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## First Move Hospitality Sector Introduction - HOTELS

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Could there be a better a time to be entering, or to consider entering the hotel industry? Probably not. Following the tragic events of 9/11 and the subsequent global economical challenges, it is fair to say that the hotel industry has steadily recovered in the last 5 years with 2007 representing a significant peak of resurgence. That is not to say that there is not future growth over the coming years. Quite the contrary; for example, with literally hundreds of new opening hotels planned within 2007 alone in Dubai, China and India, it is hard to imagine the hotel industry being anything other than buoyant over the rest of this decade and hopefully beyond, within every continent.

### **The lure of hotels**

Those that have ever worked in a hotel will know of the contrasting aspects of front of house, and back of house. Thin walls often divide the glamour of the 5\* lobby from the drab, not so 5\* back office. But it is this front of house glitz that continues to attract and lure us into the hotel game, and that enables employers and owners to market successfully the sexiness of the industry to customers and employees alike. In which other industries can you travel the world, mix with celebrities, experience a business opening and work within a dynamic multicultural team within a couple of years of your career? Not many.

Of course like any effective marketing campaign, a large element of this appeal is overstated. So what truly is the lure of the hotel industry for graduates, and what can it realistically offer you and your career?

### **Career opportunities within the hotel industry**

The transient nature of the hotel industry is widely documented, and those in the know have surely experienced being operationally short-staffed and involved in what seems like an endless recruitment cycle. Generally, this is highly indicative of working in hotels but does however, present both opportunities and challenges. Most importantly, reflecting the very nature of the trade, as an aspiring hotel management graduate you *are* expected to move, to progress, to travel, to be promoted, to learn, to succeed... and you can do it quickly! On the flip side, it may be a stressful journey. Sorry, it *will* be!

For those future hotel General Managers, the 2 traditional career paths of 'Rooms' and 'F&B' remain the most popular and normal, however it is increasingly possible to achieve the same goal via careers within the departments of Sales, Revenue, Housekeeping, Corporate Office and Kitchen. Some will be quicker than others of course.

For those seeking a 'corporate hotel career', the extremely high paced development strategies of most large international hotel groups means that there are greater opportunities just now in the corporate world than there have ever been before. Typically a specialised Postgraduate qualification or a business MBA will assist you to get a foot in the door for these rarer and more sought after positions and you will generally require some basic operational hotel experience too.

It is hard to generalise, and everyone has their own opinion about the best ways to progress and develop. My personal view is to try to gain as much exposure in as many areas of the business as you can, and to focus as much on developing your people management skills, as on learning the business. Treat your career like it was your own

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business, where you would surely want to know every little detail of what is making the operation a success, or what or whom is prohibiting that success. Does a hospitality qualification help you? Most definitely.

### **The rewards**

We have all listened to the broken record about 'low pay and long hours', and academics have researched and published about the total rewards package and the fringe benefits that make up the total salary package within the hotel industry. Both run true. Generally speaking the early stages of a hotel management career will require an element of earnings sacrifice, though not always. Long hours - naturally - but most jobs in my opinion require long hours. I work long hours! What the hotel industry offers in return, as mentioned before, is fast progression opportunities, and greatly increased rewards as you climb the career ladder. It also offers a more diverse range of potential benefits than most other industries, including tax free expatriate salaries, meals, entertainment allowances, laundry costs, accommodation, rest and relaxation breaks, company discounts, share schemes and gratuities, to name but a few. And who can put a price upon meeting and greeting celebrities?! More seriously, who can put a value on living in many different countries and cultures, and working with and managing a highly diverse labour force?

### **Employer expectations of hotel graduates**

Some hotel employers feel that every graduate wants it all, and wants it now. Most employers, however, hopefully understand that the majority of hotel management graduates do want a lot, but are prepared to work hard and well to get it. The best graduates that I see and work with, are those that have a comprehensive education, those that have diverse hotel experience, and most importantly those that have the right attitude and passion to learn, develop and succeed within the industry. For these individuals, the sky really is the limit.

International hotel employers just now are fighting to employ the best, and they are fighting to employ sufficient manpower to match their aggressive development programmes, so good people will go places, literally. The diversity of the industry means that there can be no absolute formula for guaranteeing success, and of course every candidate is an individual being who must formulate their own career plan.

One message is clear though - the timing is right, the market is ripe, and hotel employers need you.

### **About Hospitality Graduate Recruitment (h-g-r)**

Hospitality Graduate Recruitment, h-g-r, helps global hospitality employers find hotel-school graduates, undergraduates and alumni for entry level, supervisory and junior management positions. h-g-r operates a leading web-based database which allows you to search for candidates and allows graduates to apply online to vacancies. h-g-r works with over 100 global hospitality management schools and universities, producing a diverse database of fresh talent. Visit [www.h-g-r.com](http://www.h-g-r.com) for more information or contact Jeff Ross, Managing Director, Hospitality Graduate Recruitment, Tribschenhof 70, Luzern, 6006, Switzerland, Tel Direct: +41 41 370 6759, [jeff@h-g-r.com](mailto:jeff@h-g-r.com)

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