



Seda Hotels -- Harnessing Innate Filipino Hospitality to Build a Dynamic Phl Hotel Brand

January 2017..... Set to expand in the next three years in various Philippine locations, the Ayala Hotels and Resorts Corp. hospitality brand Seda is counting on innate Filipino hospitality and international levels of service efficiency to maintain its overall guest satisfaction rating of 90 per cent that it currently enjoys.

The wholly-owned Filipino brand has 817 rooms to-date, spread over five properties in these locations: Metro Manila, Davao City, Cagayan de Oro City, Laguna, and Iloilo City. In 2017, it is scheduled to open Seda Vertis North in Quezon City (438 rooms), Seda Capitol Central in Bacolod (155 rooms) and Seda Lio in El Nido, Palawan (153 rooms). More Seda hotels will open in the succeeding years, including five more in key areas of Metro Manila and one in Cebu.

Group Director of Human Resources Wilma Estaura discloses that in every location, Seda hires local talents who are eager to work in the hospitality industry and with the help of managers who have had extensive experience in international chains, a tried and tested training program transforms rank-and-file employees into brand ambassadors in one month. "Our recruitment philosophy is to hire them for attitude and train them for skills. What is important is that they are enthusiastic and eager to learn, and exhibit innate Filipino hospitality which will reflect in the way they deal with hotel guests.

"We Filipinos are naturally humble and *mapagpakumbaba*; we have a genuine desire to take care of our guests and always want to give the the best that we can offer," she explains. "Management's role is to encourage our employees to cultivate these attitudes and take it a step further by training them to follow global service standards."



In almost every city it is in, a Seda hotel is likely to be competing for market share with hotels that carry an international brand. Estaura observes that this situation, in fact, motivates hotel employees to work harder to prove to guests that a Filipino brand can deliver the same, if not better, service than that provided by the global chains.

This advantage is complemented by a superior and strategic location within the city and within an Ayala Land mixed use development that ensures easy access to restaurants, shops and other modern conveniences. In the top travel websites like TripAdvisor, Seda is always one of the top two best rated hotel in the city with guests expressing high satisfaction with the service – “the best reason clients are likely to return to a hotel,” according to Estaura – and a location close to everything they need.

Estaura observes that Seda’s challenge is how to replicate its culture fast enough so that when the new properties open in the next few years, the service and the employees’ desire to delight the customer remains consistent. She notes that employees highly appreciate training that allows them to hone their skills and perform according to international service standards.

The courses are further complemented by staff recognition programs, employee engagement activities and other benefits. “We believe that happy employees provide the best service. We periodically run an Employee Climate Survey that measures their satisfaction in terms of pride in the company, compensation and benefits, training and development, and other aspects. We are proud to report that Seda’s employee satisfaction index was 89 per cent in 2016, exceeding the mean range of 80 to 85 per cent worldwide,” according to Estaura.



Employee happiness certainly begets customer satisfaction. In fact, Seda's guest return rate is a high 42 per cent, the best proof of its ability to systematically harness innate Filipino hospitality to deliver service that meets global standards. ###

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