

CASE STUDY

Opryland

TRAINING STILL EFFECTIVE AFTER SIX YEARS



IN BRIEF

Background

Gaylord Opryland is part of the Gaylord Hotels and is the largest hotel in Nashville. The resort used Signature training for more than six years to improve the sales and service skills of agents at its on-site call center.

Challenges

Using one program for such a long time presents challenges including the need to track Return on Investment (ROI) for the training program, maintaining consistency and keeping the training fresh so agents are excited and motivated to use the skills they've learned.

Solutions

Signature implemented Call Center Edge™, a training solution that improves the sales and service skills of call center agents. The program uses a proven system of reinforcement to create long-term results. Signature's measurement system allowed Opryland to easily track results and tie them to revenues. A twice-yearly training program maintained consistency, and ongoing work with a Signature trainer helped Opryland management keep the program fun and lively.

Results

Gaylord Opryland showed a direct and consistent correlation between Signature mystery shopping scores and monthly sales. In a four-month period, average revenue-per-agent, per month at Gaylord Opryland increased by 57 percent. Signature scores, during that same four-month period, increased from 80 to 93 percent. "The impact on revenues alone is enough to keep using the Signature program," said Opryland's Reservations Manager Telenia Brooks.

Background

Gaylord Opryland Hotel is part of Gaylord Hotels, a pioneer in the hotel and convention industry. By developing resorts and convention centers in the nation's most desirable event destinations, Gaylord Hotels provides meeting planners and guests with everything they need under one roof. With 2,779 rooms, Gaylord Opryland is the largest hotel in Nashville.

The property has a call center on site dedicated to handling extensive booking inquiries from vacation packages to entertainment tickets to convention rooms. Gaylord Opryland takes pride in its exceptional guest service and has demonstrated this commitment by utilizing Signature sales and customer service training since 1999.

Challenges

Continue to Demonstrate the ROI of Signature Training: Because Gaylord Opryland had been using the Signature program for six years, it was crucial for the training staff to avoid becoming complacent. Staff needed to continue to put ROI measures into place and not assume the program was working without utilizing a system of measurement.

Maintain Consistency Over Time: Maintaining the consistency of the training and the skills of the agents was a key to the successful training system. By using the same program for many years, Opryland ran the risk of supervisors and agents "adjusting" parts of the process to fit their needs, thereby losing some of the most critical aspects of the program.

Stay Fresh and Interesting: As with most things, a training program can become monotonous if not updated on a consistent basis. In addition, many agents had been through various forms of training at different jobs, so setting the Signature training apart as something unique and keeping the implementation fun and interesting was important.

Solutions

Call Center Edge™ Training: Since 1999, Gaylord Opryland has utilized Signature's Call Center Edge™ to improve the sales and service skills of reservation agents at its on-site call center. The training and reinforcement program taught a simple Magic Formula for handling inquiries, improving caller experiences and selling more rooms.



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Call Center Edge training sessions were interactive, easy to absorb and fun for participants. Signature provided each agent at the Opryland call center with a half-day group training session twice a year.

Reinforcement Program: Signature training solutions used a reinforcement system that featured ongoing coaching, mystery shop calls, and management reporting. Signature performs a total of 80 mystery shop calls per month at the Opryland location. Results were available online through Signature Web-based reporting tool where supervisors could view scores and listen to the calls.

This unique scoring system allowed Opryland to measure the performance of their employees and easily track revenues, conversions and other important data against score results.

The Signature reinforcement ensured experienced agents received follow-up training while new agents learned the same skills. This helped Opryland maintain the integrity of the process so agents and managers conformed to the same set of customer service standards over time.

The reinforcement program was a critical piece of the process for Opryland's Reservations Manager Telenia Brooks. "One thing that made Signature so different is the reinforcement they provided. Each time our trainer came out for follow-up programs, he got the whole staff energized and gave us ideas about how to keep the program fresh and interesting. He also sat down with us and discussed areas we've indicated need more help. It was truly a partnership."

Results

Revenues Correspond Directly to Signature Scores
Based on an annual month-to-month analysis of Signature mystery shopping scores, Gaylord Opryland showed a direct and consistent correlation between Signature scores and monthly sales. When scores went up, so did revenues. In a four-month period, average revenue-per-agent, per month at the Gaylord Opryland increased by 57 percent. At the beginning of that reporting period, Gaylord agents were completing just under 80 percent of the required steps in the Magic Formula. At the end, their scores were 93 percent.

Consistent Sales and Service Skills: Signature's Magic Formula, coupled with the mystery shopping and online scoring, ensured agents were using the skills they were taught. Mike Tate, director of reservations service, feels Opryland's Magic Formula left little room for interpretation. "A big plus for us was that we could listen online to the calls. The hard data was there so if an agent disputed a score or interpreted a point differently, we had something to review to see where the issue came into play. It was a completely objective way of evaluating our team," he added.

With a way to measure achievement, Opryland had become more selective about who they hired for their call center positions. They conducted both phone interviews to gauge phone manner and in-person interviews so the candidate could see first-hand what the position entailed. Hiring managers made it clear that employees would be expected to convert inquiries into reservations, which helped the hotel hire a consistent type of employee willing to perform well in a sales role.

Program Continues to be Fresh and New: The follow-up events kept Opryland's training fresh. The nature of the Signature performance system allowed Opryland to offer various incentive programs based on objective performance standards. Because Signature trainers visited the site twice a year, employees learned something new each time they went through the reinforcement training. In addition, managers and Signature trainers made the program fun for employees with contests and rewards for jobs well done.

"The impact on revenues alone was enough to keep using the Signature program," said Brooks. "But on top of a program that really worked, the service we received from Signature is exceptional, and we had easy access and support from our trainers year round. It was truly the best training investment we've made," she added.

