Deploying customer service coaches
服務教練的推行

L C Koo
Administrative Manager, Performance Improvement Department, SJM
Chairman, Macau Quality Management Association

Abstract

As at end of August 2008, Macau has 31 casinos. The gaming industry in Macau is extremely competitive particularly when the Macau government has announced measures to freeze the launch of new gaming-related development projects. As a result, the quality of service provided by the various casinos is getting more and more important to ensure their successes. Since 10 July, 2008 SJM Holdings Limited, one of the six concessionaires and sub-concessionaires in Macau has successfully become a listed company in the Hong Kong Stock Market.   As at 31st December, 2007, SJM operated 18 of the 28 casinos in Macau with a total of 305 VIP gaming tables, 1107 mass market gaming tables, and 3702 slot machines. It is the largest casino operator in terms of gaming revenue, market share and number of casinos. In order to improve its customer service the Customer Service Coaching Scheme was launched in May 2008 for the pit-managers and supervisors. This paper reviews relevant literature on coaching, outlines the service coaching scheme in SJM and describes the results of a series of surveys among the customer service coaches within the SJM. A total of 311 SJM employees received training on customer service coach by end of 2008. The coaching concept is an effective approach to liberate people's potential and change their attitude. Apart from its application in the gaming industry, coaching can be adopted in many other industries to improve the quality of people in providing service.

Key words: SJM, customer service coach, quality of service; Macau; gaming industry

摘要

直至2008年8月底澳門共有31間娛樂場，澳門政府公佈凍結有關博彩業新項目措施，博彩業的競爭變得越來越激烈，因此，各娛樂場提供的服務品質是它們的關鍵成功因素，在零八年七月十日，澳門六家娛樂場持牌公司之一的澳門博彩股份有限公司 (簡稱澳博) 亦成功在香港上市，在2007年底，澳博擁有澳門28間娛樂場中的18間，有305張貴賓廳賭桌、1107張中場賭桌及3702部角子機。從賭博收入、市場份額和娛樂場數量來看，澳博是澳門最大的娛樂場經營商。為了提升顧客服務水平，澳博在2008年5月份為娛樂場的管理者及監督推行了客戶服務教練計劃，本文對有關教練的文獻作出整理，並介紹澳博的服務教練計劃，同時亦分析服務教練的調查結果。在2008年底一共有311位澳博的員工參與有關的顧客服務教練課程。教練是一種能有效釋放人員潛能及改變他們態度的技術。除了可以在娛樂場應用，教練概念可以在其它行業中被廣泛應用來改善提供服務人員的品質。

關鍵詞：澳博、客戶服務教練、服務品質、澳門、博彩業

What is coaching?

The word "Coach" comes from "Kocs", a village in Hungary where high quality carriages were made. In the 19th century, English students used this word as slang for tutors of such excellence that they felt as if they were carried through their academic career in a carriage driven by their tutor (Wilson, 2004). Coaching has it

origin from sport. Ige and Kleiner (1998) describe the coaching philosophy of John R. Wooden (a successful basketball coach), viz., "Get the players in the best condition. Teach them to execute the fundamentals quickly. Drill them as a team. Enabled him to reach his championship goal". Attributes from his style of coaching can be used to develop successful work teams in business as well. Coaching has become an important technique for performance improvement. Coaching is not same as teaching. Teaching is usually one-way communication. Managers can teach their subordinates to do or not to do things, but subordinates may not understand or act completely as their managers expect. Coaching is more of a two-way communication process. Coaching focuses on the individual. It can be used to enhance morale, motivate and increase productivity and reduce staff turnover. Coaching can achieve a balance between meeting organizational goals and objectives and the personal development needs of the individual. It is a two-way relationship with significant benefits for both (Sweeney, 2007). Coaching is a private relationship built on shared values, mutual interest, respect, and trust. It is essential for the coach and coachee to develop a good rapport, early in the relationship (Cramm, et al., 1998). When learners, who are expected to be coached, deliver results, coaches will give feedback and let learners adjust their future actions. This process will go on and on until they reach the expected outcomes. It is a reciprocal relationship between coaches and learners. Coaches may not perform as good as coachees but they know how to improve others (Champathes, 2006). He introduces the **COACH** process which comprises:

- **C**larifying needs;
- **O**bjectives setting;
- **A**ction plan designing; and
- **CH**ecking activities.

Salisbury (1994) introduces an alternative coaching model called '**POWER**', an acronym for:

- **P**urpose,
- **O**bjectives,
- **W**hat is happening now?
- **E**mpowering, and
- **R**eview.

Training should come before coaching. Coaching can release the skills and potential that people have, that training alone cannot do. Training teaches people to reach a standard performance. Coaching enables people to exceed the standard. It is the release of latent talent and skills, previously untapped by training, through a process of self-awareness initiated by the coach. Coaching can help coachees strive for the best they can be, or to be better than what they have been before.

The purpose of coaching should be clearly identified. The learning process can occur in the office or place of work so that actual work — rather than a carefully simulated exercise — is the vehicle for the learning experience. The focus is on the learner learning, rather than the coach teaching, and the coach's style is usually non-intrusive with an emphasis on helping from a distance (Phillips, 1994). Lloyd (2005) views coaching as the art of facilitating the unleashing of people's potential to reach meaningful, important objectives. According to Lloyd (2005), important characteristics of coaches include:

- sense of power and responsibility,
- time management approaches,
- definition of identity and purpose,
- organizational arrangements,
- notions of territory and boundaries, communication patterns, and
- modes of thinking.

The concept of coaching, in which the "expert" passes on valuable skills to the "novice", will not be strange to managers. But what many fail to understand is that a different, more "customized" approach is needed when the process is applied in a business setting (Barry, 1994). Edwards (2003), suggests that coaching should:

- focus on possibilities and potential;
- be about facilitating learning rather than teaching;
- enable the coachee to unlock their potential and maximize their performance; and
- give the coachee full responsibility and ownership of the outcomes.

Definitions of coaching tend to group around learning and development linked to performance improvement or coaching to facilitate personal growth and change. Coaching is the facilitation of learning and development with the purpose of improving performance and enhancing effective action, goal achievement and personal satisfaction. It invariably involves growth and change, whether that is in perspective, attitude or behavior (Bluckert, 2005b). Executive coaching is an action-learning process to enhance effective action and learning agility. The coach works with coachees to achieve speedy, increased and sustainable effectiveness in their lives and careers through focused learning. Coaching is about change and transformation — about the human ability to grow, to alter undesirable behaviors and to generate new, adaptive and successful actions. A coach facilitates the process of change. The coach should act as a "catalyst for change", someone who "stimulates and challenges the individual to adopt new behaviors".

Using a mixture of action development (built from action learning) and coaching help the coaches (Wild, 2001):

- develop their own skills while working with the teams.
- build themselves into an effective team;
- understand and use the politics of the organization;
- develop a real understanding of how to instill learning into the organization;
- achieve qualifications.

Action development uses a series of structured tasks to help the participants develop their abilities to work in action learning sets. Wild (2001) describes the following similarity between action learning and action development

- Learning takes place in a real working situation
- Learning involves taking action
- Time for meetings should be flexible
- Learning set members make contributions from their own experiences
- Managers learn best from each other
- Action learning set members must be volunteers
- Individuals need higher management support
- Input of programmed knowledge should be limited
- The groups need a facilitator, not a teacher
- Members must be prepared to participate
- Trust and openness must be developed in the group
- Action learning/development support culture change

Solution-focused coaching approach discourages "problem talk" and replaces it with "solution talk". People are more naturally oriented towards "problem talk" because they are more comfortable when dealing with the past where they can analyze a problem and examine its causes and effects. "Solution talk" is more about

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exploring issues that are focused on the desired outcome. This does involve a change in the frame of reference and the coachee is encouraged to talk, in specific concrete terms, about the preferred "future perfect" (Nagel, 2006). Hawkins (2003) describes solutions coaching as a powerful, highly pragmatic and emotionally intelligent method of coaching individuals and teams. Its guiding principle is simple — find what works and do more of it. He (ibid.) introduces the **SIMPLE** solution coaching model:

- **S**olutions, not problems
- **I**n-between — the action is in the interaction
- **M**ake use of what's already there
- **P**ossibilities — past, present, future
- **L**anguage (use simple language)
- **E**very case is different

Toit (2005) argues that coaching provides the challenge and the support managers need to develop the competencies they and their organizations need. The following are the key characteristics of coaching:

- a reflective practice based on a one-to-one relationship between the coach and coachee;
- tailored to the needs of the individual;
- stimulating growth in areas of organizational importance or weakness;
- present and future focused;
- action oriented;
- a non-directive intervention form of development; and
- aimed at the development of individual performance and abilities.

Coaching helps people adapt willingly to change. From the learners' perspective, being coached involves (Phillips, 1994):

- assertiveness — they need to make clear what they want to achieve;
- taking initiatives — learners may need to ask to see their coach who may be unaware that they need help;
- openness and honesty — coaches need to know if learners have specific reasons for doing or not doing particular tasks;
- asking for feedback and suggestions — coaches sometimes have to be prompted to give a review of learners' successes and mistakes;
- networking — coaching offers learners an opportunity to build valuable networks;
- clarifying objectives — the coaching project should have a clearly written statement of objectives;
- taking responsibility —learners need to take responsibility for their own learning.

Coaching is concerned with creating conditions so that people can perform to the best of their ability. The emphasis is on the learner learning rather than the coach teaching and the coach's style is usually non-intrusive with an emphasis on helping from a distance. Coachees will feel a sense of ownership and that they are managing their own development. In coaching, coachees receive instant feedback about their performance — this reinforces successes and helps them quickly correct any mistakes. This accelerates the whole learning and performance improvement process. Coaching helps people who can adapt willingly to change. People who have been coached offer many insights into how the coach-learner relationship works best. Coaching relationship requires that the coach is self-confident and motivated, which attitude is translated to the coachees and builds their confidence and the coach has confidence in the coachees, which again builds the coachees' own confidence.

Coaches' mental skills include observation and analysis, and the ability to structure the coaching process for the coachees in question. Key interpersonal skills include questioning; listening; giving and receiving feedback; communicating and motivating (Phillips, 1995). The purpose of coaching is clearly identified as improving the performance of an individual person. The learning process occurs in the work place so that actual work — rather than a carefully simulated exercise — is the vehicle for the learning experience. An effective coach is an enabler rather than someone with the answer to all questions and problems. Indeed, the coach may know very little about a particular process or issue, but can still fulfill a coaching role successfully (Phillips, 1996).

To help a team develop towards high performance requires an integrative perspective of the team as a whole. Team coaching is a response to the difficulties teams encounter to foster team building. It is intended to trigger self-reflection on team performance and promote the necessary changes in the team in achieving its desired objectives (Rezania, 2008). According to Rezania (ibid.), team coaching is a fairly short-term activity, a relationship between the coach and the team, focusing on developmental discussions around the current and future performance. It is an act of leadership, based on self-directed learning process in which individuals:

- take the initiative in analyzing their learning needs;
- determine learning goals;
- identify human and material resources for learning;
- choose and implement appropriate learning strategies; and
- control and monitor learning outcomes.

In structuring effective coaching, Barlow (2005) suggests that the following five questions should be addressed:

Where have I been?
Where am I now?
Where do I want to go to?
How will I get there?
How will I know if I have arrived?

Effective coaching

Barry (1994) outlines the following critical principles of successful coaching:

- Choose the right time.
- Communicate clearly. Avoid vagueness, ambiguity and confusion.
- Listen to ensure full understanding.
- Learn to deal with your coachee's emotions.
- Delegate projects to help increase satisfaction and broaden skills.
- Encourage continuous improvement.
- Give criticism in a way that clearly communicates your intention to help.
- Discuss and understand the coachee's career goals, interests and concerns.

Bluckert (2005a) outlines the characteristics of an effective coaching relationship:

- Predictability and reliability;

- Predictability and reliability;
- Factors of time, place, and confidentiality;
- Respect, consideration and understanding for the complexities of the coachee' s experience;
- Empathy for the coachee;
- The coach interacts in an authentic and genuine way;
- Consideration and understanding for the complexities of the coachee' s life;
- Courtesy; and
- Accurate and tact.

A great coach will facilitate and accelerate individual learning and dramatically increase the personal effectiveness of the coachee. Coaching delivers results when a relationship is based on mutual respect, the intent of the coach and the effectiveness of the communication used. Essentially, coaching is a highly personalized one-to-one personal development programme. People learn best when they take ownership of a given situation and take personal responsibility for the outcome. The key principles of a great coach (Edwards, 2003) include:

- Focuses their attention on achieving the outcomes.
- Negotiates how the coachee wants feedback.
- Uses high impact questions.
- Gets themselves out of the way and releases any value judgments.
- Has excellent personal mental/emotional state control and great behavioral flexibility.
- Is fully present and listens with full attention.
- Believes that everyone has the inherent abilities and resources they need to succeed.

The key factors in successful goal-focused workplace coaching are (Grant, 2007):

- coaching sessions that deliver tangible value;
- a strong collaborative working relationship between coach and coachee;
- an emphasis on constructing solutions, rather than just analyzing the problem;
- efficient goal setting; and
- managing the coaching process and holding the coachee accountable for agreed actions.

Salisbury (1994) suggests that the following attributes and skills are necessary for a coach:

- Caring skills
- Observation skills
- Questioning skills
- Supportive skills
- Listening skills
- Verbal skills
- Non-verbal skills
- Counseling ability
- Patience
- Awareness

Benefits of coaching

The main benefits of coaching to the coachee are:

- Improvements in individuals' performance
- Increased openness to personal learning and development
- Solutions t ific work-related issues

The main benefits to the organization are:

- Allows fuller use of individuals' talents/potential
- Higher organizational performance/productivity

Many companies bring in coaching as a solution to a chronic problem. The most common of these are that people:

- Do not know what is expected of them;
- Do not get the quality of feedback they need;
- Do not feel appreciated;
- Do not trust management;
- Are not getting the career development they want.

Process of coaching

Nagel (2006) outlines the features of a typical solutions focused coaching session:

Co-operative relationship
> An important starting point in a coaching intervention is to establish trust and understanding between the coach and coachee.

Recognizing solvable and unsolvable problems
> With solutions focused coaching, it is essential to keep the intervention "on track" by focusing on solvable issues only.

Encouraging solution talk
> Solutions focused coaching discourages "problem talk" and replaces it with "solution talk". "Solution talk" is more about exploring issues that are focused on the desired outcome. This does involve a change in the frame of reference and the coachee is encouraged to talk, in specific concrete terms, about the preferred "future perfect".

Resources
> There are a wide range of resources which coachees have at their disposal to help them achieve the solution. There are both concrete and intangible resources, e.g.:
> - Concrete - communication skills, conflict or crisis management skills, business insights, time and finances; and
> - Intangible - effort, the will to succeed, company loyalty and friendship.

Agreeing the next steps
> Towards the end of a coaching session, it is important to summarize and agree next steps.

Evaluating
The feedback loop to evaluate the effectiveness of the coaching intervention.

The three main principles of solutions focused coaching are (Nagel, 2006):

1. People need to be willing to change or do something differently. If they do not wish to do so, there is no point in forcing them to participate in a coaching program.
2. It is important to do more of what is working — this behavior needs to be strengthened.
3. It is important to stop doing what is not working and, instead, trying something different.

The Customer Service Coaching Scheme in SJM

In response to the key findings of a training need analysis conducted by end of 2007, the Performance Improvement Department of SJM tailor-developed this action learning approach using the coach-the-coach concept since May 2008. Up to end of October 2008, twelve classes were conducted and 311 casino managers and supervisors attended the training on customer service coach. Before the trainees came to the one-day training they were required to complete two questionnaires. The first questionnaire is related to their view on coaching (Appendix 1) and the second questionnaire is a modified form of the SERVQUAL questionnaire (Appendix 2: a 22-item questionnaire on service quality). These questionnaire findings are discussed at the beginning of the training in order to set the scene that customer service is an important success element in gaming industry and then also review their perception towards coaching. The one-day training on service coaching is designed to be interactive, interesting, pragmatic, and action-oriented. Live-examples on customer service related issues are used as learning opportunities. Gaming and group discussions are used to strengthen the learning outcomes. The one-day course serves in fact as the start up for a three month long action learning project initiated and owned by the individual potential customer service coach. After the training on theory and practice on coaching they are asked to prepare a coaching action-plan with SMART objectives (**SMART** is the acronym for: **S**pecific; **M**easurable; **A**chievable; **R**esult-oriented, and **T**ime-bound). On top of these individual three month action-learning assignments the coaches are also asked to form Service Improvement Teams (SITs) which is modified from Quality Control Circles (QCCs). The SITs are in fact solution focused coaching approach mentioned above. With the SITs, these newly appointed Customer Service Coaches are expected to apply their knowledge gained from the class-room into solving real life service issues occurring in the workplace.

The contents of the customer service coach session include (Koo, 2008; Kinlaw, 1996):

- **What is coaching**
- **Why coaching becomes important**
- **The Customer Service Coaching Model** (Core value; Characteristics of coaching; Skills; Interview; Application of coaching)
- **Core Value** (People want to improve; They should be given opportunity to improve; People like their job and find them interesting; Every conversation can be a coaching opportunity)
- **Characteristics of coaching** (i.e. Balanced communication; Specific goals; Shared responsibility; Diverse-Focus Approach; Respect)
- **The Coaching skills** (Listening; Probing; Expressing; Committing; Normalizing)
- **Coaching interview** (Diverse vs. Focus approach on: Problem solving; Counseling; Performance maintenance and Performance improvement)

Table 1 depicts the questionnaire survey findings from the participants attending the coaching training course (Likert scale: 5 = Definitely agreed, 4 = Agreed, 3 = Neutral; 2 = Disagreed' 1 = Definitely disagreed). A total of 263 questionnaires were collected and the survey results were discussed among the coaches.

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	N	Mean
sc1 Good Service Quality is very important to casinos	263	4.84
sc4 Teamwork among colleagues is needed in providing good customer service	263	4.60
sc7 People need to be given opportunities to prove their abilities	263	4.19
sc6 With support people will work hard to enhance their capabilities	263	3.96
sc12 After having made a mistake, SJM employees are given opportunity to improve	263	3.88
sc13 Every interaction between superior & subordinates can be an improvement opportunity	263	3.86
sc9 SJM employees are competent to do what they should do	263	3.81
sc3 SJM service still needs improvement	263	3.79
sc8 SJM employees know what they do and the importance of their tasks	263	3.52
sc5 On the whole, cooperation among SJM colleagues are good	263	3.46
sc14 Traditional training can help enhance service quality of SJM	263	3.38
sc10 SJM employees enjoy their jobs	263	3.35
sc2 On the whole SJM service is highly praised by our customer	263	3.34
sc11 SJM employees find their jobs challenging	263	3.19
Valid N (listwise)	263	

Table 1: Listing of extent of agreement in descending order

The top most agreed items are:

~ sc1 Good Service Quality is very important to casinos
~ sc4 Teamwork among colleagues is needed in providing good customer service
~ sc7 People need to be given opportunities to prove their abilities

There was a strong consensus among the course participants that service quality is important to casinos and that teamwork is required in providing good customer service. They also agree that people need to be given the chance to prove their abilities. These findings set a useful scene to convince the coaches that these coaching philosophies need to be adopted and practiced in their daily works.

On the contrary, the relatively least agreed items from the questionnaire survey are:

~ sc10 SJM employees enjoy their jobs
~ sc2 On the whole SJM service is highly praised by our customer
~ sc11 SJM employees find their jobs challenging

These findings were discussed among the coaches. By design the job of a croupier is rather routine. It was not surprising that they opined the job to be less challenging. An interesting story on a "professional beggar" was circulated among the course participants and they discussed the job of front line employees of casinos and concluded that if providing excellent customer service is instilled in their daily jobs, their otherwise mundane jobs can turn to be most challenging and rewarding! The coach can help change dealers' perception towards their jobs and even make them enjoy their jobs. On the issue on the relative lower rating on SJM service being praised by customers, this helps convince the participants to visualize the importance of improving customer service among the SJM casinos. This finding can be read and interpreted in conjunction with the second part of the questionnaire on Service Quality.

Measurement of Service Quality (SERVQUAL)

The SERVQUAL approach to measure service quality is getting more and more popular. SERVQUAL assumes that the level of service quality experienced by customers is determined by the gaps between their expectations of the service and their perceptions of what they actually receive from a specific service provider. There are five dimensions (with RATER as acronym) of service (Koo, H., 2008; Koo and Koo, 2007):

- Reliability is the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately
- Assurance refers to the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence
- Tangibles refers to the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials
- Empathy refers to the level of caring and individualized attention the service provider extended to its customers.
- Responsiveness is the willingness of service provider to help customers and provide prompt service

As a measurement instrument, the SERVQUAL questionnaire consists of 22 parallel statements related to expectations (E) and perceptions (P) of the five service quality dimensions discussed above (Appendix 2). Customers select a response using a 7-point Likert scale. The contrast SEVQUAL approach was discussed by Koo, H. (2008). The Contrast SERVQUAL adopts the traditional 22-item SERVQUAL questionnaire. The respondents are asked to indicate their perceived "best" casino and the "worst" casinos in Macau. The listing for the perceived "best" and "worst" casinos is useful. Whatever the customers perceived, though subjective in nature, is reality from their perspective. Service providers should never underestimate or ignore subjective perception from customers. The best and worst casinos are aggregated together as two distinct service provider groups and then their customer satisfaction levels are compared. For each of the 30 questions used in the revised Contrast SERVQUAL questionnaire (i.e. 22 service quality items from the traditional SERVQUAL questionnaire and eight additional Macau casino specific questions), the respondents are asked to rate subjectively their opinion on the importance scores (i.e. Expectations); the satisfaction scores (i.e. Perceptions) of the perceived "best" and "worst" casinos respectively. An overall satisfaction level is added respectively for the best and worst casinos. The five service quality dimensions are same as in the original SERVQUAL questionnaire i.e. Tangibles (questions 1 to 4); Reliability (questions 5 to 9); Responsiveness (questions 10 to 13); Assurance (questions 14 to 17); Empathy (questions 18 to 22). Test for data normality is not done because the central limit theorem states that the sum of a large number of independent random variables each with finite mean and variance will be approximately normally distributed (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_limit_theorem).

A total of 276 sets of questionnaire were collected. Some questionnaires contained missing values for some questionnaire items. 201 respondents indicated their perceived best casinos and 60% named SJM casinos being the best casinos and 40% named non-SJM casinos as the best casinos. 165 respondents indicated their perceived worst casinos and 85% named non-SJM casinos being the worst casinos and 15% named SJM casinos as the worst casinos.

	N	Mean
SQI_16 Their employees are polite	262	6.2977
SQI_5 They can comply with promise to do something on time	260	6.0038
SQI_11 Customers can get prompt services from their employees	260	6.0038
SQI_12 Their employees are willing to help customers	259	5.9575
SQI_4 Physical facilities keep with type of services provided	260	5.9269

SQI_13 Even their employees are busy, they respond to customers requests promptly	261	5.8851
SQI_8 They provide services at the time they promise to do so	260	5.8808
SQI_1 They have up-to-date equipment	262	5.8588
SQI_15 Customers feel safe in their transactions with their employees	261	5.8544
SQI_3 Their employees are well dressed and appear neat	262	5.8244
SQI_17 Their employees get adequate support from the company to do their jobs well	260	5.7846
SQI_22 They operate hours convenient to all their customers	261	5.7739
SQI_2 Their physical facilities are visually appealing	261	5.7663
SQI_14 Customers can trust their employees	261	5.7165
SQI_6 They are sympathetic and reassuring to customers who have problems	261	5.6935
SQI_7 They are dependable	260	5.6462
SQI_9 They keep their records accurately	260	5.5769
SQI_20 Their employees know the needs of customers	261	5.5670
SQI_10 They tell customers exactly when services will be performed	260	5.5000
SQI_21 The casino has their customers' best interest at heart	261	5.3678
SQI_18 The casino can give customers individual attention	261	5.3218
SQI_19 Their employees can give customers personal attention	261	5.3218
Valid N (listwise)	257	

Table 2: Extent of importance of various service quality items in descending order

The importance scores of all 22 SERVQUAL items scored very high indicating that the respondents agree with the importance of these items. On a relative basis, the top five most important service items are:

- SQI_16 Their employees are polite
- SQI_5 They can comply with promise to do something on time
- SQI_11 Customers can get prompt services from their employees
- SQI_12 Their employees are willing to help customers
- SQI_4 Physical facilities keep with type of services provided

These are useful reference information for the casino operators. Employee politeness stands out to be the most important service attribute. This is followed by the compliance to do something on time and prompt service. These information are shared among the coaches.

	N	Mean
BSQS_1 They have up-to-date equipment	214	5.7757
BSQS_16 Their employees are polite	215	5.6837
BSQS_2 Their physical facilities are visually appealing	215	5.6326
BSQS_22 They operate hours convenient to all their customers	213	5.6150
BSQS_3 Their employees are well dressed and appear neat	214	5.4953
BSQS_4 Physical facilities keep with type of services provided	215	5.4791
BSQS_14 Customers can trust their employees	214	5.4393
BSQS_12 Their employees are willing to help customers	215	5.4233
BSQS_15 Customers feel safe in their transactions with their employees	214	5.4206
BSQS_17 Their employees get adequate support from the company to do their jobs well	213	5.4178
BSQS_11 Customers can get prompt services from their employees	215	5.2977
BSQS_13 Even their employees are busy, they respond to customers requests promptly	214	5.2850
BSQS_5 They can comply with promise to do something on time	216	5.2361

	N	Mean
BSQS_19 Their employees can give customers personal attention	213	5.2300
BSQS_8 They provide services at the time they promise to do so	216	5.2037
BSQS_10 They tell customers exactly when services will be performed	214	5.1963
BSQS_9 They keep their records accurately	214	5.1402
BSQS_7 They are dependable	216	5.0972
BSQS_18 The casino can give customers individual attention	213	5.0423
BSQS_6 They are sympathetic and reassuring to customers who have problems	215	5.0326
BSQS_20 Their employees know the needs of customers	213	4.9859
BSQS_21 The casino has their customers' best interest at heart	213	4.9296
Valid N (listwise)	211	

Table 3: Satisfaction of various service quality items for best casinos in descending order

In general, the perceived "best" casinos score very high on all 22 service attributes.

N		Mean	
WSQS_22 They operate hours convenient to all their customers	181	4.6630
WSQS_3 Their employees are well dressed and appear neat	186	4.3925
WSQS_1 They have up-to-date equipment	185	4.2324
WSQS_7 They are dependable	182	4.0879
WSQS_2 Their physical facilities are visually appealing	185	4.0865
WSQS_9 They keep their records accurately	181	4.0663
WSQS_4 Physical facilities keep with type of services provided	184	4.0109
WSQS_17 Their employees get adequate support from the company to do their jobs well	180	4.0056
WSQS_15 Customers feel safe in their transactions with their employees	181	3.9890
WSQS_16 Their employees are polite	183	3.9727
WSQS_14 Customers can trust their employees	181	3.9337
WSQS_18 The casino can give customers individual attention	179	3.9274
WSQS_21 The casino has their customers' best interest at heart	180	3.9111
WSQS_10 They tell customers exactly when services will be performed	181	3.8729
WSQS_8 They provide services at the time they promise to do so	183	3.8525
WSQS_6 They are sympathetic and reassuring to customers who have problems	182	3.7692
WSQS_19 Their employees can give customers personal attention	180	3.7667
WSQS_11 Customers can get prompt services from their employees	180	3.7611
WSQS_5 They can comply with promise to do something on time	184	3.7446
WSQS_20 Their employees know the needs of customers	180	3.7333
WSQS_12 Their employees are willing to help customers	182	3.7253
WSQS_13 Even their employees are busy, they respond to customers requests promptly	181	3.7127
Valid N (listwise)	178	

Table 4: Satisfaction of various service quality items for worst casinos in descending order

It can be seen from table 4 that the perceived "worst" casinos get much lower scores on all these quality service items. In particular, the following 14 items out of 22 items score below the neutral value of "4".

- WSQS_15 Customers feel safe in their transactions with their employees
- WSQS_16 Their employees are polite
- WSQS_14 Customers can trust their employees
- WSQS_18 The casino can give customers individual attention
- WSQS_21 The casino has their customers' best interest at heart

- WSQS_10 They tell customers exactly when services will be performed
- WSQS_8 They provide services at the time they promise to do so
- WSQS_6 They are sympathetic and reassuring to customers who have problems
- WSQS_19 Their employees can give customers personal attention
- WSQS_11 Customers can get prompt services from their employees
- WSQS_5 They can comply with promise to do something on time
- WSQS_20 Their employees know the needs of customers
- WSQS_12 Their employees are willing to help customers
- WSQS_13 Even their employees are busy, they respond to customers requests promptly

Table 5 below summarizes the perceived importance and satisfaction scores for the following eight casino specific items.

	Means of Importance	Satisfaction towards "Best" casinos	Satisfaction towards "Worst" casinos
SQ_23 Complimentary (e.g. ferry ticket, hotel,···) to customers	5.86	5.39	4.10
SQ_24 Performance & Entertainment show	4.62	4.89	3.83
SQ_25 Free food and drink provided	5.30	5.28	3.81
SQ_26 Casino bus service (e.g. convenience, frequency,...)	5.75	5.55	4.28
SQ_27 Quality & quantity of promotional materials	5.52	5.21	3.94
SQ_28 Cashier service (cage)	5.58	5.14	4.09
SQ_29 Discounts/rebates on casino (dead) chips	5.67	4.94	4.11
SQ_30 Location of the casino (i.e. convenience to customers)	6.09	5.55	4.17

Table 4: Summary of perception towards casino specific items

The Service Coaches were reminded that except Cashier service, most of these casino specific items are beyond the scope of coaches' responsibilities. These information are more useful to the senior management of the concerned casinos in deciding how best to allocate the resources.

Cluster Analysis

Cluster analysis is a statistical technique that can be applied to data that exhibit "natural" groupings. Cluster analysis sorts through the raw data and groups them into clusters. A cluster is a group of relatively homogeneous cases or observations. Objects in a cluster are similar to each other. They are also dissimilar to objects outside the cluster, particularly objects in other clusters. Cluster analysis, like factor analysis and multi dimensional scaling (MDS), is an interdependence technique, i.e. it makes no distinction between dependent and independent variables. The entire set of interdependent relationships is examined. It is similar to MDS in that both examine inter-object similarity by examining the complete set of interdependent relationships. The difference is that MDS identifies underlying dimensions, while cluster analysis identifies clusters. Cluster analysis is the obverse of factor analysis. Whereas factor analysis reduces the number of variables by grouping them into a smaller set of factors, cluster analysis reduces the number of observations or cases by grouping them into a smaller set of clusters.
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cluster_analysis_(in_marketing))

Clustering helps classify objects into different groups, i.e. the partitioning of a data set into clusters, so that the data in each cluster share some common trait - often proximity according to some defined distance measure. Data clustering algorithms can be hierarchical. Hierarchical algorithms identify successive clusters using previously established clusters. Hierarchical algorithms can be agglomerative ("bottom-up") or divisive ("top-down"). Agglomerative algorithms begin with each element as a separate cluster and merge them into successively larger clusters. Divisive algorithms begin with the whole set and proceed to divide it into successively smaller clusters. Hierarchical clustering builds (agglomerative), or breaks up (divisive), a hierarchy of clusters. The traditional representation of this hierarchy is a dendrogram (from Greek dendron "tree", -gramma "drawing") used to illustrate the arrangement of the clusters produced by a clustering algorithm. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Data_clustering).

The following dendrogram, generated by SPSS, presents a picture of cluster agglomeration with distance rescaled to numbers between 0 and 25. The closer the variables are joined towards the number "0" the more similar it is among themselves. From the dendrogram, SC6 and SC7 are most similar to each other (joining very close to number "0". SC1 and SC4 are similar to each other and yet are most different from the rest of all other variables (Joining at the number of "25". Visually there are three clusters which are:

If a vertical line is drawn on the dendrogram below at a distance 10, three clusters are formed. They are labeled as: Coaching philosophy (SC6, SC7, SC9, SC12, SC13, and SC3); SJM Staff Status (SC10, SC11, SC2, SC5, SC8, and SC14); and Success Criteria (SC1 and SC4).

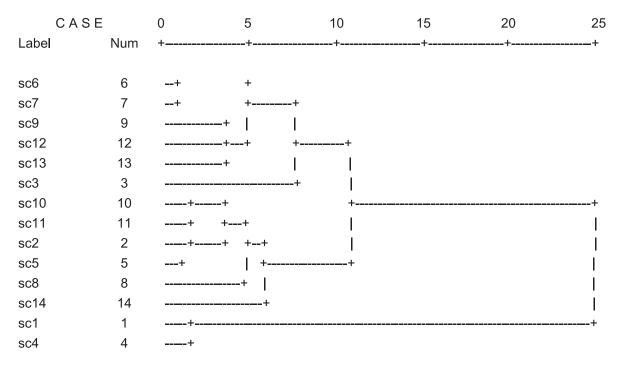| Coaching Philosophy: |
| --- |
| sc6   With support people will work hard to enhance their capabilities |
| sc7   People need to be given opportunities to prove their abilities |
| sc9   SJM employees are competent to do what they should do |
| sc12 After having made a mistake, SJM employees are given opportunity to improve |
| sc13 Every interaction between superior and subordinates can be an improvement opportunity |
| sc3   SJM service still needs improvement |
| SJM Staff Status: |
| sc10 SJM employees enjoy their jobs |
| sc11 SJM employees find their jobs challenging |
| sc2   On the whole SJM service is highly praised by our customer |
| sc5   On the whole, cooperation among SJM colleagues are good |
| sc8   SJM employees know what they do and the importance of their tasks |
| sc14 Traditional training can help enhance service quality of SJM |
| Success Criteria: |
| sc1 Good Service Quality is very important to casinos |
| sc4 Teamwork among colleagues is needed in providing good customer service |

Table 2: Cluster analysis of Service Coach Survey

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Figure 1: Hierarchical Cluster Analysis — Dendrogram

Dendrogram using Average Linkage (Between Groups)

Rescaled Distance Cluster Combine

```
     C A S E          0        5        10       15       20       25
     Label      Num   +--------+--------+--------+--------+--------+

     sc6         6     --+           +
     sc7         7     --+           +--------+
     sc9         9     -----------+  |        |
     sc12        12    -----------+--+        +---------+
     sc13        13    -----------+           |         |
     sc3         3     ------------------------+         |
     sc10        10    -----+------+                      +----------------------------------------+
     sc11        11    -----+      +---+                 |                                          |
     sc2         2     -----+------+   +--+              |                                          |
     sc5         5     ---+         |  +----------------+                                          |
     sc8         8     ----------------+  |                                                         |
     sc14        14    ------------------+                                                          |
     sc1         1     -----+----------------------------------------------------------------------+
     sc4         4     -----+
```

The Service Coach Model in SJM

During the training for the Service Coaches, the findings from the surveys were shared with them. It is seen from table 1 that the most agreed items are customer service and teamwork are important criteria for success. The coachees also agreed with the philosophy adopted in coaching. Generally speaking they agreed that employees needed to be given the opportunity to prove their ability and with support they would work hard to enhance their capability. They agreed that employees should be given opportunity to improve and every interaction between the superiors and the subordinates is a coaching opportunity. These points were then reinforced in the training. The training then continued with elaboration on the definition of coaching, the benefits of coaching and the approach of coaching.

The coaching model for continuous performance improvement in service is as below:

Step 1: Core values of coaching:
• When given opportunity, people would work hard to improve their capability
• People should be given opportunity to prove their ability
• Every interaction between coach and coachee is a coaching opportunity
• In developing and sustaining excellent performance, individual and team should strive hard
• People should know what they are doing and the contribution they are making
• People have the ability to do what they should do
• People like their jobs and find them challenging
• When people commit mistakes, they should be given a chance to improve

Step 2: Basic characteristics of a coach
• Balanced (two-way communication)

- Specific achievement objectives
- Shared responsibilities between the coach and coachee
- Approach (Diverse and Focused)
- Respect the coachee

Step 3: Key coaching skills:
- Participate (listening skills)
- Explore (probing skills)
- Express (ensuring coachee can understand the message)
- Assure (getting commitment from coachee to improve. Coach helps coachee in problem solving, achieving and sustaining results, and revising for higher achievement goals)
- Normalize (being responsible for the coaching results)

Step 4: Core coaching interviews:
- deploying coaching skills outlined in step 3 above, to explore areas for improvement with the coachee
- Problem solving (problem identification, problem diagnosing, problem solving)
- Guiding coachee (what to improve and how to improve)
- Sustaining achievement made
- Revising for further improvement target (i.e. the Plan-Do-Check-Act improvement cycle)

Conclusion:

It is obvious that coaching is a more effective tool to enhance and sustain service quality than the traditional chalk and talk approach in classroom training. Service provision is more an attitudinal issue and in service management we can argue that the weakest link in a service delivery chain (a series of moment of truth) is its weakest. In order word, we have a service formula $100 - 1 = 0$. If one service personnel out of 100 is delivering bad customer service, the customer will rate the entire service of that organization as poor. It is of paramount importance for the service provider to provide consistent high service standard at all times and in all encounters with its customers.

Service coaching approach is far more effective than the one-off service training conducted in a class-room setting. Coaching is an on-going process and successful coach would use every occasion to reinforce good service behavior and to rectify undesirable service issues through problem solving techniques. This service coach scheme in SJM is supplemented by Service Improvement Teams (SITs) whereby team synergy is deployed to help improve the quality service. A certificate presentation ceremony was conducted on the 18th February, 2009 to recognize 89 customer service coaches who successfully completed a three month coaching project (市民日報, 2008 February 19).

The coaching concept can and should be applied in many service organizations to help improve the quality standard of their people. The coaching approach outlined in this paper (e.g. questionnaire to solicit participants' opinions for subsequent discussion; role play; lecture; games; simulation of real cases during training; follow-up action learning project) can be generalized and adopted in other service settings. In order to combat the current wake of financial tsunami all business should make much better use of their human assets. Coaching and other quality management practices are definitely better alternatives to simply laying off employees.

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服務教練（Service Coach）課程前問卷調查

感謝你參加由展能部舉辦的一天教練課程，這課程介紹什麼是教練，教練的好處和怎樣做一位好的教練，提升澳博的競爭力。為了能夠達到最佳的教練學習效果，希望你把你的看法告訴我，個別資料是會保密的，請放心填寫以下的問卷，在三天內交給我，謝謝你的合作。

澳博展能部
宋玉生廣場
中土大廈十樓

		5 = 絕對同意 4 = 同意 3 = 一般 2 = 不同意 1 = 絕不同意
1	優秀的服務素質對娛樂場是非常重要	
2	整體而言，澳博目前的服務深受顧客讚賞	
3	澳博的服務水平尚須大大改善	
4	提供良好的顧客服務須要各同事發揮團隊合作精神	
5	整體而言，澳博娛樂場各階層之間的同事合作良好	
6	人們希望更有能力，輔以幫助，便會更努力去增強能力	
7	人們必須給予機會証明他們的能力	
8	澳博的員工都知道他們在做什麼，以及其重要性	
9	澳博的員工都有能力做他們應該做的事	
10	澳博的員工都喜歡自己的工作	
11	澳博的員工覺得工作具挑戰性	
12	澳博的員工在犯錯時有機會去改進	
13	每次上司與下屬的交談都可以是替下屬改善績效的機會	
14	傳統授課形式的服務培訓能有效改善澳博的服務水平	

目前澳博最急須改善的顧客服務是以下幾方面：

_____

_____

_____

姓名：_____ 員工編號：_____

Service Quality

Your name： _____ **In your opinion, the best casinos in Macau is**： _____ **In your opinion, the worst casinos in Macau is**： _____	**Importance** Please rate the importance： 7 = Most Important 6 = Important 5 = Slightly Important 4 = Neutral 3= Slightly Unimportant 2 = Unimportant 1 = Most unimportant	**Satisfaction** Please rate the satisfaction： 7 = Most satisfactory 6 = Satisfactory 5 = Slightly satisfactory 4 = Neutral 3 = Slightly dissatisfactory 2 = Dissatisfactory 1 = Most dissatisfactory	
## Service Quality Items	As a customer, you think the importance score should be:	The satisfactory level of the BEST casino is:	The satisfactory level of the WORST casino is:
1	They have up-to-date equipment			
2	Their physical facilities are visually appealing			
3	Their employees are well dressed and appear neat			
4	Physical facilities keep with type of services provided			
5	They can comply with promise to do something on time			
6	They are sympathetic and reassuring to customers who have problems			
7	They are dependable			
8	They provide services at the time they promise to do so			
9	They keep their records accurately			
10	They tell customers exactly when services will be performed			
11	Customers can get prompt services from their employees			
12	Their employees are willing to help customers			
13	Even their employees are busy, they respond to customers requests promptly			
14	Customers can trust their employees			
15	Customers feel safe in their transactions with their employees			
16	Their employees are polite			
17	Their employees get adequate support from the company to do their jobs well			
18	The casino can give customers individual attention			
19	Their employees can give customers personal attention			
20	Their employees know the needs of customers			
21	The casino has their customers' best interest at heart			
22	They operate hours convenient to all their customers			
23	Complimentary (e.g. ferry ticket, hotel,…) to customers			
24	Performance & Entertainment show			
25	Free food and drink provided			
26	Casino bus service (e.g. convenience, frequency,...)			
27	Quality & quantity of promotional materials			
28	Cashier service (cage)			
29	Discounts/rebates on casino (dead) chips			
30	Location of the casino (i.e. convenience to customers)			
The Overall Satisfaction level for this casino is::			

Gender： Male [ ]; Female [ ]

Age： 21and below 下[ ]; 21-30 years [ ]; 31-40 years [ ]; 41-50 years [ ]; 50 and above [ ]

Working experience： Below 1 year [ ]; 1-10 years [ ]; 11-20 years [ ]; 20 years and above[ ]

Currently working in which casino？ _____

Number of casinos visited last 12 months： _____