

Separating Good from Great GMs in Two Questions

December 10, 2019

Working as an asset manager, one of my key responsibilities over the years has been to collaborate with the general manager to secure the underlying asset's value as well as develop programs that will grow rate, occupancy and the hotel's status within the community.



Obvious enough, but just like something straight out of an old Soviet playbook, another primary duty is to assess the GM's performance, offering guidance and mentorship where needed as well as giving the thumbs up or thumbs down on their employment contract renewal.

While others will utilize a lengthy and formal checklist for this latter task, I have boiled down the essence of a great GM to one's ability to answer the following two critical questions, both of which work for either quarterly or yearly performance appraisals.

Question #1: What have you done to improve the team?

Good GMs work hard to get the job done; great GMs are experts at delegation so that everyone else can work even harder and smarter.

The response here can include a reordering of the organizational structure to improve internal team empowerment or demonstrate a cleaner path of succession for ambitious team members. It might also include the hiring (or dismissal) of senior team leaders to increase bench strength, or even the rewriting of job descriptions along with bonus structures to enhance individual motivation.

Then there's the holistic wellness angle whereby proficient general managers working in a modern workplace must take an active role in programs designed to advance the well-being and overall enrichment of the team. Further, the GM can demonstrate what they've done to boost the corporate culture.

In all instances, what I'm looking for is a person who is a leader – someone who can direct his or her team, so they all know their role and where the organization is headed. I'm not necessarily looking for the ship to be completely leakproof, only meaningful progress towards that end.

Question #2: What new projects have you initiated to enhance the asset's value?

Good GMs know how to balance a budget; great GMs are already looking ahead at how to grow the bottom line into the next decade.

Again, there are a lot of options available for such a vaguely written inquiry, but two words you should pay particular attention to are 'new' and 'initiate'. For this, I'm not judging one's performance solely on execution because it would be highly unreasonable to expect every new project to be an instant success, and also there are lessons to be had in failure or mediocre results. Moreover, there's no prize to be had in maintaining the status quo; you must always be pushing the ball forward if you are to triumph.

Instead, I'm looking for an individual with vision, and the drive to put those ideas into action. True, according to the first question, a big part of a worthy leader's role is to facilitate an environment where others feel empowered to experiment and growth within their own departments. But this go-getter attitude starts at the top. If a GM is to lead by example, this individual must be also be an instigator and enthusiastic supporter for others to follow.

Ideally, I could ask this second question unannounced and a true hotel leader would be able to respond extemporaneously with a handful of incredible ventures that were undertaken within a given period of time as well as a few candid observations on why they succeeded or need to be reworked.

While there are numerous other styles of management, if you always keep these two questions in mind and have thorough answers at the ready then you are well on your way towards being a great GM.

Source: <https://www.hotelmogel.com/separating-good-from-great-gms-in-two-questions/>