

Speaking the language of corporate buyers

June 2006

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Hotels in the City of London

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# Keeping it positive



*"A yoyo can spin off in many directions and the more practice you do, the better you get. The same applies to Yes I can!"*

Rezidor SAS likes to keep its staff positive and on their toes, Catherine Chetwynd spoke to B-J Lunde about how she keeps standards up

Last year, "Yes I can!" saw its 10th anniversary as the Rezidor SAS service philosophy and to mark the occasion, head of human resources B-J Lunde launched a campaign to reconfirm the values across the company.

"Every person who has contact with us should experience the 'Yes I can!' attitude," she says. "And we want every employee from the bottom up to understand it." Lunde has been with the company 20 years and has been working with the programme for 10.

And it is not just guests who benefit. "I drive the campaign from the corporate office and we also want to improve service levels to colleagues, employees and suppliers," she says. "We asked for ideas from everyone at head office and had them printed on posters, which we put up in the toilets. It is our code of conduct – what we want to become better at."

Ideas ranged from the practical – one moment in planning, saves you 10 in execution – to the considerate – treat people how you want to be treated. And they are aimed at everyone from directors down.

There is also a Yes I can! anniversary pin for staff, and diamonds are added to it for every five years of service. "I see senior directors going around wearing the pin and talking about it – there is buy-in from the top," she says.

Lunde also founded and operates an internal management school at Rezidor SAS, which also celebrates its 10th anniversary in August this year. "One of the biggest programmes the school runs is instructing trainers to teach Yes I can! to employees in the hotels," she says.

B-J Lunde is creative in her efforts to sustain the momentum of the campaign. "We have a number of activities to keep people's attention," she says. "After the last wave of activities, each employee received a wooden yoyo showing the Yes I can! logo. A yoyo can spin off in many directions and the more practice you do, the better you get. The same applies to Yes I can!"

The attitude pervades the company, inside and out, and each hotel flies a Yes I can! flag. "We also thought we should do something for children who are not able to work in hotels, so Rezidor SAS bought red rubber wrist bands for staff and gave one Danish krona for every employee – 22,000 – to Save the Children," says Lunde. "The bands were such a hit that we decided to let them become part of the uniform after the campaign."

"In addition, we have started choosing hosts and hostesses of the month in each property instead of employee of the year and they are selected based on their Yes I can! attitude."

## Improving the skills of staff

The programme is backed by detailed skills training, to ensure service delivery matches service ethic. "Some customers are fussed with waiter service – whether food is served from the right side – others couldn't care less," she says. "But skills are important and we select a regional master trainer to do that."

With B-J Lunde at the helm there is no fear that the re-energising campaign will run out of steam and there is a new wave of activities every quarter, which hotels

can implement at their own pace. "People like variety and an element of surprise," she says. Activities involve departments in role play for 15-20 minutes, to emphasise the positive results of giving better service.

## Variety of activities

B-J Lunde works with a team of six people, comprising corporate and area vice presidents. "We put together a business plan for goals and activities and pass these on to 14 regional directors, who communicate with general managers and they make it happen," she says. She also oversees the production of a magazine, gathering from each hotel information on what they have done well and what they could do better. "When we send out stories of best practice, it inspires those who are a bit lazy or laidback to take up Yes I can! with more energy. It adds sparkle," says Lunde.

"In recent years, the focus in the hotel industry has been on cost cutting and revenue optimisation," she says. "So we needed to celebrate the anniversary of Yes I can! and keep the emphasis on service. We must keep rolling out new activities: there is material for another three years and we will have to think about what we do after that. The trick is constantly to make it feel like a new chapter."

The Yes I can! attitude is even adopted by guests. "A guest at the Radisson SAS Atlantic Hotel Stavanger arrived to find her travel agency had made a mistake and there was no booking," says Lunde. "All hotels in the city were full, so staff quickly transformed a meeting room into an exclusive bedroom and added some personal touches such as extra amenities and decoration. The guest was so pleased with their efforts that she returned two weeks later with a bottle of champagne to express her gratitude."

If anyone can, Rezidor can.