

# **World Class Shipboard Hospitality**



# **World Class Shipboard Hospitality**

A Practical Guide to Post COVID Cruise  
Ship Guest Satisfaction and Service  
Personnel Operating Standards

**Paolo Benassi**



Universal-Publishers  
Irvine • Boca Raton

*World Class Shipboard Hospitality: A Practical Guide to Post COVID Cruise Ship  
Guest Satisfaction and Service Personnel Operating Standards*

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# Chapter 1

## The Cruise Industry After-Covid

Learning objective: the purpose of Chapter 1 is to describe how the Coronavirus pandemic affected the cruise industry and how the industry is restarting its success. It shows the opportunities for a career on a cruise ship, the differences in the way of life, the shipboard culture, and the discipline of working at sea.

After reading this chapter, you will be in the position to:

- Be familiar with the cruise industry and its ability to resume after a critical pandemic.
- Identify the differences between land life and ship life as well as the advantages to work onboard.
- Understand the shipboard rules and regulations, and how they affect passengers and crew.
- Describe the various positions available in the cruise industry and how to contact cruise lines.

### 1.1 Overview

At the beginning of 2020, an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered “Coronavirus” spread rapidly all over the world affecting human lives and businesses as well. The virus caused the death of nearly 3 million people by the end of 2020, as well as the closing of several businesses and the layup of cruise ships in different ports worldwide.

The cruise industry was critically affected by the pandemic that caused a rapid decline in its capacity at the beginning of the disease, followed by the

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need to disembark all passengers and to keep the ships out of work in some ports around the world.

Nine vaccine makers signed a joint pledge holding themselves to high ethical standards and sound scientific principles in the development and testing of potential vaccines for COVID-19; in early December 2020, the first mass vaccination program started with the approval of national and international medical authorities, creating a new hope to successfully control the disease.

The cruise industry suffered losses in the billions; in Europe alone, according to the Cruise Lines International Association, more than 200,000 jobs that depend directly or indirectly on the industry have been lost since March 2020. Older ships have been sold off or scrapped to save on costs, and the great majority of seafarers lost their job.

Only at the beginning of 2021 certain cruise lines resumed partial service, depending on the condition of the pandemic in their country with the ships' departures being determined by the guidelines received by the relevant international and local medical authorities. By mid-2021 most cruise lines restarted their operation on the condition of implementing a comprehensive health and safety protocols designed to protect the health and safety of guests and crew, as well as the local communities.

The projections of the 2021 Cruise Industry Annual Report based on ship deployments and passenger order book, expected a full deployment in 2022 when the global fleet is reported to consist of nearly 400 ships; however, they may be impacted by the rate of containment and vaccinations not only in the passenger source market but also in destinations on a global scale.

The history of the cruise industry is not new to ups and downs. When the first nonstop transatlantic crossing on a Boeing jet was launched in the late 50s, the passenger ships started to lose their transportation business and most of them went out of business. Others became cruise ships, sometimes defined by romantic writers as "The Queens of the Seas" and the cruisers were mostly affluent retirees that could afford to handsomely pay the price of the cruise ticket. This created the perception that cruising was an exclusive vacation reserved only for wealthy people, where the main activities were playing bridge and sleeping on a comfortable deck chair on the promenade deck. Thus, cruising was intended as either unaffordable or just boring, until two major events in the 1970s helped the cruise industry to become one of the

most desired vacation experiences. One was the television program “The Love Boat” which made cruising popular all over the world and changed the idea that cruising was only for retired couples. The other was Carnival’s marketing campaign focusing on “Fun Ships” and making ships a destination. According to cruise industry experts, this was a total reversal of cruise marketing. Up to that time, cruise promotion had been destination-driven, and cruises had been viewed as suitable only for wealthy older people. This was a whole new market that changed consumers’ perception, making cruising a fun and affordable vacation for families and active guests. From an elite type of holiday reserved for the lucky few, the cruise turned into a holiday destined for a much wider audience and this has caused a great transformation in the construction of ships, of which European shipyards are at the forefront.

In the recent thirty years, we have seen a transformation in how cruise ships were built. Cruise ships are no longer what they used to be: from 15,000-ton converted transatlantic steamers carrying a few hundred passengers to 150,000-ton vessels carrying more than 6,000 guests. From small inside cabins to exclusive duplex suites; from one or two main dining rooms to dozens of eclectic culinary venues, including celebrity chef signature restaurants; from shuffleboard and ping pong to wave riding, water parks, rock climbing, bowling, and ice skating; from tiny windowless gyms to 20,000-square foot luxury spas.

The three major cruise groups before Covid (Carnival, RCCL, and NCL) have now a reduced but more efficient fleet as most of the older ships were sold or scrapped.

**Carnival** is still leading in the number of ships, controlling the following cruise lines:

- Aida
- Carnival
- Carnival CSSC
- Costa
- Cunard
- Holland America
- P&O
- P&O Australia

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- Princess
- Seabourn

Followed by **RCCL** with these cruise lines:

- Celebrity
- Royal Caribbean
- Silversea
- TUI and Hapag Lloyd

The **NCL** group was the runner-up with three cruise lines Norwegian Cruise Line, Oceania, and Regent 7 seas, and is it about to be reached by **MSC** cruises, which is adding a new luxury brand, Explora Journeys, to its modern contemporary fleet.

Other important cruise lines are:

- Azamara (sold in 2021 by Royal Caribbean Group to Sycamore Partners)
- Disney
- Fred Olsen
- Genting (facing bankruptcy at the time of printing; in June 2022 the Crystal Serenity and Crystal Symphony have been acquired by the A&K Travel Group jointly with Manfredi Lefebvre d' Ovidio, bringing the two ships back into service after an extensive restyling).
- Hurtigruten
- Ponant
- Star
- Viking
- Windstar
- In December 2021 the first large cruise ship built in China was floated out in Shanghai.

#### *Ship classification*

In the cruise industry a ship classification system like the one used in the hotel industry (\*\*\*\*\*Five-star, \*\*\*\*Four-star, and so on), is replaced by the

classification that appeared first in the book “Selling the Sea” by the former president of Carnival Bob Dickinson who considered four major categories:

- Contemporary/Value: including all the large cruise vessels catering mostly to first-time cruisers and younger clientele.
- Premium: including those ships with wider cabin accommodation and catering for more experienced clientele such as Celebrity, Princess, and Holland America.
- Luxury: the 300 to 500 passenger expensive vessels normally offer an all-inclusive package and top-class food and service such as Seabourn and Silversea.
- Specialty/Niche: a variety of cruise lines offering river cruises, exploration itineraries, and eco cruises normally on smaller vessels (100 to 150 passengers).

## 1.2 Typical cruise ship organization

A cruise ship can be defined as a holiday village on the water, offering similar facilities like accommodation, food & beverage, and entertainment, although entertainment on modern ships reached a level comparable only to the most famous shows on Broadway, Las Vegas, and London. Since this hotel is a boat that sails at sea, the technical and safety requirements must comply with the rules of maritime law and play a fundamental role in the ship’s operation. There are three main organizational departments on board, normally known as “Deck”, “Engine” and “Hotel”, coordinated by the Captain, the highest authority on board.

The Captain has the legal authority to apply national and international maritime laws, according to the country where the ship is registered (the flag of the ship). His primary objective is the safety of all aboard, therefore he must ensure that the ship is seaworthy and that the procedures and operations for navigation are carried out correctly.

**DECK:** is the ship’s department under the supervision of the Staff Captain who may replace the Captain in case of need. It includes the following important positions: the Safety Officer responsible for a variety of tasks such as passengers and crew drills, crew safety training, abandoning ship’s

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procedures, and supervision of ship's tenders; the Environmental Officer, responsible for all guidelines and requirements regarding the protection of the environment; the Officer on Duty that oversees the navigation of the ship from the Bridge according to the watch schedule. Other Deck Officers are the Security Officer who ensures the onboard security of passengers and crew as well as preventing that no unauthorized people board the ship while in port, the Communication Officer and the ship's Doctor. Other positions, so-called ratings, oversee very important jobs necessary to ensure a smooth and safe operation; they include the Bosun or boatswain, Quarter Masters, Carpenters, Tilers, and Upholsterers supported by A.B. (Able Body Seamen) and O.S. (Ordinary Seamen).

**ENGINE** (on certain ships known as **ELECTRONIC** and **TECHNICAL**): is the organizational unit responsible for the operation, maintenance, and repair of the propulsion systems and the support systems for passengers, crew, and cargo. It is also responsible for maintaining and repairing other systems of the ship, such as Electrical Power Generation Plant, Lighting, Fuel Oil, Lubrication, Water Distillation, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration. The Chief Engineer oversees the Engine department and is responsible for the operations affecting all engineering equipment throughout the ship. The Staff Chief Engineer is second in command in the engine room and may relieve the Chief Engineer if required. The Electro Technological Officer (ETO) carries out electrical and electronic maintenance, repairs, diagnosis, installations, and testing. The Hotel Engineer supervises the maintenance of operations normally outside the main engine room such as refrigeration, plumbing, air condition, water chlorination and swimming pools. These engineers are normally assisted by several junior positions and ratings such as plumber, fitter, motorman, oiler, and wiper.

**HOTEL**: is the department, controlled by the Hotel Director, responsible for the management of passenger services. It is the largest in terms of the number of personnel employed, usually comprising over 90% of the entire crew and supervises the following hotel services (in alphabetical order):

- Accounting and finance operations
- Beauty salon and Spa
- Casino and other gambling games
- Children and youth programs

- Customs & Immigration requirements in the ports of call
- Duty free and gift shops
- Food production and food store
- Housekeeping and laundry services
- Information office
- Onboard entertainment and theater shows
- Passenger and crew administration
- Passenger embarkation and disembarkation procedures
- Photo and video
- Reception office
- Restaurant and bar service
- Shore excursions
- Sport activities

The management of hotel operations on a cruise ship will be dealt more in detail at Chapter 2.

### **1.2.1 Crew facilities**

On the following pages we provide information on the onboard facilities dedicated to the crew as well as some advice to take into consideration when boarding a passenger ship for the first time as a crew member. Cruise companies know very well that the good treatment of the crew is essential for the success of the cruise and in fact they allocate the crew with a whole series of services that in the past were reserved only for passengers.

Living and working onboard is different from any other business as crew works seven day a week and, after work, is not going back home but sleeps on the ship; this makes it necessary to keep an open mind to new experiences and a constructive attitude in view to learn how to appreciate every minute on board. Think of working on a ship as joining a special social circle composed of people coming from many different countries, bringing with them their cultures, their religions, and their traditions. A successful crew member must show patience and—at the same time—willingness to share life and work with people from other nationalities, thus enjoying a new way of life, new acquaintances, and new friendships.

Your new house is the cabin: all crew members are housed on the ship according to their position; in general, all officers have a single cabin, while the other crew members can share the cabin with a colleague of the same rank. The ship provides sheets and towels and the necessary for the toilet. Some crew members have a person to clean their cabin at their disposal, in this case it is a good practice to leave a service tip.

Crew cabins are regularly inspected by supervisors and safety officers to avoid the presence of illegal substances, people smoking in the cabin and to ensure that all facilities are in good condition. This is not a violation of confidentiality but a necessity to ensure the safety of the cabins in terms of fire regulations and ventilation systems.

Your meals are served in the crew mess and normally there are different messes for different crew positions. In the crew mess, there will usually be a large TV where members can come together and watch sports. A crew bar is available and normally opens early evening and during this time any crew member can come in and enjoy a drink or two. Snacks can also be purchased from the bar including popcorn and chocolate bars. Many events and activities are normally held, such as karaoke, quiz night, and bingo. For those who love to keep fit, a crew gym is available and normally equipped with weights, benches, and workout machines.

The good health of the crew is an important concern of the cruise line and suitable medical facilities are available onboard: the ship's infirmary is headed by experienced doctors and qualified nurses that take care of the crew in case of illness and/or injury at no cost.

Uniforms and work uniforms are washed for free in the main laundry. In addition, most ships have washing machines and dryers available free of charge in the areas reserved for the crew.

There are several opportunities to spend your free time, such as the Crew Internet Café where the crew Wi-Fi is in operation. Recreational activities are normally organized by the Crew Welfare Committee, composed of a representative for each onboard department.

One of the best opportunities when working at sea is being able to visit the cities of the stopover in different countries, in what is called a "shore leave" that should be authorized by your supervisor. When going ashore a document of identity is required as it can be requested by the officers in charge.

Missing the ship: in the maritime language “missing the ship” means not being able to get back on board on time before the ship leaves a port. Missing the ship is a very serious disciplinary violation therefore it is always necessary to remember the departure time of the ship and to return on board in time! Anyone missing the ship must contact the port agent and is responsible for all costs to reach the ship at the next port of call.

Crew mail: with the availability of using the Internet the traditional mail service is disappearing. If the seafarer wishes to receive letters and/or documents on board, they must ensure that the sender indicates the following information on the envelope:

- full name and position held on board.
- work department.
- name of the ship.
- address of the ship’s port agent in the port where the ship is calling. Once in port, the agent will deliver the mail received to the Crew Purser Office.

### ***1.2.2 Ship’s rules and regulations***

The Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney, known as MU-SEA-UM, describes the history of ship’s discipline by presenting examples of crimes on the 18th century HMB Endeavour based on information in Cook’s journal and asking why it was important for the sailors to obey orders and be disciplined. The question is: how do we view ship’s discipline today? In fact, even if working onboard is a non-military employment, the Australian Museum—like every person dealing with the maritime industry—recognizes that “a clean and orderly ship is essential for the safety of ship and crew”, as well as the passengers, we may add. Consequently, every person who works on a ship is required to have a responsible attitude both at work and during leisure time, and disciplinary procedures are aimed at encouraging and stimulating improvements in individual conduct.

On most ships a printed booklet is distributed to the crew detailing the rules and code of conduct to be followed to keep the reputation of the ship and the cruise company at the top level. Inappropriate conduct that can lead to disciplinary action include violations of the safety regulations, unauthorized

use of public rooms, discrimination against guests or work colleagues based on race, nationality, religion, gender or disability, sexual harassment, repeated delays or absenteeism, and rough language in the presence of guests or work colleagues.

The most serious violations leading to dismissal include the possession of drugs, firearms, or any other type of object inflicting bodily harm or physical damage, entertaining intimate relationships with guests or offering sexual favors, causing sea pollution, engaging in violent behavior under any circumstances; sexual harassment of any kind.

### ***1.2.3 Towards an encouraging discipline***

Depending on the severity of the infraction most cruise lines have a progressive discipline process to help improve the performance of the crewmember as well as warn the employee about the severity of their actions.

Verbal counselling: is the first step that is usually taken when a crewmember is not meeting performance expectations. The supervisor discusses with the crewmember their infraction explaining that their behavior needs improvement and will be closely monitored.

Informal written warning: in this case, the actions of the crewmember are more serious, or a replication of their previous infraction and the crewmember should receive a written warning. However, the warning is still considered informal because the supervisor decides not to bring it to Captain Court.

First written warning: a written warning is given when the crewmember's actions or performance require the evaluation of the Captain Court; in this case the crewmember will be investigated by the Master and the Division Head within 24 hours of the alleged breach being reported. At the hearing the employee is to be given every opportunity to deny or admit the allegation, they shall also be permitted to question the person bringing the allegation, to call and question any witness on the evidence produced against them, and to make a statement. After careful and thorough investigation and having considered all the evidence the Master or Division Head will conclude if they find the employee did or did not commit the alleged breach of the Code. The Master will consider the employee's record on the ship, the severity of the offence and any other relevant factors and may impose either a formal

warning or dismiss the employee from the ship. Disciplinary action is to be recorded in the appropriate form, as well as in the official Logbook.

Second written warning: will follow the same procedure of the first written warning and, if the crewmember is found guilty, a second written warning will be imposed and the crewmember will be informed that in case the violation is repeated, the third warning will require their immediate dismissal.

Third written warning: normally when the disciplining of the crew member must be presented at Captain Court for the third time the actions are very serious and, unless the investigation finds the crewmember not guilty, a dismissal is imposed. In this case the employee is to be advised of any repatriation expenses will be recovered from their wages and they will be considered as “Do Not Rehire”.

### ***1.2.4 Inside the world of cruise ship careers***

The need to man cruise ships with professional and skilled crew has increased enormously, and the task of hiring managers for cruise ships has become one of the most demanding and expensive challenges in the business. However, working on a cruise ship is not suitable and cannot please everyone, as it requires good physical shape, mental and emotional strength, with a strong motivation to work hard.

The psychological pressure can be intense and the working hours very long. Crewmembers are required to work seven days a week and the work can get monotonous. Other important features for those who work on the ship are flexibility and adaptability. If you have these characteristics, working on a cruise ship can be very rewarding. In addition to the regular salary, the accommodation and food are free, the working area is not far from the cabin (so no commuting time, like working ashore, is required), and there are great opportunities for long-term professional growth.

In fact, one of the policies of cruise lines is precisely to promote their own crew to reach a higher and better paid position. The more the crewmembers become skilled at work and based on the promotion availability, they may be considered for promotion to a position with greater responsibility. To obtain a promotion it is necessary to receive an excellent evaluation of the work performed from the supervisor and department head, based also on the positive comments from the guests.

So, every crewmember has the key to their future; it is necessary to work hard, to provide excellent service and to obtain good appraisals, these are the steps to obtain a promotion.

The preparation of a good “resumé” is very important when searching for a job. The resumé, sometimes called CV (Curriculum Vitae), is a document created and used by a person to present their background, skills, and accomplishments. It is usually sent by letter and/or email to respond to a job announcement, and must be computer written, complete and above all powerful, because it is the “advertisement” of the person who wrote it and should convince that this person is the ideal candidate for the job. There are also several companies specialized in making resúmes and they suggest fitting all personal information in one page as often the human resources employees reading it have so many on their desk and prefer not to spend too much time reading them.

A recommended format should include:

- Name (first and last)
- Address (street, city, country)
- Telephone and email (fax when available)
- Objective: the goal for applying
- Work Experience: starting from the latest (date, company, position, accomplished tasks)
- Education: schooling and diplomas
- Computer skills: Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.
- Languages: English is mandatory plus any other known languages
- References: available on request

Once the resumé is ready, it should be sent to the cruise line that has an opening for the job; this is normally available in their website (a list of cruise line’s website is available at the end of the chapter), under “careers”.

It can also be sent by letter to the Human Resources Division of the cruise lines, or to a reputable crewing agent. These are companies that interview candidates interested to work on a ship to check if they have the required qualifications. It is advisable to investigate first if the crewing agent is reliable,

by checking on their website and ensuring that are properly regulated to provide an efficient, adequate, and accountable service protecting the interest of the candidates and the cruise lines.

When the cruise lines and/or the crewing agent are interested by your resumé, the next step is an interview with the human resources office; today most interviews are conducted online, using one of the several video interviews programs, and it is very important to be prepared for this interview, that is like an in-person interview.

These are some recommendations for a successful video interview:

- Appearance: proper attire, business or casual depending on the position.
- Be ready on time in front of the computer and ensure that it is working properly and there is good lighting with a neutral background.
- Reduce noises, no typing on computer, silence all electronics, wearing headphones.
- Make eye contact and speak clearly.
- Be prepared about the cruise line, the ships, and their marketing image.
- Be positive and enthusiastic, showing interest about the advertised job.
- Be ready to answer questions about previous work experience and never say anything negative about previous companies and colleagues.

### **1.2.5 Nautical terms**

The nautical terminology dates to the 7th century and is updated every year with new scientific shipping innovations. To work on a ship, it is not required to study one of the many nautical glossaries, but it is necessary to know the basics so, for instance when the supervisors talk about “portside” you know that they refer to “the left-hand side of the ship when facing forward”.

The following are the “must-know” nautical terms:

- Aft: towards the stern (rear) of the ship
- Ashore: on land as opposed to “at sea”
- Berth: a place to rest in a ship’s cabin. Also, a ship’s allotted place at a wharf or dock.

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- Bridge: a room or platform of a ship from which the ship can be commanded by deck officers
- Bulkhead: a wall that divides the inside of a ship
- Cabin: is the ship's term to hotel room. It is the same term for passengers and crew accommodation
- Deck: the floor of a boat or ship
- Dock: is like the parking lot for a ship. Sometimes is also called a pier, quay, or wharf
- Embarkation: going into a vessel
- Galley: the ship's area where they cook food
- Gangway: is the platform to go on a ship
- Lifeboat: a small vessel kept on a ship for use in emergency
- Port and Starboard: respectively the left and right sides of the ship, when facing forward
- Porthole: a round window on the side of the ship, especially in the smaller outside cabins
- Single occupancy: a type of travel accommodation for one person in a cabin (instead of multiple)
- Tender: a small boat used to ferry people and supplies to and from a ship

### 1.2.6 Useful websites

- ✓ [www.azamaracruises.com](http://www.azamaracruises.com)
- ✓ [www.carnival.com](http://www.carnival.com)
- ✓ [www.celebrity-cruises.com](http://www.celebrity-cruises.com)
- ✓ [www.costacruises.com](http://www.costacruises.com)
- ✓ [www.crystalcruises.com](http://www.crystalcruises.com)
- ✓ [www.CunardLine.com](http://www.CunardLine.com)
- ✓ [www.disneycruise.com](http://www.disneycruise.com)
- ✓ [www.hollandamerica.com](http://www.hollandamerica.com)
- ✓ [www.msccruises.com](http://www.msccruises.com)
- ✓ [www.ncl.com](http://www.ncl.com)
- ✓ [www.oceaniacruises.com](http://www.oceaniacruises.com)

- ✓ [www.pocruises.co](http://www.pocruises.co)
- ✓ [www.princesscruises.com](http://www.princesscruises.com)
- ✓ [www.rssc.com](http://www.rssc.com)
- ✓ [www.royalcaribbean.com](http://www.royalcaribbean.com)
- ✓ [www.seabourn.com](http://www.seabourn.com)
- ✓ [www.silversea.com](http://www.silversea.com)
- ✓ [www.starcruises.com](http://www.starcruises.com)
- ✓ [www.vikingcruises.com](http://www.vikingcruises.com)

### *Shipyards*

- ✓ Fincantieri Cantieri Navali SpA—[www.fincantieri.com](http://www.fincantieri.com)
- ✓ Meyer Werft—[www.meyerwerft.de](http://www.meyerwerft.de)
- ✓ Chantiers de l'Atlantique St. Nazaire—[www.stxeurope.com](http://www.stxeurope.com)
- ✓ Wärtsilä—[www.wartsila.com](http://www.wartsila.com)

### *International organizations dealing with shipping*

- ✓ Brazilian Sanitary Guide for Cruise Ships—[www.anvisa.gov.br](http://www.anvisa.gov.br)
- ✓ Cruise Line International Association—[www.cruising.org](http://www.cruising.org)
- ✓ European Public Health Program—[www.shipsan.eu](http://www.shipsan.eu)
- ✓ Health Canada—[www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca) [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca) [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca)
- ✓ International Maritime Organization (I.M.O.)—[www.imo.org](http://www.imo.org)
- ✓ International Shipping Federation—[www.ics-shipping.org](http://www.ics-shipping.org)
- ✓ International Transport Workers Federation—[www.itfglobal.org](http://www.itfglobal.org)
- ✓ Vessel Sanitation Program—[www.cdc.gov/nceh/vsp](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/vsp)
- ✓ U.S. Coast Guard—[www.uscg.mil](http://www.uscg.mil)
- ✓ Marine Operation [www.marineinsight.com](http://www.marineinsight.com)
- ✓ Marine Engineering [www.marinettraining.eu](http://www.marinettraining.eu)
- ✓ Technical Ship Management <https://maritimetrainingacademy.com>
- ✓ Bunkering <https://shipandbunker.com>
- ✓ Diesel Engines [www.nauticalmind.com](http://www.nauticalmind.com)
- ✓ Desalinization <https://imaginethat.org>
- ✓ Bridge Control <https://getawayblogwordpress.com.wordpress.com>

### 1.3 Managing quality service

Learning objective: Section 1.3 focuses on the necessary requirements aimed to provide quality service in view to maximize guest satisfaction. After reading this section, you will be in the position to:

- Recognize the quality traits crucial in the hospitality business.
- Describe examples showing these quality traits in action.
- Understand the effect of showing enthusiasm while you work and the power of positive thinking.
- Discuss the importance of courtesy and politeness in dealing with guests and fellow workers.

#### 1.3.1 A definition of quality service

Definitions of quality service are very hard to produce. Most people would consider themselves perfectly capable of judging the difference between a good steak and a classy cuisine performance, but when it comes to specifying the constituents of high quality, they might find it challenging.

According to Swiss Hotel Management Schools quality is “the ensemble of features and characteristic of a product or service that is capable to satisfy a given need”. In other words, it can be said that service is good when it meets the needs of customers in the way they want and expect to be satisfied. And consequently, a service is excellent when it exceeds the expectations of the customers.

The Mission Statement in the Welcome Onboard brochure of Seabourn Cruise Line exemplifies how quality service is described by one of the most famous luxury cruise lines.

*“Through genuine and intuitive service, we consistently deliver exceptional Seabourn Moments that delight our guests and create the world’s finest travel experiences.*

- *Uncompromising Commitment to Safety and Sustainability: we have a great responsibility to safeguard the well-being of people and the oceans we sail upon. Ongoing training and adherence to rigorous standards are vital to preserving and protecting our guests, our employees, and the environment.*

- *Focus on Performance and Results: the foundation of our success always has been and continues to be a focus on performance and results.*
- *Committed to Service Excellence: striving for and achieving excellence in all aspects of company operations is a key ingredient of our culture and our success.*
- *Integrity, Honesty, and Ethics: integrity, honesty and ethics guide our decisions at all levels, from individual employees to the company. We not only do things right, we do the right things.*
- *Team Together, Team Apart: as a global company, we are challenged by the many miles that separate the parts of our team. With employees located throughout the world, we are committed to working together and sharing a common goal and vision.*
- *Embrace Change and Improvement: we must change and evolve in view to remain viable and competitive.*
- *Maintain Optimism and Perspective: we strive to recognize the valuable contribution of our employees and embrace their diversity as we make every effort to strike a positive and healthy balance between personal life and professional goals.”*

Currently, in the very competitive commercial environment, the main distinction in terms of effectiveness is, in the minds of many customers, the “service”. Learning how to provide extraordinary service is essential for any successful business, particularly for the cruise and hospitality industry, where the employees are an integral part of the final product.

Therefore, understanding the customers and their expectations is a main duty of the service personnel. Cruise customers are very demanding because they know, via tv advertising, newspaper reports, and comments from friends who just returned from a cruise, that service on a cruise ship is of a top quality. They have learned that a cabin steward provides a completely different service than a room attendant in hotels, and that your waiter after the first night of the cruise, remembers how you like your steak cooked and your favorite cocktail.

When they arrive on the ship, they expect to receive the same service and to keep great memories of their sea vacation. Cruise ships are the ideal vacation for the modern consumer, as they provide all the opportunities indicated in

marketing research and surveys. To better understand the importance of the “guest” we should study the “Inverted Pyramid” management model. Traditional management models are hierarchies where authority and decision-making power are concentrated at the top of an organizational pyramid. Orders are issued and carried out by subordinates. The inverted pyramid reverses this approach. The “guest” is moved at the top of the pyramid and the people dealing directly with the “guest” are the most important in the organization.

### *First impression*

A first impression is the event when one person first encounters another person and/or another situation and forms a mental image of that person and situation. First impressions can be based on several aspects such language, gender, physical appearance, body language and voice. A case study shows how a negative first impression can disrupt the beginning of a cruise, showing insufficient training on the ship’s employees. A positive first impression is one of the key features of quality service.

#### **Case study “First Impression”**

Sandra and Sofia, a happy couple from Liege, Belgium boarded the Amazing Ship in Genoa for a cruise in the Mediterranean Sea. It was their first cruise, and they were very excited as one of their friends told them how great cruising is. They were also in love with the ship’s itinerary, calling at Livorno for a tour to Florence followed by Civitavecchia, for Rome, then Palermo, Sicily. They knew Rome very well and were looking forward to that small trattoria in Trastevere serving the best lasagna they ever ate, but they never been to Florence and had already booked a visit to the Uffizi Gallery. They were also intrigued by Palermo as they heard about its cultural reputation, but they were concerned as they were told that Sicily is a very traditional island, and a female couple was probably not so popular. They took a train from Liege and arrived in Genoa around 1 p.m., joining the ship by taxi. The embarkation procedures were conducted in the Maritime Station very smoothly, so they boarded the ship at around 2 p.m., just in time for the lunch buffet. At the entrance of the buffet, one attendant asked them if they were passengers and they were quite

surprised by this request, however they started to help themselves with plates and to look around to select a quick snack. The buffet was very large and in addition to the traditional long line with mostly hot food they also had different small isles serving cheese, fruit, omelets, and pizza. Sandra is a cheese lover and stopped looking at the cheese varieties available while Sofia went to the pizza place, and it was at that time that she noticed that two cleaners, while removing dirty dishes from the tables, were looking at her, grinning and murmuring in their own language a vulgar word that she knew too well in reference to her apparent sex preference. Sofia decided to go back to Sandra and get some cheese, but Sandra noticed that something went wrong and immediately understood the situation. She then told Sofia to get some cheddar and ignore the incident. Later the p.a. system announced that the ship was ready to sail, and the two girls went on deck to enjoy the departure from Genoa. However, during the cruise Sofia reported this incident to the office, showing her disappointment about the behavior of the service staff during the buffet, and for the duration of the cruise she could not hide her apprehension when she encountered male employees.

Being committed to service excellency is like an internal force helping to build the right service attitude, that shows the desire to serve.

The next case study is an example of how “attitude and positive thinking” not only projects a good impression on others, but also strengthen the personal confidence of the employees to do a good job and to believe in themselves.

### **Case study “Attitude and Positive Thinking”**

Katrina is an assistant receptionist on a cruise ship sailing from Tampa. She enjoys working at the reception and her goal is to be promoted to Front Office Manager. Now her main task is handling passengers’ requests and complaints and she is becoming quite good at it, although in certain cases she could not correctly understand the passenger request and had to ask a colleague for help.

Katrina is originally from the beautiful city of Odessa in Ukraine and at school she chose German as second language because she was told by her mother about the ships cruising in the European rivers carrying many German passengers. Katrina’s mother had a Greek background, and her grandfather told her stories about the magnificent ships sailing from Piraeus in Greece to

Australia and South America, so she decided to work as a cook in one of the Odessa ferries going to Turkey, where she became familiar with the ship's life. After school Katrina was attracted by working on ships, but she was aiming at a more refined position, such as the hospitality officer for instance, and she started to apply first to the river ships as suggested by her mother. Her first job was Assistant Tour Guide, and her German knowledge was very helpful as she was escorting passengers in the various shore excursions, however she was always attracted by the positions at the Reception, and she became very friendly with an Irish young man who started to speak to her in English mentioning the cruise ships sailing in the British Isles and in the Caribbean. He used to refer to these ships as the real cruise ships and when she finished her contract, she went to a well-known English school in Odessa to familiarize with the language and apply for a job on those "real cruise ships".

By then, her English knowledge was not yet perfect, and she was very embarrassed to have to ask her colleagues who sometimes were mocking her accent, laughing among themselves. One day one senior receptionist, a middle-aged lady from England, disapproved the behavior of Katrina's colleagues and invited Katrina to have lunch with her in Nassau. This was a great opportunity for Katrina who, not only found in Nancy (the English lady) like a second mother but also had the chance to further improve her English. Nancy was very knowledgeable, having been on several ships, and she taught Katrina certain tricks on the English language namely the peculiarities of certain English words spoken by North Americans, that were nearly incomprehensible for Katrina.

The relation with Nancy helped Katrina to become more confident and more efficient in her job and she decided to confide to her senior colleague her desire to grow in the position in view to obtain a promotion. Nancy then gave Katrina several good advices that made her more enthusiast and pushed her to become more acquainted with the office administration files and policies. This was very helpful for Katrina whose enthusiasm helped her a lot in handling the passengers' requests and complaints. With the help of Nancy, Katrina started to assist her direct supervisor in the preparation of the weekly report, and the Front Office Manager noticed her improvements and congratulated her. When Katrina's direct supervisor contract was nearly completed, the Front Office Manager decided that Katrina was ready to replace her.

*Politeness* is another key feature of quality service, and it is the courteous behavior and the showing of proper manners when dealing with other people. An example is the practice of saying “please” and “thank you”, of saying “excuse me—and—I am sorry” in case of a mistake. Politeness is addressing people as “Sir” or “Madam”, giving way to passengers in the gangway and remembering their name.

A case study shows how lack of politeness in dealing with a passenger may disrupt the pleasure of cruising.

### Case study “Politeness”

Many people like to select a cruise for their vacation and Virginia, a senior lady from Ohio, was one of them. When she was onboard her third cruise in the Caribbean and the ship docked at St. Tomas she preferred to stay onboard and relax in one of the deck chairs in the promenade deck, instead of following her fellow passengers looking for a good purchasing opportunity in that magnificent island. Virginia was very well built and notwithstanding her effort in controlling her diet, lately she added some weight, and she was walking very slowly. That morning she only had tea for breakfast and at around 10.30 a.m. she needed a little snack, but she did not know where to find it. By that time, all restaurants were closed, and the shop was sealed by the local Customs. The great majority of passengers was already ashore and there were not many people around, so Virginia approached the first person that was passing around, saying “Please sir”. The person was a ships’ musician in the process of going ashore who replied, “Yes madam, can I help?” so Virginia asked him where she could have had some food. The musician seemed very confused by the question and replied, “I don’t know madam, but let me ask around”, then called the reception using one of the phones available in the promenade deck. Virginia was very thankful and tried to listen to the conversation between the musician and the reception, but she could only hear a few words. At a certain point, she had the clear impression that he was raising his voice, so very slowly she moved up from the deck chair and approached the musician. He just hung up the phone and told her that somebody was going to help her soon with some food. She thanked him and he left. Then she went again to her deck

chair waiting for somebody to come, but after nearly 15 minutes, since nobody was coming, she called again the reception. This receptionist was not aware of the previous conversation of the musician with another receptionist and questioned Virginia as she could not understand her request. When Virginia told her that a musician just called reception on her behalf, the receptionist asked Virginia to hold on the phone while she was going to find out. This time Virginia paid more attention to the conversation taking place in the reception back office and she heard that when the receptionist was questioning her colleague, he replied “Yes, I know. It is always the fat old lady that creates problem with the food, and now she is looking for some. She should have taken with her some cookies from breakfast” and took over the phone asking Virginia abruptly “Can I help you?”. Virginia ironically replied, “Yes please, I am the fat old lady still looking for some food and I apologize for bothering you” and the receptionist, instead of proffering excuses for his unpolite words, reacted stating that at 11 a.m. a hot bouillon is available, so she will have to wait another five minutes to get some food. Fortunately, the other receptionist found an energy bar in her purse and run to the promenade deck to offer it to Virginia, apologizing for the inconvenience.

The Seabourn Cruise Mission Statement emphasizes the importance of integrity, honesty and ethics guiding their decisions at all levels, from individual employees to the company. The next case study “Integrity and Honesty” shows an event where a company employee is faced between taking advantage unethically of a situation and deciding to be honest and do the right thing.

### **Case study “Integrity and Honesty”**

Antonio works onboard a large cruise ship and his position, in some cruise ships is called Housekeeping Utility and in other just Cleaner. It is the entry level post in the housekeeping department and his main responsibility is to ensure that public areas, public lounges and restrooms, passengers’ accommodations and crew areas are kept spotlessly clean. Antonio is a hard-working guy and is valued by his supervisors that call him with a friendly Tony, especially when they need somebody to complete a job on time according to the required procedures. Normally the cleaners work as a team, each one with a distinct task,

and on one occasion Tony was told to clean the restrooms in the passenger's deck; he was praised by the head cleaner who recommended Tony to the Chef Housekeeper as a reliable worker who can do his job on his own with not so much supervision. Another time, they called him to clean all corridors in the crew areas and one of his colleagues, surprised to see him working so hard, told him "Tony, these are only crew areas, they don't need to be as cleaned as the passengers'". Tony very calmly and naturally replied "I am a crewmember and I expect to be treated efficiently and professionally at all times, so when I clean a crew corridor, I want the same result as with a passenger lounge". His statement was repeated by his colleague to the Assistant Housekeeper Jennifer, and she passed it to the Chief Housekeeper who asked her "Do you think Tony could be ready for promotion?". Jennifer replied, "Tony has the potential for promotion; however, I suggest that he completes first his contract, then we can propose him to be Assistant Head Cleaner". One day Jennifer was asked by the Maitre D' to help him for cleaning the main restaurant after dinner and Jennifer immediately thought that Tony could have been the ideal person for the job. The Maitre D' was very thankful and explained to Tony the areas to be cleaned and the precautions he had to take when the floor reached the table side service equipment. This was the first time Tony saw the restaurant and he was astonished by its elegance and by the magnificence of the furniture, so he was very careful during his cleaning and paid attention as recommended by the Maitre D'. He also realized that the restaurant floor needed a good scrubbing as its surface was sticky with food debris and he was going to make it look as spotless as the housekeeping areas.

It was during this operation that Tony caught sight of an object left in the opposite side of the large tables by the side of the tables for two. He slowly reached this object to notice that it was a wallet, probably a gentleman's since it had a photo of a classy lady. Tony did not resist the temptation to open it and saw that there were more than 300 dollars in cash, in addition to several plastic cards. He was alone in the restaurant as all the assistant waiters already left and realized that by not reporting the wallet, he could have pocketed more than 300 dollars, nearly half of his monthly wage. He was wondering whether it was better to pick up the money or the entire wallet, and he was planning to wire the 300 dollars to his mother at home, when suddenly remembered the words she used to tell him, when he was a child, "Antonio be always honest and do the right thing". Thinking about these words Tony changes his mind and decides to deliver wallet and money to the Maitre D' who congratulates him for his honesty. The next day, Jennifer calls Tony with a letter from the passenger who lost the wallet and a gift of 50 dollars.

### **1.3.2 Achieving quality service**

Service excellence is always linked to the performance of management and employees, and quality is concerned with a process of continuous improvement, therefore, to achieve quality the following elements should be established:

- A commitment to meet customer expectations on every occasion, in other words “deliver the promise”.
- A comprehensive plan on the training required to achieve quality.
- A service should be delivered where the customer is, by people without the immediate management supervision.
- Delivery of service requires a strong degree of human contact.
- If improperly performed, a service cannot be replaced.

Cruise ships present several situations where even a crewmember that is not working in direct contact with the guests is required to interact with them. Normally passengers feel more at ease to ask their waiter or cabin steward instead of contacting the reception, however very often cleaners and technical staff are approached by passengers with all sorts of questions. Therefore, it is necessary that all crew members learn how to interact with guests in a professional and positive manner.

The basic approach when talking to a guest is:

- Making every possible effort to be helpful.
- Showing the guests that they are very important and go the extra mile for them.
- If they ask where the beauty center is, escort them there.
- When they need assistance, they should always be taken care of, either by helping them, or if this is not feasible, by taking them to the person that can help.
- If the guest needs assistance, and you cannot personally help them, make sure that you take them to the person who can assist them.

Quality service should also be demonstrated even not being in front of the guest, such as for example in talking by phone. These simple guidelines

will improve employees' phone skills making them more confident, while pleasing the customers.

- Do not let the phone ring more than twice.
- Give your name and the department you are working in (example: Good morning, this is John at Front Office, how may I help you).
- Sound enthusiastic and ready to help.
- Your telephone voice should project enthusiasm and eagerness to help.
- Listen closely to your guest's request or statement and respond accordingly.
- When speaking on the phone never chew gum or eat.
- Smile while you are talking on the phone.

### **1.3.3 Useful websites**

- [www.travelweekly.com/travel-news](http://www.travelweekly.com/travel-news)
- [www.academia.edu/ServiceQualityManagement](http://www.academia.edu/ServiceQualityManagement)
- [www.mindtools.com/FirstImpression](http://www.mindtools.com/FirstImpression)
- [www.instituteofcustomerservice.com](http://www.instituteofcustomerservice.com)
- [www.consumerreport.org](http://www.consumerreport.org)
- Courtesy in the hospitality industry—[www.courtesymanagementinc.com](http://www.courtesymanagementinc.com)
- Power of attitude—[www.focus3organizationalculture.com](http://www.focus3organizationalculture.com)
- Dealing with customer complaints—[www.customerservicemanager.com](http://www.customerservicemanager.com)
- Telephone etiquette—[www.businessvoice.com](http://www.businessvoice.com)
- American with disability act (ADA)—[www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov)
- Sexual harassment—[www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov)
- (RAINN) Rape Abuse & Incest National Network—[www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)

## **1.4 Cruise industry environmental policies**

*Content from this section was created referencing the Cruise Line International Association (CLIA) publications and documentation.*

Learning objective: Section 1.4 provides an overview of the various and complex international environmental standards applied to the cruise industry.