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The Daily Star

DHAKA, FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2015

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NEXT STEP

The new name over at Radisson

Interview with Geir Sikko, Pre-Opening General Manager at Radisson Blu Chittagong Bay View



A General Manager for Pre-Opening is performing his relations according to the Management Agreement which means employing, enquiring and forming contracts with suppliers for services in due course of the operation of the hotel. Basically acting as a Manager on behalf of the management.

You've got a long career in the hotel and hospitality management sector. What are the two big differences between what it is like in Bangladesh and in developed countries?

The main difference is in resources as they are quite limited in this country and one needs to import quite a few, not only for building a hotel but also for operating it, i.e. operating equipment, food and beverage supplies. Other than that because of limited high level properties in Bangladesh it is also a challenge to find trained or qualified staff.

Why hotel management? Why not become a lawyer or a doctor or a mobster? What was your motivation for getting into this field of work?

Pure coincidence. My mother and father worked in this industry, but none of my siblings with the exception of my sister who used to be a very good housekeeper in a five star hotel. Should I have chosen something different, I would choose to be a football player or football commentator – that is my passion.

What ticks you off? What do you look forward to when you wake up in the morning?

What motivates me is achieving the daily agenda. I like people working relatively free of constraints, but if doesn't move forward it demotivates me. I really look forward to seeing people develop and grow.

We all face one or two things that make us wish we could teleport elsewhere. Leaders hate things too but face have to face them anyway. What's the toughest part in this line or work?

Toughest part is to see the team not acting as a team. It's frustrating to see people not using common sense.

You've been all over the globe. Aside from Bangladesh, which destinations stand as hotspots for those interested in this career?

There is no specific hotspot; the world of hospitality is so different from place to place, from Europe to Asia. I think there are more five star hotels in Asia than in

Europe because Europeans are more focused on saving, so there are less people working in the hotel industry in comparison to here.

Do you have plans for opening up your own winery? We see you've listed wine as your major interest. Would you ever consider being a bartender?

No. Even though I like wine and I have studied wine, I don't find it necessary to open a winery. Why open a bookstore when you have a library?

If you were to be graduating from a hotel school in 2015, what would be your next step?

The first thing you need to do after graduating is to get into an apprentice program. It takes about two years and you should work in every department in a hotel. Apprenticeship is very important if you want to be a hotelier. So you specialise in all departments normally after or before your graduation. There's nothing more to do after graduation. It's all practice, practice, practice.

What do you think should be the top three personality traits for becoming a successful hospitality management professional?

I always say the three things you need to possess to be a good leader are: 1) knowledge – you need to know what you are talking about, if you don't know then you need to continue to study; 2) creativity – you need to be open minded or creative – some people can be very knowledgeable but without creativity or being open minded knowledge alone will not help; 3) leadership skills – if you can't listen to people then you won't be able to communicate, and you need to be able to communicate with everyone.

Is there a rule of thumb for tipping the hotel staff?

In my world I give tip based on the service. It's different from place to place as different countries have different rules.

So, what is next for you?

For me next is to turn this hotel operationally as good as our brand standard, and we will see from there.

INTERVIEWED BY: EHSANUR RAZA RONNY

WATER COOLER CHRONICLES

Grand lessons from THE GRAND BUDAPEST

No, we do not expect you to honourably shout out, "Get your hands off my lobby boy!" as Nazi musclemen try to deport him on board a moving train and then have Edward Norton surreptitiously pop out to save your behind. And frankly, you probably lack the finesse and charisma of Monsieur Gustave to successfully charm your way into inheriting a precious art piece or talk your way out of the trickiest of situations. Or those other things that he does which we can't really write about, but you know what we mean.



The Grand Budapest Hotel was the buzz of social media last year; everybody seemed to love the quirky characters and eccentric quips of this Wes Anderson film. And with good reason. However, if you look beyond the glory of past grandeurs and Zero's clueless face, the film is a lesson in relationship management, loyalty, and if you are the personification of endless mobile operator promotional texts – retaining your customers.

M. Gustave, the concierge on The Grand Budapest is a man who knows how to please his customers. He is seen as knowing every single one of his regulars by name, their preferences, and as he says so himself, they always keep coming back for him. In the corporate world, where you start your career at the lowest rungs, you will meet customers and if you manage to develop a relation with them, chances are they will be loyal to you as you move up – they might even shift with you if you decide to move.

But M. Gustave's dynamics with his employees is also something to learn from. He is precise about what he wants done, demands the best all while almost never losing his cool. He knows his employees personally, fraternising when necessary. He demands respect without fear, and his employees turn out to be loyalty incarnate. And why wouldn't they when their boss stands up for them at times of trouble, instead of throwing them under the wheels. In real life if you are a boss who will defend and fight for your employee with management, your employees will have your back when you need them to.

It is not only what Gustave does that draws people to him, it's about how he does it. When he talks to his customers, he understands why they are complaining, he listens and he does not hand them over to someone else like an unwanted burden. He is there personally when needed and in return we see a fading old age hotel kept at its prime through the constant rush of dedicated customers. Gustave, probably without taking any course on relationship management, delivers customer satisfaction to perfection. So when Edward Norton ends up saving him from Nazi torture because Gustave was nice to him as a kid, you realise the importance of his attitude. You never know when you will need to call on the service of someone important and chances are if your interactions with them have been right, they will do the same for you.

But perhaps the most important lesson of all has to be from the lobby boy Zero who starts from the bottom and only has dedication to offer. Maybe one day you too will end up owning (read: managing) your very own Grand Budapest.

MOYUKH MAHTAB

Secrets of the hotel trade

AMIYA HALDER



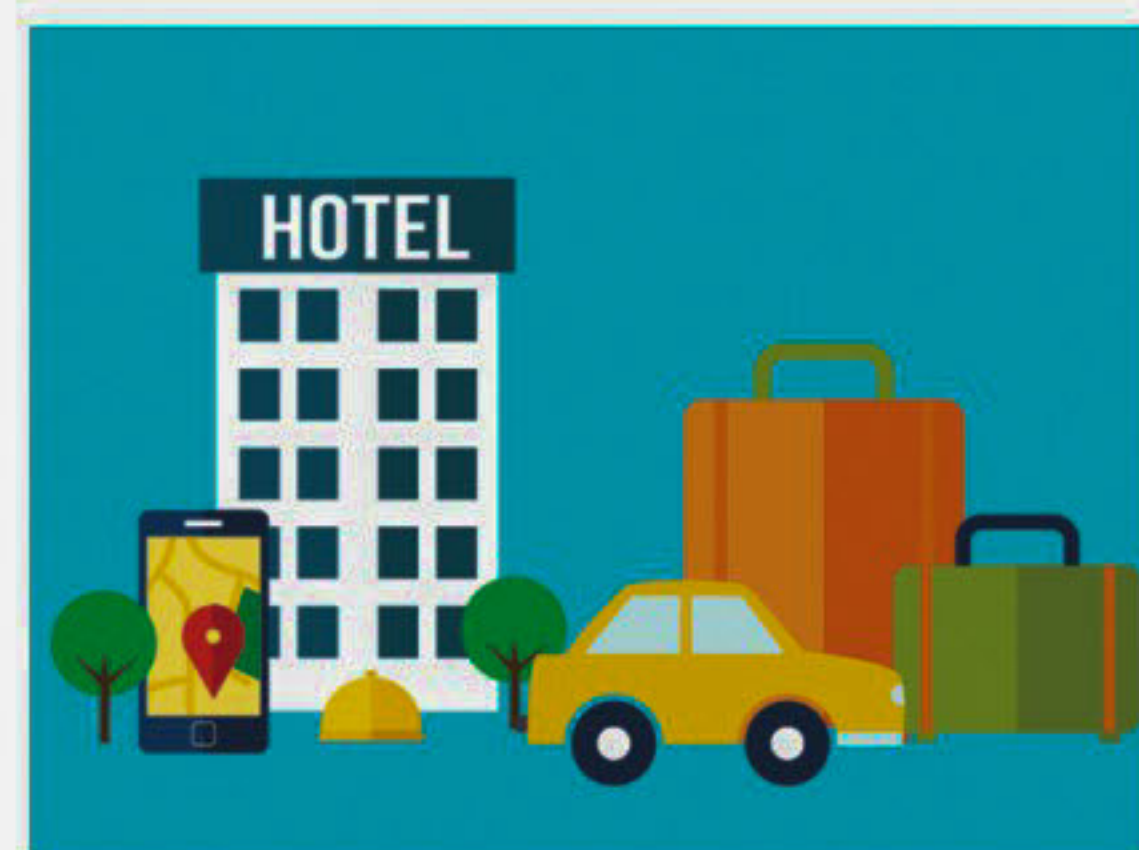
WHERE TO GET STARTED

The hospitality industry has become a centre of attraction for youngsters these days due to various impeccable benefits related to this field, including up to four bonuses throughout the year besides the above average salaries. Hotel management is a part of this huge and wide industry, and involves management of all hotels' assets and other elements for a smooth working of the hotel.

Students who pursue a Bachelor's or Master's degree hotel management have to pursue traditional business courses to establish a solid foundation for various hospitality specialities. Students then choose an area of emphasis, such as catering, gaming, sales and marketing, restaurant management, etc. but the scope is limited in institutions within Bangladesh. Army Hotel Management Institute, National Hotel and Tourism Training Institute, and Bangladesh Skill Development Institute offer various programs and qualifications for those interested in a career in this sector. However, it is recommendable to pursue an education abroad if you're really serious about advancing to a high-up management position in a reputable organisation. While the Lausanne Hotel School in Switzerland is the dream institute for any stary-eyed hotelier in the making, universities throughout all of Europe, Australia and North America provide brilliant opportunities in grad and undergrad studies.

MOVING UP

There are many job levels in the hotel management hierarchy, from administrative to executive to operational. The administration exercises maximum power and authority and all the administrative decisions are taken under their consideration; it usually consists of the General Manager or the Hotel Manager who takes care of the hotel on a day-to-day basis, overlooking staff and customer care. The Assistants to the GM works on an executive level and may serve as the in-charge in his superior's absence. Departmental Directors serve on the operational level in diverse areas such as housekeeping, revenue management, security, food and beverages, and events.



ANNUAL SALARIES WORLDWIDE

One of the main attractions behind a career in this field is its demand abroad. Many places, especially in Asia, provide generous salaries and services to employees in this sector. As Geir Sikko, Pre-Opening GM over at Radisson Blu Chittagong puts it, "One of the biggest challenges is to find 100% qualified staff."

USA: \$23,507 - \$83,721	CANADA: \$24,331 - \$70,452
UK: \$22,966 - \$65,962	UAE: \$42,829 - \$194,814
AUSTRALIA: \$33,470 - \$71,789	INDIA: \$3,010 - \$48,140
GERMANY: \$32,500 - \$52,206	MALAYSIA: \$6,540 - \$111,01

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Using Emotional Intelligence
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Course overview

Putting emotional intelligence to work is an emerging trend in the corporate world; intellectual knowledge is no longer enough. In this course, you'll learn the value of emotions and how they can affect your workplace for better or for worse. You'll gain an understanding of how emotional forces can influence performance and decision making, learn how you can leverage emotions in a way that maximises performance, and discover how you can shape your own and others' emotions in positive and mutually satisfying ways. The course will focus on using of empathy, particularly in confrontation scenarios, and on helping others to develop their own emotional self-awareness and empathy, leading to more positive exchanges on the job.