

Mission Possible

Hospitality Veteran Larry Broughton Leverages Experience On TV Reality Series

Wednesday, May 25, 2016

Dennis Nessler

Having spent some 30 years in the hotel industry, Larry Broughton, President and CEO of broughtonHOTELS, insists that anything's possible when it comes to hotel turnarounds. It's precisely that kind of attitude, along with his company's stellar reputation for successfully turning around assets, which has landed him as something of a regular on the show *Hotel Impossible*.

Broughton—who has appeared on the Travel Channel reality series at the urging of host and fellow U.S. military veteran Anthony Melchiorri a host of times over the past two years—talked about how the opportunity came about when he received the initial call.



“The first thing he said to me is ‘who are you? Everywhere I turn for the last few months everybody is saying you need to meet Larry Broughton. We’ve got this hotel here in Hollywood called the Liberty Hotel, and it’s an absolute mess.’ He said, ‘I’ve never owned a hotel, I’m just this just guy that’s turned around hotels. Honestly, I’m in way over my head on this. Can you come up and help me?’” said Broughton, who added “we kind of hit it off.”

Broughton—who prior to founding Anaheim, CA-based Broughton Hospitality in 2001 spent some 14 years with Joie de Vivre Hospitality— emphasized the show has been a positive experience and has even helped him generate some additional ideas. In fact, he has come up with 8 fundamentals that “transformational leaders” can learn from mistakes commonly made on the show. The first four include treating team members with dignity and respect; knowing your industry; maintaining focus and mastering the basics (or the blocking and tackling), and actively soliciting feedback from guests.

Broughton, for example, elaborated on the importance of how employees are treated. “How often do you watch this show and you see failing hotel owners treat team members like servants? The hotel owner has these deplorable work conditions. The [employees] have got no benefits and they’re underpaid, but they expect employees to be effective ambassadors, to remain loyal and to actually make money for them. Clearly, that does not work. Successful leaders treat team members the way they want their clients and guests to be treated,” he said.

Broughton also underscored the potential impact of guest feedback. “These hotels that are on *Hotel Impossible* are not asking for feedback from either their guests or from their team members. Sure people are going online and doing TripAdvisor stuff, but they’re not actively soliciting the feedback so that they can learn. This is a great opportunity to improve the experience. The key is to avoid being offended or getting your feelings hurt, but instead taking rapid action and fixing the stuff that people are complaining about. So you have to be proactive about this,” he said.

The final four fundamentals for hoteliers include continually re-evaluating and communicating long-term goals; playing to your strengths; recognizing that change starts at the top; and taking responsibility for problems.

According to Broughton, making sure that long-term goals are properly communicated is critical. “We have to be vocal evangelists for our business and our cause. But often times what I see when I go to these failing hotels is that the only thing the team members or employees hear about is the negative stuff. How they’re screwing up or they’re not doing a good job, but nobody sets the course and says ‘here what our long-term goals are,’” he maintained.

Mission Possible

Hospitality Veteran Larry Broughton Leverages Experience On TV Reality Series

Wednesday, May 25, 2016

Dennis Nessler

Broughton also pointed out that taking responsibility is not something to be overlooked. “All problems in business fall into these four categories: people, process, product and profit. At the end of the day, if you have process, product or profit problems really it boils down to a people problem...We’ve got to make sure as leaders that we’re taking responsibility for this stuff and become a problem solver. But that takes humility and it takes profound courage sometimes to look in the mirror to say ‘I may be the problem here.’ Sometimes that’s where Anthony is really good by saying ‘listen the best thing you can do is step out of this business and either sell it or bring in a management company, but you are the road block here,’” he said.



Broughton noted his experience on the show has also benefitted broughtonHOTELS, which has a management portfolio of 18 hotels, primarily boutique properties located in California and Chicago. He cited the Studio City Court Yard Hotel in Studio City, CA, which the company is managing, as a prime example.

“It was in really bad disrepair for years with bad morale and a bad guest experience. So when we went in there maybe 8 months ago we had to get all the team members together and start asking questions; not pointing fingers, not blaming. It’s not the team members’ fault that they don’t have the tools to do their job, it’s the former owners. So now we’re planning on doing a 3.5 million dollar renovation on 65 rooms to turn this thing around. The lessons that we’ve learned there is listen to the guest and listen to the team members. So we went back to TripAdvisor, among other sources, and tried to figure out who were the people that were complaining. We said we’re going to be changing this thing and we’d love to get your feedback. Give us the good, the bad and the ugly, and then we did the same thing with the team members,” said Broughton, who added when the company takes on a new property it routinely gives a confidential work climate survey.

Broughton, who will be appearing on the season finale of Hotel Impossible on July 18, summed up the experience. “It’s a lot of fun. It gives me an opportunity to think fast on my feet, and I get to see what other people are doing. And frankly it also lends credibility to the company,” he added.