



## Hotel Granduca

The Hotel Granduca opened in September 2006 in Houston - its creation was inspired by the life and history of an Italian Grand Duke born in Italy in 1524. Owned by Interfin one of the premier real estate developers in Houston, with office buildings, retail centres and luxury apartments, the company had a long held ambition to build a new retreat in the heart of the city. The Hotel Granduca has 126 suites and all of them offer the comforts of an opulent home, most having a separate living room and dining area as well as a fully equipped kitchen. Although they have a fine dining restaurant, their in-suite dining is exceptional, with a concierge that will deliver the perfect meal, or can source any other requirement such as the perfect cappuccino, a limo to the airport or tickets to the ballet.

### The Business Challenge

In a challenging and competitive market, the Hotel Granduca directors were keen to gain formal recognition as an outstanding luxury hotel. They wanted to lead their team to regularly deliver high levels of service excellence. A key target was to conform to the standards to be accepted as one of *The Leading Small Hotels of the World*.

### The Solution

The directors asked Hunter Roberts to work with them to support the opening of the hotel, assisting in staff development and helping the leadership team create the conditions needed to achieve this prestigious award. A Hunter Roberts team, led by Susy Roberts, conducted the initial research and agreed with the directors to draw up job profiles, recruit staff, deliver induction and front line training and conduct one-to-one coaching with the senior team.

A core Hunter Roberts team identified the key competencies, both functional and behavioural for each management and staff role and from there drew up job profiles. The General Manager was looking for “high- energy people with a contagious enthusiasm to be the best”, with strong capabilities in building rapport and with a strong customer focus. Hunter Roberts assisted in recruiting the core managers, middle managers and general staff roles, carrying out competency based interviews and evaluating each candidate against the GM’S requirements. A key requirement was to ensure an international element, so that the final team had the ability to speak languages ranging from Spanish and Japanese to Swahili.

Hunter Roberts designed and assisted with participative and lively group workshops to welcome the new recruits, facilitate teamworking, ensure consistency of delivery and gain an understanding of the luxury property in which they would be working. The Hunter Roberts team

delivered on the job training in all customer facing departments to ensure an outstanding customer service level. In the Housekeeping Department, for example, Hunter Roberts helped housekeepers develop the words, gestures and behaviours to assure an outstanding customer relationship in a context where guests are often resident for periods of over 20 days.

During both the pre- and post-opening a member of the Hunter Roberts team coached and shadowed the General Manager, helping her to achieve a balanced focus on both strategic planning and daily operational issues. Other team members worked closely with Senior team members coaching them on operational issues and forward planning to ensure the success of their departments. A performance management system was also designed to reward high performers and further develop underperformers.

### **Measuring Success**

The training sessions and workshops were judged to be a huge success. The coaching relationships were continued both over the telephone and at six monthly follow ups. Mary Grace Gray the General Manager was very pleased with the lasting results that have been achieved, “we would not have been able to achieve our outstanding success without the help of the fantastic team from Hunter Roberts.”

Hotel Granduca received exceptional results from the *Leading Hotels* audit, achieving compliancy with the Leading Hotels Standards in all areas.