Saluting Our “MVP” Housekeepers

By Dr. Richard Kelley

Over the next two weeks, in Outrigger® and OHANA hotels across the Pacific, we will take some time away from our regular duties to honor our Housekeepers. We will give well-earned recognition to those who work tirelessly every day of the year to keep our rooms and public areas looking as great as they do, and we will thank them for everything they do.

Even though they work quietly, far from the limelight, our Housekeepers do a magnificent job. They perform their duties flawlessly 24/7/365 – all day, every day of the week, throughout the year, even on Christmas Day.

Regular readers of Saturday Briefing are probably aware that I have a special place in my heart for our Housekeeping staff. I am sure this has something to do with the fact that I started my hotel career 66 years ago folding towels in the Housekeeping Department of our company’s first property, the five-story Islander Hotel at 351 Seaside Avenue, a block off Kalakāua Avenue in the heart of Waikīkī.

The Housekeeping Department of the Islander was not much to talk about at the time. There was just a small storage area behind the main building. Racks with linen and towels lined three sides of the room. A 4-by-8-foot sheet of plywood mounted on “saw horses” in the center served as a table to fold towels that had been laundered in a row of residential-quality Kenmore washing machines purchased from a Sears Roebuck department store.

The Housekeepers would make up rooms not only in the Islander itself, carrying sheets and towels up and down five flights of stairs, since the building had no elevators, but they would also clean and make up rooms in numerous outlying cottages – annexes to the hotel – up to several city blocks distant. Heaven help them if they had to run back to get a pillowcase or towel that had somehow been forgotten. It happened to me on more than one occasion. But it certainly kept us all in tip-top physical shape!

That experience left a lasting impression on me and gave birth to the enormous respect I have for our Housekeepers.

Readers may also recall that during Housekeepers Week, I often seek a metaphor for the vitally role that Housekeepers play in the success of our hotels. This year, I believe the term “Most Valuable Players” (“MVPs” in today’s high-speed world) really captures the spirit of our Housekeepers.

In my mind, an MVP is someone whose skills and dedication far exceed the norm. Sometimes, MVPs are just fictional characters that appear in novels, movies and Internet games. Fortunately, there are also many real-life world champions who accomplish extraordinary feats in a wide range of pursuits. These

“Our Housekeepers give MVP-quality performances day after day.”

- Dr. Richard Kelley

Peyton Manning (credit: Wikipedia)

Image: Richard Kelley (credit: Outrigger)
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are the people who play a significant role in improving the quality of life on our planet.

A week and a half ago, Denver Broncos’ Quarterback Peyton Manning – many times an MVP – stunned the sports world, throwing a whopping seven touchdown passes, tying the National Football League record for touchdown passes in a single game.

Manning is no flash-in-the-pan, overnight, accidental overachiever. Like our housekeepers, he has worked long and hard to be the best at what he does. He led his New Orleans high school football team to a 34–5 record during three seasons as starter.

At the University of Tennessee, in addition to four outstanding football seasons, he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, America’s oldest academic honor society, in 1997 for excellence in his scholarly pursuits.

Since 1998, he has compiled an outstanding record in the NFL. Playing for the Indianapolis Colts through 2012, he earned many MVP awards from his team and the league up until 2010, when neck injuries limited his game time and affected his passing accuracy.

After surgery in 2011, the Colts released him, and the Denver Broncos picked him as their quarterback for the 2012 season. He led the Broncos to the playoffs where they lost their first game to Baltimore, which went on to win the Super Bowl XLVII that season.

Reading about Peyton Manning reminds me of the characteristics I find in our Housekeepers day after day and year after year. These include:

• A strong work ethic
• Top skills
• A sense of responsibility
• A willingness to help others
• Honesty and integrity
• A sense of humor

Peyton Manning would not be a champion without a combination of a strong work ethic, exceptional skills and a sense of responsibility. Our MVP Housekeepers are much the same.

Every morning they go forth to tackle the vital role of cleaning our guest rooms and public areas. By the end of the day, everything has to be perfect and ready for guests arriving from all parts of the world or returning from a day or evening enjoying our island paradise. Thousands of details demand our Housekeepers’ attention.

Only people with a strong work ethic and top skills can do this job with consistent MVP-level performance day after day, month after month, year after year.

Author Mike Wineberg points out some of Peyton Manning’s other fine personality traits. I have paraphrased his comments slightly but, in effect, he says that Peyton Manning:

• Is never satisfied with his own performance.
• Raises the bar of expectations of those around him.
• Knows his product inside and out, and adapts to new situations better than anyone.
• Is a classy, likable human being.

Our Housekeepers also have a great sense of personal responsibility for their jobs, their company and fellow employees. Like Peyton Manning and other top athletes, dedicated scientists or brilliant authors, they focus on the job at hand. Housekeepers take full charge of their assigned guest rooms or public areas. They are proud of what they do and do not need a supervisor looking over their shoulder to make sure they do it right.

Peyton Manning is also a very generous person and through personal appearances and his own charitable foundation, the PeyBack Foundation (www.peytonmanning.com), he has helped thousands of children in need.

Our Housekeepers, likewise, are compassionate and show it in many ways. They help others in our
community through volunteer service and fundraising. Every year, they enthusiastically turn out in large numbers for the annual Visitor Industry Charity Walk on each of Hawai'i's four major islands.

Peyton Manning is also known for his honesty and integrity, and our Housekeepers are legendary in this area too. Every day, our guests leave valuables and personal effects in the care of our Housekeepers. In my 66 years in the hospitality business, I have hardly ever seen that trust violated.

Finally, if you do a quick Internet search about Peyton Manning's life, you will discover that he has a great sense of humor. He has performed a number of skits on TV's “Saturday Night Live” and made some very humorous video clips for charitable organizations such as United Way and for-profit companies such as MasterCard.

Like Manning, our Housekeepers also know that humor is an important quality to keep at the ready. In the hotel business, as on the football field, things often fail to go as planned. Guests check out late. Groups arrive early. The plumbing clogs up. Fresh linen from the laundry fails to arrive on time – or perhaps not at all. When this happens, our MVPs usually approach the situation with a great deal of patience sprinkled with lots of humor.

So, are our Housekeepers MVPs?

Absolutely! To accomplish everything they do, they must turn in MVP-quality performances day after day. The only difference between them and world champions in sports, business, politics and the arts is that our Housekeepers do not get their stories, photos and achievements reported on the nightly TV news, on the front page of the newspaper or in an Internet “tweet.”

However, once a year, we do pause for National Housekeepers Week to recognize what great people they are and everything they do for our company, their fellow workers and our guests.

So, to all of our Housekeepers … Domo Arigato, Fa’afetai, Kamsahamnida, Mahalo, Mauruuru, Salamat, Si Yu’us Ma’ase, Thank You, Tika Hoki, Vinaka Vakelevu, Xie Xie!

Have a great week! You have truly earned our respect! 💪
“MVP” Housekeepers

Sitting: Jacky Zheng, Bitsy Kelley, Dustin Chen and Jimmy Zhang. Standing: Ji Qiao Liang, Jacky Gong, Kelvin Shiu, Zhuo Hui Zhao, Yu Ming Feng and Eugene Chu

Sitting: Elain Peng, Zhuo Hui Zhao, Kelvin Shiu, Barbara Lam and Ji Qiao Liang
Standing: Min Chi Lau, Wayne Talaro, Alan White, Ivy Kwok and Barbara Lam

Sitting: Chiu Tai Wong, Janice Yee, Siu Fong Kwok and Su Xian Zhuo
Standing: Min Chi Lau, Wayne Talaro, Alan White, Ivy Kwok and Barbara Lam

Sitting: Elain Peng, Zhuo Hui Zhao, Kelvin Shiu, Barbara Lam and Ji Qiao Liang
Standing: Robert McConnell, Li Qi Zheng, Sean Dee, Bitsy Kelley, Barry Wallace, Chuck Shishido and Alan White

Julie Ha, Chong Ja Kim and Naomi Pae

Estrelita Sagadraca, Desiree Valdez and Mia Lau

Paz Rosal, Mia Robinol and Reggie Molina
“MVP” Housekeepers

Sitting: Filipinas Isidro, Ely Bareng and Marina Manzano
Standing: Eric Liu, Monica Rivera, Alan White, Emiliana Cadiz and Nena Corpuz

Rodel Juan and Eloy Gapuzan

Sitting: Rey Orpilla, Ester Angeles and Eva Bumagat
Standing: Alan White, Michael Valdez, Eloy Gapuzan and Bruce Schneider

“MVPs” dig in!

Sitting: Annie Mar, Miao Xia Chen and Jessica Su
Standing: Pam Cabrera and Fritzie Ramones
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Richie Palafox, Carol Hanna, Kani Copp, Tielma Galigo, Aurora Oranu, Rosalinda Oranu, Doreen Regohos, Rodola Tanyonan, Elizabeth Quero, Maria Añaga, Maggie Cuaisto, Ophelia Añadilla and present but not pictured is property photographer, Gary Correia

Grace Mello and Dr. Chuck

Alison Nagamine, Karen Villarmia, Divina Garcia, Nora Weatherwax and Ruthann Yamanaka

Feng Zhen Chen, Agatha Kim, Han Sook Song, Jun Li Lu and Xiaofeng Huang

So'o Tuna, Amante Castro, Herb Fernandez, George Poon and Chuck Shishido
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Standing: Barry Wallace, Divina Garcia, Chuck Shishido, Henry Rodrigues and Ruthann Yamanaka. Sitting: Ai Jin Li, Yuan Ni Lei Lin, Yue Hing Shiu and Xiaofeng Huang

Efren Agustin, Antonio Salvador, Ed Case and Xiaofeng Huang

Ai Jin Li, Yuan Ni Lei Lin, Yue Hing Shiu, Xiaofeng Huang and Barry Wallace

Divina Garcia, Feng Zhen Chen, Primie Marzan and Siu-Lan Fong

Ho Soon Kang, Hak Soon Song, Divina Garcia, Nora Weatherwax, Agatha Kim, Amy Lee and Qiqiaoliu Tong
“MVP” Housekeepers << From 7

Front: Shari Tachibana, Tereza Gapuzan and Anna Lau. Back: Conrada Corpuz, Shao Fei Weng, Consolacion Caraang, Amador Manzano and Julito Boniel

Valeriana Domingo, Eufemia Saitt, Marilies Tagala, Narilya Fangon, Narysa Serzaon, Noemi Atanes and Marivin Nastor

Conrada Corpuz, Consolacion Caraang, Kim Son III and Susan Park

Amador Manzano and Julito Boniel