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Designing a Service Manual for Employees

A Case Study of Huone Events Hotel, Helsinki

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Laurea University of Applied Sciences **Abstract**
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The constantly growing service sector in Finland, especially in the capital city Helsinki, requires continuous efforts from organisations to not only provide the most excellent services, but also to maintain a consistently high quality standard. One solution for ensuring consistency in the working performance of various employees within an organisation is to utilise a working manual where the most crucial information on how to conduct a desired operation is clearly described. Understanding the tremendous benefits of a working manual, Huone, the first event hotel in Helsinki and which is expanding internationally, decided to adopt a working "service manual" for their service department. This thesis aims at providing information on how to develop the service manual, its contents and benefits in a general context. The outcome of the project is an actual service manual delivered to Huone Helsinki as the end result.

The theoretical background supporting the reliability and validity of this thesis is derived from textbooks, digital materials, academic journals and articles, as well as educational webpages. In addition, official handbooks and guidelines providing instructions on creating employee manuals together with insights from hospitality management also form the core knowledge base for this thesis. A qualitative approach was taken to for data collection, utilising such methods as open-ended surveys, observations, interviews, and the construction of a service blueprint based on the analysis of a self-designed customer journey.

Analysis of the research results shows that delivering a service manual boosts the standardisation of working processes, which is important to ensure the consistent quality service of one company, especially during an expansion phase, as in the case of Huone Helsinki. A comprehensive understanding of the service manual creation process including its content details is crucial in constructing a successful service manual. The main outcome of the project was an actual service manual distributed to Huone Helsinki staff and based on the assessment of feedback results received, the functionality and use value of the designed service manual is highly appreciated, especially within the service department. In the future, possible updates to the service manual should be conducted periodically, and more manuals for other departments in Huone Helsinki can also be developed.

Keywords: manual development, service manual, manual design

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1 Introduction

For an organization, especially after getting a hold on its business, owning a service manual will bring many great benefits. Not only does it help to document all valuable information but also ensures the standardization of the working process. Besides, a service manual can both serve as a great tool for the management level and aid the operational level tremendously during their daily working life. Without a service manual, a company might face challenges in delivering the same knowledge to its employees or difficulties during training process. Hence, Huone Events Hotel, a young start-up company in Helsinki has realised the need for one and urged to implement it into practice.

2 Huon Events Hotel

2.1 Huone in brief: History, Visions, Missions, Goals, and its CSR

Huone Events Hotel is a concept founded by Evon and Jussi Söderlund, a talented and diverse couple from Malaysia and Finland. Evon was rewarded as the most valuable entrepreneur in 2014 while Jussi completed a Master degree from Aalto University with a sales background. Noticing the emerging demand for innovative event venue, they started the company named Söderlund International Oy in 2012 with the Events Hotel concept.

Huone's vision, mission and goal has been described nicely on its website as followed:
"Huone Vision is to maximize guests' return on time invested in business meetings and events. At Huone, the whole team strongly believes that this can be achieved by putting people first in everything they do.

Huone Mission is to ensure that both guests and employees are happy and excited to come back again, to operate a responsible business that honors three principles: people, planet, and profit, to promote creativity and happiness in business and to never stop innovating and improving.

Huone Goal is aiming to have HUONE in all major meeting cities in the world." (Huone Events 2017)

Huone's founders believe that business is all about trust and people. At Huone, customers are always treated as number one with respect and excellent customer service. Meanwhile, its employees are also ensured to work in the best environment with strong work ethic. At the same time, Huone's team does not take environmental issues lightly and handles their purchases with environmental friendly concept in mind. For instance, beef has not be served in any menu since December 2016 and no-straw campaign starting from March 2017 is applied into practice. In 2015, 'Give Back' movement was born in Huone to make the world a better place for the next generations. Child welfare, specifically to education, is focused on. Part of Huone's profits will be donated to charity organizations under the same cause. Huone's founder, Evon is personally leading the example by public speaking. The compensation she receives from entrepreneurship, girl power, immigration, and education speeches is all contributed to child welfare.

2.2 Events hotel – a unique concept

'Huone' means 'a room' in the Finnish language. Huone Events Hotel is a hotel without bedrooms. It is called an events hotel since its main focus is to host successful small business events and meetings. A board meeting, a team day or a product launch can easily be organized in Huone with its innovative venue, supportive event consultation, delicious Asian fusion food & beverages, exciting entertainment and first of its kind - online event management system: Eventsome. (Huone Events 2017.)

2.3 Expansion of Huone & the need for a service manual

Huone has an astonishing story behind its success: "The world's first HUONE was established in 2012, in Helsinki Finland. It is a 2200m2 events hotel with 12 event rooms, 3 saunas, dining hall, lounge and terrace. The starting years was tough, the delayed constructions, the construction cost almost doubled, the debt was accumulating before Huone even opened its doors. Their fates as entrepreneurs started to change after the recognition of the Best Event venue in Finland in 2014. When Evon's entrepreneur story was featured in the Taivas + Helvetti book late 2014, the contacts started to flow in. She later that year won the PwC award for Most Valuable Entrepreneur of the year 2014. Today, Huone Helsinki has hosted almost 4000 events and won 6 awards. In 2016, Huone grew 4 times in revenue and began its internationalization journey starting from the opening of Huone Singapore in February 2017." (Huone Events 2017)

Huone Helsinki is run by a team of 10 full-time crucial members who acquire expertise and knowledge in their own department: management, sales & marketing, event coordinator and kitchen. Everyone works closely to each other and communication as well as customer service skill are usually practiced and emphasized for their importance. However, since Huone started as a start-up company and Huone Helsinki is the pioneer unit, everything was learned from scratch. All working procedures and executions were gained by doing without any prior references or samples. Furthermore, due to the expansion to Singapore, the question for a need of a service manual to summarize all knowledge and standardize the working process has been raised.

Therefore, the writers were offered to create a service manual for Huone Helsinki, especially for the service team. The writing process of the service manual started in October 2016 and it was completed in February 2017. Based on the Non-Disclosure Agreement between the thesis's writers and the commissioner company, the detailed version of the service manual will not be presented.

3 Theoretical background

3.1 Developing a service manual

3.1.1 What is a service manual?

An employee manual, or employee handbook/guidelines, is a formal written (or electronic) document which provides crucial information regarding to every detailed information of an employment relationship, i.e. the relationship between the employers and the employees. Such information is, for example, a company's working rules, expectations, employment legislations and other important job-related messages, being company introduction together with its organizational structure, job descriptions, employee benefits, and so on. Employee manual is often delivered to employees at the beginning of their employment by an employer, thus guiding new staff with clear, written information so they would familiarize faster with the company's working cultures and procedures. (Guerin & Delpo 2015, 2.)

Depends on each particular purpose, employers need to make a thorough decision on which kind of manual to be employed so its finest usefulness can be utilized. Introduced by Tripathi (2009, 5-6), manuals can be classified into different types such as induction manual, policy manual, procedures, sales, accounts, quality control, maintenance, training manual, etc. Among these types, the main focus in this thesis is **operations manual**, or **procedures manual**, or **services manual**, which is defined as a complete guidance or documentation on how a department within an organization should operate in order to achieve the determined goals. Services manual is considered to be one of the most critical manual types because of its ability to provide clear, accurate instructions and standards on the daily business activities which employees should respectfully execute. By carefully following the procedures or policies written in the manual, a successful goal accomplishment can be expected. (Tripathi 2009, 8.)

3.1.2 Objectives of a service manual: to employers, and employees

The need of a service manual is irrefutable to maintain a consistent, efficient, and systematic performance according to the standard which the company is pursuing. A clear, practical, and comprehensive service manual does not only serve employees' purposes perfectly, but it can also be a great tool to help employers or supervisors to meet cohesive working requirements and expectations. In this section, more in-depth benefits of having a well-constructed service manual will be analyzed consecutively from two divergent angles: one from management approach, i.e. the employers or supervisors and the other aspect is from operation level, which are the employees.

As stated by Guerin et al. (2015), to ***employers***, service manual, in most cases, is seen as a necessary means of declaring the company's rights and expectations to its workers. Working procedures, policies, as well as employment requirements, conditions can be found conveniently in the manual. Hence, such information can be addressed clearly and consistently without unnecessary repetitions, which saves a considerable amount of time and efforts, especially during training period. Additionally, service manual is also a perfect tool to help the employers to guide, and manage their employees, or even their managers to ensure the whole organization is approaching the same direction, since it helps ensure the workers' acknowledgement of the company's cultures, values, missions, and visions (Guerin et al. 2015, 3). Last but not least, another significant benefit of service manual to employers is also persuasively established: its support in reducing, protecting organizations from the so-called knowledge-traps. Knowledge-trap is explained by Makoto (2015) as the situation where special working knowledge, technique, or know-how can only be done by only few workers, or even one person. Within the help of a service manual, the knowledge-trap can be avoided greatly, other employees can also perform the desired work without relying entirely on certain specialists.

On the other perspective, to ***employees***, a comprehensive manual is an effective and practical road-map, reference point for them to orient, adapt to the same direction where their company is heading to. Usually, company's crucial expectations, job requirements, benefits, codes of conduct are clearly provided in the service manual together with the frequently asked questions and answers. This enables an equal shared knowledge base between employees, which ensures an equal working environment. Moreover, employees can also get the knowledge of the way of approaching feedback, complaints in case of problems from their supervisors/employers, thus establishing a fair judgment, or understanding that certain standard treatment will be delivered to the same employees with similar issues (Susan 2016). Additionally, according to the University of Tennessee (2017), an important benefit that a service manual can bring to employees, especially new hires, is the help of providing them accurate, standard information, since it is quite often that current workers may transfer unreliable source of work-related information, which can result in immeasurable misunderstandings. Plus, it is also an informative source of instructions where employees can review not only their working responsibilities, but also their rights, legal protections, and other benefits as an employed person.

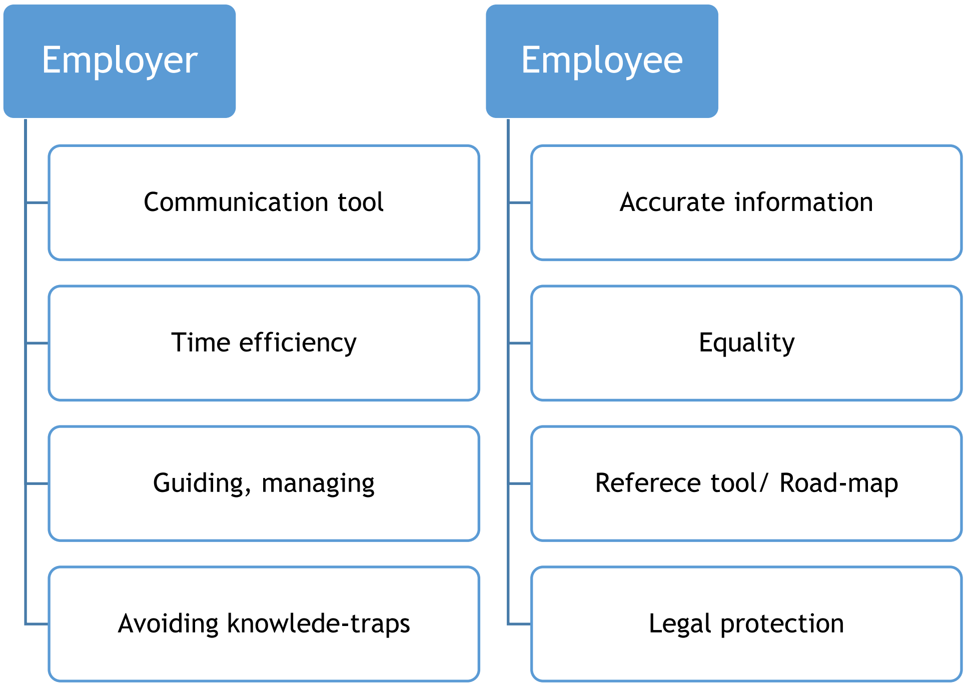


Figure 1: Benefits of a service manual to employers and employees

Figure 1 summarizes the advantages of having an employee handbook, not only for employers, but also for employees with details already discussed above. These benefits will efficiently promote a healthy employment relationship where employers have their expectations and goals delivered while employees are treated fairly and respectfully. In the other words, misunderstandings, confusions and lawsuits will be reduced, and productivity, profit will be maximized.

3.1.3 How to develop a service manual?

The Society for Human Resource Management - SHRM (2015) shows that important actions should be implemented in order to establish a functional service manual. These actions are introduced in a model for developing an employee handbook which comprises of nine steps. Employed as a referential design, this system proposed by SHRM and the details of its steps will be presented as follow in chronological order.

- ***Company policies assessment:*** Since the most important foundation of an employee manual relies on the company's daily operating practices, it is certainly an essential action to examine the common, everyday procedures to gather information for constructing the manual. It is also suggested that the policies should be established if they do not yet exist. Thenceforth, in order to complete the policies and characterize those daily practices, a legal consultation should be implemented to confirm the legal aspects of the information that is going to be applied in the service manual.

- ***Building framework of the manual***: this is an advantageous step for employers to list all the relevant subjects relating to the employment relationship and then construct an outline for the manual in a logical order. In accordance with SHRM's point of view (2015), the most essential topics that should be provided in the manual are such as the aim of the handbook, background information of the organization (vision, mission, working cultures, etc.), employment equality declaration together with other legal concerns relating to the employment (sick leave, family leave, anti-discrimination acts, and so on). The importance of conveying such messages within the manual is noteworthy, since it may be considered as labor law disobedience if these information is missing. Besides, if adding extra information to help clarify the content of the manual is inevitable, the choice totally depends on the employer's wishes and preferences.

  Additionally, this step is mainly about building the foundation, or the main structure of the manual. More detailed information and specific content composed in the handbook will be covered in the next section "Contents of a service manual".

- ***Summarization of policies and procedures:*** In order to produce a user-friendly manual with easy-to-read texts, and without heavily-used legal terms, it is recommended by SHRM that each policy and procedure should be summarized, or encapsulated in a simple, straightforward statement.

- ***Appropriate positioning summary statements:*** Based on the constructed outline earlier, those above-mentioned summarized statements should be arranged reasonably. Different topics prompt different contents in the statements, thus a consistent arrangement would make the handbook more organized, systematized, easy to follow, and address the information to the readers more effectively.

- ***Review the service manual:*** HR, a project team, or both reviewing the service manual is advisable (SHRM 2015). This step will help ensure the information provided in the handbook is precise, clear, authentic, and comprehensible.

- ***Legal consultation:*** Legal claims and other lawfully relating risks possibly happen if legal aspects are not thoroughly examined in the manual. Hence, presenting the manual before publicly issuing to the legal counsel is mandatory so these risks will be minimized.

- ***Choose publication channel:*** When the manual is ready with its design, contents, review, etc., publication is the next step that is expected. As encouraged by SHRM (2015), employers will progress through a publishing process, which begins from finding and deciding an appropriate publishing service provider to working on every details of the manual publication. These details are such as, format of the manual, its size, color, fonts, design style, and so on. Before sending the desired manual to print, an ultimate revision and approval on the publishing process should be conducted so that all possible errors could be eliminated, and costs of printing incompetent handbooks would be minimized.

- ***Service manual distribution:*** There are different ways to hand out the manuals to the workers once they are successfully printed by the chosen means of publication. Manuals can be in either carbon copy or electronic form. Electronic manual could be delivered using company's internal private network system called intra-net, or by using electronic mail. The advantage of this computerized method is that employees can access to the updated version of the handbook anytime. Physical handbook, or carbon printed version can be given to employees when the electronic one is not available, or if Internet access is limited at the employee's side, or upon employee's request. It is mandatory that the handbook must be provided to the employees, especially at the beginning of their employment, orientation, or training for new employees. (SHRM 2015.)

- ***Updating:*** Reviewing and updating the handbook regularly is desirable, preferably annually since changes in business's procedures and internal activities as well as labor laws are expected. In order to do this, a person should be appointed by the employer so the updating process can be conducted carefully, thus no changes in laws or policies is neglected.

Last but not least, a critical procedure must be accomplished to complete the handbook development process, which is to guarantee that the service manual is successfully delivered to the employees. According to SHRM (2015), a written confirmation from the workers must be presented to the employers. This acknowledgement is required and stored to ensure that every employee has read, and is aware of the information given in the handbook, so that possible legal issues can be avoided.

3.1.4 Contents of a service manual

There are different approaches to form the contents of an employee manual, since business varies in size, operations, structures, etc., which demands distinctive information included in the handbook. Despite this fact, most of the service manuals still share the most generic, major information concerning the relationship between employees and employers. These topics can be, for example, an overview or introduction of the company, vision, mission statements, general information regarding the employment, working hours, payment and other benefits, conduct standards, and so on (B Corporation 2007). However, since this project's main focus is about providing procedures guidelines to employees, it is essential that more information regarding employment process (recruitment, training, employee classifications, development, etc.), job descriptions and responsibilities as well as operating procedures should be discussed more extensively. The flow of a service manual's main contents can be briefly presented in the following figure.

Figure 2: Main contents of a service manual

In the next sections of this thesis, the most fundamental topics which should be clearly contained in the service manual will be discussed and analyzed. It is important to note that the information going to be presented only serves as a guiding model of a manual's contents, it does not function as a fixed framework which covers all the possible employment situations. Besides, the contents may be more extensively expanded according to the company's individual goals, expectations, and policies (Mackenzie 2007, 85, cited in Dale 2002, Dowling 2002).

3.2 General

As the name implies, in this part of the service manual, general information about the company (such as its history, organizational structure, visions, missions) together with the purpose of the manual, or even welcoming messages from management to employees can be found. Guerin et al. (2015, 11) stated that this will give the beginning impressions about the company to new workers, hence a friendly, warm-toned manual is favored over a contrasting one with threatening, unfriendly statements.

3.2.1 Commencement

According to Mackenzie (2007, 82, cited in Ehrenfeld 1993), employers can begin the service manual with a personal, warm, welcoming announcement from the management, preferably the head person of the organization. Company's history, vision, mission, and its working culture could also be reflected briefly, diligently, and genuinely within the commencement. Language, wording used should be compatible with daily communication system in the company. Moreover, opening a service manual with a commencement is encouraged, since this welcoming statement is explained as a way to set the tone, to orient new hires to the ideologies, philosophies, and working principles of the organization, which helps employees follow the same direction targeted by the business (Guerin et al. 2015, 11-12).

3.2.2 Overview: company, history, vision & mission

This section is aimed for introducing the key information about the company such as history, background, growth, vision and mission, business ethics, company's principles, and so on (B Corporation, 2007). Even though some of these pieces of information may have been presented shortly in the welcoming commencement, more details are still needed to be extended.

Explained by Guerin et al. (2015, 14), information about the company could be misinterpreted or distorted by subjective opinions from surrounding colleagues, mentors, and clients, which could leave a negative impact on the employees. Hence, it is certainly a decisive step to provide a **company introduction** right at the beginning of the employment relationship so that a good impression of the company could be made without distortions. To successfully design the introduction of a company, it totally depends on the employers to choose what information they wish to deliver since any kind of message can be put into this part. Some vital data can be considered to use in this section is, for instance, a description of the organization's key success values, its goals, products and services, working culture, etc. (Guerin et al. 2015, 15).

Firstly, a statement of company's **mission and vision** can be shared in the introduction so that employees can understand the reasons why their company exists, on which purpose they are focusing beside profit, as well as the importance of the organization in the society. It is recommended that the mission statement should be written briefly and concisely, preferably within a sentence so it is straightforward for workers to remember. (Guerin et al. 2015, 16.)

Next, to emphasize the evolution of the organization's core values, goals, and its missions, a good story of the **company history** with its significant, meaningful events, achievements should be added into this part. Not only does getting to know the history of the company help the workers feel more integrated and proud of their employer, but it can also encourage their efficiency at work. Employees will get more inspirations from the past, and be more committed, dedicated to the future growth or the company (Guerin et al. 2015, 17-18).

3.2.3 Organizational structure

In order to give an overview of how the company operates to the employees, a section which describes the structure of the organization is necessary. As defined by Aquinas (2008, 94), one can understand the way of "how job tasks are formally divided, grouped and coordinated" from the organization structure. Designing or defining the organizational structure is essential within the service manual because the working process, relationships as well as communication means are systematized clearly in the organizational structure (usually presented as a chart), thus improving one's understanding of his/her working environment, and reducing business risks from confusions (Aquinas 2008, 94). Types of organizational structure vary. In the scope of this project, departmentalization, specifically functional departmentalization will be of main interest, and detailed information regarding this type of organizational structure will be presented in the next paragraphs.

Departmentalization is the process where individuals are classified and grouped according to the relating units and departments. This method gathers employees with similar work tasks or functions as a group, and assigns a manager for each group, or department. The four most popular departmentalization models are functional, divisional, hybrid, and matrix departmentalization. (Aquinas 2008, 97-98.) As mentioned above, functional departmentalization will be discussed further as the case company is classified as having a functional departmentalization structure. The figure below depicts a general idea of how an organization with functional departmentalization structure looks like.

Figure 3: Functional departmentalization

As can be seen from the figure, functional groups such as production, finance, marketing, and human resource are grouped separately as departments. Each department consists of employees of similar competences, job duties, skillsets, and proficiencies. Employees and employers under a functional organizational structure can gain some beneficial advantages such as having a clear career development path, in-depth skills and knowledge advancement opportunities, resources are utilized efficiently and coordination within function can be carried out conveniently. However, this type or organizational structure still holds some disadvantages. As employees are positioned in a functional group, cross-functional communication, networking is limited. Another drawback for top management level is the amount of decisions to make, which are accumulated from the departments underneath. (Aquinas 2008, 98.)

3.2.4 Manual purpose

Following could be a statement which specifies the **purpose** of the service manual. Guerin et al. (2015, 19) stated that workers are supposed to clearly acknowledge the information given in the manual and know how to apply it in their work. It is also important to clarify to the readers in this purpose statement that the manual should be viewed as a procedure and policy guidelines to assist working collaboration more effectively rather than just “a set of rules” (Mackenzie 2007, 82-83, cited in Scharinger 2002). What is more, since employee manual is just an internal communication tool, its policies and procedures can be modified without notice, it must be clearly indicated that it cannot replace, and does not take effect of an official employment contract or document (Mackenzie 2007, 83, cited in Gregg 2001, Lanza & Warren 2005).

Last but not least, since a service manual cannot cover all the possible work situations, it may be also essential to include **contact information** of responsible persons so employees know where they can consult for more work-related concerns. This contact can be, for example, the HR department, a supervisor, or even the employer him/herself, depending on the business size (Guerin et al. 2015, 20).

3.3 Employment

This section discusses information relating to the employment such as recruitment process, procedure of selection and training of new hires, employee types, as well as how to provide motivation and career development opportunities for employees. These topic will be introduced in the next sub-sections. However, before presenting them, one can start with briefly describing the two most important policies that are normally mentioned in employee handbooks. They are at-will statement and equality statement.

- ***At-will statement:*** At-will employment is defined as an employment relationship where employees can terminate, and be discharged at any time, for any reason which is not against the laws (Guerin et al. 2015, 25). At-will statement is one of the most important item in the handbook that should be mentioned, because of its effectiveness in protecting the company from potential legal risks. Since the terms in this part of the handbook must reflect the municipal labor laws, it is recommended that the employer should consult a lawyer in order to provide a proper statement. Furthermore, a receipt from employee indicating that he/she has acknowledged the terms of the at-will statement is also needed. (NFIB.)

  Nevertheless, Guerin et al. (2015, 28) also showed that employee's loyalty and productivity may be enhanced if the at-will policy is discarded, since it may give workers the impression of an unstable employment relationship where they can be fired for any reason at any time. Thus, the decision of employing an at-will statement in the handbook totally relies on the employers. However, as long as the employers understand how to make their employees feel that their work is valued by the company, having an at-will statement is still highly recommended by Guerin et al. (2015, 28).

- ***Equality statement:*** Anti-discrimination is prohibited by most laws, and it is very necessary that a company develops a statement of equal opportunity employment in its manual. In this part, one should clearly state that the workplace respectfully follows anti-discrimination policies and every worker regardless of their race, religion, sex, nationality, age, marital status, disability, etc. receives equal work-relating treatments. These conducts are, for instance, during recruiting, hiring, promoting, evaluating, and terminating process. (NFBI.)

3.3.1 Recruitment

Sarma (2008, 87-88) stated that recruitment is a very crucial function since it ensures to maintain the human resources within the organization; an organization cannot function properly if suitable manpower is not put into practice, even if with the best laid business plans. In addition, Guerin et al. (2015, 33) contribute another interesting reason of why information about hiring process should be discussed in the manual, even though the readers (i.e., the employees) already started their job: it is not only a way to introduce the core values and organizational cultures, but it also helps increase the workers' understanding of the recruitment process, thus they can help their employers find new talents.

A recruitment process containing of 8 steps proposed by Sarma (2008, 89) can be depicted in the following figure.

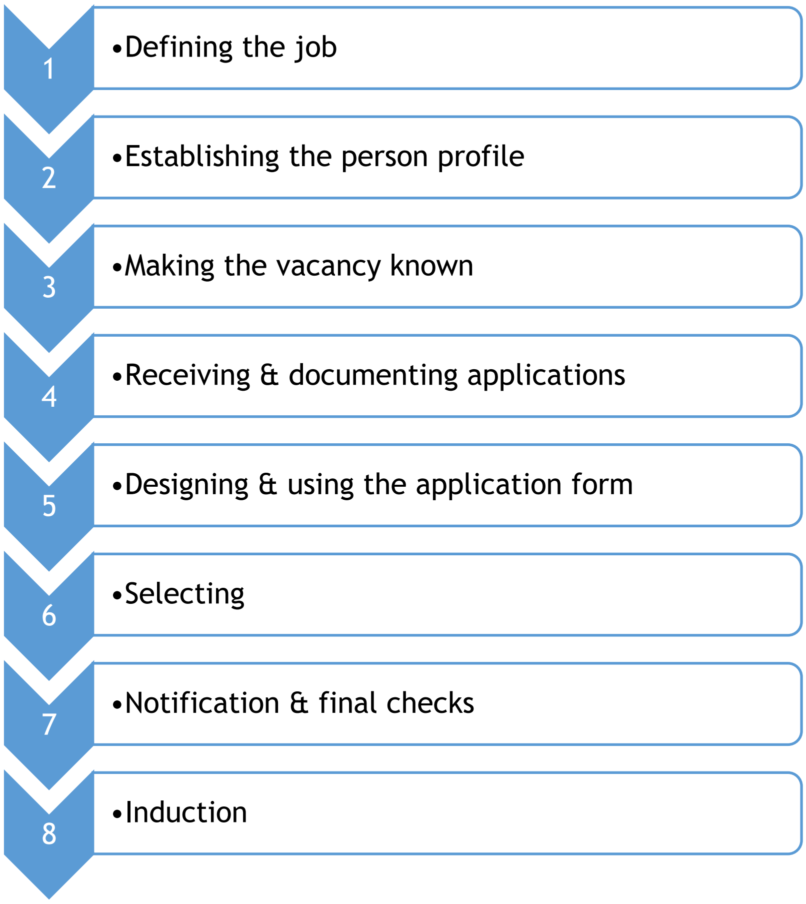


Figure 4: Recruitment process

As can be seen from the picture, when an organization looks for suitable candidates to fill in its open positions, the very first steps that should be performed is to establish a definition about the nature of the work as well as an employee profile where expectations of an ideal applicant is fully identified. Next procedure to be anticipated is publishing the availability of those open vacancies, thus applications can be collected and analyzed, which helps identify potential applicants. Following this is the selection process, where certain means of evaluating desired qualifications from applicants can be applied. Once the most suitable person is selected, the final steps are to notify him/her about the selection, and possibly needed final profile examinations. After that, an induction may be given to the new hire. Last but not least, it is also essential that every step in this recruitment process should be carefully conducted in order to increase the chance of the right quantity and quality of workers would be employed. (Sarma 2008, 89.)

3.3.2 Employee Selection, Orientation & Training

Selection process can be seen as a post-phase of the recruitment procedure where potential candidates who are already identified before will now participate in the selection part. In this phase, if the employment terms and other conditions are fulfilled, an employment offer will be established. (O'Meara & Petzall 2013, 10-11). Arthur (2005, 285) stated that while the selection phase shouldn't be a complex process since all the main information has already been gathered and analyzed in the recruitment phase, it is, however, quite important to consider some crucial elements within the selection process in order to bring an ideal applicant to join the company's official workforce. Some major steps introduced by Arthur (2005) to successfully perform this selection process are presented briefly below:

- Preparation for the final meeting: After requesting the potential applicant to have a more in-depth discussion, called a final meeting, it is necessary to prepare the contents for it, since basic information regarding the job should be delivered directly and coherently; in other words, employees should not make the assumption that such information is well understood by the candidate. Some topics could be prepared are, for instance, job title, working hours, benefits, responsibilities, holidays, salaries, code of conducts, etc. A checklist is recommended for both applicant and HR personnel to keep track. (Arthur 2005, 272-273.)

- Final meeting: during this discussion, the above-mentioned checklist can also be used as an effective tool or guide. It is a process where certain topics are reviewed, discussed until a mutual agreement is met. If there is any disagreement, it is advised to discuss later and a resolution should be provided. Every topic has its own possible issues and different solutions. It is very crucial that the HR representative consider these factors so that a satisfactory, fair agreement can be arranged as a result. For example, a job title should fully describe the work extent; duties and responsibilities should be explained carefully to cover all the possible tasks that employees may not realize; salary and other benefits should be adequate, agreeable for both sides, etc. (Arthur 2005, 273-279).

- Notifying selected applicants: After everything has been clearly discussed and successfully negotiated, it is very crucial to inform the chosen candidates about the employment offer officially. It is ideal that the written agreement is well formalized where all the terms of employment discussed in the final meeting are clearly defined, as well as it should contain the signatures of both the employee and employer. At-will statement is also recommended to be mentioned again in this acceptance notification letter. (Arthur 2005, 279-280).

- Notifying rejected applicants: Once the desired applicants have already confirmed about the employment settlement, it is wise to professionally inform the rest of the applicants who are not chosen with a positive-toned, specific, and genuine rejection notification. On the other hand, it is important to note that details of the grounds for choosing the suitable employees is not necessary to be included in the rejection letter, as it may be considered as a privacy violation for the selected applicants, or in some cases, in may even be used for a discrimination claim. (Arthur 2005, 280-283).

Orientation and training is normally organized for new hires in the beginning of their work with either brief or extended, formal or informal session depending on the nature of the job. Orientation program is often arranged in a welcoming, friendly atmosphere where new workers can be introduced to their colleagues, management, working cultures, policies, facilities, etc. Training is aimed at providing the employees working environment and conditions, requirements, procedures, operations, and so on. (Sarma 2008, 115). In this phase, an employee handbook is usually very beneficial, since it contains most of the basic information regarding the employment relationship (Arthur 2005, 299).

3.3.3 Employment Classifications

Employment can be classified into different categories such as “on call”, “temporary”, “part-time”, “full-time”, “per diem”, and many other types, depending on the complexity of the organization as well as how the employers wish to establish the entitlement to wages, benefits, and employment rights (Guerin et al. 2015, 55). However, because of their popularity, the three most frequently used types of employment, which are temporary, part-time and full-time, exempt and nonexempt will be discussed briefly in the next passages. It is necessary that employment division is referred in the handbook because this is a perfect place where employees can consult their wages, compensations, benefits, responsibilities, and so on according to the status of their employment.

First of all, ***temporary employee*** category is considered as an employment relationship which has a specific date of termination, and generally employment benefits such as insurance, holiday are not provided to temporary employees (NFIB, 9). Situation where companies need temporary workers are such as holiday season, or any other peak working period varying in business types. Guerin et al. (2015, 57) pointed out a significant matter which needs be clarified is how to make the temporary employees comprehend clearly their current employment status, and any change in it, if there is. This is because every now and then, some temporary workers may be misled that they no longer belong to this category of employment. Thus, any change in the status of temporary workers must be formally announced by an authorized person, such as a HR representative or manager, and this approach should be clearly stated in the employee handbook.

The next classification of employment is the regular one, which consists of ***part-time and full-time*** worker types. This status is normally decided from the regular amount of time a worker spends in the company, if an employee works at least a certain amount of time depending on the organization own hour limits (usually about 30-40 hours per week), he/she is classified as a full-time worker and is eligible for particular employment benefits. Similarly, he/she is considered as part-time worker if the working hours are less than a desired amount of time, and is entitled to some limited employee benefits ranging from different policies in companies. (Guerin et al. 2015, 58-59). However, the definition for part-time and full-time workers may vary in different countries. For example, in Finland, the employee status definition is based on "the respondent's own idea of the work being full-time, [or part-time]", and is not dependent on the working hour limits (OSF 2017).

Lastly, ***exempt and nonexempt*** employees are other two types of employees that should be described precisely in the handbook, as it decides to the right of receiving overtime payment or benefits of an employee. Depending on the labor law in each municipality, overtime compensations may vary. Usually, according to Guerin et al. (2015, 60), overtime pay is expected when a worker has performed more than 40 hours per week, or 8 hours per day of work. In this case, the employee status of being exempt or nonexempt matters. Exempt employees are not entitled to overtime provisions, they are proposed to accomplish their given task no matter how overtime they may get. On the contrary, nonexempt status allows the employees the eligibility of having overtime payment, typically of 1.5 times the normal wage (NFIB, 8). Employees are recommended to inquire their manager or HR department to make sure the status of their employment.

3.3.4 Job Motivation & Development

Employees are always considered as the most important factor in deciding the success of an organization, without the dedicated contributions from the employees, even the greatest business plans with the most modern machinery or equipment cannot operate properly. Oftentimes workers may perceive their workplace as a place merely for earning money while companies just think about them as labor force, which would result in poor productivity. For this reason, organizations should consider effective approaches to integrate their employees into their organizational culture, reflect their work performance with appropriate treatment, as well as assist them in both professional and personal growth. Employee handbook or service manual is a perfect place for a company to present such information. This sends a crucial message to new-hires that their effort and contribution is valued, treated fairly, and the company cares about their career growth by offering development programs to upgrade employees' working skills and knowledge.

Motivation has been reserved a lot of attention from researchers, HR managers for its benefits in building and developing great working values in the employees such as productivity, creativity, innovativeness, and quality-orientation. Various studies about what motivates people have been conducted and as a result, there are different popular motivation theories and models for an employer to consult. They are, for example, "Maslow's Theory of Hierarchy of Needs", "McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y", "Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory", "McClelland's Theory of Motivation", and so on. These theories may have diverse approaches to study motivation topic, or deal with different aspects of motivation, but as examined and concluded by Sarma (2008, 225) the needs for satisfaction "which produce motives that lead to the accomplishment of objectives" are the most crucial key in motivating process. The author also suggested employers to consider these main points while developing an employee motivation plan:

- Compensation to employees should be sufficient, and fair.
- Providing a safe and healthy workplace.
- Offering security to employees within job as well as new opportunities for them to grow in their career path.
- Ensuring that employees feel free to contribute their creativity and innovation, and that it would be encouraged and valued.
- Personal rights of individuals are respected in the company.
- Work life and family should be balanced.

(Sarma 2008, 217-224.)

Employee Development refers to a process where employees and employers collaborate together to revise, sharpen the current working skills together with learning, updating new know-how in a rapidly changing, competitive business environment. This is seen as one of the utmost beneficial activities that a company should organize for their employees, as it does not only integrate the workers into their workplace and help them to improve the professional knowledge, but it also nurtures a competent, efficient source of manpower which will contribute lots of advantages to the organization. Employee development activities can take different forms. It can be organizing relating seminars and conferences where employees from various organizations can share their knowledge and experience; or it can be periodical training sessions where ideas, new skills and updated information is exchanged, this also a good method to make employees more commit to their workplace. Besides, new challenges and responsibilities, job rotation, team work are also encouraged to be assigned to employees, since they will help them to learn new things, to be motivated and productive, as well as to expand their professional network. Furthermore, on-the-job learning with constructive feedbacks, notes and guidelines is also very important, and supervisors are expected to evaluate employees' performance together with assisting them in their professional growth. (MSG 2017.)

3.4 Job descriptions

The next important part of a service manual is to present the detailed descriptions of a given job. This is one of the most crucial session in this operation-manual type since it illustrates a clear, comprehensive picture of all the what, how, when, who, why questions relating to a specific job, which assists employers in many important functions such as recruiting, training, orientating, evaluating, etc. (Sarma 2008, 64). Since the scope of this project is narrowed down to host and service department, general information of job descriptions including its definition, benefits, and structure will be presented briefly at first, following with a detailed job analysis of host and service in the next sub-sections.

Clark (2013, 3) defined job description as "a clear, concise depiction of a job's duties and requirements" and suggested four key components which together build a comprehensive job description: job summary, job functions or duties list, job requirements, and other relating information.

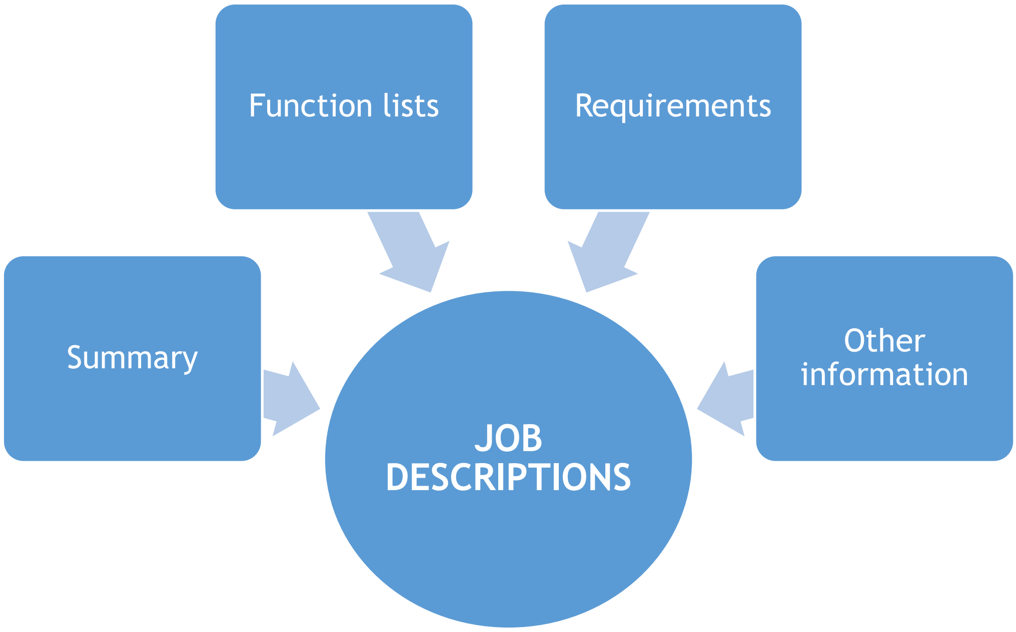


Figure 5: Job description consists of four parts

As depicted in the figure above, these four typical elements together provide a thorough idea about a job description to the readers. Firstly, Clark (2013, 3) explained job summary as a short, concise version of the job descriptions which generalizes the overview picture of the job. This part is normally written in a straight-to-the-point and brief manner, so desired candidates with qualities satisfying the job requirements could be filtered more efficiently. Besides, the first impressions of the company can be quickly presented in this summary depending on the writing style: it can be friendly, sweet, welcoming, or even funny, based on each organizational culture. Following is a list of job functions which will help employers state the job responsibilities, or duties in a more detailed angle, with an unambiguous style. Clark (2013, 3) suggested that municipal labor laws, especially when it comes to antidiscrimination part, should be studied carefully when writing the job duties list, so unwanted lawsuits can be avoided. Next, information regarding job requirements or expectations from the employers to the employees such as qualifications, educational background, desired working experience, permits or licenses, etc. can be described in the requirements section. This section can effectively help employers to refine the most relevant future employees, so time and cost can be saved from irrelevant ones. Finally, at the end of the job descriptions, normally a section for other essential job-related information can also be included. Such information can be about the working hours, the whereabouts of the work, other requirements like the willingness to travel, relocation, overtime working, etc.

Organization can remarkably benefit from using job descriptions, not only in the recruitment and hiring processes, but also during daily management. Job description is a practical tool for employers to communicate with their employees to ensure that both share the same understanding about the job, which increases the productivity and efficiency at work. This can also be a clear guideline for job performance evaluation, where employees who meet the desired requirements and expectations are rewarded fairly and the incompetent ones can be easily determined and discharged. Moreover, this is also a great tool for companies in future planning based on the current descriptions of various positions. (Clark 2013, 4.)

3.4.1 Host and service

As mentioned before, because of the definite scope of the project, this part of the thesis only discusses the job descriptions of ***host and service***. It is important to clarify that in this project's context, "host and service" is adopted as a name for a multi-tasking position which, in general, is a combination of host/hostess and waiter/waitress (or food server) positions. To fully analyze this special position, it may be advantageous to study the information regarding host/hostess and waiter/waitress roles first in a combined concept, then in a separate manner, simultaneously.

A winning element of delivering a great dining service beside food quality, restaurant design, etc. is having a competent host/hostess and waiter/waitress team. These staff are seen as the "ambassadors of the kitchen", who represent the whole restaurant from A to Z. They normally first welcome guests and position them to the appropriate seats, then take orders, serve food, clean the tables, and so on. It is a multitasking working environment, especially during the peak hours where every order needs to be done with a smile no matter how busy it may get. Certain qualities that are considered to be crucial in a career as a host/hostess and waiter/waitress as for example, being friendly and patient, helpful, professional, together with the ability to handle pressure well, to foresee the customer requests, and the availability to work during weekends or holiday seasons, etc. (Riley 2008, 11.)

Host or hostess is seen as the representative of a restaurant, usually an up-scale one, by whom customers are professionally greeted and welcomed. The importance of host/hostess is irrefutable, since the first impressions of the professionality and quality of a restaurant is conducted by him/her. Warm, friendly, and professional reception, courteous seating, menu introduction, informing customers with new dishes and their order status as well as managing, monitoring the functionality of the dining area are seen as the core responsibilities of a host/hostess (Hcareers 2009). Other than these, hosts and hostesses are also supposed to manage table reservations and answer costumers' requests, both at the premise and over the phone line, and this, commented by Riley (2008, 12), may be the most challenging task for this position, especially during peak hours. The main competences that are usually expected from a host/hostess are, for instance: focusing on customers' needs, good communicational and organizational skills, ability to handle stressful situations (or to be composure) as well as being able to multi-task (SHRM 2017).

Waiter/waitress or food server is regarded as a strong "link between customers and sales" (Arduser et al. 2005, 12) who has competent knowledge and experience in introducing and serving food and drinks to customers. Restaurants ranging from pop-ups, cafes, casual to up-scale have different specific requirements for becoming a food server. However, in general, their main duties are usually expected to be greeting customers, establishing menu, taking orders, serving food, handling payment, and last but not least, cleaning. Suggested by Arduser et al. (2005, 12-13), certain qualities that a good waiter or waitress should possess are: ability to effectively communicate, high level of energy, flexibility, and ability to deal with stressful conditions, capability to work in team, be courteous, empathic, have a neat appearance as well as a will to satisfy customers' needs.

As a combination of the two described positions above, a ***host and service*** job position should function efficiently at the same time on both fields. Ultimately, it is also very important to mention in the job description a very basic, yet essential requirement, or quality of the position: the possession of a hygiene passport. As it is required by Finnish law in restaurant business, employees working on food premises like coffee shops, restaurants, kitchens, etc. must have a hygiene passport indicating their basic understanding about food hygiene, thus ensuring food safety (Envira 2016).

3.4.2 Host and service tasks

The tasks, or job lists of host and service position will be discussed in this session. Already commented above, as a combination term for both food server and host(ess), information regarding to host and service tasks can be found in the duty lists of the two positions consecutively. The tables below list the main tasks of both positions which are introduced by Arduser et al. (2005).

WAITER/ WAITRESS

General	▪ Hospitable to customers ▪ Tidy personal appearance
Service	▪ Understanding the service sequence/order ▪ Greeting customers ▪ Taking orders (drink) ▪ Serving drinks ▪ Taking orders (food) ▪ Suggestive selling ▪ Serving food (appetizers → entrée → dessert) ▪ Exporting bill ▪ Processing payment ▪ Cleaning the table ▪ Table re-setting
Side tasks	▪ Napkin-folding ▪ Furnishing stations ▪ Refilling spices, sauces, etc. ▪ Setting tables ▪ Coffee/tea/water brewing or refilling ▪ Other possible tasks
Closing tasks	▪ Cleaning working stations ▪ Washing trays ▪ Restocking service stations ▪ Setting tables ready
Bill handling	▪ Know-how in using electronic tills ▪ Launching a bill ▪ Input items into bill ▪ Deleting items from a bill ▪ Editing items ▪ Exporting a bill for customer to pay ▪ Handling payment process ▪ Knowledge in using card machine ▪ Issuing change if necessary

	▪ Producing daily till reports after each shift
Menu knowledge	▪ Describing items in the menu ▪ Presenting information about wine and drinks selection & their combination with food ▪ Knowledge of food-making process as well as the tastes ▪ Concerning about customers' possible allergies and diets

Table 1: Food server job list formulated by Arduser et al. (2005)

HOST/HOSTESS

Inspecting the dining room	▪ Making sure booths and counters are in good order ▪ Properly adjusting lighting, temperature, ventilation, etc. ▪ Ensuring tables are set and well equipped ▪ Ensuring service stations are clean and fulfilled ▪ Distributing menus suitably ▪ "Reserved" signs must be placed on tables with reservations ▪ Decoration (flowers, plants, signs, monuments, etc.) are in good order ▪ Tablecloths, napkins, cutlery, serving towels, spices, sauces, etc. are well equipped ▪ Reporting any facility malfunction to manager if necessary
Providing excellent service	▪ Making sure orders are taken when customers are ready ▪ Preventing delays between meal courses ▪ Water, bread, butter, coffee, tea should be available to guests ▪ Children service must be given by introducing kids menu, smaller portion possibility, different flavors, children chair, and play area if possible. ▪ Ensuring additional order or supplementary service from customers are taken care of ▪ Collecting menus from tables once orders are defined

	▪ Keeping polite, friendly manner with guests and as the same time trying to avoid long, irrelevant conversations ▪ Saying goodbye and thank you to leaving customers and if there is enough time, ask for their feedbacks ▪ Clearing and re-setting tables once customers leave
Performing clerical function	▪ Reviewing, comparing serving menus and kitchen menus to see if there is any item omitted or mistaken so necessary adjustment could be made ▪ Counting, revising stock items and reporting the needed supply amount ▪ Handling reservations with adequate required information: contact person's name, address, phone number, organization name, day and time, which occasion, number of people, seating preference, special decoration arrangement, type of menus, allergies, etc. ▪ Recording working hours of employees in the dining room area ▪ Sale analyzing ▪ Informing managers about important customer feedbacks including suggestions, complaints, compliments, etc.
Serving special parties or occasions	▪ Assigning extra human resource if needed ▪ Ensuring there are enough dining utensils ▪ Instructing waiters/waitresses to set tables according to the required theme ▪ Inspecting if the setting, arrangement, and outlook of the tables are finished ▪ Examining if places are arranged according to the booked amount ▪ Specific guidance shall be provided to each waiter/waitress ▪ The time when service begins as well as serving time of different courses should be informed to the kitchen staff ▪ Observing and giving signals of when to start serving and when to collecting dishes from table to the waiters/waitresses ▪ Special allergies and diets of customers should be examined and approved. Substitution should be replaced.

	▪ Additional services should be anticipated and provided to the best ability, thus ensuring a smooth dining/party experience to the customers
Receiving customers	▪ Manner: courteous, friendly, welcoming, and dignified ▪ Greeting customers from the dining room entrance with a smile and appropriate welcome message. ▪ Assist or guide customers with the location of cloakroom or hanging rack ▪ Seat the customers appropriately according to the number of members in the group. If there is not too many customers in the dining room, host/hostess can ask for customers' seating references ▪ Ensuring the table is cleared and set before seating customers ▪ Children chairs shall be served if there are children along ▪ Introducing menu and serving water

Table 2: Host/hostess job list formulated by Arduser et al. (2005)

As can be seen from the two tables, there are certain similarities in tasks in the two positions, even though one (host) may be at a more management level than the other (waitperson). This indicates the correlative relationship of the two positions: they are connected to each other and the functionality of a position supports and complements the other one, which ensures the quality and efficiency of the overall restaurant performance, particularly within the dining room. Since the two positions are combined as a more multi-tasking, demanding special position named "host and service", it is important for employers to analyze and harmonize the tasks between the two, then choose the most important and relevant ones according to their business requirements and activities to form a complete tasks list for the "host and service" position, based on the information extracted from the two tables described above.

3.5 Daily Operating Procedures

In order to run restaurant services smoothly, a detailed plan which fully describes the service operations on a daily basis is certainly important. This ensures the consistency, completeness, and standard of the services implemented. A common practice to follow when illustrating the daily operating procedures is to construct a duties list, specifically based on the job title or job classification (Faulstich 2017). Faulstich also pointed out some crucial benefits of presenting a daily operation plan in businesses such as: working standards are clearly set, employees following the same consistent procedures can be ensured, seasonal staff can follow to keep up with the standard working guidelines, and last but not least, within the help of daily operation plan, employees can be self-responsible, independent in their daily work while employers or supervisors do not have to waste their time and effort in controlling every single operating detail.

Basic duties list for a serviceperson, or front of house (FOH) proposed by Faulstich (2017) can be consulted as an example for employers to consult for developing a daily operation procedures plan. This tasks list can be found in the table below.

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
FOH Opening Duties							
▪ Fill up ice bin(s)							
▪ Change door sign to “OPEN”							
▪ Set up patio furniture and clean chairs and tables as needed							
▪ Fill pastry display							
▪ Fill pastry display							
FOH Transition Duties							
▪ Clean counters, tables, & chairs							
▪ Sweep or vacuum floors as needed							
▪ Clean bathroom & restock bathroom with toilet paper and towels							
▪ Clean & restock pastry display							
▪ Take trash and recycling out if more than ¾ full							
▪ Stock FOH to-go-ware as needed							
FOH Closing Duties (Coffee Shop Duties included)							
▪ Wash all steam pitchers, drip tray & rack, bar mats, tampers, tamp box, shot glassware, & espresso utensils							
▪ Clean grinder at the end the day by using a clean brush and removing any debris left in the dozer.							
▪ Remove steam wand nozzles and soak in hot soapy water for about 5-10 min cleaning in the holes with the steam wand brush and rinse. Put the wand nozzles back on steam wand and purge.							

▪ Polish all glassware							
▪ Wipe down entire counter, espresso machine, grinder, and brewer.							
▪ Restock cups, lids, milk, and all other beverages.							
▪ Clean FOH refrigerator & pastry display refrigerator,							
▪ Remove ice from ice bins and sanitize ice bins.							
▪ Clean and restock bathroom							
▪ Sweep and mop floors in FOH							
▪ Clean windows							
▪ Count down cash drawer with manager or owner.							
▪ Wrap desserts with plastic if still usable for next day and place in BOH refrigerator. Date and label.							
▪ Take inventory of all food and beverages in FOH using list.							
▪ Take inventory of to-go-ware Monday and Thursday.							

Table 3: FOH duties list established by Faulstich (2017)

As illustrated from the table, daily operations of a serviceperson can be seen as having three main phases: opening, transition, and closing. Each phase consists of various smaller, detailed tasks that are needed to perform in order to complete the service core standard set by a restaurant. These specific tasks are ensured to be implemented by using a cross or tick into the box of the appropriate day indicating the task is achieved, thus managers or supervisors as well as employees can monitor how fulfilled the given tasks are, so possible performance assessment can be easier conducted. By applying this type of duties list, the set goals regarding to service quality of a restaurant, especially in the service area, or dining section can be more feasibly accomplished. Last but not least, is important to note that the table above only serves as an example of how an operation procedures plan is made, it is not a fixed model which can be used for every business types. Employers need to understand and apply these model tasks appropriately according to their specific business services and quality standards and customize further particular task information flexibly rather than just automatically using the above-described table without any adjustments.

4 Research Methodology

This part of the thesis is aimed for introducing the main research approach applied in this project, which is qualitative research as well as the details of the data gathering process using those qualitative means such as questionnaires, in-depth interviews, observations or user shadowing, and blueprinting.

4.1 Qualitative Mean

Qualitative research is commonly used within social study field where specific, detailed, insightful, and quality data is of main interest rather than the quantity. It is “designed to reveal a target audience’s range of behavior and the perceptions that drive it with reference to specific topics or issues” and utilizes “in-depth studies of small groups of people to guide and support the construction of hypotheses” (QRCA 2017). This mean of research provides researchers opportunities to understand thoroughly experiences, perspectives of individuals by conducting “in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observation, content analysis, visual methods, and life histories or biographies” (Hennink & Hutter & Bailey 2011, 9).

Qualitative approach is chosen as the core research method in this project as it can help explain effectively questions regarding to the manual development process, thanks to its great range of benefits compared to quantitative approach. Behaviors, opinions, emotions, points of view, perspectives, experiences, values, etc. from people can be reflected completely using qualitative method. This powerful research mean can also help researchers adequately identify, understand and design processes or activities, specifically in different” social, cultural, economic, or physical context” (Hennink et al. 2011, 10).

4.2 Data Gathering

Data in this project is collected using various qualitative methods. The methods used are interview, observation, blueprinting, customer journey, and survey. The details of each method used can be found in the following sub-sections.

4.2.1 Interview

Depending on the type of information, interviews can be implemented in various forms: comprehensive, uncomprehensive, or semi-comprehensive in order to gather needed data. These interviews can be handled directly (face-to-face), or via phones. Each way of conducting an interview has its own advantages and disadvantages. Face-to-face approach can help interviewer collect detailed, rich, complex, in-depth data as well as explore more data or possible issues from signals, non-verbal acts. However, this method requires investments in time and professional trainings from interviewers in order to produce an objective interview where possible sensitive topics are minimized. A less costly interview manner is to deliver it through telephone. Over-telephone interviews does not require as much resource as face-to-face one, especially literacy skills. On the other hand, if one wishes to conduct a phone interview, making repeated phone calls could possibly happen as people may not want to answer, and it should be aimed for short questionnaires only, where phones are available to the major population of an area. Another drawback of phone interview is that personal or more sensitive data is hard to be collected, which would lower the quality of data if a project requires such data. (My Peer toolkit 2010).

4.2.2 Observation

Observation, or user shadowing, is a powerful service design method where observed objects, events, activities or persons are witnessed, described, and recorded objectively. This is an effective method to identify actions, experiences of users involving in a service design. Necessary prior arrangement such as approvals from people observed or permissions from an environment's manager may be required. It is important that data from the observations is described, not interpreted in order to optimize the objectiveness of data. An observation framework is introduced by TD4Ed for observational note-taking where activities and the surrounding environment are observed uniformly from various aspects. This structure, or model help observer go through the following aspects: A – E – I – O – U. A stands for "Activities" where what observed people are doing is written down. E is for "Environments", which describes the surrounding of the activities as well as how this environment is being used and the functionality of it. "Interactions" between objects and people is described in I, while "Objects" within this environment, specifically present objects, being used and not being used objects are illustrated in O. Lastly, U implies "Users", which means the people involved in the activities are defined: who they are, what they are doing, which relationship they hold, etc. The style of structuring this observational note-taking may vary. Elements of A – E – I – O – U can be presented in its own alphabetical order, correspondingly. The other way is to build a story-like format which associates all the components. (TD4Ed.)

4.2.3 Blueprint & customer journey

Service blueprint is a useful framework for service design researchers to easily visualize the overall picture consisting of various elements which construct the whole service process; and as an end result, it helps them to have a thorough analysis of the service qualities and customer experiences, thus further improvements and values can be added to build a better service experience (Reason & Lovlie & Flu 2016, 12). Another way which well defines blueprint is to see it as “an operational tool that describes the nature and the characteristics of the service interaction in enough detail to verify, implement and maintain it” (Service Design Tools 2009). The blueprint design is based on the whole process where service interactions from user’s perspectives are described in chronological order: from start to finish; the whole service blueprint development process can be illustrated in the figure below (Reason et al. 2016, 13).

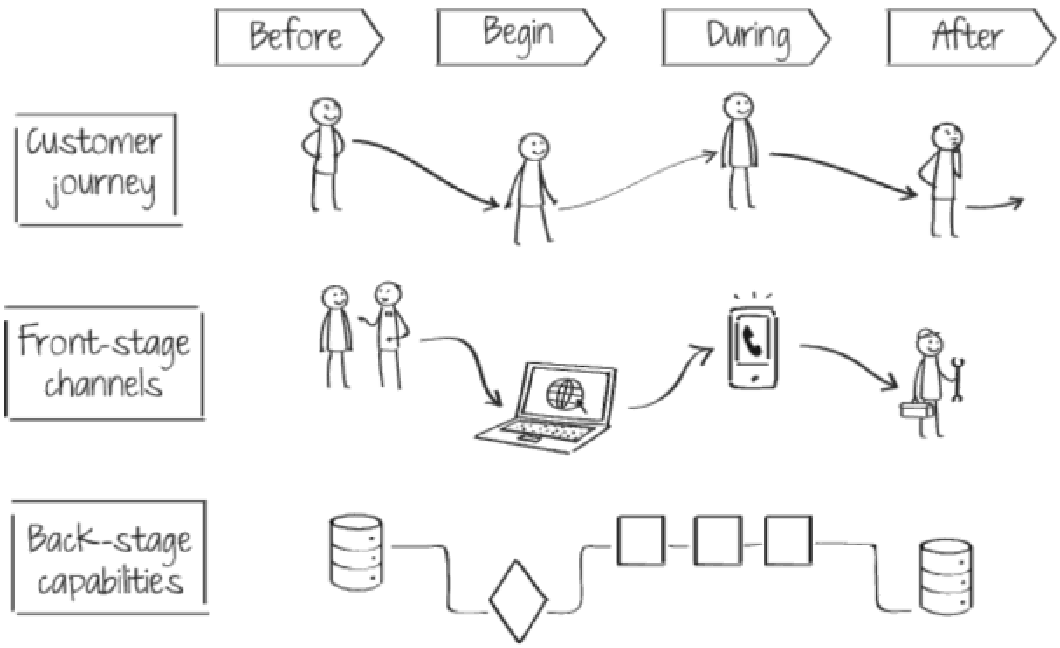


Figure 6: Service blueprint

Customer journey is considered as a starting point where service blueprint begins, and it outlines the general picture of the service delivery flow (Reason et al. 2016, 12). This tool maps every touchpoints where interactions between customer and service happen, and these interactive communications can be characterized carefully, step by step in the journey of a customer receiving service from an organization (Service Design Tools 2009).

Information gathered from this customer journey serves as the core bones of a service blueprint, and based on these bones, a more detailed analysis can be conducted to support the blueprint. The two main streams of elements associated with customer journey to provide the best service blueprint are front-stage channels and back-stage capabilities. Front-stage channels are the physical contact points where customer interacts with the organization such as face-to-face communication, website, phones, or other services provided by a third-party.

Back-stage capabilities such as service staff, facilities, services, tools, etc. will be then analyzed and assigned appropriately according to the front channels identified in order to provide the best service experience to customer. This analysis does not only support organizations in fulfilling the customer expectations, it is also a great approach to identify the unnecessary or overlapping services and facilities. (Reason et al. 2016, 12-13.)

4.2.4 Surveys

Survey is described as a document distributed in either hard copy or electronic form to gather information in the form of question lists. This is seen as a great approach to gather data such as feedbacks, but not in-depth data as discussions and interviews can provide. The form of how a survey is constructed varies. It can be multiple choice question where participants can choose one among suggested answers, or many answers using checkboxes. It can also be just yes/no question, or answers can be recoded according to the scale given, for example, from highest to lowest, or from least agreeable to most agreeable. It is important for survey creators to acknowledge the tips for creating an effective survey. Its wording and length should be suitable and enough, not too long which makes readers bored, and should not be too short which data cannot be adequately collected. Questions and answer choices are encouraged to be written in a simple, clear, and well-constructed manner. (Marquez & Downey 2016, 63.)

4.3 Reliability & Validity of data

It is important that reliability and legitimacy of data collected and distributed in this thesis is evaluated correctly. Reliability in qualitative research refers to the consistency, richness, and ambience of data, which can be improved by “reputational analysis, constant data comparison, comprehensive data use, inclusive of the deviance case and use of tables”. Validity refers to the “appropriateness of the tools, processed, and data” in order to successfully answer the research questions and reach desired research results. (Leung 2015.)

The reliability and validity of this thesis project can be assessed by reflecting the process of gathering research data. First of all, interviews were conducted during working process of one of the authors as she is currently employed as a full-timer at the case company. The main reason of implementing such at-work interviews instead of an official, separate session is due to time constraints from the interviewees, i.e. the employees of the case company. The results of those interview sessions were documented, analyzed, and input objectively in the result service manual. Secondly, observations were organized and recorded in the most unbiased manner possible, which is, describing everything the observers see rather than interpreting or explaining in witnesses’ personal points of view. Next, data collected from those observational activities is input directly to form a complete service blueprint, which helps ensure the consistency of research data. Furthermore, a survey designed by the authors containing 13 questions in electronic form was sent to 10 employees of the case company in order to collect feedback data regarding to the constructed service manual. Twelves questions were designed in multiple choice form where receivers can provide a scaled-form answer, and the other survey question functions as an open free-write feedback from the respondents. Last but not least, it is also necessary to reflect the process of building a theoretical background in order to support the reliability and validity of data in this project. This process includes finding, selecting, and using valid, academic knowledge from text books, electronic books, academic journals, manual creating guidelines, as well as official webpages of academic institutes.

5 Research Process & Fidings

First of all, in order to conduct a service manual, it is important to understand what kind of services Huone offers to its customers and how an events hotel operates on a daily basis. The service blueprint below was created to give readers a clear view on offering services in Huone Helsinki.

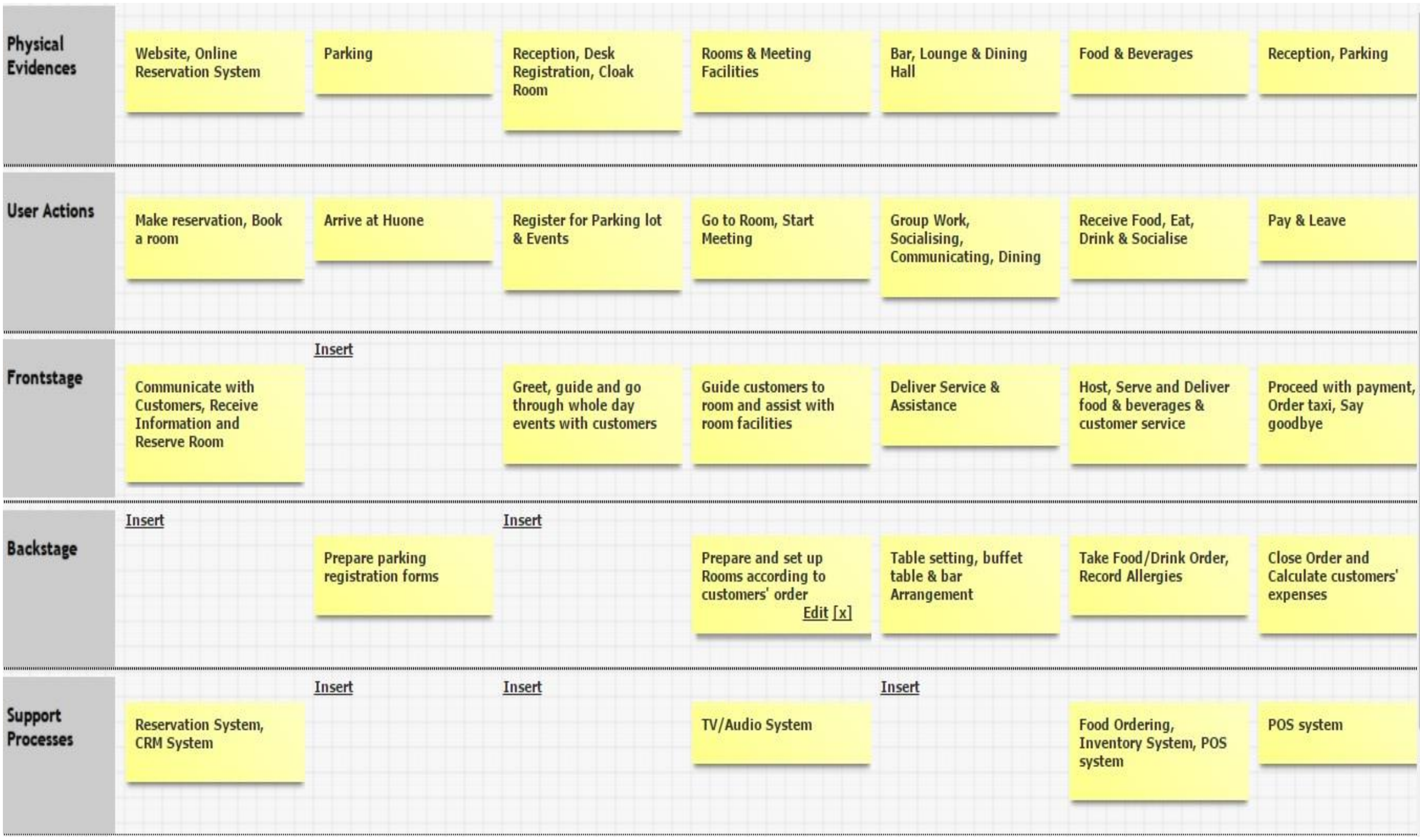


Figure 7: Service blueprint in Huone Helsinki

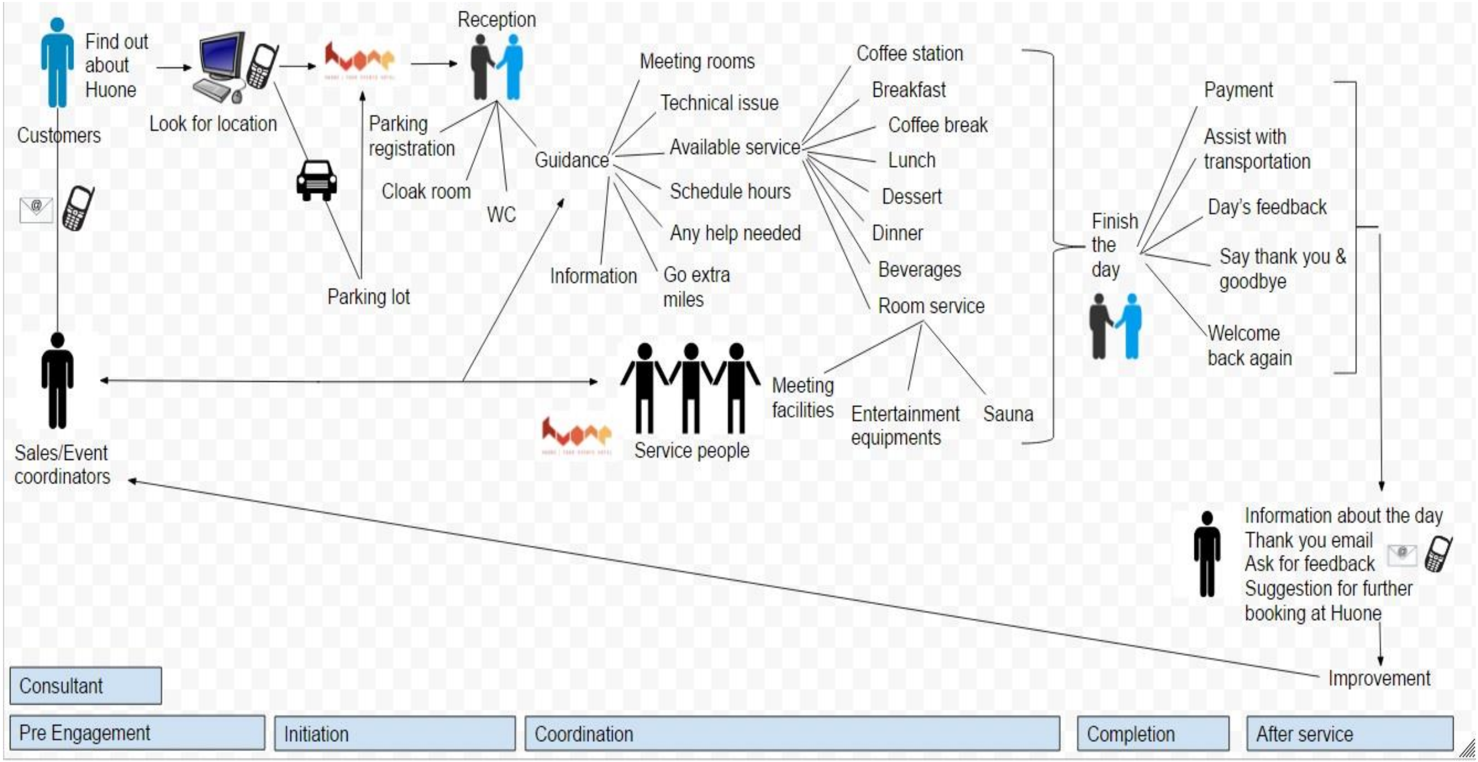


Figure 8: Customer journey in Huone Helsinki

Since Huone operates in events industry, excellent customer service is required from every employee and it should be delivered to the customers throughout the whole customer journey. Moreover, specializing in creative meetings and events in different themed rooms, room preparation, room services and room facilities are well prepared before the customers' arrival. Huone also has its own kitchen and catering service to meet customers' needs and requests. At the same time, Huone can turn into a fun exciting place with its well-stocked bar and entertainment programs for after-work activities. In general, Huone offers all-in-one events solution and takes care of all services since the beginning until the end of customers' events.

First, targeted customers will be contacted through sales personnel or event coordinators and all information related to the event will be discussed through thoroughly. The event organizer, event schedule, number of participants, type of events, needed room equipment and facilities, food allergies and payment method are carefully recorded and delivered to all departments. Huone's event coordinators will constantly communicate and discuss with customers to gather the most updated information and forward them again to each department. After the events have been confirmed, a weekly catering file and a daily day list filled with events' details will be produced and printed out every day. Based on these lists, raw materials will be calculated and ordered; breakfast and afternoon servings will be prepared; lunch and dinner menu will be planned, meeting rooms will be arranged and the events' timetable will be followed.

When customers arrive at Huone Helsinki, they will be greeted by the event coordinators in the reception and offered parking registration form if arriving by car. General information about the cloak room, toilet, coffee station and dining hall will be briefly introduced. Right after, the customers will be guided all the way to their rooms and assisted with any request.

A wide range of food and beverages are available throughout the whole event to the customers according to their meeting packages. Free flow coffee, breakfast breads or breakfast buffets, lunch buffet, afternoon servings and dinner menu are carefully planned, selected and suggested to fit customer's budget and type of events.

Each room in Huone is specially designed with its own theme and amenities to boost creativity and generate effective meeting results. The rooms are usually set up in advance according to customers' request. Enough tables and chairs are counted and organized followed the meetings' structure. Flipcharts, extension cords, cables and stationaries are well equipped inside. Besides, Nespresso machines are found in 9 rooms offering coffee at all times for customers to stay focused on their events/projects. Food and beverages servings plus refreshment can also be ordered to the room both in advance and on spot. Additionally, customers do not need to leave the room or meet the actual personnel for a request. A telephone which connects directly to Huone's reception is accessible in every room at any time. Huone has designed and created a whole package, focused on every single detail to give its customers the most optimal working environment.

Metsä lounge downstairs and Loistava lounge upstairs have cozy welcoming ambience that are ideal for co-working, socializing and dining. Coffee stations (available all day), open bars (mostly for evening events), buffet tables and stages can be found in both lounges. Customers visit these two lounges often for many purposes such as their morning coffee, breakfast, lunch, afternoon break, group work, socializing, dinner, show and entertainment.

From all the offerings and customers' touch points above, it can easily be seen that the level of tasks and services required in Huone is quite high and Huone's service staff need to know how to perform and deliver those in the same standard way. Since Huone is going international, a need for a service manual is more crucial than ever.

The service manual was structured with 4 main parts: Overview of the company history; description of workstations; job tasks and procedures; essential tools and systems - basically everything an employee needs to know to start his/her job as easy as possible. The service manual is specially designed to provide guidance and know-how to employees to ensure that standardization of Huone Events Hotel is carefully applied and maintained regardless of positions and departments. When new recruits first read the manual, they will be able to learn about the company's background, its vision, mission, and goal and from here get a glimpse of Huone's work culture. Furthermore, appearance and code of conduct requirement were mentioned since every employee is an ambassador and a face of Huone. A brief introduction of service staff's main tasks along with customer service skill requirement were also emphasized to remind the employees about the importance of high service level in Huone (see Appendix.)

After the company introduction, the service manual was continued by describing Huone's workstations in details. Bars, Metsä lounge and Loistava lounge, Rooms, Kitchen and Storages were covered in this section. Their location, standard required appearance, functionality, facilities and tasks that the service staff should perform in these workstations were one by one listed. Especially, the themed rooms are one of the most essential selling points of Huone so how they are prepared, how pieces of furniture are arranged and even where stationeries should be put inside the room are carefully considered. It is important for the service staff to capture these knowledge and have an eye for the overall setting of the rooms so they look presentable at all time for the guests' visit. Hence, 12 rooms with different sizes, themes, setups and capacity were attentively written and described in a separate document due to their extensive information. Photos of each workstations, their location and setup were attached to aid the learning process for the service staff (see Appendix.)

Getting information and being familiar with their workstations will help the service staff substantially in performing their tasks which were depicted in the following section - Job Tasks and Procedures. The writers have paid a tremendous amount of time and effort for this chapter since it can be considered as the most important part in the service manual. In Huone, the service staff are divided into morning shift and evening shift due to the nature of each event. Understanding the customers' behaviors towards morning and evening events, the service staff will soon notice that the service flow is not the same and the tasks they need to perform vary widely according to different circumstances. This section started with information on what the service staff should do if they are the first one to arrive at Huone - what needs to be open and switched on, etc. Next, a clear, accurate and very detailed description of job tasks and procedures that the service staff will be in charge of in each workstations were portrayed. Samples of morning and evening person-in-charge's daily procedures were also attached to give readers a better understanding on how the service flow should be measured and managed (see Appendix.)

In order to accomplish these job tasks, proper means and systems should be handed to the team as well. The last section in the service manual presented important tools that Huone team uses on their day-to-day operation. Gmail, Google Drive and Google Calendar are the main sources for communicating, storing files and scheduling everyone's work shifts respectively. With regard to daily and weekly events, the most important document for the service staff is the Day

List & Catering. It includes all information about daily events with number of customers, event coordinators in charge, rooms in use, specific schedules and orders, tasks and person in charge. A Day List & Catering is printed out every day for the service staff by the event coordinators. Plus, instruction on how to use Point of Sale (POS) system was also explained and several notes to pay attention to when using the system was also mentioned (see Appendix.)

By producing a service manual, Huone's management team hope to achieve several goals. The aims of the service manual serve differently towards the company's management level and its employees. First of all, to Huone's management level, the service manual helps gather all correct, relevant and necessary information as well as unite all common knowledge and future updates in one place to deliver to the company's employees. More importantly, the service manual ensures the standardization of Huone's working process resulting to high level of efficiency and standardized work performance from the employees. Through the manual, the managers can also explain the company's business model and convey its rights and expectations to the operating team. Furthermore, a service manual can be used as a training guide for new employees and retrain current employees at the same time. Usually, the service manual is considered as one of the most powerful tools that managers can use during training periods. Last but not least, owning a service manual does create and add more value to the business when it comes to franchising or other market entry modes. On the other hand, to Huone's employees, the service manual works as a guideline "bible" to all employees, especially new hires. By providing relevant information and step by step instructions, they can start performing work tasks in the most effective way. In case of emergency, challenging work situations or just common knowledge, the employees should be able to rely on the service manual and follow the instructions written inside. In addition, not only does it give a clear view of the company's history, concept, vision, mission and goal but also helps the employees understand the company's business structure and standard operating procedures. Therefore, a service manual is worth producing since it offers many benefits for both the management level and the operational level in Huone. It saves time and effort during training periods and creates faster and more effective training. The manual also generates cohesive information flow between departments resulting to less misunderstandings and mistakes. Naturally, communication between team members will be improved and work process becomes smoother for everyone. This will boost efficiency and speed up the employees' decision making as a consequence. Moreover, it will be a shortcoming not to mention how the service manual helps Huone's employers avoid the knowledge trap when some employees might know too much while others are lacking of information or guidance.

The service manual was formed by collecting data through the writers' actual experiences and working process since they both worked in Huone Events Hotel before. The writers also worked closely with the team by frequently interviewing, observing and discussing various work tasks and work procedures in each department. User shadowing method was applied to gain as much information as needed. Plus, the team's ideas, suggestions and feedbacks were constantly gathered and adapted to improve the service manual's content and structure. However, the writers have faced some difficulties while writing the service manual. Basically, the process of acquiring data is time-consuming since every task in Huone is very detail-oriented and the whole service and work procedures are quite complicated. For example, Huone's breakfast buffet contains 19 items and each item should cover these topics: what it is, what ingredients it includes, where to find it, how to do it and how to present it. This is only a small part of many servings that Huone offers to its customers. This leads to the fact that the level of details the manual requires is high since it opts to document a large amount of information and data. Yet, the manual needs to be written in a way that it holds only relevant information while avoids unnecessary ones and still encompasses all the fields. On the contrary, some topics and details might be missed since the writers have accessed to a huge volume of data and it is easy to be "blinded" in the flood of information. Nevertheless, being aware of these challenges, the writers have constantly asked for opinions and feedbacks from Huone's team members and obtained many valuable points to develop the service manual.

After completing the service manual, the writers have conducted a survey to see whether the service manual is informative, relevant and helpful enough for Huone's team or not. The survey consisted of 12 questions with multiple choice options from "not informative" to "extremely informative" type of answer (see Appendix). It was sent to 7 full-time employees and all 3 part-timers in Huone. 8 responses were received.

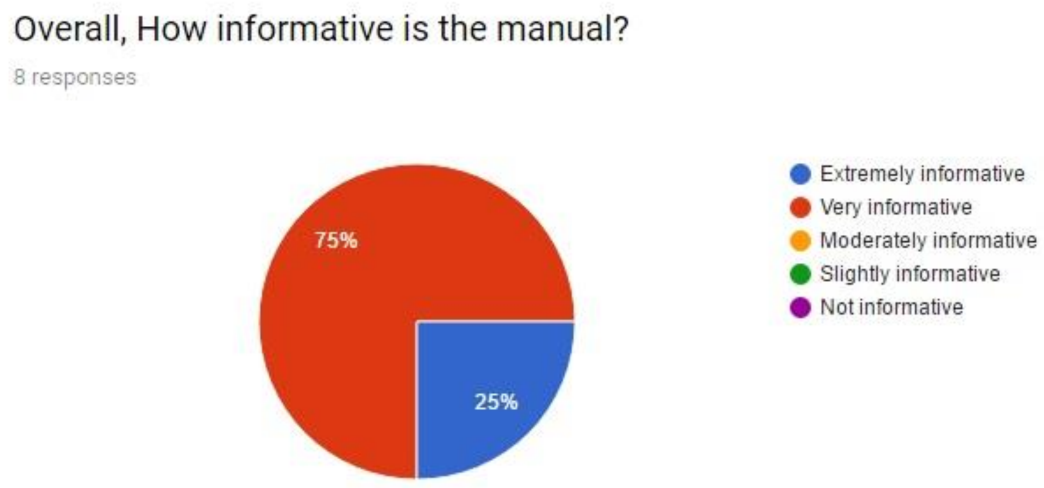
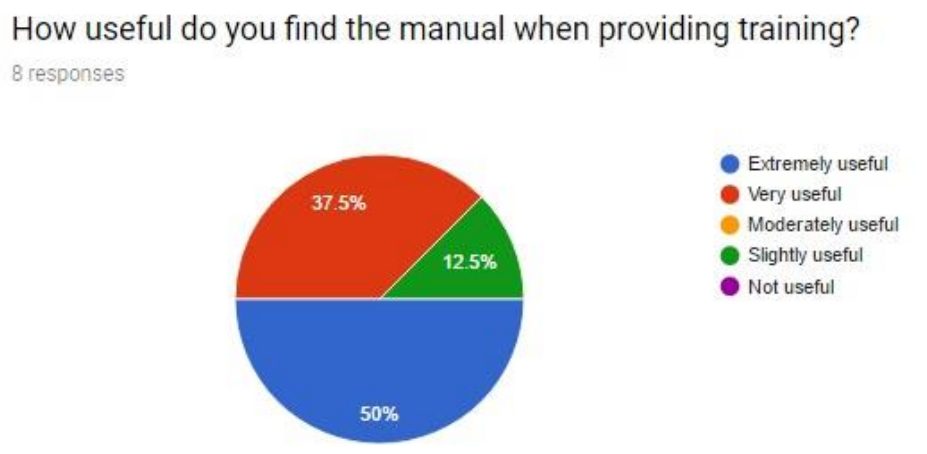


Figure 9: Employees' opinion about the informativeness of the manual

Overall, 2 people found the manual "extremely informative" and 6 people considered the manual "very informative".

The manual's structure shared equally 50% responses of "extremely well/clear" and "very well/clear". Regarding its content, once again "extremely well" and "very well" were the chosen by 6 people and 2 people respectively. Besides, more than half of the participants agreed that it was easy to follow the instructions in the manual. However, 5 people sometimes use the manual and 3 answered "rarely" together with only 3 people found the manual very helpful for their work. The reason for this is because the service manual was only written after Huone has been operating for 4 years. All full-time employees have already achieved a sufficient amount of knowledge while part-time employees have also gained a certain amount of experiences already.



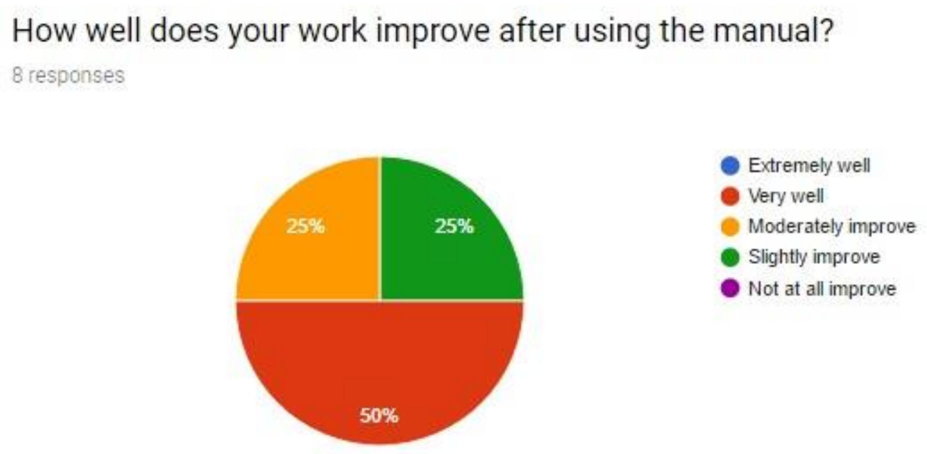


Figure 10: Employees' opinion about the manual's usefulness and its impact on their work

Still, 4 people acknowledged that the manual was “extremely useful” when providing training and 3 went for “very helpful”. Also, half of them noticed that their work have been improved after using the manual.

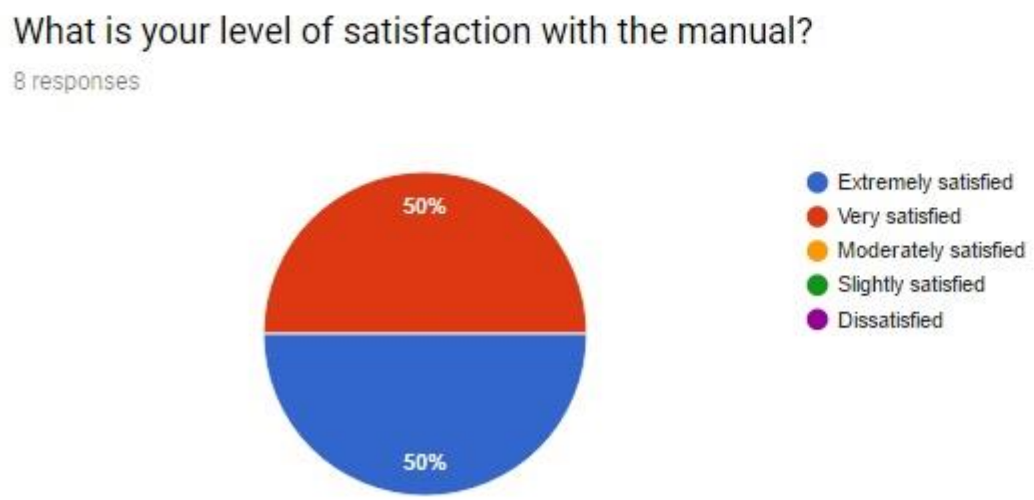


Figure 11: Employees’ level of satisfaction with the manual

In the end, 4 people felt “extremely satisfied” and 4 people selected “very satisfied” with the manual. All comments, feedback and suggestions were also recorded as below:

“My day to day job in sales the manual does not provide much but every once in a while I do service it is nice to know there is manual to go back to incase I would need to check something. And I can imagine it will helpful for new employees in the future.”

“In training new staff members the manual will be very useful, since most of the information is "silent information" from our current staff.”

“Overall, the manual is very detailed, easy to follow, easy to implement. However for a new comer, memorizing such many details could be a bit challenging. The author could also consider including some short instruction videos if possible, since it would be a lot easier to remember and follow, compare to the text version. Also having a few additional videos will help shorten the length of the manual text significantly, so the manual user could be able to go though it within a shorter amount of time.”

“There is some information that has changed during past couple of months. But the challenge with this broad and exact manual is to keep it up to date all times, when small information change.”

“Is very well done and I love the pictures, they make the content clearer.”

“The manual is great tool to double check things when people are trained.”

In general, the service manual has obtained quite good responses in terms of details, relevance, content, structure, use in training and work improvement. Perhaps, it will be more helpful for fresh newcomers in the future and Huone’s team members are encouraged to put the manual in use more regularly in practice. The feedback has already been taken into consideration and adopted to the service manual for improvement and development.

6 Discussion & Conclusions

In conclusion, implementing and possessing a service manual is absolutely vital for an organization, particularly in its expansion phrase. Both management and operational level receive abundant benefits from using the service manual. Not only does it help standardize the working process and procedures but also serves as one of the most essential tools in any training program. New and existing employees can count on the knowledge and guidance provided in the service manual for self-taught or cross training practices. Consequently, smoother daily operating procedures, more efficiency and better performance results can be seen thanks to the support of the service manual. Knowing the importance of this comprehensive documentation, its layout and content should be planned carefully and structured clearly before starting. All the information gathered in the service manual should be descriptive, precise and relevant. Attention to details is also required when writing a service manual. Additionally, it is not a project for one individual in a company so everyone should work together and contribute feedbacks for improvement and development. Once it is completed, it should be tested among the company’s team members to ensure the practicality of the service manual.

In the scope of this thesis, the service manual for Huone Events Hotel has successfully achieved its aim by providing a clear, relevant and informative guideline for the employees. It has already been used in training and supporting day-to-day working procedures for the whole team. Feedback and suggestions are also taken into account and new information will be updated all the time to maintain the accuracy and validity of the service manual.

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Appendices