How do you get to market and manage a five-star hotel operation without risking a single dollar? The answer is the Cornell Hotel Administration Simulation Exercise (CHASE).

The business of hospitality is as old as civilization. However, like all good things in life that are taken for granted, excellent hospitality is an expectation of many customers. Excellence, nevertheless, requires all round business skills.

Practitioners in the business of providing service and hospitality can attest that to provide excellent service and comfort, with a smile, no matter how difficult the environment is, while keeping an eye on the profit and loss, requires immense people skills and business savvy.

In the business of hospitality, it is important for a manager to maintain a pleasant image and a collected disposition at all times, no matter how stressed he or she may be. Like true professionals of hospitality, they know that ranting and ventilating feelings of frustration at others are uninvited characteristics. Good training can make good managers. And many hoteliers, some of whom are now managing 5-Star hotels, have participated in the Cornell Hotel Administration Simulation Exercise (CHASE) programme at some point in their hospitality career.

WHAT IS CHASE?
CHASE was developed by Professor Robert M. Chase of Cornell University. CHASE is a simulation of real-life marketing operations, finance and management aspects of a hotel operation in a dynamic economic environment. Participants will get the opportunity to explore the management of revenue and cost. Participants of CHASE also get to network with their peers, compare business strategies and learn contemporary business tactics. All businessmen would agree that if they do not update their business knowledge, they would be come outdated in their business approaches. CHASE can help make better managers.

Taylor’s College School of Hospitality and Tourism (TCHT) recently created an opportunity for hoteliers to attend the CHASE workshop in Kuala Lumpur. Over 30 participants from established hotel chains attended the workshop. The profile of the participants includes hotel general managers, managing directors, hotel managers, directors of operations, resident managers, etc.

"Being in the forefront of education, it is imperative that the programme we provide are not only industry relevant but are offered in collaboration with prestigious universities. I believe that TCHT is the first private institution to work with an esteemed university like Cornell," said Pradeep Nair, Chief Operating Officer, TCHT.

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“The hospitality industry is not only about serving and cooking; it is, in fact, serious business. Being the second largest foreign exchange earner, it is imperative that the top management continuously seek new and innovative ways to not only improve services and products but also keep in mind the bottom line,” he added.

The list of participating hotels included Sheraton Imperial KL, Desaru Golden Beach Hotel, Grand Blue Wave, Carcosa Seri Negara, Tanjung Rhu Resort (Langkawi), Cittel (Mid Valley), Crystal Crown Harbour View Port, The Coronado, Sheraton Perdana Resort (Langkawi), Grand Center Point and Stanford Hotel. Two members from the management team of Grand City Hotel, Brunei, also flew into Kuala Lumpur to participate in the programme.

THE PROGRAMME
The CHASE programme was conducted by Peter Masson. He has a Bachelor’s (with merit), a Master’s degree (Honours) in Commerce (Economics) from the University of New South Wales and a Marketing Practice Certificate from the University of Technology, Sydney. Masson is an accredited adjunct lecturer in Service Marketing for the degree programme conducted at the Blue Mountains Hotel School for the University of New England. He is accredited to conduct the Cornell Hotel Administration Simulation Exercise (CHASE) and the Cornell Restaurant Simulation Exercise (CRASE). In September 1998, as an invited guest lecturer to the School of Hotel Administration at Cornell University, New York, he delivered a short programme in hotel management and tourism studies.

From 1 to 3 September 2003, over 60 students, grouped into six executive management teams, grappled with the challenges of running a hotel for two years (eight quarters) in just three days. They faced a volatile economy and the added complications of terrorist threats and SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome). At the end of that time, the teams had to convince a visiting group of Swiss bankers (lecturers Peter Masson, Willem Costlyck, Luke Fisher and Val Cook) of the merits of investing in their hotel.

The CHASE interactive workshop was conducted at TCHT under licence from the Hospitality Research Institute (HRI), the Asia-Pacific representative of the programme’s originator, Professor Robert M. Chase of Cornell Hotel School. With brands ranging from the aptly named seaside resort “Grand Nautilus” to the high-tech contemporary “@Home Hotel”, each executive committee had to make key decisions about marketing, managing and financing their hotels.

As it turned out, the managers of these hotels were all making similar plans in their attempts to be profitable - competition was very keen! After each team finalised its decisions, it only took an hour or average for each hotel to receive feedback from a variety of reports on what customers thought about their service and operations. Just as in managing a real hotel, the students’ task was to communicate, analyse, and make fresh decisions to improve their customers’ satisfaction and, of course, the financial condition of their hotel.

Which hotel won? The “Bayside Inn”. Why? Because of its consistent performance through a turbulent trading period and because it made the most money for its owners - very much like the real world.

For the restaurant and foodservice industry, TCHT will be offering the Cornell Restaurant Administration Simulation Exercise (CRASE) programme this year.
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