained their standard of quality and market share. However Mike Forte, the owner of the hotel and CEO of CMC, is concerned that if the economy rebounds, they may have management staffing issues due to a palatable tension growing within the team. He isn't sure if it is all diversity related but wants Julia's first order of business to review the management staffing and create a plan to unify and strengthen the hotel.

CMC's Diversity Initiative

Colcordia Management Company believes in promoting and maintaining diversity in their workforce. This value of diversity is focused on acceptance and respect of similarities and differences in the workforce. The foundation is built on the understanding that each individual is unique and worthy of respect for their individuality. We strive to promote understanding each person and to move beyond

tolerance to embracing and celebrating the inherent diversity within each team member or guest.

The Problem

Mike Forte recently hired Julia Jones, a 29-year-old single Chicago native, as the new General Manager. She believes that facing unpleasant situations head on is the best policy. Julia is a graduate of Penn State University School of Hospitality Management. She worked her way up to Human Resources Director at a full service CMC property. Mike was impressed with Julia's skill at navigating tricky employment issues and felt that she might be the perfect person to rectify the situation at the Paramus Inn. This is her first GM position, and is excited to make her mark in the company. Her ultimate goal is to become the youngest female African American regional manager with CMC.

From past experience, and having taken cultural anthropology courses in college, Julia knows that the diversity of the management team might be the root of some of the discord. Julia decides to evaluate the management team and determine the issues that might be hindering the team's morale and overall working environment and relationships. To start the process, Julia writes down everything that she knows about the department managers at the property. She also interviews the team to see how they feel everything is going at the property. After she completes this task, she plans to look back at some of her resources on diversity and culture to analyze the relationships and create a plan for success.

The Team

Miguel Ramirez - Front Office Manager—Miguel is 26 years of age and has been with the hotel for four years. He started as a desk clerk and was promoted last year when he graduated with his degree. Miguel was born in Texas and was raised in Mexico by his parents, Mexican citizens. He speaks English and Spanish fluently. He is married to his partner, Joe. Miguel is very vocal about his political and social views, especially on same-sex marriage.

Regina George - Executive Housekeeper—Regina is 46 years of age. Regina has been in her position for two years; previously she held similar positions for 13 years. Her mother, a West German, met and married her father, an American, in Berlin. Regina's parents divorced when she was an infant. She moved to the U.S. at 18 to be closer to her father. She was raised in a traditional German household and holds

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true to their values. Regina speaks German and English fluently. Divorced, Regina lives with her son's family.

Frank LeFranc – Maintenance Chief—Frank has been with CMC for 19 years and has been the Maintenance Chief at the Paramus Inn since it opened in 1999. Frank is 61 years of age and is from Baton Rouge, LA. Frank has been married for 40 years and is a father of four and grandfather of nine. Frank is a fourth generation Marine veteran and is proud of having served his country. He considers himself “a true southern gentleman.” After serving in Vietnam, Frank received his A.A.S. in Civil Engineering. He retired from the military in 1989. He is vocal about his very conservative views.

Kristen Jorgenson-Smith - Sales Manager—Kristen is 23 and is originally from Oslo, Norway. Kristen speaks Norwegian, Swedish and English fluently. She came to the U.S. as an au pair where she met and married her husband. Kristen has been at the hotel for 16 months. She has an 11 month old son.

Comments about Miguel:

Mike: “I felt good about promoting Miguel; I like his upbeat style and guest communication skills.”

Kristen: “The guests love Miguel. However, as soon as I, or a guest, have a problem, Miguel is nowhere to be found.”

Frank: “Miguel’s never meets a deadline. Might be a good concierge, but he’s not tough enough to handle the job of front office manager.”

Miguel’s staff: “Miguel values our opinions and always gets our opinion when setting department policies. We enjoy having a say in how things run.”

Regina: “Miguel doesn’t like to follow rules. He translates for my Spanish speaking staff, but tells them his expectations. Often they don’t do as I asked. Also, we are expected to put in 45 hours per week. I would be surprised if Miguel is putting in more than 35.”

Comments about Regina:

Mike: “The Paramus Inn has been awarded the highest cleanliness scores in the CMC for four years. Regina is a task master, but gets results.”

Miguel: “Regina is too direct, people think she is rude. She needs to lighten up. She isn’t very open to new ideas; she wants robots not employees.”

Regina’s staff “Regina is fair, but why can’t we set our own rules like the front desk staff. ”

Frank: “You can’t fault that little lady’s work ethic, she’s always here. Sometimes we have issues when she wants something done. I have an entire hotel to repair and maintain, some things have to wait.”

Kristen: “Regina is very private but she is supportive of me, especially since I had the baby.”

Comments about Frank:

Mike: “Frank’s been with me from the beginning; he’s efficient and friendly to everyone. I know he is set in his ways, but you can count on him. He had an issue with the last manager. Frank didn’t think she was up to the job; he came to me on issues he though needed attention. It caused tension.”

Regina: “Frank is willing to do anything asked but works on his own time. He always knows best. Sometimes I don’t think he likes me.”

Miguel: “Frank is a good ole’ boy. Like every Republican, if you want an opinion; ask Frank. Some of his ideas are pretty outdated. He needs to move to this century.”

Kristen: “Frank is sexist and there is only one way, HIS! He spends too much time socializing. If he spent as much time working as talking he could get a lot more work done.”

Comments about Kristen:

Mike: “Kristen does a good job selling the hotel but is outspoken and tends to offend other managers. I would definitely call her independent.”

Regina: “Sweet girl, but not a very hard worker. She thinks things should be handed to her. I think she just needs to grow up.”

Miguel: “Kristen makes promises to groups that just aren’t possible; then it is my fault! She never takes any of the blame.”

Frank: “Nice little girl but I don’t like that she is critical of CMC and U.S. policies. If she wants her socialist benefits for the birth of her child then she should move back to Norway!”

Conclusion

As Julia suspected, there is a great deal discord in the team. She knows that the diversity can be an asset for the operation if she can get beyond the initial bias and misconceptions.

Discussion Questions

- Use the pre-readings, lecture, in-class activities and personal experiences to answer the following questions.
- In adherence with the CMC’s Diversity Initiative, assess and explain how the diversity of the team could strengthen the overall hotel operation.
- Identify the cultural norm differences and similarities, based on country or culture of origin, between managers identified in the case, include the General Manager. Create a chart to differentiate the team using Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions.
- Based on the differences and similarities in the previous question, analyze and explain how culture may create relationship difficulties that are occurring within the management team.
- Creating a chart, differentiate the demographics (aside from nationality), psychographics, personality traits and personal at-

tributes or behaviors of the individuals might be impacting the relationships, including the General Manager? (These might include political, personality, gender, personal relationships, emotional expression, time orientation, communication style, or work style).

- Based on the differences and similarities explain possible reasons that relationship difficulties may occur within the team. Evaluate using Generational Theory and Gender Structure Theory.
- Julia feels that some of the issues don't appear to be related to diversity. Explain in depth any human resource issues that might be occurring at the Paramus Inn beyond diversity. Identify some strategies and create an implementation plan, that Julia should employ to rectify the issues.
- What activities or ideas would you suggest to improve the relationships of the management team? Specifically create a plan to implement your suggestions to improve the working relationships and morale of the team members.