

The Hypnos Hotel – Case Study

The Hypnos Hotel is a fictional hotel, based in the local area of Preston. The following is the (tidied up) transcript of a fictitious interview with Sonia, who is the owner and Managing Director of the hotel.

[Introductions and pleasantries between the interviewer and Sonia]

Interviewer Tell me about your company, Sonia.

Sonia This hotel has been in my family for generations. I became the owner and Managing Director when my parents retired about 5 years ago, and I've been trying to modernise the place ever since. The hotel has 132 bedrooms and suites offering premium accommodation and fine dining to our guests. We also have several large rooms that we hire out for conferences, weddings and other celebrations and parties. It's a non-stop whirlwind of activity running a hotel!

Interviewer It sounds really interesting work. Tell me a bit more about the main business of the hotel.

Sonia Well, the main business is the hotel itself. We have spent a lot of money upgrading and refurbishing the bedrooms to try and improve our guest experience. All of the rooms are en-suite, have tea-making facilities and a television. Our premium rooms are bigger – some have a desk and sofa, and some have a separate bedroom. Guests choose what type of room they want when they book to come and stay with us. We are normally about 70% full all year, as we are close to the Lake District, Blackpool and cities such as Manchester and Liverpool, so are a good central location to visit all of the North-West area. We also get a lot of business from guests staying over to attend the conferences or weddings, and we give them a discount to stay over with us. We have at least one conference most weeks, sometimes we have three happening simultaneously! We also have at least one wedding a week, and our Saturdays are booked up for weddings for the next nine months.

Interviewer That sounds really promising, Sonia. So what can we do to help?

Sonia Well the main problem we have is that our systems are a bit antiquated. We have a system for booking rooms, but it doesn't really do what we want, as it doesn't allocate guests correctly to the type of rooms they request, so we need to over-ride the system all the time. Sometimes we end up with rooms double booked, because whoever took the booking didn't allocate it correctly. I would also like to be able to take online bookings – at the moment we get emails from our website that our receptionist then deals with on a daily basis. This is an inefficient use of their time.

Interviewer Okay, so that definitely needs fixing. I can get my team to come in and investigate that further, to see what we can come up with to streamline those processes. Is there anything else?

- Sonia Oh yes, all our systems are old and don't really work as we want. For example, the Head Chef is always complaining about the way that food orders are given to the kitchen. For example, we have the restaurant orders that are hand-written and provided to the kitchen by the Head Waiter. We also serve meals in the bar area, so these orders come into the kitchen from the bar staff in the same way, and sometimes the orders get confused about where the diners are. We also offer room service, so guests ring their orders through to the receptionist, who writes it down and then brings it through to the kitchen, often on just a scrap of paper. We have orders from all over the place, and it's difficult to keep track. We also obviously order in fresh produce and other supplies to run the business and it's hard to keep track of what we have on order and who we owe money to.
- Interviewer Hmmm. Yes, I see that could cause issues. We can investigate that further too.
- Sonia Another area of concern is cleaning and servicing the rooms. We rely on the receptionist making a list every day of which rooms need cleaning as people check out, and which rooms need a tidy up for guests that are staying another night. Our system is not very good at that. The only area of the business that works reasonably well is the wedding bookings, although there is room for improvement there too.
- Interviewer Okay, we need to look at all areas of your business. What about your staff?
- Sonia Staff here are usually employed for specific roles, such as receptionists, chefs, restaurant staff, bar staff, cleaners, room preparation, maintenance, night porters, etc., although there is some flexibility. Each area has a manager (with titles like Head Waiter, Head Chef, etc.) and often a Shift Leader too.
- Interviewer Okay, thanks. I think I have a good idea now of the core of your business. Do you think there is anything else I need to know at this stage?
- Sonia Well, we have only just got started really, as there is so much that could be improved. I think the biggest issue is about having the information we need to help us be more efficient – that's what is holding us back. Some areas are working okay and some are becoming an issue that will lose us customers if we don't act quickly.

[Closing remarks between the interviewer and Clara]