

# **A TRAINING MATERIAL: A SOLUTION TO HELP FRONT OFFICE STAFFERS AND ATTRACT MORE CUSTOMERS FOR IBIS SURABAYA CITY CENTER HOTEL**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is related to the Front Office staffers of ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel who have difficulties in giving information and handling complaints from overseas guests. Therefore, they need a training material in English that contains three lessons about giving information, handling complaints, and receiving calls. This training material is equipped with conversations, sentence pattern and substitution, list of important words, exercises, and also answer key to help the Front Office staffers to have better performances in terms of customer service. By having this training material, ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel will gain three benefits. Firstly, this training material will help the Front Office staffers at ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel to support their work performance. Secondly, this training material can help the Front Office staffers to improve their English skill since it is written in English. Finally, this training material can help Front Office staffers to give the best possible service to the hotel's guests.

**Keywords:** front office, training material, lessons

I did my internship for 129 hours from March 13th to May 4th 2014 at Ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel (ISCCH), Surabaya. I was an intern from English for Business Communication program at Petra Christian University. During my internship period, I worked in the Front Office department. In ISCCH, I found that there were some statements coming from its guests regarding the quality of its customer service, which they think it is not good. First of all, the customers said that the Front Office staffers did not have enough knowledge to explain about the information of the hotel. Next, the guests said that the Front Office staffers could not solve their problems in due course of time. Thus, we can see that ISCCH needs a solution to make their customer service better than before. ISCCH does not have any training material in English to serve the guests in explaining information related to the hotel and solving the guests' problems. Therefore, ISCCH needs a training material that contains proper procedures for explaining information and solving problems in English. My work will concentrate on helping the Front Office staff to give better services to overseas guests. Thus, this training material will be made in English.

The problems of ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel are regarding the customer service of ISCCH. Therefore, the problem here is how the Front Office staffers of ISCCH can improve themselves in terms of upgrading their quality of customer service in order to get guests' satisfaction and avoid losing customers.

From this BCFP, I expect to get three things. First, I expect to get much valuable experience such as writing and reading a lot. Next, I expect to get some new skills by doing this BCFP. I expect to get better communication and negotiation skill. Last but not least, this Business Communication Final Project (BCFP) can support me to be accepted in a company which I want to work at.

By doing this Business Communication Final Project (BCFP), there are several benefits for the hotel. First of all, this training material will help the Front Office staffers at ISCCH to support their work performance. Second, this training material can help Front Office staff to improve their English skill. Last but not least, this training material can help Front Office staffers to give the best service possible to ISCCH's guests. I would have five chapters in my Business Communication Final Project report. In chapter one, I write about the introduction. In chapter two, I write the concepts that I used for making my product and how that concepts could help me to do my

product. In chapter three, I write all the stages and procedures in doing my Business Communication Final Project (BCFP). In chapter four, I analyze my product and describe the result. Last but not least, in chapter five, I conclude all the contents in my BCFP report and give a useful suggestion for the next BCFP report.

According to Christine Jaszay and Paul Dunk (2003) , training is the process used for the development of knowledge and skills needed to perform the jobs, duties, and tasks found in an organization. According to Christine Jaszay and Paul Dunk (2003), in the Training Design Model, there are seven important steps that need to be followed in order to produce a great training material:

- 1) Needs Assessment
- 2) Training Plan
- 3) Lesson Plans
- 4) Trainer Training
- 5) Training Implementation
- 6) Training Evaluation
- 7) Coaching & Counseling

From these seven steps, I selected to do step one until step three. Since I would make a printed training material, my business communication final project will be restricted up to step three. I also used a source about front office and its components. According to Sue Baker, Pam Bradley, and Jeremy Huyton (1994) in their book titled “Principles of Hotel Front Office Operations”, the main function of front office department is to support and facilitate guest transactions and services. There are several sections in front office department. Those sections are the reservation office, reception (the front desk), porters (concierge/lobby services), telephone operator, and front office cashier. Out of this several sections I chose reception. In Front Office department, reception plays a significant role. That is why reception staffers need to be trained as well as possible before they face the guests of the hotel.

In my training material, I also talk about how to handle complaints from guests. According to Ahmed Ismail (2002) in his book titled “Front Office Operations and Management”, there are five rules that should be followed to handle complaints:

- 1) Listen first
- 2) Summarize and restate the problem
- 3) Make no excuses
- 4) Resolve the problems
- 5) Document the conflict

All concepts above helped me a lot in doing my final project. By using those concepts, I could identify and understand what steps were needed to make an excellent training material.

## **METHODS**

Before I got the approval from the Board of Examiners, there were some steps that I did. The first step that I did was I finished my proposal. Then, I did the proposal defense. In here, I presented my BCFP proposal in front of the board of examiners. Finally, they agreed to my BCFP proposal and looked forward to my project. There were some steps that I did before getting the approval for the BCP proposal from ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel. First of all, I printed the BCP proposal which I had made. After that, I made a call to the Human Resource Manager of ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel in order to make an appointment in what day and what time I could meet. Then, I went to ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel. I explained all things inside the BCP proposal and asked for the response as soon as possible. After she was looking at my BCP proposal and hearing my explanation, she said she also would give my proposal to the Assisstant Front Office Manager since my proposal is related to the Front Office department. At that time, I also asked her help to arrange me for an interview with the Assisstant Front Office Manager. Finally, she said that she agreed to my BCP proposal and looked forward to the BCP product.

There were some steps that I did before getting the approval for the BCP product from ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel. Two days after I had submitted the BCP proposal, I got a call from Mrs. Dita, the Human Resource Manager of ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel. After that, I came to ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel and had a talk with the Assisstant Front Office Manager. From the

talk, I asked several questions to get information. Also, I explained about my business communication final project. Furthermore, I explained that each lesson has three different situations which represent the Front Office staff's daily working activities. She told me that my training material was more about application, not just theory like the training material that they had already had. Finally, she agreed to my BCP product and looked forward to it.

There were some procedures in making the training material for Front Office staff. First of all, I determined the topics for the training material. From the problems that I found during my internship, I finally decided to use the topics about giving information, handling complaints, and receiving calls. The second procedure was that I determined the materials related to my business communication final project. Next, I created the situations for each topic. Each topic contains three different situations. The situations for the training material would be as follows:

- For giving information lesson, there are three situations:
  1. How to give information about room types
  2. How to give information about hotel facilities
  3. How to give information about local interests and directions
- For handling complaints lesson, the situations are:
  1. How to handle complaint about housekeeping service
  2. How to handle complaint about rooms
  3. How to handle complaint about hotel facilities
- For receiving calls lesson, there are three situations:
  1. How to receive calls about reservation
  2. How to receive calls about complaints
  3. How to deliver information to the guests and the employee of the hotel

After creating the situations for the training material, I started to write the most typical conversations found in three situations. Then, I made the sentence patterns and substitutions. The next section was a list of words. In here, I listed many important words that came up in the conversation in order to make it easier to remember. The last section is exercise. In this section, I made two types of exercises. The first one was a type of filling in the blank. The second type was true or false exercise. Next, after I had finished making the lessons, I gave it to Ms. Elok, the Assistant Front Office Manager of ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel for the final check. After I got the permission from the Assistant Front Office Manager, I gave the training material to the designer. Finally, I printed the training material.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This training material consists of three main lessons. Each lesson consists of three different situations that most typically occur in the daily working activities of ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel's Front Office staff. The first lesson is about giving information to the guests. In this lesson, there are three situations representing what kinds of information that the Front Office staff often have to explain to the guests. Next, the second lesson is about handling complaints from the guests. This lesson consists of three situations representing what kinds of complaints that the Front Office staff often have to face and how to handle those complaints based on the situation. After that, the third lesson is about receiving calls from both the guests and the prospective customers. In here, there are three situations representing what kinds of calls that the Front Office staff often have to deal with and how to respond those calls in a proper way.

This training material is used by the Front Office staff of ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel. This training material aims to help the Front Office staff improve their ability to serve the guests of Ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel. It contains some lessons to train the Front Office staff of Ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel to give information to foreign guests, handle complaints from foreign guests, and receive calls from both the guests and the prospective customers in English.

In this training material, I used white as the main color for the background. I chose white to represent the cleanliness of ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel. Furthermore, I chose modern style for the training material to represent the modern concept that the hotel used. Also, I inserted some pictures in the training material in order to make the training material more attractive. I got those

pictures from ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel and also took some of them using my own camera. For the layout design, I explained the main concept that I wanted to the graphic designer and she designed the training material based on my explanation.

Inside this training material, there are five components. The first component is table of contents. The second component is the lesson about giving information. The third component is the lesson about handling complaints. Next, the component is the lesson about receiving calls. Finally, the last component is the answer key for all exercises in the training material. Each lesson consists of three situations.

The reason why I decided to make training materials about giving information, handling complaints, and receiving calls in English are that I think those components are the most important components that the Front Office staff often face in their daily work activities in the hotel. The Front Office staff in every hotel always deal with the guests who ask them a lot of information, the guests who ask them to handle their complaints, and the guests who call the hotel. Thus, I think it is very important for the Front Office staff to understand how to give information to the guests, how to handle complaints from the guests, and how to receive calls from the guests appropriately. In addition, my training material has a goal to improve the language and also service management of the Front Office staffers of ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel.

Next, inside the lessons of the training material consist of four sections. Those sections are conversations, sentence patterns and substitutions, list of words, and exercises. The first section is conversations. In here, there are some conversations between a Front Office staff and a guest. The function of the conversations are to describe the real situations and dialogues that the Front Office staffers face in reception desk. That is why I put them in the beginning of every lesson. The Front Office staffers often have difficulty in explaining information to the guests. Therefore, they need a typical example that is conversation that can show them exactly how they should say when they give information to the guests.

After that, the second section is followed by sentence pattern and substitution. In here, there are some sentences from the conversations. In each sentence, there is a substitution for a word. For example, the word “sir” in “What could I do for you, sir?” can be substituted to “Miss” so the sentence becomes “What could I do for you, Miss?”. The function of sentence pattern and substitution is to expand the vocabulary so that the Front Office staffers do not use the same vocabulary again and again. That is why I put them after the conversations so that the Front Office staffers can directly check the choices of vocabulary which they can use.

Then, the third section is list of words. In here, there are some important words from the conversations. The function of this section is to make the Front Office staffers know and remember some words that need to be noticed from the conversations. For example, in handling complaints I about how to handle complaint about housekeeping service, the list of words are housekeeping staff, clean up, apologize, and inconvenience. That is why I put them in my training material since I think that this section is important.

Finally, the last section is exercises. In here, I provide two versions of exercises. The first version is fill in the blank exercise. In here, I put the same dialogues but with some blank spaces. The function of this version of exercise is to test the learners whether they understand or not about the content of the related conversations in focus. The second version is true or false exercise. In here, there are some statements based on the conversations. The function of this version of exercise is to test the readers deeper understanding about the content of the conversations. I make short exercises since I think that short exercises are easier to understand.

Furthermore, the order of the components inside the training material also becomes one of the most important points that I should pay attention to. The first part is the front cover. In the front cover, I use white and red color. As I mentioned before, white represents the cleanliness of ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel. Besides, red represents the logo of ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel. After that, I wrote a brief preface in order to make the readers have basic knowledge about what ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel is.

Next, the second part is the table of contents. This part is important for the Front Office Staffers to find certain lessons in the training material. It can help them searching to the page of lesson they need without opening every page of the training material.

After that, the third part is the lessons. In the training material, the first lesson is giving information. In this lesson, the first situation is about a guest who wants to ask about the room types before checking in. Basically, before the guests stay in a hotel, they will reserve the rooms in the hotel by phone or come to the hotel directly. Thus, in the giving information lesson, I put the situation how to give information about room types as the first situation. The next situation is about a guest who wants to ask about hotel facilities. The guests often ask about what facilities that the hotel has. Sometimes, the hotel facilities can be very important to the guests' decision whether they will stay in the hotel or not. If the guests think that the hotel facilities do not meet their wants and need, there will be a big possibility that the guests will not stay in that hotel. Thus, after the situation about how to give information about room types, I put the situation about how to give information about hotel facilities in the second order. The last situation in this giving information lesson is about a guest who asked about local interest and directions. The Front Office staff also have to be aware that they have to know about local interests and directions around the hotel area. When the guests ask about it, they expect that the staff know their area very well so the staff have to be able to give satisfying answers to the guests. Thus, I put this situation in the last part of giving information lesson.

The second lesson is about handling complaints. In this lesson, the first situation is about a guest who complained about housekeeping service. The Assistant Front Office Manager of ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel said that the guests often complained about their laundry. Thus, I put this situation in the first place since it is important. After that, the second situation in this handling complaints lesson is about how to handle complaint about rooms. Sometimes, the guests feel uncomfortable with their rooms. For example, they want to change their room with another room because there is misplace. Thus, I put this situation as the second situation in the handling complaints lesson. Lastly, the situation is about a guest who complained about hotel facilities. The guests often complained about the hotel facilities during their stay so I put this situation in the handling complaints lesson.

The third lesson is about receiving calls. In here, the first situation is about a guest who calls to make a reservation. Many guests reserve the rooms by calling the hotel receptionist so the Front Office staffers have to be able to receive their reservations. Thus, I put this situation in the first place. Next, the second situation is about a guest who calls to give a complaint. The guests complain not only by coming directly to the reception but also calling the reception so the Front Office staffers also have to be familiar with solving the guests' problems. Thus, I put this situation as the second place. Finally, the last situation in this lesson is about how to deliver information to the guests and the employee of the hotel. If there is a call from outside the hotel and s/he wants to talk with one of the employees of the hotel, the Front Office staff have to be able to connect them based on the procedure that the hotel has. Thus, I put this situation in the receiving calls lesson.

Finally, the last part is the back cover. All contact information about ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel is included here. In the back cover, the readers can find the address, the phone number, the facsimile number, and the e-mail address of ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel. I put this contact information in the last page because it is important for the Front Office staffers. They have to remember all contact information that ibis Surabaya City Center has so that they can give the best service to the guests.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

I decided to make a training material for Front Office staff of ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel, a three-star hotel in Surabaya as my business communication final project. In completing the project, I had gone through many difficult processes. I needed to make a good yet self-explanatory proposal. It was difficult for me to arrange the words but finally I could make it. Also, I did negotiation with the real prospect clients in the real business world for the first time. I negotiated with the Human Resource Manager and Assistant Front Office Manager of ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel.

I got the idea of making the training material from my internship experience at a three-star hotel. I found that the Front Office staffers there have difficulty in giving information related to the hotel and handling complaints from the guests in English. It can lead to a serious problem that is losing customers. Based on the problems, I think the hotel needs training material for its Front

Office staff in English which contains the lessons for giving information, handling complaints, and receiving calls.

There are three components inside the training material. The first component is the lesson about giving information. The second component is the lesson about handling complaints. The last component is the lesson about receiving calls. Each component consists of three situations. In completing this training material, I use some concepts from the books. Those concepts help me in making the dialogues and exercises for the lessons inside the training material which can help the Front Office staffers to improve their customer service skills in English and maintain the customer of the hotel.

In brief, based on the project of training material, it can be concluded that the Front Office staffers of a hotel need to be able to give information and handle complaints appropriately in English in order to avoid customers' dissatisfaction and loss. Therefore, it is important for a hotel to have training material which consists of the lessons about giving information, handling complaints, and receiving calls for the Front Office staff to enable them to serve overseas guests in English.

Last but not least, the writer hopes that the training material can be used effectively and efficiently by the Assistant Front Office Manager to train the Front Office staff of ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel to improve their work performance. Also, the writer hopes that this training material can be used to train new employees in Front Office department of ibis Surabaya City Center Hotel. Finally, the writer hopes that the lessons inside this training material are suitable with the real situation that the Front Office staff face in their daily work activities.

Suggestion for the next students of English for Business Communication of Petra Christian University who want to do similar Business Communication Project (BCP) as in my project is that the writer suggests that they have sufficient time in the preparation of the proposal. It would be better to have a self-explanatory proposal so it would be easier to be understood by the company. In addition, the writer advises them to be well-prepared before going to the company to give the proposal. By so doing, they will have prepared for everything and they do not have to go to the company again and again to get the agreement. Finally, the writer suggests that they find a person who will design the training material first so s/he will have enough time to design and revise the training material.

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