Housekeepers – Our Extraordinary Superheroes

Over the next two weeks, 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, the job our Housekeepers do is nothing short of magnificent. 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 know that during International Housekeepers Week, I often seek a metaphor for the vital role that Housekeepers play in the success of our hotels.

This year, I believe the term “Extraordinary Superheroes” captures the spirit of our Housekeepers because it brings to mind the legendary, fictional superheroes, Wonder Woman¹ and Superman².

Our Housekeepers are far from fictional. Every day, they perform tasks that would challenge both Wonder Woman and Superman if those icons of yesteryear suddenly came to life and leaped off the pages of the comic books many of us read in our youth, long before the days of computers and the Internet.

Wonder Woman deflected bullets with her magical, metallic bracelets. Superman could leap over tall buildings.

The two represented trust, honesty, dedication and strength. They were swift, hardworking and sincere. They cared for their communities and everyone in them. They were serious about their mission, yet both – and particularly Superman, also known as news reporter Clark Kent – could also pause and laugh at themselves in typically human fashion.

Doesn’t it all describe our Housekeepers?

We are so fortunate to have a group of such extraordinary individuals working in the Housekeeping departments of every Outrigger, OHANA, and affiliated property across the Pacific and, with Outrigger Lodging Services, across the continental United States from Florida to California.

Seven days a week, these Superheroes accomplish exceptional, noteworthy, and remarkable feats in a wide range of activities.

Three hundred and sixty-five days a year, they demonstrate:
• A strong work ethic
• Top skills
• A deep sense of responsibility
• A willingness to help others
• Honesty and integrity
• A wonderful sense of humor

Each morning, as they go forth to tackle a corridor full of guest rooms or the equivalent in public areas, they bring with them this incredible set of skills and dedication. By the end of the day, everything has to be perfect and ready for guests arriving from distant corners of the world. There are thousands of details that need attention. Only people with a strong work ethic and well-honed abilities can do this demanding job with consistently high performance day after day, month after month, and year after year.

Our Housekeepers also have a tremendous sense of personal responsibility for their jobs, their company and their

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fellow workers. They often work alone, focused only on the task at hand. Housekeepers take full charge of their assigned guest rooms or public areas. They take pride in what they do and do not need a supervisor looking over their shoulder to make sure they do it right.

Our Housekeepers are well known for helping others achieve their goals. They often make personal sacrifices by working odd hours and irregular shifts. They are willing to tackle the really tough jobs that no one else wants to do. Generally, these are also the kind of jobs that cannot be put off to another day.

Think how guests would react if we told them, “We’ll make up your room tomorrow and touch up the lobby later this week!”

Along that line, our Housekeepers are compassionate and show it in many ways. They help others in our community through their volunteer service and fundraising. Every year, they enthusiastically turn out in large numbers for the annual Visitor Industry Charity Walk.

Our Housekeepers are legendary for honesty and integrity. Every day, our guests leave valuables and personal effects in the care of our Housekeepers. In my more than six decades in the hospitality business, I have hardly ever seen that trust violated.

Finally, our Housekeepers know that being gracious and, perhaps, even adding a bit of humor to a situation are important qualities to keep at the ready.

In the hotel business, difficult, awkward situations are an almost daily occurrence. Guests get grumpy. Some arrive early. Others check out late. The plumbing clogs up. Fresh linen from the laundry fails to arrive on time – or perhaps not at all.

When this happens, I’ve seen that our Extraordinary Superheroes almost always approach the situation with a great deal of grace and patience, and a healthy sprinkling of humor.

So, are our Housekeepers really Extraordinary Superheroes? Absolutely!

To accomplish everything they do, they must turn in extraordinary performances day after day. The only difference between them and the world’s top athletes, film stars or leaders of business and government is that our Housekeepers do not get their stories, photos and achievements reported on the nightly TV news, on the front page of the Honolulu Star-Advertiser, or in an Internet “tweet.”

However, once a year, we do gratefully pause for International Housekeepers Week to recognize what wonderful people they are and all the great things 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, and Xie Xie!

Have a great week! You’ve earned our respect and admiration!

1 All Star Comics, 1941
2 Action Comics, 1938