HOSPITALITY +SERVICE

Bringing Hospitality to Your Community

HOSPITALITY BY DESIGN

Tools, Best Practices, and Guidance to Help Nonprofit Leaders Improve
Client Experience and Organizational Performance through Hospitality

POINTS OF LIGHT

HILTON WORLDWIDE

taproot FOUNDATION

Dear Colleagues,

At Hilton Worldwide, our vision is to fill the Earth with the light and warmth of hospitality. When our founder, Conrad Hilton, opened his first hotel in Cisco, Texas in 1919, he introduced a new culture of hospitality delivered by committed Team Members who ensured every guest was greeted with a friendly welcome. Since those early days, our company has grown to serve millions of guests at thousands of properties around the world, welcoming them into our home and caring for their ever needs during their stay with us. As leaders in hospitality, our Team Members experience tremendous value and pride in serving others.

But the value of hospitality isn't exclusive to the hotel industry. We believe the same principles that make our properties warm and welcoming to travelers can also help direct-service organizations deliver meaningful social impact for their clients.

Direct-service organizations operate in an environment where clients may feel a heightened vulnerability or distress, as well as stigmas too often associated with social assistance. Indeed, empowering dignity in service delivery is perhaps the greatest challenge organizations face – a challenge we believe hospitality can help overcome.

Hospitality + Service, an initiative of Hilton Worldwide, Points of Light and Taproot Foundation, is a tailored training program that leverages Hilton Worldwide's experience and expertise in the service industry to infuse hospitality into the daily practices of nonprofit and social sector organizations. This guidebook, Hospitality by Design, is specifically tailored to the needs of nonprofit leaders. We have developed this to support you in creating organizations that are powered by hospitality.

You serve the public good day in and day out, and your work is vital to the success and health of our communities. At Hilton Worldwide, we too, are dedicated to positively impacting our communities through our business. Through Hospitality + Service, we hope we will also help you find new ways to serve your clients and deepen the impact of your organization.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Silberman
Vice President, Corporate Responsibility
Hilton Worldwide

WHY HOSPITALITY

There is enormous power in providing your clients with excellent service and care. It's not just about making your clients feel good: when your clients are comfortable, trusting, and fully supported, they are more receptive to the services you provide, more likely to return if they need help in the future, and more inclined to refer your organization to others in need. Improved client relationships and retention create far greater opportunities for impact and can attract positive attention from funders, who in turn may invest in expanding your services and help you reach even more people in need.

A strong client experience is an essential part of how you fulfill your organization's vision and mission. It's essential to impact.

We believe that excellent service extends beyond proficient service delivery or "being nice." It's about delivering *hospitality* to your clients. Hospitality—the art of creating a warm, welcoming experience that is centered on client needs—is a concept most often associated with the for-profit service industry. But it has an important place in the nonprofit sector too.

You may understand the value of creating this type of service-oriented experience for your clients. But, like many nonprofit leaders, you might feel as though it's too hard to prioritize or operationalize hospitality within the work you do. Where do you begin? Can you teach hospitality? Is there room in your programs for what many consider "the extras"? How do you prove the worth of hospitality and make it an integral part of your organizational culture?

Hilton Worldwide is a leader in creating experiences that are deeply endowed with a culture of hospitality and service. To Hilton Worldwide brands, hospitality is a powerful tool to increase the bottom line by improving staff focus and morale and boosting customer satisfaction and retention. These positive outcomes are equally valuable to nonprofit organizations, where client referrals and reputation within the community are vital to organizational livelihood and success.

Now, through the Hospitality + Service initiative, we have captured and codified Hilton Worldwide's approach so that direct service nonprofit leaders may apply them to the organizations, individuals, and communities they serve. The lessons in this toolkit will guide you in building hospitality into your organizational culture from the ground up; and they'll help you deliver more to your clients, strengthen your team, and build your reputation and impact in the community.

Ready to begin? Read on to start making hospitality a deeply ingrained part of the way your organization does business.

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

The purpose of this toolkit is to enable you, a nonprofit leader, to harness the power of hospitality to better serve your clients and your team. This toolkit translates lessons from the recognized international leader in hospitality: Hilton Worldwide. It includes best practices, exercises, and templates that can help you make noticeable improvements within your organization.

In the Hospitality + Service Toolkit document, you'll learn how to:
- Build hospitality into your **organizational culture**,
- Strengthen your **understanding of the clients you serve**,
- Develop and manage a **hospitality-focused team**,
- Design **a client-friendly space** that fosters positive interactions, and
- Collect and measure **client feedback** to improve service and enhance the positive impact your organization can have.

This toolkit is intended for use by local, national, and international nonprofit organizations that provide direct services to individuals in need. You can apply lessons from the entire toolkit, or focus only on the sections that are most relevant to needs of your organization at this time.

WHAT'S INSIDE

1. HOSPITALITY FROM THE GROUND UP
Integrating hospitality throughout your organization

You're ready to make hospitality integral to your service delivery strategy. So where do you begin?

We recommend four initial areas of focus:

1) Articulate how hospitality aligns with your **mission and values**
2) Build hospitality into **your leadership style**
3) Make hospitality an indelible part of **your organization's brand**
4) Define **success—**and then manage to that definition

In this section, we describe these areas and offer recommendations for how you can make them an actionable part of how you lead.

1. ALIGN HOSPITALITY WITH YOUR MISSION AND VALUES

To make hospitality a fundamental part of how your organization operates, you must make it relevant to the core elements of your organization: your mission (what you do) and your values (how you do it). When you articulate this link, you'll be in a stronger position to apply and sustain hospitality within your culture and operations. When someone asks you why you're focusing on hospitality, you'll be able to give a solid answer that reflects shared goals and values throughout the organization.

You may have articulated similar alignments for other key areas of your organization business. For example, you know that to achieve excellent results in your community, you must have an excellent team. Any HR-based goals then map directly back to your mission and values, and your whole team understands why HR initiatives are worth the resources and measurement you put toward them.

Mission
To begin, consider how hospitality is a part of your mission, which guides your organizational strategy and grounds your work. An understanding of how hospitality compliments your mission can help you to frame your approach to client service—and its importance within your organization—at the most fundamental level.

For a direct service organization, you could outline concrete and actionable activities that both support your mission and are connected to hospitality. These activities should be things that you and your team do (or aspire to do) to enhance your clients' experience. Consider the following example:

Table 1.1	
Sample hospitality focus for a mission statement	
Sample mission statement:	**Hospitality focus:**
Our mission is to provide shelter and food to the homeless and hungry.	We make hospitality an integral part of our mission by: • Providing a clean, safe, and welcoming environment • Focusing on understanding and responding to our clients' needs • Treating our fellow team members with kindness and respect

Now explore how hospitality aligns with your organization's mission by filling out *Exercise 1.2*. You can do this exercise by yourself, with your leadership team, or in a session with individuals from all levels of your organization.

Exercise 1.2	
Your hospitality focus for your mission statement	
Your mission statement:	**Hospitality focus:**

You might want to have different groups within your organization do this exercise as well, so that they are making the connections as well as you. In any case, once you've completed *Exercise 1.2*, you should share the outcomes broadly with your organization.

By formalizing how hospitality is a part of your mission, you are making a powerful and motivating statement about how hospitality is woven into the core of everything you do. This is a great time to introduce your team to the ongoing efforts you will be making to more fully integrate hospitality into the organization (the efforts you'll identify in the rest of this toolkit). Building internal champions early will help you to contextualize and garner support for upcoming changes.

Values

Once you've articulated how hospitality aligns with your mission, turn your attention to aligning hospitality with the beliefs that your team holds in common: your organization's values.

One good way to start is to evaluate hospitality-related values from other organizations that are driven by hospitality. We've identified five key principles – called the *S.E.R.V.E Principles of Hospitality* – that are common to these organizations. Using them to augment or highlight your existing values is a good way to help all members of your team embody hospitality, regardless of the position they hold within the organization. We explore the S.E.R.V.E. principles and how they can be applied in day-to-day direct-service activities in the Hospitality + Service curriculum.

Table 1.3	
The S.E.R.V.E. Principles of Hospitality	
Sincere	Be genuine and authentic
Empathetic	Demonstrate compassion or understanding for people's thoughts, feelings, and attitudes
Respectful	Show respect by valuing others through your actions
Visible	Display hospitality through actions, gestures, and words
Engaging everyone, every time	Treat everyone with the same level of courtesy and make an effort to know people individually

It's likely that you've already established a set of values for your organization and that you share them regularly with your team (and perhaps even your clients). So how can you make the S.E.R.V.E. principles your own?

Ideally, you'll integrate them fully into your list of existing organizational values, or confirm that they are already represented there. You can play with phrasing to make them feel authentically your own. Or, if integrating these principles into your existing set of values isn't possible, you can also introduce them as a separate, complimentary list of principles that guide the way your organization does work.

Exercise

In *Exercise 1.4*, outline how you'll integrate the S.E.R.V.E. principles into your organization's values.

Exercise 1.4
Integrating the S.E.R.V.E. Principles of Hospitality
We'll integrate S.E.R.V.E. principles into our values by…

After you've made the S.E.R.V.E. principles your own, it's time to share them with your team. This makes a formal and visible commitment to establishing hospitality as a part of your common vision for the way work gets done. At Hilton Worldwide hotels, values are posted in every back-office area as a visual reminder of what every staff member should be working towards. This offers Hilton Worldwide a constant reminder of the values that they share and that provide a common thread for the services they provide, regardless of their specific roles or duties.

2. BUILD HOSPITALITY INTO YOUR LEADERSHIP STYLE

As the leader of your organization, your actions, presence, and management style set the tone and the standard for all other members of your team. Hospitality must begin with you. If you want to build an organization that has a strong culture of hospitality, you must embody the best practices you wish to see from the rest of your team. Show your staff, your volunteers, and your clients that hospitality is a priority by modeling the behavior you wish to see in them. Your staff will take cues from you about what is expected and rewarded behavior within your organization.

How can you begin to model a hospitality-focused approach to leadership? Consider the following recommendations, based on Hilton Worldwide's trainings for General Managers, to help you put hospitality into action.

✓ **Embody S.E.R.V.E.** Think about how you exhibit the S.E.R.V.E. principles in your work and seek ways to embody the principles more fully. Be intentional about your actions and how people perceive them. As the leader of your organization, you set the standard.
✓ **Prioritize client needs.** Address and resolve clients' issues with a sense of urgency and authentic concern.
✓ **Listen to your clients.** Seek out intentional opportunities to interact with your clients so that you can develop a firsthand understanding of their needs and their perception of your organization.
✓ **Keep your door open.** Encourage openness, transparency, and accessibility by keeping an open door policy and inviting members of your team to seek you out if they want to talk.
✓ **Do a daily lap.** Walk your facility, greeting your team and paying attention to your space. Consider how clients may be experiencing your staff and facilities.
✓ **Practice regular feedback.** Provide regular feedback to your team related to how they are contributing to hospitality within the organization, and seek their feedback on the culture you are building.
✓ **Be kind to your team.** Instill a culture of warmth and respect by treating every member of your team with kindness and patience.
✓ **Invest in your team's development.** Show a commitment to your staff's continued growth towards excellent client service by regularly refreshing their hospitality skills through the Hospitality + Service curriculum.

✓ **Measure and refine.** Define the measures that are most important to tracking client satisfaction and hold yourself and your team accountable to improving performance towards those metrics. (See the *Measuring Client Satisfaction* section on page 33 for more information on developing and implementing these measures.)

Which of the actions on this list come naturally to you? Which take more effort? What other actions would you add to this list?

Exercise

Now consider how you can leverage your personal leadership style and the recommendations above to create a model for hospitality within your organization. Begin by outlining the ways you already display a commitment to hospitality through your actions.

Exercise 1.5
Existing Areas of Hospitality
Already, I build hospitality within my organization by…

Exercise

Now, in *Exercise 1.6*, outline some new actions you will take as a leader to model hospitality to the rest of your organization. Need some inspiration? See the list of recommendations above, or think about a person you know who consistently exudes hospitality.

Exercise 1.6
Deepening Hospitality in Your Organization
In the future, I'll deepen the culture of hospitality within my organization by…

3. MAKE HOSPITALITY AN INDELIBLE PART OF YOUR BRAND

Let's turn our attention to another of your organization's most valuable assets: its brand. Your brand defines how you're known in the community, shapes your clients' expectations, and contributes to how your team members view their jobs. Whether you are aware of it or not, you are shaping your brand every day. And now it's time to make it stronger by incorporating hospitality.

So where to begin? Start by developing a simple, memorable, public-facing *brand promise* with hospitality at its core. Your brand promise is the guarantee you make to your clients. It is a public statement that's a call to action for you and your staff. When your brand promise is infused with hospitality, it informs your clients of the high-level of hospitality that they can expect from your organization.

Need some examples to start thinking through what your brand promise might be? See *Table 1.7* for a handful of examples of brand promises from various Hilton Worldwide brands:

Table 1.7	
Sample Hilton Brand Promises	
Hilton Worldwide Brand	**Brand Promise**
Hilton Hotels	We promise to ensure every guest feels cared for, valued and respected
Embassy Suites	We strive to make our guests feel welcome and at home
Hilton Garden Inn	You can count on us to give you a great hotel experience - at a price that's affordable - with all the amenities you deserve

Exercise

In *Exercise 1.8*, outline your organization's brand promise. Think about how hospitality plays a part in that promise. What would you want to guarantee your clients? When you speak with your funders, what could you tell them is most important that you deliver through your services?

If it plays only a small part, how can you make hospitality have more weight in your brand? If necessary, revise your brand promise to reflect a deeper focus on hospitality.

Exercise 1.8
Creating A Brand Promise
My Organization's Brand Promise
We promise to…

4. DEFINE SUCCESS—AND MANAGE TO THAT DEFINITION

One of the key ways that Hilton Worldwide brands stay true to their spirit of customer focus is through a core set of measures called SALT (Service and Loyalty Tracking) that track client satisfaction rates and flag areas where improvements can be made. General managers at every hotel that is part of the Hilton Worldwide portfolio are measured on the SALT scores of their hotels. These measures are considered essential to evaluating a General Manager's overall job performance. In fact, General Managers are measured on their SALT performance right alongside the revenue and profits they are able to bring in for their properties.

Successful leaders within Hilton Worldwide understand that they must constantly listen to clients, learn how and where improvements can be made, and remain flexible to making changes to improve

operations and service. Moreover, they leverage measurement tools to stay on top of this information – like SALT, Trip Advisor, Yelp, and other online ratings.

It's critical that you identify the metrics that matter most to you and your organization as you establish a culture of hospitality. By identifying the relevant measures, building out a client feedback system to track progress against these measures, and holding your team (and yourself) accountable to continuously working to improve performance, you are creating a simple but clear shared vision of success that will unite your entire team.

In the *Measuring Client Satisfaction* section of this toolkit (), learn more about how to build out or modify a client feedback system within your organization.

WHAT'S NEXT?

With hospitality at your core, you can begin to weave it into everything you do. It's the people you hire. It's the way you communicate who you are and your work in the community. It's what you measure and reward as an organization. It's the way your facilities look, feel, and function. It's even how your staff feels when they arrive at work each morning.

And all of these elements, when they are woven together, create an organization that is truly powered by hospitality and customer service. Continue reading to learn concrete tactics to build hospitality more fully into everything you do.
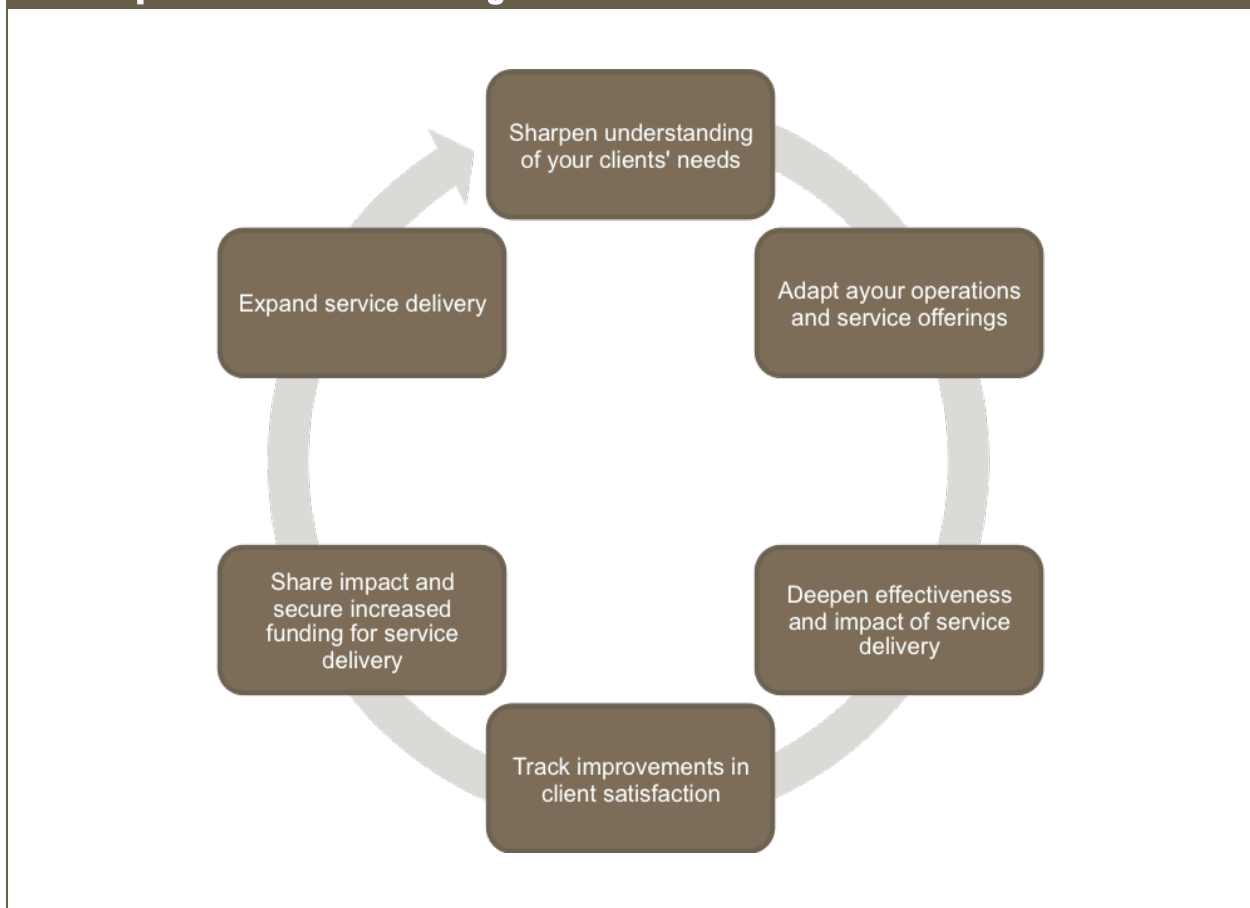
2. KNOWING YOUR CLIENT
The power of exceeding expectations

It's hard to overstate the benefits of truly understanding your clients. Nonprofit leaders who understand the people they serve—who they are, what they need, what they like, how they behave, the expectations they have—can identify key investments to improve client experience. Client satisfaction follows from good client experience. And, as satisfaction rates rise, so does the impact of the services you're providing. Greater positive impact in the community can lead to greater investment from funders, which, in turn, allows you to continue to invest in your organizational capacity and grow your services.

Figure 2.1
The Impact of Understanding Clients

Sharpen understanding of your clients' needs

Adapt ayour operations and service offerings

Deepen effectiveness and impact of service delivery

Track improvements in client satisfaction

Share impact and secure increased funding for service delivery

Expand service delivery

Savvy leaders use client insights to design services with the end user in mind. As they make organizational decisions, big or small, they ask, "How would my clients experience this?" Now let's explore that question with your organization in mind.

WHO IS YOUR CLIENT?
A clear understanding of your "typical client" can help you to make confident, strategic decisions about the services you offer. How well do you know—I mean *really know*—what your clients want, need, and expect? Does your whole team have a shared understanding of who your client is? How empowered is your team to put clients first?

Hilton Worldwide has developed its service options and culture around the needs of its clients. They recognize that satisfied clients directly impact the bottom line through repeat business and increased referrals. *Table 2.2* details the ways that Hilton Worldwide builds their culture based on their clients.

Table 2.2		
Hilton Worldwide Service Development Is Based on Client Needs		
1. Understand the typical client profile	2. Build a client-focused team and culture	3. Collect, track, and respond to client feedback
• Hilton brands segment their clients and understand their needs, wants, and expectations of those various client segments (i.e. young families with children, business travelers, etc.). • Hilton shapes its service offerings to meet the needs that these client segments have.	• Hilton focuses intently on hiring, training, and retaining a team that puts clients first. • Team members know how to access client information when they need it. • Team members are given clear direction and responsibility for when and how to respond to client needs when they arise	• Hilton brands systematically track and benchmark client satisfaction through a standard survey that clients receive after staying at Hilton properties. • Hilton shares survey outcomes broadly, and team members are accountable to resolving issues swiftly. • Hilton brands continuously adapt and improve their services to better meet client needs.

BUILDING OUT YOUR "TYPICAL CLIENT" PROFILE

Now let's map out your "typical client" and what that individual needs from your organization.

Exercise

Exercises 2.3 and *2.4* give you a decision-making and service design framework that is informed by your clients' specific needs and preferences.

Note that in this exercise, you focus on describing one specific individual rather than a group of individuals. This focus will help you to draw out important details and develop a clear visual.

Exercise 2.3
Creating a Client Profile: Part 1
IMAGINE YOUR CLIENT
In the space below, describe your "typical client". Make this person real to you. What does your client look like? How old is your client? What does a typical day for your client look like? What does your client care about? The more specific you are—the more you create a three-dimensional character—the more helpful this profile will be as you make important decisions about how to serve your clients.

Is there anything about the typical client that surprises you, that you'd like to explore more? Is there anything else you're wishing you knew? Go back and fill in the gaps.

Once you've completed your profile, move on to *Exercise 2.4*.

Exercise 2.4 **Creating a Client Profile: Part 2** IMAGINE YOUR CLIENT'S NEEDS, WANTS, AND EXPECTATIONS		
Consider: What does your client *need* from your organization?	What does your client *want* from your organization?	What does your client *expect to get* from your organization?

Do you notice alignment or misalignment around what your client *needs* and what your client *wants*? Do you notice alignment or misalignment between your client's *needs* and *wants* and your client's *expectations*? What can you do to increase alignment in these areas? Is it a matter of adjusting services, or merely rethinking how you present your brand in the community? When you know what your organization does best and who it's best-positioned to serve, you can set better expectations for your clients—and delight them when you exceed those expectations.

DEVELOPING AN ONGOING UNDERSTANDING OF YOUR CLIENTS' NEEDS

There are a number of concrete ways that you can develop a rich, accurate, and ongoing understanding of your clients' needs and expectations. *Table 2.5* outlines some strategies for getting to know your clients and staying responsive to their experience with your organization.

Table 2.5 Strategies for Collecting Client Data		
Form of Data Collection	**Overview**	**Good for...**
Ongoing client satisfaction surveys	A standardized approach to collecting feedback from clients who have received your services or interacted with your organization	▪ Helps you to understand client trends and clients' evolving needs ▪ Allows you to establish the metrics you care about most, measure progress against them on a consistent basis, and use outcomes to communicate progress to your team
Focus groups	Conducting one or more small group, facilitated discussions with a handpicked, diverse set of clients	▪ A method for hearing from clients firsthand ▪ Allows you to ask pre-identified questions about the things you care about most and receive in-depth answers from a diverse collection of clients
One-on-one interviews with clients	1:1 interviews with a targeted set of individuals who can offer specific insights into a set of pre-determined questions	▪ An in-depth way to understand individual client perspectives and allowing for specific and organic questioning
Broad client survey/needs assessment	The collection of specific information and data from a large pool of clients, via online survey, in-person surveying, or mailed surveys	▪ Great for capturing data from a larger pool of clients or potential clients, which allows you to see major trends emerge ▪ Can help you to have a statistically significant sample size
Secondary research	Collection and synthesis of existing information about the clients and broader community you serve	▪ Understanding and staying up-to-date on major issues and trends facing your target client and community. ▪ Getting a broad view into your clients' needs and realities
Collecting insights from team members who provide direct services	A subjective, informal approach to collecting information	▪ Encourages staff to ask questions of their clients and relay the insights they gather back to their team members and organizational leadership ▪ Allows you to stay abreast of client needs, as seen, heard, and understood by your team members ▪ Helps you to build your bond with staff and clients, while stressing the importance of staying responsive to client needs

Table 2.5 *(cont'd.)* **Strategies for Collecting Client Data**		
Holding roundtables or town halls with clients	Conducting "open door" discussions with diverse sets of clients and allows the agenda to be driven by client interests	▪ Gives clients the opportunity to provide your organization with direct feedback and recommendations ▪ Displays your client-focus to the community ▪ Allows you to hear what clients most want to discuss—rather than following an agenda that is set in advance by your team
Observing clients interacting with your team and services	Conducting regular "walks of the grounds" and spending time observing your team and clients while they're working together	▪ Gives you personal knowledge into how your clients are relating to your organization ▪ Offers you an unfiltered view into the client experience ▪ Shows clients and team members that you deeply value the client experience and are willing to invest time into observing it

Hilton Worldwide uses a combination of the tactics outlined in *Table 2.5* to develop a robust understanding of its clients. From surveys, to direct conversations with clients, to observing the staff in action, to walking the grounds—General Managers keep a constant bead on what clients are thinking.

ADAPTING YOUR NONPROFIT TO BETTER MEET YOUR CLIENTS' NEEDS

What will you do with all of the information you're gathering about your clients? See *Table 2.6* for a list of ways to translate information into actions and decisions that will solidify your operation as a client-focused organization.

Table 2.6 **8 Ways to Put Client Information and Feedback Into Meaningful Action**	
1. **Meet regularly with senior leadership to review key findings from client feedback.**	What trends are you finding? Where are there missed opportunities to serve clients better? When are you doing a great job that should be celebrated?
2. **Make sure your whole team has a shared—and up-to-date—understanding of the clients you serve.**	Does all of your team have an understanding of who your typical client is? Make sure they do, so that you have a shared approach to meeting clients' needs and expectations.
3. **Use client insights to pinpoint challenges and opportunities for growth.**	Comb the client information and feedback that you get to identify opportunities to do what you do better. It's important that you include objective data as well as any subjective observations. Pull data from your customer satisfaction surveys to track performance over time. Keeping this data public and visible to your entire team can encourage an ongoing group dialogue about performance. It's important to engage people from all levels of your team to offer insights into how you can improve services—you never know where the best insights will come from.

Table 2.6 *(cont'd.)*		
8 Ways to Put Client Information and Feedback Into Meaningful Action		
4.	**Take action on improvements.**	It's not enough to know where your opportunities to grow are. You need to take action. Make sure your team and your clients know when you're making changes based on client feedback, so that they see that your commitment to making improvements.
5.	**Empower your team to gather and share key insights from their interactions with client**	Your team is your most important organizational asset. They know your clients well, and they should feel empowered to be constantly trying to understand and serve them better. Give them the authority to resolve certain issues with clients when they arise, and you will quickly see how they can resolve minor challenges before they turn into crises.
6.	**Display a focus on client needs in your own actions.**	How do you respond when you learn new things about your clients? Whether you realize it or not, your team is watching you in situations like this. Be open to all types of client feedback by being accessible to your clients and acting on the clients' feedback.
7.	**Publically value and share client feedback.**	Share client feedback regularly with your team. You can send a weekly email that highlights recent findings. Or post key client data trends in a central hub in your office. Whatever you choose to do: keep the data fresh, relevant, and designed to provoke your team to keep their eyes and minds on what the clients need.
8.	**Celebrate wins.**	When your team and organization goes above and beyond for a client, recognize it. A quick and specific "thank you" can go a long way—and more public displays of gratitude and celebration can also be a good way to set an example for others.

In *Case Study 2.7,* learn about a specific way that DoubleTree turned information about their guests' needs into an opportunity to surprise and delight.

CASE STUDY 2.7
DOUBLETREE'S DELICIOUS WELCOME

DoubleTree team members noticed that their customers were often tired and harried when they finally arrived at the hotel to check-in. How could they make these customers feel more comfortable? Creating a memorable solution to this challenge would involve some creativity.

DoubleTree took the inventive step of giving customers a warm, fresh chocolate chip cookie upon their check-in at the hotel. This simple, standard gesture surprised and pleased guests. With this gesture, they felt welcomed, cared for. From the beginning, their interaction with DoubleTree was infused with hospitality.

This relatively inexpensive and easy-to-execute offering created a dynamic of service and customer care right from the start. Imagine how much easier it is for DoubleTree to serve its guests when they're already feeling more at ease.

What's your version of the DoubleTree cookie? Knowing and understanding your clients and their expectations will take time, focus, and patience. Over time, however, you will find yourself, your team, and your organization becoming more attuned to the motivations and needs of your clients.

3. BUILDING A STRONG TEAM

Developing Your Most Important Asset

Ask multiple leaders from Hilton Worldwide for the key to consistent and authentic hospitality, and you will invariably get the same answer: great talent. Your brand, the services you provide, the vision you have for your organization's future—all of these critical elements are in the hands of your team members. The services you provide are inseparable from the people who provide them, so investing in your people—from your volunteers on up to your senior leadership team—is a critical investment in the very quality of the work you do.

A team that focuses on hospitality doesn't happen by accident. Fortunately, you can take a systematic, strategic approach to building a team that's strong on hospitality. In this section, we offer you tips and tools to build an all-star hospitality team by focusing on three key areas: **hiring, developing,** and **recognizing** talent that is focused on client service.

Notes:

- While you likely have existing human resources policies, the exercises and tools offered in this section should augment your existing practices to better support a team *focused on hospitality*.
- You'll find that the presented best practices in this section can apply to both your staff members and your volunteers.

1. Hiring the Right Talent

We all know how important it is to hire the right people. A great hire adds enormously to your culture and furthers the positive impact of your work. We also know that finding those great people to hire can be hard. But adding just one more requirement to your long list of must-have skills—"hospitality-focused"—can make all the difference as you try to make the difference to your clients.

To build an organization that feels effortlessly warm, welcoming, and empathetic; you must find and hire the kind of individuals for whom hospitality comes naturally. Hilton Worldwide General Managers and HR leaders have found that having a natural client-focused predisposition is an essential characteristic in any new hire. While training is helpful in building your team's capacity for hospitality, it cannot replace a natural inclination towards client service. That's why Hilton includes hospitality qualities as part of job descriptions, and why Hilton's hiring managers have honed their skills in identifying candidates with natural abilities in hospitality and service.

As you begin building an organization that has a depth of hospitality experience and focus across a number of functions, you may eventually find that you don't need to look as hard for the right talent. As Hilton Worldwide can demonstrate, people who care about hospitality will begin to find the organizations that care about it too.

Job Descriptions:

Begin by building a focus on hospitality into your job descriptions.

Exercise

To get started, use *Exercise 3.1* to identify the core hospitality-focused competencies that you feel every member of your team *must share*. Integrating these qualities into your job descriptions broadly will help you and your team members incorporate hospitality as part of the hiring process—from vetting cover letters to the interview.

Exercise 3.1
Hospitality Competencies

OUR TEAM'S ESSENTIAL HOSPITALITY QUALITIES

Every member of our team should have the following hospitality-focused characteristics/competencies in order to best support our work:

(Examples: A relentless focus on meeting the clients' needs, a solutions-focused approach when challenges arise, a hunger to constantly improve the services we provide, a demonstrated dedication to going above-and-beyond for clients)

Now that you have articulated the desired (and required) qualities related to hospitality, you may be wondering which job descriptions these qualifications should be added to. The answer? Every job description within your organization—from your volunteers, to your finance team, to your front-line staff.

Now that you have a sense of the hospitality traits that all roles within your organization share, it's time to crystallize how of the different functions within your organization contribute to a culture of hospitality. This will help you to specifically pinpoint what to look for when hiring specific positions. The Hospitality Competencies Chart (*Exercise 3.3*) will help you explore the various players on your team and what you need from them.

To get you thinking, here's a sample Hospitality Competencies Chart:

Table 3.2
Sample Hospitality Competencies Chart

Position:	How this role contributes to our culture of hospitality:	The must-have hospitality qualities, skills, and abilities this role requires:
Example A: Front desk staff	*This staff greets our clients and sets the tone for the rest of their time with us. They are the "face" of our organization.*	• *Warm, welcoming demeanor* • *Ability to balance multiple competing demands, all while maintaining open and friendly communication with clients* • *Comfortable de-escalating tense situations*
Example B: Senior leadership team	*This staff sets the strategy for the organization. They set the standard of behavior for the rest of the team. Team members, our clients, and the public closely watch what they say and where they place value.*	• *Ability to lead others with warmth, empathy, and generosity* • *Experience making strategic decisions that keep client needs at the forefront* • *Inspires others to continually improve the way in which they deliver services*

Exercise

In *Exercise 3.3*, complete a Hospitality Competencies Chart that's customized for *your* organization. Fill in as many columns as you can to get a snapshot of the individuals who create your culture, and what kinds of qualities these individuals should bring to your organization. Once you have your chart complete, you'll not only have a snapshot of the different members of your team, you'll also have a deeper sense of how to look for specific qualities in all of these individuals when you hire for these positions.

Exercise 3.3
Creating Your Hospitality Competencies Chart

Hospitality Competencies Chart

Position:	How this role contributes to our culture of hospitality:	The must-have hospitality qualities, skills, and abilities this role requires:

Interviewing:

When it comes time to make new hires within Hilton Worldwide and its brands, hiring for hospitality is paramount—and through focused questioning, the candidates' true colors come out during the interview process. How do you make sure you're hiring people who embody the characteristics, qualities, and competencies you've outlined in your Hospitality Competencies Chart?

Follow the interview guide in *Table 3.4* to make sure you're keeping hospitality in mind as you get to know candidates. (Note: This guide is developed with full-time positions in mind, so it may not be applicable to all hires.)

Table 3.4
Hospitality Interview Guide

Questions to consider…	What you're looking for…
Before the interview:	
Has the candidate worked in client/customer service before?	A background in client service is an important indicator that the candidate has experience putting the client first and is accustomed to the nuance and unpredictability of helping people.
What does the candidate's resume/cover letter say about his/her commitment to serving clients?	It's a good sign if you can sense a candidate's passion for client service in their candidate materials.
Immediately before & during the interview:	
How does the candidate interact with your front desk staff?	This can tell you a lot. Get a sense for whether a non-interviewer found the candidate to have an authentic and friendly demeanor.
What messages are sent by the candidate's body language and tone?	The candidate will probably be nervous, and you may sense that. But, beyond that, what kind of body language and overall tone does the candidate use? Does this seem like the kind of person to whom clients and other team members would respond positively? Does this person's approach reinforce and enhance the hospitality-focused culture you are creating?
What's the candidate's communication style?	Look for candidates who have a direct style. They make eye contact. They speak clearly. They use the names of the individuals with whom they are speaking. They are responsive and attentive listeners.
Does the candidate pass the "airport test"?	How would you feel if you learned that your layover was just extended by four hours, and you had to spend that time with this person in the airport? Do you want to be in his/her company for that long? (Note: this scenario is not about whether you like the candidate or if he/she is similar to you. Rather, consider how authentic and engaging this person would likely be as a fellow traveler.)
After the interview:	
Does the candidate follow up with an authentic and thoughtful thank-you note?	Look for a prompt, sincere, and customized thank you note. An emailed note is common nowadays. Best practice is to send a note within 24 hours of the interview.

During the interview, ask specific questions to understand the candidate's approach to hospitality. Two good ways to get authentic answers from candidates include: 1) asking the candidate to walk you through specific scenarios from their past when they've needed to act with hospitality, or 2) inviting the candidate to walk you through how they'd solve a sample scenario that requires hospitality at your organization.

Want some specific interview questions to help you get started? Consider asking questions like the ones outlined in *Table 3.5*.

Table 3.5 **Hospitality-focused Interview Questions**	
Good for…	**Question to ask…**
Direct-service staff & volunteers	Walk me through a time when you had to deal with an upset client. What was causing that client to be upset? What, specifically, did you do to address the problem? What was the resolution after you took action?
Managers	Tell me about a time when you had an employee who wasn't serving clients well. What was that employee doing that could have been done better? What did you do to address the situation? What was the resolution to your intervention?
Leadership	Tell me about a time when you had to lobby other members of your leadership team to make changes that would better serve your clients. What was the challenge? How did you address it? What was the outcome?
All hires	Imagine that our organization is working to improve the way we serve clients when they first arrive for services. Given what you experienced when you arrived for your interview today—including what you saw, how you were treated, etc.—how would you make improvements?

Once you get to references for the strongest candidates, consider asking some questions about the candidate's hospitality skills to get a third party's perspective on his or her hospitality competencies. Take the time you need to make sure that they meet the qualifications for the job—including the key qualification that they be deeply focused on hospitality.

2. Developing Talent

How can you take a strategic approach to developing your team and its ability to exceed clients' expectations? It starts the moment somebody joins your team. The key is to provide team members with a strong introduction to your organization's approach to hospitality during their onboarding, and then to follow with opportunities for your team to develop their skills, as they relate to client service.

Onboarding training:

Provide your team with a strong foundation by making sure that the onboarding for all staff and volunteers includes the hospitality-related items listed in *Table 3.6*.

Table 3.6	
Four Key Components to Onboarding Training	
Values & Culture	• Start with an introduction to your organizational values and culture, so that the new team members are grounded in your most basic approach to the work. • This portion of the onboarding is critical to laying the groundwork for the culture that you'll be looking to them to reinforce.
Client Service Protocol & Policies	• Before adding on personal approaches, new staff need to know the basic policies that keep the organization running. • Examples: What should staff do if there is a client complaint? How do you find up-to-date client information? Where are trends in client satisfaction rates posted? Etc.
Hospitality Best Practices & Norms	• You'll need to familiarize new hires to the "soft skills" that all of your team is expected to exhibit. Even naturally hospitable people benefit from learning best practices. • Sample topics: How do you greet clients when you meet them for the first time? Where can you go to quickly find timely and relevant client information?
Coaching on "Making Hospitality Their Own	• Many new staff will wonder how much room they will have to infuse their approach with their own best practices and personality. • Great hospitality is heartfelt and authentic—so make sure you give clear direction to staff on how they can make their approach to hospitality genuine and personal from the start.

Ongoing training and professional development:

Even the best team members need an occasional refresher on hospitality best practices. Some staff will need to build new skills to serve clients better—while others may desire the opportunity to go deeper with the skills they've already built. Wherever your team members are, you should provide them with ongoing opportunities to continue learning. It will build effectiveness; engage them more fully in the work; and, in some cases, will help to prepare them for increasing responsibility.

An excellent way for you to build the skills of everybody within your organization — including yourself! — is to download and lead the no-cost Hospitality + Service curriculum for direct-service staff. Hospitality + Service curriculum is a tailored training program that leverages Hilton Worldwide's internal on-the-ground Team Member trainings to infuse hospitality into the daily practices of nonprofit and social sector organizations to develop a strong culture of hospitality. You can learn more about the Hospitality + Service curriculum and download it right away by visiting www.hiltonworldwide.com/hospitality+service.

The Hospitality + Service curriculum is organized into seven modules and includes three key resources in each module: a Trainer Guide, a PowerPoint presentation to guide each lesson, and complementary handout materials for participants. The curriculum is customizable and can be delivered as a one-day training, as short, stand-alone workshops, or as lessons integrated into existing staff and/or volunteer trainings.

Table 3.7 outlines the content in the Hospitality + Service curriculum:

Table 3.7 **Hospitality + Service Curriculum Modules**	
Module 1	Transforming Communities with Hospitality + Service
Module 2	Ensuring Authentic Client Interactions
Module 3	Anticipate and Exceed Client Interactions
Module 4	Find Resolution in Difficult Situations
Module 5	Communicate with Care
Module 6	Intentional Client Connections
Module 7	Using Feedback to Drive a Better Client Experience

Explore how you can integrate these modules into your organizational training. Can you gather your staff and regular volunteers for an all-day 'hospitality-bootcamp' training? Is there an hour-long staff meeting that could be used to go through one module once a month? Consider how you might incorporate the Hospitality + Service training curriculum into your organization's professional development offerings.

Professional Development
Hilton Worldwide believes that you manage what you measure. Therefore, they make hospitality a measureable part of every staff members' goal-setting and performance review process. Consider integrating at least one professional goal related to hospitality into each of your team member's objectives. Work with them to understand what areas of the Hospitality Competencies chart they feel competent in, which ones they'd like to work on, and what goals you can set to measure and support their progress. Then, during their performance review, revisit the goals they've set and use feedback from clients and specific examples to assess how they are performing.
In addition to formal structures of staff development related to client-focus, you should also explore ways to keep tactics for improving hospitality skills front and center. This might include forwarding blogs or articles about the importance of hospitality and customer service to your team, along with a few "lessons-learned" called out for your team at the top.

Finally, as you consider individuals for promotion, keep your Hospitality Competencies chart and those whom are meeting their hospitality-focused professional development goals in mind. Make it known that staff members who excel in these competencies may be well-positioned for growth within the organization.

3. Recognizing Talent
Attracting, hiring, and developing talent adds up to a big investment. How do you make sure that your organization is recognizing, rewarding, and retaining the people who make it really shine? Develop a strategy to reward and recognize team members who excel in hospitality: a recognition program. Well-designed recognition programs are a key component in driving positive behaviors, unifying teams, developing culture, and engaging and retain talent.

Use the key principles outlined in the table below as the foundation to build a program that is customized to your organization's budget, people and culture.

Table 3.8
Building an Effective Recognition Programs

Make it Consistent	Supporting a culture of hospitality through recognition should become part of the fabric of your organization. Providing a structure that regularly recognizes staff for their acts of hospitality continually reinforces a focus on clients and encourages staff to aspire to an increased level of hospitality.
Make it Public	Everyone likes to be acknowledged for a job well done. Providing recognition to a staff member for exceptional hospitality in front of peers is an effective way to reinforce expectations and celebrate high-performers. Consider publically giving an award once a year to the staff member who embodies the hospitality-related value of your organization.
Make it Relevant Across Levels of Seniority	Hospitality is vital at all levels and positions within your organization, so it is important to recognize good work done by all levels of seniority (including volunteers). Programs that allow individuals at any level to reward and recognize their peers are able to engage and excite their entire organization in the recognition process. Additionally, department-specific reward structures can ensure that roles not traditionally thought-of as client-facing are still acknowledged for their hospitality.
Make it Authentic	Celebration of your hospitality all-stars should be consistent, public, and democratic - and it should also be fun. Think about ways to infuse the bright spots of your culture into your recognition program. Be creative and don't underestimate the power of catchy names, spontaneous rewards, certificates, and more.

In *Case Study 3.9*, we explore some samples of how Hilton Worldwide brings these best practices of recognition program development to life.

CASE STUDY 3.9:
RECOGNITION PROGRAMS FROM HILTON WORLDWIDE

The CEO Light and Warmth Award and the Spirit Award: These awards are very public forms of recognition and include company-wide acknowledgement from senior leadership. For these awards, Hilton asks staff members to nominate their peers and give specific examples of how the nominee's actions are positively affecting customers. Regardless of if the nominee receives the reward, they are given a certificate to acknowledge their nomination, and a packet of each nomination letter. Thus, team members see the way their actions inspire their peers and make the organization's culture stronger, in addition to publicly celebrating the winner.

Catch Me At My Best: This yearly program allows hotel guests to "catch" hotel employees when they go above and beyond for a guest. Hilton Worldwide provides the opportunity for guests to easily fill out simple comment cards or an online survey. These stories of exceptional hospitality are tallied, relayed back to the employee, and posted publically online. At the close of the program, the employees with the most "catches" receive a reward. In addition, as part of their internal communications, Hilton Worldwide uses these "Catches" spotlight staff members who are making a difference for the company through hospitality.

Peer-led recognition efforts: In addition to formal programs led by organizational leadership, Hilton Worldwide empowers their staff at every level to recognize their peers. They have created certificate templates that allow any staff member to download, print, and give to another staff member. These certificates can give a reward, such as a free lunch or candy bar, or they can simply be a written acknowledgement of their good work.

Remember, culture is king and it's your people who shape and reinforce your organization's culture through every action. Having the right talent—people who are client-oriented and are given the tools and cues to grow in hospitality—can be your organization's greatest differentiator.

4. FACILITIES DESIGN

The Power of Responsive Design

Let's focus on one of the organizational assets you've got that impacts your clients the most: your facilities. From the way your space looks, to how easy it is to navigate, to the level of safety your clients feel once they've stepped through your doors; the design of your facilities plays a critical—but often under-emphasized—role in your client's experience. In this section, we'll take a look at how Hilton Worldwide properties use space to enhance the experience of their guests. Then we'll explore how you can design and implement changes that make a real difference within your own organization.

We will begin by looking at a *Case Study 4.1* from Hilton Worldwide and how they redesigned their guests' experience by rethinking their approach to the hotel's space. While surely you're not trying to create the feeling of a hotel at your nonprofit organization (and you likely have very different financial reserves to support an extensive renovation), there are many lessons to be learned about how to shape your space from the Project Grow case study. What from the Hilton Garden Inn example resonates with you and the needs of your organization?

CASE STUDY 4.1:

HILTON GARDEN INN'S PROJECT GROW

BACKGROUND:

Hilton Garden Inn's executive leadership knew it was time to make a change. They were noticing that their guests were checking in and going directly to their rooms, and staying there. They weren't convening in common places, socializing with others, or taking advantage of the hotel's common spaces, lobby, or bar. When they did leave their rooms, they were leaving the hotel entirely – heading out to other local restaurants and bars.

By listening closely to their customers, the hotel identified that it had an opportunity to turn its lobbies into a place where customers could relax and mingle. Customers felt that the current common areas weren't usable or inviting. For customers, the new space would be appealing and would improve the quality of their stay. For the hotel, an investment in space would create significant financial returns in the form of deepened customer loyalty, repeat business, and increased revenue from customers purchasing more items at the restaurant and bar.

OUTCOMES:

Hilton Garden Inn developed an approach that took the customer experience to the next level, resulting in measurable increases in customer satisfaction rates, client loyalty, and revenue generation.

CASE STUDY 4.1 *(cont'd.):*

HILTON GARDEN INN'S PROJECT GROW

HILTON GARDEN INN'S APPROACH:
Below, we take a look at some key lessons from how they approached the opportunity:

- **They focused on client needs from the beginning.** Hilton Garden Inn recognized that customers' tastes were changing. More and more, customers wanted options for places to relax, work, and socialize within the hotel. This spurred leadership to act.
- **They started with clear goals in mind.** Project Grow had three goals: 1) Increasing guests' connection to the brand, 2) setting the brand apart from competitors, and 3) increasing the sales of food and beverages. These goals were focused and could be assigned measurable metrics.
- **They had a unified overarching vision.** Project Grow was designed to inspire a sense of being in nature, and it was intended to evoke an uplifting feeling among guests. All of the design choices reinforced a similar theme and shared the same aesthetic palette.
- **They made changes that reinforced their broader vision.** All Hilton Garden Inn hotels were given a makeover, and every change in lighting, furniture, and overall look reinforced the overarching vision that Project Grow established. The hotels replaced stiff, more formal furniture with softer, welcoming chairs and couches. They placed tables in the common areas, where people could spread out their work projects or a board game. They placed lamps throughout the space to create a soft, warm light. Live plants were scattered around communal spaces, enhancing the "garden" effect. Drapes and curtains separated spaces, creating a sense that you could always find private place to catch up with colleagues, family, or friends.
- **They established roles and behaviors for their team members.** Hilton Garden Inn recognized that a beautiful space alone wouldn't drive increased customer loyalty and revenue. The Hilton Garden Inn team was a critical part of bringing this new space to life. When the project rolled out in hotels, all team members were given trainings on the new design, why it was being implemented, and how it would change guests' experiences. They were asked to find their own personal connection to the changes, and then explore ways that they could help the guests connect with the space.
- **They tracked progress.** Hilton Garden Inn kept a close eye on customer satisfaction rates by monitering survey results closely. They were able to observe a direct correlation between an investment in their facilities and an uptick in customer satisfaction, which told them their efforts were working.

DESIGNING A BETTER SPACE FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

Whether you need to completely revamp your facilities design or just make some touch-ups, you can follow the series of steps in *Table 4.2* to make improvements to your space (within your budget) that will make a real difference in your clients' experience and your ability to delivery on hospitality.

1. **Begin and end with the client in mind.** Before you begin making any improvements to your space, take a step back and understand what changes need to be made from a client's perspective. Be careful not to make any assumptions about what your clients need. Their needs may surprise you.

Table 4.2 Four Ways to Develop a Client-centric Facility Design	
Walk the grounds as if you were a client.	Imagine you've never been to your organization's site before. With a notepad, take a tour of your facilities as if you were a client seeing the place for the first time. Be sure to start outside of your facility and take the walk in—because the things your clients see right before they enter your space also influence their visit. What do you notice? Jot down notes as you move along. What messages does the space send? Look at the walls, the furniture, lighting, signage, and collateral that is on display. Notice how staff is behaving. Where are they placed? How do they help your clients navigate the facility? Be mindful of any issues with accessibility or safety. By giving your space a fresh look, you may start to see all kinds of things you hadn't before.
Check client feedback.	Are clients mentioning your facilities or asking for improvements they wish to see? Check formal (surveys, feedback forms, comment boxes) and informal (1:1 conversation) sources.
Ask your clients directly.	Whether through direct conversation or a special survey, solicit your clients' feedback directly. What would they improve?
Get your team's thoughts.	Your team may have many ideas about how to improve the space so that it's better for clients. Sometimes staff doesn't mention improvements that are needed because they are aware that they may cost money. But, if you ask them, watch how quickly they'll jump to helping you make the space feel better. Think of different ways you can engage them in the design process. Maybe they would even participate in a brainstorming conversation around the ideal "tone" your facility should be setting for your clients. Or perhaps you could have them share their ideas around low/no-cost ideas for improvements? Seeking team member input early can also be a good way to introduce them—and get them involved in supporting—changes that may happen down the line.

2. **Outline measurable goals.** Know what you want to achieve with the improvements you're making. Do you want your new design to entice clients to convene in common areas and build relationships with one another? Do you want your new design to improve how clients navigate through the space so that there are fewer bottlenecks? Do you want your new design to draw in new clients—those who may not have thought to visit your site before?

Exercise

In *Exercise 4.3*, you can set measurable metrics that you can track over time.

Exercise 4.3 **Setting Measurable Goals around Facilities Improvements**	
Goal 1:	• 1-3 Metrics to measure progress in reaching this goal: • How and when these metrics will be measured:
Goal 2:	• 1-3 Metrics to measure progress in reaching this goal: • How and when these metrics will be measured:
Goal 3:	• 1-3 Metrics to measure progress in reaching this goal: • How and when these metrics will be measured:

3. **Develop your overarching "design intent".** Like "Project Grow", your design should have an overarching intent. What kind of look, tone, and feel are you trying to create for your clients? It should deepen the experience that clients have with your brand. Make it authentic to your organization—and tie it back to your vision and values. By creating an inviting and attractive space for individuals who are going through a time of need, you can create a deeply positive experience for them. And it can even help to make them more receptive to the services you are offering.

Exercise

Exercise 4.4
Design Intent
(Here, describe the intent behind your design. What is the experience and tone you are trying to create for your clients? Describe it in as much or little detail as you feel is necessary.)

4. **Get your team on board.** Changes to your space will only be effective if your team takes on behaviors that bring the space to life in the best ways. Your team can be an essential part of helping clients to navigate the improved space. They are the stewards of your clients' experiences of the space. And your team is also important in making sure that the space remains tidy and welcoming. Upkeep is half the battle—so make sure your team feels a sense of ownership, accountability, and pride in keeping the space welcoming. Make sure your team is briefed before you rollout changes and understands the impact that keeping up a space can have on a client.

5. **Be resourceful, not cheap.** Like most nonprofits, you probably have a (very) limited budget to make improvements. But that shouldn't be an excuse for taking no action at all. While some improvements will certainly involve a financial commitment, many improvements can be made at no cost at all. If you have little-to-no budget at all, you can seek no-cost donations of services and goods from local companies. Consider asking a space designer to work with you pro bono, and team up with a local corporation that can donate used office chairs, desks, lighting, and other goods. In *Table 4.5*, we outline 10 ways to improve your space on a tight budget:

Table 4.5

10 WAYS TO BUILD A GREAT SPACE ON A SHOESTRING BUDGET

1. **De-clutter:** Perhaps that bulletin board overflowing with tacked-up paper has become "background noise" to you and your team by now. But it probably just looks like a mess to your clients. Take a hard look around your space. Do you need all the stuff you've got laying around? Cleaning out the clutter will make your space feel cleaner, more professional, and calmer to your clients. Once you've got the clutter under control, find ways to manage it by creating standardized ways to present messages, forms, and other information to clients (i.e. plastic holders, or all "on-brand" and printed on cards that are all the same size).

2. **Rearrange the furniture:** Maybe you've had the furniture for one way so long that it's gotten hard to imagine new arrangements. But sometimes a fresh arrangement can be just what you need to improve a space. If you rearrange furniture with a focus on creating better spaces for convening, conversations, and the easy flow of traffic, you'll improve client experience significantly.

3. **Improve the lighting**: Changes in a few lighting fixtures throughout your space can give a new tone to key spaces and can give the overall feeling of your facility a much-needed lift. Using lamps instead of overhead lights is a low cost way to dramatically increase the feeling of warmth and make a space more welcoming.

4. **Add plants (real ones):** Plants can add dimension, warmth, and a fresh feeling to space. Getting real ones can make a difference—they create a more authentic feel. Just make sure you have a plan for how to care for them. Hearty plants that need minimal care are recommended.

5. **Apply a fresh coat of paint:** This may be one of the cheapest ways to brighten up your space. A fresh coat of paint can make a tired room look new.

6. **Keep it clean and tidy:** Just keeping the space clean can go a long way to making it feel hospitable and inviting. Pay special attention to your floors—they often get dirty first.

7. **Make the "tone" consistent:** Remember how Project Grow worked to establish the tone of a garden or backyard? What is the tone you want to create? Audit the current tone of your space and get rid of items that detract from the tone you're trying to create.

8. **Update your upholstery:** Furniture is expensive, but often you can find upholstery on the cheap. Make an old chair look new by having its seat freshly upholstered, or add nice slipcovers to the chairs in your common spaces.

9. **Focus on signage:** Does your signage reinforce a strong, clear brand? Is it easy to follow? Is there just enough signage (but not too much)? Your signage can be an important way for you to express your brand, keep traffic moving in an orderly way, and set the tone for the space. Remember to keep your brand consistent across all of your signage.

10. **Improve collateral:** You probably keep informative collateral in your space for your clients. Is it consistent in look, tone, and branding? Consider your collateral an essential element in your overarching design—the way it looks matters to the overall feel of your space too.

MAKING IT COUNT

After you've rolled out changes, get the most out of your improvements. First of all, let your clients know about the changes. Your team should let clients know the design intent and how the space has changed to improve client experience. Most importantly, your team should solicit clients' feedback. What do they like most? Are the changes effective?

Once you have your design improvements in place, return to your original goals and track your progress. Are you seeing notable improvements? If you are, then share the good news with funders, your team, pro bono consultants, and others who have supported the strategic and thrifty changes you've made. This will motivate others to support the continuous improvement of the space where you work.

While design may feel superfluous to you, we guarantee that it doesn't feel that way to your clients. They will appreciate the time and attention you pay to creating a hospitable, warm, inviting, and attractive space. You'll be surprised how small changes to the way your space looks and feels can surprise and delight the people you serve, improving their experience—and, ultimately, their relationship with your organization.

5. MEASURING CLIENT SATISFACTION
Using client feedback to continuously improve service

Understanding and measuring client satisfaction is essential to driving improvements in the services you provide and the overall efficiency and effectiveness of your organization. This impacts both of the bottom lines you are accountable to as a leader: the positive impact of your organization's work and the sustainability of your funding. When you know how your clients feel about your work and have a better sense of their needs, you're able to create a more responsibe service delivery model, which takes your impact further. And the further your impact goes, the more funding you'll be able to secure to sustain and grow your work.

In this section, we offer you step-by-step guidance that will help you to:
- Identify the client satisfaction measures that matter most to your organization
- Design an implementation strategy for a client feedback system
- Use findings to make improvements to the services you provide, which helps you to make a greater impact on your clients and sustain the funding you need to keep quality high and grow the reach of your work.

Read below to begin unlocking the potential of measuring client satisfaction for your organization.

1. IDENTIFY YOUR ORGANIZATION'S CLIENT SATISFACTION MEASURES

What measures matter most to your organization? This can be a difficult question to answer—and it can look a little different for every nonprofit. We've identified five key client satisfaction measures that apply to direct service nonprofit organizations: Overall client satisfaction, service attributes, service recovery, open client feedback, and client information. These measures are modeled after client satisfaction measures used by Hilton Worldwide brands and are adapted to meet the unique context for a direct service nonprofit. However, since every direct service nonprofit organization is different; every organization's approach to measuring client will be different too. You should use these key measures and sample questions as a starting point for designing and customizing your own in-house client satisfaction survey.

Overall Satisfaction
Measuring overall satisfaction can help your organization to better understand the entirety of a clients' experience, from the time they began engaging with your organization through the completion of their service experience.

Sample questions:
- How satisfied were you with your overall experience as our client? *[Extremely Satisfied (5), Satisfied (4), Neither (3), Dissatisfied (2), Extremely Dissatisfied (1)]*
- How likely would you be to recommend our services to someone else, if they were to require assistance? *[Definitely Would (5), Probably Would (4), Might or Might Not (3), Probably Would Not (2), Definitely Would Not (1)]*

Service Attributes
Nonprofit organizations can pinpoint areas of service strength and weakness by asking questions that help to identify clients' satisfaction with key attributes of the services they receive. Depending on your organization—including the services you provide, the individuals you serve, the community where you are

located, your physical spaces, etc. - questions developed to measure satisfaction with service attributes will vary widely.

To determine which service attributes are the most important for your organization to measure, you should identify the key drivers of satisfaction for *your specific clients* (i.e. timeliness of service, friendliness of staff, convenience of location, look/feel of site, etc.). To develop an understanding of the service attributes that your clients value most, you can:

- **Talk directly with clients** about their preferences as they relate to their service experience at the nonprofit. Asking clients directly about their needs, desires, preferences, and expectations is often the quickest route to understanding which service attributes are most valued.
- **Conduct focus groups** to identify client interests. By inviting a third party to conduct focus groups with a representative grouping of clients, nonprofits can identify the service attributes that the individuals they serve value the most.

To get you started, some common areas for measurement within direct service nonprofits include:

Table 5.1 Common Areas for Measurement		
• Staff/volunteer attitude (friendliness, willingness to be of assistance)	• Staff/volunteer skills (ability to deliver service)	• Cleanliness, aesthetic quality, and comfort of premises
• Usefulness of tools, information, and/or resources provided	• Clarity of communication (verbal and written) from staff/volunteers	• Overall ease of navigating the service delivery process
• Accessibility of services	• Safety and security of site	• Service outcomes

> **Sample question:**
> - Please rate your satisfaction with the following areas: *[Extremely Satisfied (5), Satisfied (4), Neither (3), Dissatisfied (2), Extremely Dissatisfied (1)]*
>   - The quality of the service you received
>   - The attentiveness and helpfulness of the staff who assisted you
>   - The cleanliness of the waiting room
>   - The helpfulness of the tools and resources you received
>   - The convenience and accessibility of the services you received
>   - The safety and security of the offices

Service Recovery

Asking questions related to service recovery will help you identify when clients encounter problems with service delivery, and how those problems are currently resolved by staff and volunteers.

> **Sample questions:**
> - Did the service you received meet your needs? *[Yes/No]*
>   - If **no**, what could we have done to meet your needs? *[Open text]*
> - Did the service you received meet your expectations? *[Yes/No]*
>   - If **no**, what could we have done to meet your expectations? *[Open text]*
> - Did you experience any problems with our service? *(Yes/No)*
>   - If **yes**, Please indicate the type of problem you experienced. *(Open text)*
> - Did you report the problem to staff? *(Yes/No)*
>   - If yes, how did staff handle the problem? *(Open text)*

Open Feedback

In order to collect unstructured feedback from clients, you should create a section that encourages respondents to share subjective impressions of their experience.

Sample question:
- Are there any additional comments you'd like to share with us? *(Open text)*

Client Information

Collecting basic information from survey respondents helps your nonprofit identify trends in the profiles and expectations of the clients you serve. You will find it helpful to capture demographic information; however you should never request information that would compromise the anonymity of the survey.

Client information collected could include:
- Service delivery information
  - Services received
  - Method of accessing services (online, in person, over the phone, via email, etc.)
- Demographic information (the items listed below are examples; every nonprofit should consider which demographic data points are most relevant to its specific needs):
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Zip code

On the next page, you'll find *Figure 5.2*, a sample **Client Satisfaction Survey**. This turnkey resource is a great reference point for you as you draft your own, customized client satisfaction tools. It will provide a solid starting block to help you create your own, custom client satisfaction survey. You may want to add additional questions to your survey to capture feedback on specific hospitality initiatives you are spearheading, track satisfaction around a specific service area, or to collect specific demographic information on your clients.

Figure 5.2

Client Satisfaction Survey

Sample Client Satisfaction Survey

We are always looking for ways to improve the services we provide. We value your opinion and would like to hear from you about your experience and ways that we can improve. Please take a few minutes to share your thoughts.

OVERALL SATISFACTION

	Extremely Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither	Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
How satisfied were you with your overall experience as our client?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Definitely Would Not	Probably Would Not	Might or Might Not	Probably Would	Definitely Would
How likely would you be to recommend us to someone else, if they were to need similar services?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SATISFACTION WITH SERVICE DELIVERY

	Extremely Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither	Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
How satisfied were you with…					
The quality of the service you received	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The attentiveness and helpfulness of the staff who assisted you	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The cleanliness of the waiting room	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The helpfulness of the tools and resources you received	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The safety and security of the offices	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Did the service you received meet your **needs**?

○ Yes

○ No

    If **no**, what could we have done to meet your needs?

Did the service you received meet your **expectations**?

○ Yes

○ No

    If **no**, what could we have done to meet your expectations?

Did you experience any **problems** with our service?

○ Yes

○ No

    If **yes**, please indicate the type of problem. Also, if you reported the problem, please let us know how our staff or volunteers handled it.

Are there any additional comments you'd like to share with us?

Client Satisfaction Survey *(cont'd)*

GENERAL INFORMATION

How did you receive assistance from us? (Please check all that apply.)

- ❑ In-person
- ❑ Over the phone
- ❑ Online
- ❑ Other, please specify:

Which services did we provide to you?

- ❑ [Service A]
- ❑ [Service B]
- ❑ [Service C]
- ❑ [Service D]
- ❑ Other, please specify:

Thank you! Your feedback is essential to our continued improvement and success.

2. DESIGN YOUR IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

After you determine the questions your organization will ask to understand client satisfaction, you can now design how to implement your survey. See *Table 5.3* for questions that can help you to design the survey to best meet your organization's needs.

Table 5.3 Questions to Ask Before Delivering A Survey	
WHO should be surveyed?	To gather the most complete picture of client satisfaction, you should seek to survey every individual who receives direct services from you organization. If this is not possible, you should employ surveying best practices to survey a random or representative sample of clients you serve.
WHEN should the survey be delivered?	When measuring client satisfaction, timing and frequency are important. You should attempt to gather client feedback as quickly as possible after a service has been delivered in order to capture the most accurate client response.
HOW should the survey be administered?	Your team should consider how your organization's clients prefer to respond to requests for information. If clients regularly use email, a survey sent over email directly after a service has been delivered is an efficient way to capture responses and track client feedback in the aggregate. If clients do not use their email regularly, it is best to administer surveys via paper copy or over the phone after a service has been delivered.
WHICH STAFF should administer the survey?	When deciding who should administer a survey, you should always choose the option that will preserve the anonymity of the survey-taker and that will encourage honest responses. If a survey is being administered via email, it should come from a neutral source within in the organization. If the survey is delivered to the client at the site where services are delivered, the survey should either be delivered by: 1) a neutral party, to discourage survey bias, or 2) a familiar party who directs the survey-taker to return the survey to a neutral location so that his/her responses can be kept anonymous.

3. USE SURVEY FINDINGS TO IMPROVE SERVICE

Once client satisfaction has been captured, how will you use the information? Information gathered about client satisfaction is best used to make systematic improvements in your organization's service delivery. We recommend the following best practices below to maximize the benefits of measuring client satisfaction:

- **Track client satisfaction and report out on performance.** Tally survey results on a regular basis to understand performance. Track and report out on notable outcomes and trends in client satisfaction performance regularly. This allows you to maintain an objective awareness of their performance as well as show their visible commitment to high standards of client satisfaction. It's recommended that you assign accountability for tracking and communicating trends in data to a specific individual or team within your organization. If there is a regular system of tracking and sharing data in place, you and your team will be able to see trends evolve over time. Make data readily and regularly available. The more transparency you can achieve here, the better.

- **Make client feedback widely visible to staff and volunteers.** Whenever possible, client feedback should be made visible and easily available to all staff and volunteers. This increases staff and volunteers' awareness of the client experience and increases the relevance of collecting and responding to client feedback.

- **Recognize and celebrate strengths.** Survey results and trends can help organizations identify areas where clients feel service delivery are strong. These areas should be identified and celebrated publically, so that staff and volunteers develop a pride in their strengths and develop a keener sense of what satisfies their clients.

- **Address areas of weakness.** Organizations should identify where clients are dissatisfied, acknowledge areas of potential weakness, and then make timely concerted efforts to address problems. Moreover, they should let clients know that they've heard their feedback and are taking steps necessary to make changes.

WHY MEASUREMENT MATTERS

By consistently measuring and responding to client feedback, you can continuously strengthen the services you provide, improve clients' experiences, and create an environment where their staff and volunteers can do their best work. This creates improved outcomes for your clients, and it establishes your organization as a trusted and worthy recipient of funders' support.

EPILOGUE
Putting it all together

Congratulations! You're well on your way to building an organization that is powered by hospitality. Through this toolkit and its activities, you've been able to evaluate your own leadership style and its impact on hospitality in your organzation, learned tactics to better understand your clients, identified ways to increase your team's focus on hospitality, outlined improvements for your facilities, and begun thinking about how to measure client satisfaction within your organization.

Building hospitality into the culture of your organization is an exciting and fulfilling journey—but it isn't an easy one. You may find yourself questioning your own actions as a leader, or you may face resistance along the way from team members who are wary of change. This change will also take time to enact. As you know, changing culture does not happen overnight or by one person. But remember the great return on this investment. As you and your team invest more deeply in client service, you'll see the rewards. You'll experience deepened community impact, improved team morale, greater client retention, and rising measures of client satisfaction. You can use these outcomes to attract funding and expand services by showing donors the exciting return on your investment in hospitality.

Good luck! We know you'll enjoy the journey and the results of your efforts.