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Rachael Park

Rudding Park, Harrogate

THE JUDGES

Gordon Cartwright,

UK and overseas
account manager,
AA Hotel Services

Ian Hughes,

national chairman,
UK Housekeeper's
Association

Lizzy Kelk,

general manager,
Malmaison Newcastle

Minjoo Leutwiler-Lee,

executive
housekeeper, Sofitel
London St James

Jean Roberts,

head housekeeper,
Hotel du Vin

Liz Smith-Mills,

UK hotel consultant,
Johnson Diversey

Carrie Wicks,

operations director,
Firmdale Hotels

The customer knows best – so it's telling that Rudding Park was voted as one of the Top 30 Luxury Hotels in the World in the TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice Awards 2009, for the second year running. With only three UK hotels listed in the top 100, this is an accolade to be proud of, and as head housekeeper, Rachael Park was a key player in gaining it.

To inspire her staff to achieve the highest standards of cleanliness, Park has created a culture where she supports their needs and they work with her as a harmonious team. Having set the tone, her staff provide a strong support system for each other, too. It's certainly down to her management style that the majority of the 14 housekeepers and three supervisors have been at Rudding Park for more than three years.

As well as taking time to inspire her staff with a continuous programme of training and development, she also takes school pupils on work experience, college students on a housekeeping programme of development and university students on management trainee courses.

While clearly talented as a people manager, Park is also an adept manager of departmental costs, whether they are payroll, supplies or amenities. In the absence of a

central purchasing department, she has control over all housekeeping purchases – from sourcing products and negotiating price, through to ordering and stock-control.

Park has proved to be a talented negotiator in an increasingly competitive market, an example being her handling of laundry costs. The hotel has been using the same supplier since it opened in 1997 but Park has succeeded in maintaining a cost-effective contract that has seen hardly any price increases in 12 years.

Park is also tuned in to the bigger picture, promoting environmentally friendly practices wherever possible. These range from recycling guest newspapers, to using master switch controls to turn off bedroom lights.

What the judges said...

● "The hotel is spotless and very well organised. Rachael has implemented good cost control and good team building and training. She also has a low staff turnover."
*Jean Roberts head housekeeper,
Hotel du Vin, Harrogate*

● "Rachael commands loyalty and respect from her employees and peers, while meeting budget and other financial targets, and demonstrate environmental awareness."
Liz Smith-Mills, Johnson Diversey

THE SHORTLIST

Rachael Park,
Rudding Park,
Harrogate

Emma Lucking,

Kettering Park
Hotel & Spa,
Northamptonshire

Barbara Sheridan,
Thistle Marble Arch,
London

FORMER WINNERS

2007 Minjoo
Leutwiler-Lee, Sofitel
London St James

2008 Jean Roberts,
Hotel du Vin,
Harrogate