

Maureen Bennett Mitchell IV notes

Q. Take a couple of minutes and summarize your resume for me (a seasoned leader will be able to knock this out of the park succinctly and in an integrated way – I would expect a high level summary)

Sales and marketing background – hotels, restaurants, airlines, seniors. One position in Palm Springs with a small boutique hotel. Was brought in to bring the property up to level, work with the employees, revitalize. Let's re-build recognition within the local community, sell rooms. Told the owner it would be one full season before he sees the results of what you are going to get. See what she have in place, see revenues, expenses, how to maximize current revenues, while taking time to grow the business. Got the café improved, but mainly for staying on the property. Next worked on how to get the locals back, evening venues, music venues, target international market.

How do we get locals returning to the Fort to do more than walk its trails and beach. Can we create more traffic during the evening with music venues, restaurants, etc. We also need to figure out how to tap into the international community – can drive lots of traffic. Dorm could be a perfect spot for the younger international traveler.

Q. Talk about the most challenging business situation you have walked into or business plan you have been asked to implement (this answer will lead to many follow-up questions and queries)

Retirement community – always going sales and mktg and moved into GM role. Satisfaction for ee and patients was low, facility was in good shape. Maureen is good at working with people, psychology background. Worked with people that she had in place. Make them work for you. Sometimes people won't change, need to make a different decision with those folks.

Racquet club, old building falling down, no money to rebuild it. Came in during Nov, saw results in expenses and costs, a little revenue increase. Ran some late season specials – fall, spring. Restaurant, bar, and lodge. Strong by getting locals into for dinner and drinks, leveraged advertising in Sunset Magazine. Saw revenue and bar rev improve immediately – brunches, special events, needed to create good PR image in the community. She saw this quickly in terms of revenues, dollars. Saw occupancy improve the second year. Weeded out people out over the course of the first year and staff liked working for Maureen, lived the property.

FW is an incredible property. Working in an env where people are worried about their jobs is not good for business. Need to have frank conversations with the employees – if you want the jog, this is what we need from you. How can we get the soft season booked – big shoulder seasons. Do we run specials? Can't blame state – they don't know S&M, they are ticket takers.

Q. What approaches have you leveraged to both grow this business and improve its profitability? (looking for the person to hopefully bring up things like pricing, marketing, promotions, use of the internet, business management)

Q. Have you been involved in what might be called a turnaround situation? Or have you been involved in a start-up? If so, what steps did you take? What would you have done differently?

Q. How did you monitor the success of your operations and changes you were implementing? (interested in hear if there are ratios or reporting that they monitor regularly; will probe if I don't hear customer satisfaction)

Q. In all of your experiences, which job was most challenging in terms of juggling the needs of multiple stakeholders? (i.e. owners, landlords, customers, employees, partners, unions, etc). What was your approach? How successful were you?

This may be the most challenging part of the equation. Everyone wants this to be successful, what are the needs of each stakeholder, is it for the city to get money to come back to them, state wanting to get their money?

This is so much more massive than anything that Maureen has done. In the senior retirement community, interested of the stockholders, employees – many long-term patients – satisfaction was key #1. What the residents wanted might not be financially reasonable for the business, but Maureen worked to find common ground.

Q. Talk about the position on your resume where you believe you were least successful. What do you think this was the case. What did you learn from this experience?

Each position she worked at led to the next. Small luxury hotels – small hotel, operation. Goal was to create a directory for 35-40 independently owned hotels. Looking to this org to create revenue for all these properties. Not going to please all of these people all of the time. Their expectations and knowledge of the business hampered.

Q. What do you look for when you hire a person? When you have two equally capable candidates, what tends to tip the balance for you in one direction or the other?

Giving all equal, go with gut – understanding of what the person is, how well the position fits the person.

Q. What scares you?

Big job, lots of entities, advertising alone is extensive. Are the resources in place to truly make it successful? Has to be a staff, working with you. Main concern is resources. Don't want people coming to have a bad experience. What needs to change re: housekeeping, decorating?

Comes down to the value of what they are paying - \$500 a night requires a certain thread count in the sheets. Might need to create different experiences for different customers (luxury hotel vs dorm vs campground).

Q. Community

In this town, because it is a small community, different people had different opinions about how things should be. Gonna read in the Leader. Will have tough skin.

Q. Barriers to starting

Would need a couple of weeks. Works with hospice as a volunteer, work with Aldrich's a couple days a week. Not going to be a normal 8-5 M-F.