

INTRODUCTION. How long have you been here?

- Definitely hospitality is just a different atmosphere. Being in the luxury of hotel, I was always visiting and coming to the Ritz-Carlton. I started at the Marina Del Rey Ritz-Carlton and ventured off to the Beverly Hills Hotel. Got a different experience of clientele. Finally found my home which was the LA Live, which is different creative people here.

What drew you to Marina Del Rey?

- The beautiful waterfront. Just the luxury that it gives you. I was also at the spa there. We were able to offer all our guests the ultimate experience, even if they're not staying at the hotel. Even if you weren't we welcome outdoor guests to come in and get that full experience at the Ritz-Carlton.

Is that an important draw for you?

- What mostly attracted me is how much growth there was. When I started orientation you don't know what you're getting into. Just the way we're all treated, not only as employees but as family. We have other peers who have worked from the bottom. Now they're directors. Now they're DO. It's amazing how they started off from the basic and how much growth there was to move up. There's a lot of opportunity. And you have a lot of support with not only management, colleagues, everyone guides you. It's never a lonely road. Someone's always there to answer any question you have. Being in that family aspect was very important to me.

How did you get a feel for that even before you were working? Did you have that impression?

- I didn't have an idea what I was getting into until we got together. They treated us, not only with water, coffee, they made us feel like we were guests staying at the hotel. We're actually going to get the experience. Having a server serve us. What we get, we're going to offer to our guests. It was a training to get us to see what we're going to offer. That showed me this is a different world, not only of hi, hello, but a different type of service, because they give it to us first hand, and we go from there and offer it to our guests.

Why did you switch to the Beverly Hills Hotel?

- Because I wanted to grow. It's different than just going to a café or restaurant. There's so much growth in hospitality that I wanted to venture and see what else is out there. I was able to do that. I didn't feel as at home at the BBH. It made me miss that sincere service, that support of management to make you feel there's a lot of opportunity. At the Ritz-Carlton Marina I started as a concierge and moved to a supervisor. I was able to get a supervisor position at the BBH but I didn't have enough training to envision what they wanted as service as a hotel. I was only there for about four months. My place is at Ritz-Carlton. They train, give

you growth, gives you the tools you need to succeed. Also we get to make our guests feel special. Chocolate strawberries to the room because they just got engaged, they love that personal touch. We have the tools to do that.

What is that important to you?

- For me it's great because not only do we recognize you did this amazing thing for us. It's just the sense of giving for me that I find, it's good for me. It makes me feel good as a person, as a human, to make someone else feel better, when they're having a hard day. They're so stressed out, they want to zone out. That's when they come to me. I can give a frustrated person coming into the spa, but afterwards, that atmosphere we give them. As soon as they walk out, we gave them the ultimate experience. That makes me feel relaxed too as I proceed in my job. It's a balance. You're going to get that hard guest, but here it's called tools to get in there and make them feel at ease and what else can we do to make them feel comfortable or at home.

What was your first impression of the Ritz-Carlton?

- Just how everyone was so uniform and so together and just -- when I first remember, when I first started back in 2011, it was just, you just wanted to be a part of it. Not only, I heard it from others who worked from others, this great company, not only for benefits, kids, child care, I have a 1 yr old, that came into really great, just supporting us as people. 401K. everything you might need is there. Most important of course is health care. It's all there. Just working in a place where it's humble. It's not as, it has its stressors but they always make you feel like you're supported.

Help me understand humble.

- What I mean about being humble is more of just, they have everything together, which is, if you have a situation where you can't figure out, they'll make you understand. They're give you the proper vision to understand what they want us to follow and how to get out of a stressful situation. That's what they look at most, that we don't feel either stressed. If a guest is treated us also improperly, you [INAUDIBLE] ladies and gentlemen. Always ladies and gentlemen. Even though the guest is first, but they always make us put them in their position too, how we all can feel like a humble family and make our guest feel [INAUDIBLE]. I love when my home is clean, and you want to feel that at work, just having it there. You never see anyone with the worst attitude. It's part of our culture to treat not only guests but each other. As family. You make so many friends that you never even think you can. It's another really good thing.

Talk to me about this property?

- It's going to be now six months. Trying to see what my balance was, the difference. I was able to compare and contrast what I didn't have over

there. I had more management here, more team. There I was a one man team. I was doing concierge there also. When I came here I was still there and here part time. This is closer to home. It's a bigger team. We had the best concept in spa. Spa's difficult sometimes. Beverly Hills, I was concierge, valet, and managing. I was doing managing schedules and greeting guests. I was doing 4 jobs as one person. Here it's so coordinated. I focus on one thing. Vs. 4 things where more mistakes can happen. Here we have different sets of departments. Housekeeping, concierge, and our management team which just gives it all to you.

More mistakes can be made doing 4 jobs at Beverly Hills. Why is that?

- It's better here because the work is delegated. When the work is separated and someone handles an improper transaction, it's taking away my attention from giving the guest the proper attention. It makes us focus more on our guests when transactions, little mistakes can go when they're in the office, or cleaning, like dishes, that's why we have our valet. the work being delegated, everything goes so much smoother.

Do you ever run into other consequences? Is there a flip side to that, instances where you'd like to be doing more roles?

- Yes. At Marina I really enjoyed the load. It was not only as a growing manager that I want to become, it was helpful. So delegating the work as I proceeded made it a lot more functional growing to be a manager. as a manager, you want to be able to support the team but not to stress yourself out. I learned a lot. It was just not as, it was just, it became really stressful. There was other management that came in. they notice. They're able to recognize, hey, we're doing something wrong here because they always keep track of numbers and satisfaction of our guests. There were two supervisors and a director. At first they saw the pressure going on. Brought someone in, divided it, now we're stronger. They don't think about the financial aspect of bringing someone in. they just think about, how can we better that person to succeed and grow. At Beverly Hills they refuse to give one more concierge or there's no manager for months. There's a financial issue. Here they just think about, how can we make it work? Let's do it, implement it.

Are there examples of it you've had here?

- This being a newer property, it's a lot stronger. It's already envisioned from the others what's missing, what's not. They have the concept right. Different departments. Focus on different things which helps give our guests the top service. everyone knows how we have to, the pace we need to be in. we get really high clientele here. Very, very high. So everyone just knows their role always and always follows the Ritz-Carlton vision and ritual and values which is what some companies don't really put out. They don't really clarify the vision or the service or what they're here to offer.

How did that compare to the BBH?

- They have their own type of values. But they didn't follow it. Cause they want us to care for the guests, comfort them. But there's another way to it. It's being more genuine. There I felt more pressured. When you're just taught how to value yourself and give that person a personal experience of how you'd want to feel, it makes it more seamless. The BBH, I think it was more orchestrated, you have to do it this way, and that's it. Here it has its flow. Its different flow. It's more luxurious. The BBH is very luxurious and it's beautiful. They do give great service. The only thing missing is making the employees feel like a family and you're supported, not just as management but MediCal and certain things we need for living. Here it's always offered, always there, and always supported.

Let's talk about your role at the spa.

- I have a 1 yr old. We have a lot of moms come in, very stressed out. I put myself in their position. Not only moms but men. They're like, what am I doing here? Their wives drag them. Make them feel it's everyone's ritual. You need to get pampered, have a massage. Health and wellness, you always need that. Something that's going to benefit the person in the long run vs. just momentary. That really intrigued me. That's what I like. The cleanliness, the wellness, the health. Guests come in and can't move their neck. I vision them being with one of our top therapists. You remember what was going on when they entered. You helped them feel better and got them comfort. Now they're going to stay at a Ritz-Carlton hotel room. And we're the first stop always. The front desk is, Leslie, the guest is really upset, can you please do something for him? This spa offers champagne, Pellegrino, water, beer. On special occasions we get cakes. They're coming up the stairs just angry, frustrated. The come in -- it smells so good in here. It's the comfort as soon as you walk in the door. That's how I feel. Not only is it a clean environment but it's soothing. Steam rooms, we offer robes, and give them that really luxury experience.

How can you go above and beyond for the guests?

- Most all the time we have anniversaries, birthdays, we're able to do a special card, have the whole team sign, put their special input into it. It's handcrafted and made by us and something for them to take home. It's very personalized service. Not only the cakes and champagne, I even had a guest whose cat just died. I never saw anyone so distraught. But it's part of your family so we tried to make her as welcome...she just wanted someone to talk to, really vent. Hear them out. We have a variety of things we can gift our guest to. It's not about the price, it's about how we make them feel. We got a little i-pill in the form of a cat. Wrote her a little car, everybody put a special note for her. That just turned her day around. We all just listened to her. Poor cat. We made her feel very comforted. We were there for them. That was really nice.

What does a less good day look like?

- We have bars on top of our spas sometimes. Not being able to control the noise levels. Sometimes we have guests that just don't have the experience. That's when a bad complaint comes. But we're able to bounce back from that and welcome them back. When we do get a really bad service or they don't like what happened or there's a noise or the water wasn't cold enough, we're always able to offer something more. We comp service and welcome them back for another service. It's like the bad experience never happened. We have the tools to help them bounce back from something that wasn't good.

What are the best tools you have?

- My director, she's very, she's been in business a long time. She's one of my tools definitely that I use that guides us. If I have a guest that's yelling or really upset, she knows how to come in and cool them down, really just get to be told what the guest wanted. That's something that I can look up to and take with me as an experience. The tools to succeed that I was mentioning, like gifts. We don't think about the price, we think about how that's going to make them feel. What you have to do to make them feel better. They support us with all that stuff too. If we need to call engineering, we have them. We just have a lot of different departments that do a lot of things when we need it. And they're really quick. Sometimes a pipe is ripped. We had an overflow of water one time. Cleaned the place up before any guest came out of their service.

When you first started working with Ritz-Carlton, talk to me about your first impressions. Is there anything about the way you were trained that in your mind felt was outdated or not quite so fresh or relevant?

- Yeah. What I found really cool, we always have to carry our credo card. Our motto is we're ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen. This is what they first gave us. The three steps of service.

What were your first impressions?

- I was like, do I have to memorize this? It was just like, what do we do? What am I going to do in this job? The 12 steps of service just tells us our whole job description. The first one...and create Ritz-Carlton guests for life. That really caught my attention. What if I meet someone in the mix of it? What if it's opportunity growth for me too? That really intrigued me. All the steps they do, they train us how to own responsibility. They make us feel independent in our job also. not every micromanaged. The full training how to solve a problem. We have a lineup every day. We have a form that says, they give us quotes of the day. For example, this one really caught my eye: give attention to detail to better yourself. They always put really detailed quotes that makes you think about it all day. That inspired me. That's how I'm going to act all day. I find that really cool. Our manager does a lineup. Tells us what's for lunch and what

special guests we have in-house, what's going on for the day. I was like, do I have to memorize this? It was just like, what do we do? What am I going to do in this job? The 12 steps of service just tells us our whole job description. The first one...and create Ritz-Carlton guests for life. That really caught my attention. What if I meet someone in the mix of it? What if it's opportunity growth for me too? That really intrigued me. All the steps they do, they train us how to own responsibility. They make us feel independent in our job also. not every micromanaged. The full training how to solve a problem. We have a lineup every day. We have a form that says, they give us quotes of the day. For example, this one really caught my eye: give attention to detail to better yourself. They always put really detailed quotes that makes you think about it all day. That inspired me. That's how I'm going to act all day. I find that really cool. Our manager does a lineup. Tells us what's for lunch and what special guests we have in-house, what's going on for the day. You're not going into a blank stare. You know what you're going into the other day we had Diane Keaton in our spa. We made her feel like everyone else. We didn't treat them any different. Knowing we have a celebrity coming in doesn't change anything but makes us treat them with extra attention. She's so sweet. Then we have basketball players. We have to partner them with our strongest therapist. They give us oversight what we need to have over the day. For conventions going on, special events. We had the premiere Monday for the Hunger Games. Then the Justin Bieber concert. When I got out, it was a madhouse. In the lobby, it was crazy. Then we had a massage therapist who went up to massage Justin Bieber. Those things are always thrown at you. Just react to it. You know what you gotta do. The credo card always helps and just learn that ultimate experience.

When you were coming in, is there anything you've learned in the last six months that you wish you'd learned sooner?

- I learned to be a lot more patient in my journey here because there's a lot of growth but there's a lot of time to learn. Just looking back when I was at Marina, you wanna get up there, but you're not looking at the detail of the different roles and departments and the different trainings. When I got here, it involved a little more on the training. Stephanie, she's the one that teaches us everything of the Ritz-Carlton values to everything. She really made a vision how it's supposed to be which was being patient, being genuine, and learn from your peers, your colleagues, directors. And take advice. Constructive criticism. Take it as a learning tool as you grow here because there's always opportunity. And when you do go above and beyond in your job, that's when you are recognized here, when you feel you're cared for as an employee. I was appreciated. My management always appreciated me. Thank you for doing this or that. People think that's what you have to do. Not only that is important. Just being

appreciated as an employee, and that's what makes an employee stay much longer, because you're appreciated and you're recognized. We always have a quarter service awards. We get recognized for our great service. We do special cards -- even guests do that, when they acknowledge how great you've done for them. It's called fist class service and your manager gives it to you. It brings that appreciation to you and being recognized.

Give me a feel for what's really important to the guests coming into your spa.

- When they hear Ritz-Carlton, they're like, oh, it has to be fancy, #1 five star service.

What does that look like?

- They always get impressed when we serve champagne. Very personalized. We just have a variety of things to offer them. That's just the entrance. Then they're greeted by our team valet which guides them through the entire spa. Full tour from steam room to relaxation lounges to different beverages we have in the back. Any amenity, face cream, hair products, their own locker. It's there. We have it there for them. If they need swim trunks, our boutique offers everything. They really enjoy, especially the steam room. We have showers. There's always an attendant there to help them. Our valet is always there for them. That's something that not a lot of spas have. Some just give you a locker and that's it. BBH, I was valet, helping them with robes. I wasn't able to give them special service to go back in and help them inside the facility. There wasn't enough staff.

What's your sense of how they like to be engaged or talked to, interacted with? How does it differ? Is there anything unique as say the club lounge?

- Yeah. The spa, you instantly think of relaxation. Some of them, they know what they want but they don't know what else is there. We do massage, facials, manicures, body treatments, body scrubs. That's also another good thing. They think they're just going in to get pat down. They get a full experience and that's where I come in. we can add a facial, really add the experience. A lovely oil scalp treatment, hand, back and foot scrubs. It's a different type than just massage. We can add different things to it.

Are people interested to learn all the options?

- There are people who come in, I don't want to mess with it, I just want a massage. Perfect. We know exactly what that type of guest wants. That's when our masseur comes in. when your guest comes in, it's all by the body language. Tone of voice. Take their luggage from them, and they already feel less weight. If you need it, our valet brings it for them. Book them for a massage, get them something to drink. It's the vision of

what they see there. That's when sometimes my therapist calls to the front, we're going to add another 40 minute massage. They really start the magic in the back when they have the guests. At the beginning, I have the frustration, all the body language when they're just not having it. They've been traveling. Once they ease in, it's a different vision for them. I like that we have local guests that come in. not everyone can stay at a Ritz-Carlton hotel room. Not only expensive, but they want to come in locally and use the spa. We welcome guests to get that experience. Not only is it by word of mouth that everyone wants to come in and use our spa, which is really good for business for us to welcome other guests. It's an entry point to work more into the hotel. We have the WP24 restaurant upstairs. They have spa service, can you make a reservation for me? Just give em the full stay-cation at home, at the hotel.

Are there more happening?

- It's happening a lot more now. It's like a 40% local, 60% hotel guests that are coming into the spa.

Do they have difference of needs?

- Our locals are a little more difficult. They already know what they want to expect and it's something better than away from home. The locals are sometimes a challenge but we're able to execute it by giving them that extra comfort. They don't have access to the pool. But they don't know we have a steam room, robes, slippers. The pros and cons give them that experience. They get to use the spa all day. Sometimes they'll come in at 9 AM and they'll stay all day. They're welcome. Sometimes they're a little upset because there's no pool. We can also bring lunch to them in their sanctuary.

When you think of a spa in a hotel, the best standard in spas, what do you see as the key differences in this area?

- Because most spas, you have to take your [INAUDIBLE] with you into the room and get dressed in the room, they don't give you the lockers. That extra attention, beverages, complementary, is something that intrigues the guests. We get bigger groups and have bridal showers, anniversaries, because we have more to offer them than others. Simple things. Some places don't have a full locker room.

Is there anything that standalone spas feel that they have an advantage on?

- Yeah, the pool situation. It's only for hotel guests only. We consider our spa more of a boutique luxury spa. We want to steer them to our boutique luxury spa vs. a spa with Jacuzzi inside. The facilities is an extra. The services is the primary thing we focus on.

Is there a difference on the service they'd receive here than a standalone spa?

- Yeah. Here we always pay attention to them. We remember their name always and make them know they're recognized. That's service we give that no one gives out of the Ritz-Carlton. I've been to many spas and never been called by my name. It's being very attentive and feeling important. They don't know I work for the Ritz-Carlton. I'm as welcome as any other guest. Especially if someone ignores you around the spa and you're looking for a towel or q-tip, we're attentive. We read the body language. We know someone's in need. To extend that extra hand and give that to them. That's a personalized thing that we create that I don't think others have.

We were talking in the restaurant about other ways of giving service, fun and playful, etc. what are people looking for in terms of formality vs. informality in a spa context?

- When they come out of service, you can already tell they're relaxed. They've very comforted. Oh, Mrs. Smith, you look so blessed. And they're like, oh yes, I feel wonderful. You can tell when you can relax and not come from such a serious standpoint, when you can be genuinely funny with a guest. You can already tell they're relaxed. Steer them on to their manicure. That's the best thing about spas. You can get them from their serious side to down to earth side, learn so much more about that person.

What are we learning?

- We bring them in, we had the mayor from Sacramento come in. very stressed out and serious. As soon as he came out, he was a completely different person. You get the different sides of his personality. They come out, just comfortable. Absolutely comfortable after calming down and relaxing. You get to learn more things about them. If they're staying at the hotel, seeing the Lakers, seeing the Kings game, they're gonna come back and maybe want something here. You know what time the game is. We'll have something personalized in their room. Or some flowers downstairs at WP24 if it's their anniversary.

Tell me about mystique, noting preferences, in the spa experience?

- Definitely it's one of the main things we use, the preferences. If they're comfortable with a male or female therapist. A lot of people aren't comfortable with a male. Or for nail services, different type of polishes, colors, products. Skin care is another important thing, if they have oily, dry skin. We want to put our aesthetician on a really good start, know what type of skin she's working with. Or for a therapist, their preferences, deep tissue, Swedish, stretching. We take all those things into consideration.

Is there any challenge to using mystique for spa services?

- I don't think there's many difficulties. It's more of using it, just really paying attention to what the guest's needs are? It's more how you use it than how you look at it. She really paid attention. She really knows what I need. It comes into play to show we really know their needs and they know their needs are always met.

Do you still use mystique if they're not a hotel guest?

- No we don't. asking them questions that would be on mystique for our spa guests. We use Spa Soft. They use the software and are able to input things like mystique. If the guest says one thing, you put it in the notes. If it's a surprise, you don't want the wife to know. Write notes so it's all coordinated for them, from the therapist to the valet. And everyone's able to see these notes.

Is Spa Soft usable by people outside?

- Just the spa.

If they're guest and then a hotel guest, can you move it over?

- It's tricky. It will only work if the guest says I just came from the spa, give them my information. And we call the front desk and tell them.

What's the most valuable information to record?

- I would say for that is, the most important thing is where they're coming from, if they're coming from a different city, different state. And what are they here for. Are they celebrating or just here for business and to relax is the head start to getting to know more from the person. And once they come in, how was your meeting? if we're fully booked, I already know their schedule so I'm able to work around that and find different times to accommodate their needs.

If you're thinking to the future, 5-10 years, what should Ritz-Carlton be paying attention to?

- That's a really good question. They do have a lot of really good strong characteristics already. For more...like me, future...sometimes food-wise for spa would be a lot different. Also, a little more amenities in the sauna cause all we have is a steam room. Maybe expanding it a little more. The second floor. Having more rooms. We are a busy spa. On the weekend we have 90 appointments a day. Maybe expanding our locker room. We're going to become E spa coming January. That's going to become an amazing experience. I always get guests who say, I got this from E spa at Ritz-Carlton in Texas. Now we're going to be more united, carry things that other spas carry. Not only product level but the service level. The type of form of massage and facials they get. It's uniformed but it's, everyone does it. Since they got that massage somewhere, I want that massage, from there. And we're able to do that, give them something they received somewhere else. We can give them the same treatment, but personalized. We need to pay attention more to our men. I had 7 men

that came in from disaster relief. They were in by their own supervisor. There's not much we can do. a bunch of dudes in the steam room. Offering something more for the men would be a really good thing. The boutique is full of women stuff. making half and half, or making men feel equal so we can talking more male guests cause all we have is a little rack with men's trunks. Sometimes they want to look for shirts or shoes. We should make them feel that they can shop at our boutique too.

What about international guests? Overseas visitors?

- We do get a lot of overseas guests. I never had that much of a problem with them as far as the bookings. More the amenity aspect. They're more used to a whirlpool, a more bigger spa. Just the size of it. They're expecting more. But other than that, that's out of our control. We try to make them as comfortable as possible and really pay attention to them. They turn out to be great, really easy to work with. Other than things out of our control and the amenities, they're not that difficult. They mostly focus on the massage therapists. We like to personalize their service and give them a memory of the LA property.

anything you're thinking you think the company should be aware of from your development standpoint that would be important for people like yourself coming in?

- I think having a lot more leaning developments programs within...I had it at Marina Del Rey but it wasn't fluid yet. Maybe having a different learning program for employees to get into to learn more of the Ritz-Carlton [INAUDIBLE] would be really good. Cause we only get our training at the beginning. People are here 10, 20 years. Having that repetitive interaction with their employees is a really good idea.

What would you want to be learning?

- More management. wanting to grow more. What degrees would I need to get to a higher position. To make more money. Oversight more about what we need to do. Of course we'd want to stay here. It's just everyone is on the ladder. everyone wants to move up. everyone is on their toes, aware of what they have to do. More a learning standpoint as training would be good.

What are examples of format or learning?

- I know they use Task Force already. So Task Force is visiting other properties which is really good because you get to experience other different properties vs. just your own so when you want to go to that development standpoint you can go to other Ritz-Carlton via Task Force and learn from other teams how they function better. They really let you vision different places. Not everyone is the same. I think that's really good. Doing more Task Force would help keep everyone motivated and intrigued and interested.

What about inspiration?

- When we first got interviewed, it's a four day introduction. We have lots of different inspiring stories. One guy was the valet. Now he's the president, and he made it there in 7 years. It's the amount of motivation they gave him and they just kept him interested to learn more. When you stay interested, that's when you want to explore other positions. He went from front desk to accounting, from accounting to directors. It's just about exploring different departments.. you're not just gonna stay at valet. If moving to front desk would help me get a different aspect, it would help open me up more to what's around. Like a different role.

How did you learn to read people? Is that a skill you've always had?

- When you're very friendly and give them that welcoming face, they'll either say one word or a whole sentence. If it's two word or, it was a long drive or traffic. Or, I'm fine. I just want water. You know, let's move them along a lot faster. If it's someone interacting within you, you know what to put in there. People who are a lot shorter, at the end want to give it lengthier input, was everything OK? Did you enjoy your service? always get the feedback from each and everyone's experience. Email our supervisor, we need to work on this.

Do you have a sense, what's your sense of, do people who've been with the company that long, do they have a different take or approach or philosophy on service?

- There's just a different mindset to service. It just becomes their culture, not only here but outside. It just becomes a natural habit. I've talked to people who've been here 20 years. They still love the company. That gives me that motivation. This is somewhere where we can be long term. I've studied criminal justice and I'm in hospitality. I love it here and everything we have here. Not only that but they treat us as family, benefits. They give us everything we need in our daily lives, especially when we have families. They really put that in consideration.

What would help you make that mindset shift from it being a personalizing service to a natural habit?

- Just keeping us interested. Now, us transitioning to E Spa is very motivating. We're going to learn a new modality of spa. It's more detailed. We're going into training next week. We'll learn something different and new to carry on my belt that I can carry somewhere else. Ever since I started at Marina, hey, she has this type of experience. Not only is it looked at professionally, but it really helps you in the long run. With the training, we'll be learning a lot.

Thank you a lot.