

Dr Peter Kelly

Irmela Heinsius
General Manager
Hotel Telegraaf
AS Vene Posti Operaator
Vene 9
Tallinn 10123, Estonia

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Dear Madam:

I take this opportunity to follow up with you about our recent stay (20 September 2014) which frankly fell far short of our expectations of a “5 star” service concept. My wife was so looking forward to staying at your hotel to celebrate my birthday and was, needless to say, very disappointed with the whole experience and with good reason.

To provide you some perspective, a great deal of my professional time is spent developing and evaluating experience design strategies for a variety of organizations including airlines and hotels – domains in which I have a great deal of experience as a frequent international traveler. We also travel to Tallinn frequently and normally stay at Hotel Schlössle or Three Sisters, both of which are fine examples of 5 star service concepts. With this background in mind, I provide you with the following detailed feedback.

CHECK IN

We arrived early (1.30pm) and were informed that our room was not available and that the published check in time was 4pm. In all of my travels, I can never remember staying at a hotel with such a late check in time. Three Sisters has a published check in time of no later than 2pm and our experience with the Schlössle has always been stellar – they

know when we are scheduled to arrive and prioritize room cleaning schedules accordingly. Put short, we have never had to wait and Schlössle know what rooms we have stayed in before and have all the forms printed out and waiting for a signature. Even taking your published check in time to account, we were advised by SMS at 4.30pm that the room was ready (OWN GOAL #1).

ROOM 213

As the hotel was obviously full, we were assigned to a handicapped equipped room apparently in closest vicinity to the garbage cans and service entrance. I fully empathize with the situation of guests who have mobility difficulties but frankly the design of the bathroom instantly reminded me of facilities in a hospital. My wife booked a room in a 5 star hotel and not a hospital. Paired with the Delux Dreams adjustable bed – which also reminded us of hospitals – the only thing missing was the push button to call for medical help. In the interest of providing you balanced feedback, I need to thank you for the test drive of the bed --- I will never buy one, it was extremely uncomfortable and provided no support. (OWN GOAL #2)

My wife and I recently traveled to New York and stayed in Manhattan at the Andaz. The bathroom in our hotel was absolutely stunning and cleverly incorporated chic design elements that would meet the needs of disabled guests without making them feel like invalids and hospital patients. A great ambition for service industries is to develop hotel room concepts that would allow them to take the label “disabled” away completely and would provide the wow factor for all guests regardless of special needs.



Andaz 5th Avenue NYC

BREAKFAST

When we stay at a 5 star hotel, I expect a spectacular breakfast experience. What we experienced was noisy chaos that we normally associate with our workday. Our expectations were not met AT ALL. Can I suggest some of your staff take breakfast at the Schlössle to see what a real 5 star experience entails?

- Made to order menus are placed on every table and a buffet is laid out for self service; there was only small menu hidden on your crowded buffet table – we had to discover this option as opposed to being informed about it proactively by your staff.
- When we are greeted at the Schlössle, our host asks if we would like coffee or tea and it is brought immediately. We waited more than 15 minutes to be asked and I can tell you that the guests seated on either side of us were equally unimpressed.
- Your restaurant is an obviously challenging place to handle big crowds – when your hotel is full this creates waiting lines and general chaos. It strikes me that the serving table has very large serving trays and that your staff attention was fixated on putting ever bigger piles of eggs, bacon and sausage on offer. This creates the impression of a cafeteria not a restaurant and incidentally putting so much bacon in a pile - aside from taking space - causes the meat in the middle to cool (my bacon was cold!). Think about using smaller serving trays that are replenished more often.
- I expect staff to actively attend to me as a guest. Empty plates are effortlessly and discretely taken away at the Schlössle. At your hotel we were essentially ignored and finally got up leaving a table full of dirty plates behind. If I hosted dinner parties this way, I would never have return guests! We were subsequently advised at check out that you were short of staff (not my problem). This unfortunate situation could have been easily avoided if specific staff members were tasked to a specific task (pick up dirty dishes).
- Finally, and this is just an observation from an astute experience design professional – the guests who seemed to be receiving the most attentive service in the restaurant were Russian speakers. This is not too surprising as Russian consumers are, in my numerous encounters, demanding, assertive and “me” centered. There was a Russian couple that fit this profile perfectly sitting in our vicinity that quite literally thought they “owned the place”, behaved as such and were served accordingly. My wife picked this up and I could see from the reactions of our neighbors from

Spain they did also. Perceptions are important as are EVERY guest's wishes.

In closing, this experience does not rate 5 stars and you really ought to do better. Having said this, I am left with one problem – what do I say to my thoughtful wife who wanted me to have a wonderful experience and feels that she let me down? Any suggestions?

Yours sincerely,

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