

Educating trainers



A lot of hotel owners and operators are training avoiders. Although some employers spend considerable time and resources developing employees, both on and off the job, a large number of employers do not give training and technical skills a high priority.

For many, jobs are designed to be undertaken by routine unskilled labour where the low barriers to entry, low wages, minimal training and high levels of staff turnover apply. Too often hotel managers fail to appreciate the potential business benefits of up-skilling these posts.

One of the key issues for Indian hotel companies is hiring and retaining the right people to deliver the service promise of the brand in a rapidly expanding industry.

Despite the private sector investments made, for example, in the Oberoi Centre of Learning and Development, Jumeirah Group's investment in the Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management or Cornell's investment in the Singapore based Nanyang Institute of Hospitality and many others, the rapid growth rates of the Asian economies and the competitive nature of the BPO, IT and other service industry labour policies means that hotels in Mumbai, Kolkata or Delhi face labour challenges that would be familiar to hotel managers in Madrid, Krakow or Dortmund.

Attracting talent

The cry went out at a recent hotel investment conference in Mumbai, as well as at the recent Berlin investment conference, to the hotel brands and operators to do more to make the industry attractive compared to its competitors.

So it was interesting for us to be invited by Donald Sloan, the head of hospitality leisure and tourism management at Oxford Brookes University, to participate in the annual conference of the Council for Hospitality Management Education. CHME is a voluntary non-profit making body representing those UK universities and colleges offering courses in the management of hospitality businesses. 30 full research papers were presented ranging from 'A qualitative study of yield management implementation in hotels chains' to 'Exploring psychological empowerment among staff in a small luxury hotel group'.

This industry has, in recent years, been provided with educated managers from publicly funded colleges (e.g. Surrey) and privately funded colleges (e.g. Glion). The latter have gained credibility by having their courses accredited by the public sector.

But, as the public sector increasingly looks to sources of funds that are not from the state, this model is at risk. It seems to us that research is one vehicle that should be used by hotel companies to reinvest in academia, ensuring that public and private sector schools provide relevant educational experiences for tomorrow's hospitality management.

UNWTO training seminar

Hotel Solutions was recently invited by the Bahraini Ministry of Information to lead a United Nations World Tourism Organisation training seminar aimed at assisting key private sector and public sector managers develop their skills.

For Bahrain, travel and tourism is a vital part of the economy; in the Middle East, only Jordan's industry has a bigger percentage contribution to GDP (Gross Domestic Product).

The tourism offer is being repositioned to reflect the impact of the supply led growth of Dubai and Qatar, as well as to reflect the pressures on the Cabinet coming from the Sunni and Shia elements of the newly elected Council of Representatives.

It was good to experience a government and an industry engaged inside and out with the needs of its hospitality and tourism industry. It makes a stark comparison to the light government touch awarded to tourism in the UK and USA to name but two major tourism economies.

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