



Use my name - not my room number

It's far more welcoming... and it's not that difficult, writes hotel industry consultant *Melvin Gold*

"I am a name, not a number," protested Patrick McGoohan in the cult sixties TV series *The Prisoner*.

But he was number six, and we never did find out his name. Yet all too frequently hotels fall into the same trap, and although they know their guests' names, they fail to use them.

The most common scenario is at breakfast. You know the situation. You arrive at the breakfast room to be confronted by a "doorkeeping" member of staff. Their role is to welcome you to the restaurant and show you to a seat at a vacant table.

Yet all too often the "welcome" ... overtaken by a procedure. The staff member needs to identify you so they know whether to charge you for breakfast or whether you're on an inclusive package.

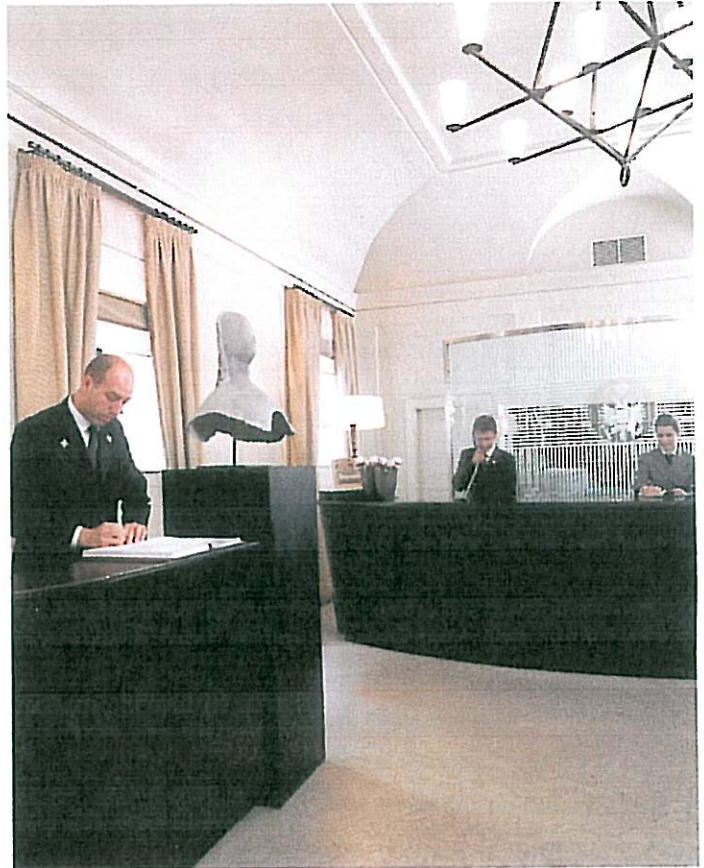
To do this, they're given a

guest list printed by room number. This means that to identify you they need your room number, hence the welcome:

"Good morning sir/madam, can I have your room number please?" All too frequently it's expressed less politely, with the staff member simply demanding: "Room number?"

I don't understand why staff are provided with the guest list in room-number order. Wouldn't it be just as easy to print the list in alphabetical order of the guests' surnames, so replacing the need for a number with a name?

Guests, especially in larger hotels, don't typically expect staff members to remember their names unless they're very regular visitors. But it's nice when they do, and it does add a special feeling of recognition to their stay. And that recognition



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is more likely to influence them to return or to recommend the hotel to others.

What hoteliers need to remember is that staff are more likely to use the guests' names if your procedures are aligned to them doing so.

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Over to you

What's your biggest hotel gripe?

Nick Basing, group chief executive, Paramount Restaurants
"Badly ventilated rooms. If they're not ventilated properly, you just can't sleep properly. That's the most important thing in order to have a peaceful night's sleep. There's nothing worse than a room that's hot or too cold, and you can't change the heating levels or the air conditioning."

Geoffrey Harrison, managing director, Harrison Catering Services
"Indifferent staff, especially doormen and receptionists, as it's the first impression you get of the hotel. I stayed at a hotel recently which was let down by a lady on reception who was competent but utterly soulless. But you have to go a long way to find something to moan about in good quality hotels."

Dominic Ford, restaurant consultant, McDonald Ford Consultants
"Lack of proper broadband internet access. If you can't get on to the internet it wastes so much time, and I've stayed in quite a few places where this has been a problem. It's important for business and leisure guests, as most people bring a laptop with them nowadays. But on the whole, hotels are getting a lot better."

David Cavalier, food innovations director, Charlton House
"Generally speaking, I don't have any gripes with hotels. I think it depends on the hotel you're staying in. If you stay in a budget hotel you don't expect much, but if you're at the better end of the market, service also seems to be of a better quality. I don't like name badges on staff, but that's just my opinion."