



## Hospitality Graduate Survey Results 2011

LUZERN, SWITZERLAND, April 2011, by Jeff Ross, Managing Director, Hospitality Graduate Recruitment

In 2010 HGR conducted a survey of various hospitality recruitment topics, and the results were extremely well received within the industry globally. This prompted us to repeat the exercise, and to draw comparisons and conclusions from the data in 2011 versus 2010.

This year, the survey was sent to a sample of 1000 recent international hospitality graduates and 500 current students from 50 different international hotel schools in Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Below is a snapshot of our findings.

A) When asked to rank the factors of greatest importance when choosing a future employer, participants selected the following:

### 2010 results

- 1 – Career development opportunities
- 2 – Brand/perception of (quality) employer
- 3 – Training provided by employer
- 4 – Opportunity to obtain a role that offers responsibility
- 5 – Remuneration

### 2011 results

- 1 – Career development opportunities
- 2 – Opportunity to obtain a role that offers responsibility
- 3 – Brand/perception of (quality) employer
- 4 – Training provided by employer
- 5 – Remuneration

Some employers may be surprised to see that again remuneration was the factor of least importance to respondents. It was absolutely conclusive that graduates were much more focused on finding a job and employer that will offer training and career development, and where within the job, candidates will have the opportunity to take responsibility and be accountable for targets and goals.

B) When asked to choose the level of role that they felt was most suitable to their experience (at time of graduation), participants responded as follows:

### 2010 results

- 33% - supervisory level
- 28% - entry level
- 21% - trainee level
- 18% - management level

### 2011 results

- 30% - supervisory level
- 29% - entry level
- 26% - trainee level
- 15% - management level

It has always been a contentious issue, that graduate expectations are highly inflated versus their experience. These results perhaps show a more realistic alignment of expectations today. For graduates that have spent considerable time and money on a hotel school education - but have not yet had the opportunity to supervise or manage a team of people within a hospitality job - it remains a constant challenge to realign expectations that an entry level or train-



ing role will realistically be required as the next career move. This can particularly be the case for Post graduate or MBA candidates, who are perhaps undergoing a career change. Responsibility must fall onto the hotel schools to better communicate the needs and requirements of the industry in this regard, as it is the experience of HGR that these more mature graduates are often particularly ill-informed about the types of jobs they may have to undertake upon graduation in order to progress within the hospitality industry.

C) When asked to rank the geographical area of interest (by continent) for their first role after graduation, participants responded as follows:

2010 results

45% - Europe  
22% - US & Canada  
18% - Asia  
8% - Middle East  
7% - South America

2011 results

49% - Europe  
17% - US & Canada  
23% - Asia  
6% - Middle East  
5% - South America

These results continue to throw up a challenge to the industry, most notably for the Middle East region. For a region with such high levels of hotel development, and consequently large recruitment needs, more must be done to market the location to international hotel schools and students/graduates. Perhaps (lack of) cultural awareness of the region is the major issue. For whatever reasons, seemingly Asia is perceived as a region that will offer better and safer career opportunities than the Middle East. This is highly contentious. Hotel schools internationally must continue to try to gain a better grasp of the employment opportunities and intricacies of the emerging markets and regions in order to better educate the future job seekers.

Europe continues to be by far the most attractive destination for students and graduates yet remains one of the harder locations in terms of visa and work permit restrictions (for non-EU nationals). This is nothing new, and is always likely to cause a lot of disappointment to non-EU national hospitality graduates seeking to start or develop their career in Europe.

D) Participants were asked if they were currently considering further education rather than employment.

2010 results

78% - No  
22% - Yes

2011 results

82% - No  
18% - Yes

In the 2011 results, there has been a small increase in the number of respondents seemingly ready to enter the job market versus 2010. Presumably this supports the theory that confidence in the hospitality job market is slightly higher than it was 6 months previously.



E) Participants were asked if they were currently considering employment outside of the hospitality sector.

2010 results

55% - No  
45% - Yes

2011 results

59% - No  
41% - Yes

This is still a very worrying result. Retention of graduates in the hospitality industry has always been an important topic, and there is no easy solution. But with the global skills shortage that is still widely talked about in our industry, something needs to be done in order to catch these 41% that are potentially going to slip through the hospitality net.

F) Participants were asked how they would rate the general level and quality of response from international hospitality employers to job applications that they had made in the last 6 months.

2010 results

Excellent – 22%  
Good – 12%  
Acceptable – 15%  
Not good – 9%  
Unacceptable – 25%  
No response received – 17%

2011 results

Excellent – 9%  
Good – 10%  
Acceptable – 14%  
Not good – 10%  
Unacceptable – 32%  
No response received – 25%

There exists even greater dissatisfaction from hospitality job seekers about the quality and low level of responses that are received to their applications. This is sadly becoming a new trend of our industry, and it is seemingly now acceptable for hospitality employers not to respond to applications, and not to send regret responses.

Online talent management IT systems most definitely contribute to this candidate dissatisfaction, where pre-scripted automated responses are the norm, and it is increasingly hard to deal with a human being. HGR sympathizes with both parties on this topic, and is well experienced on seeing the often poor quality of job applications, but equally on witnessing the poor or non-existent employer response to job applications and other correspondence.

There is no doubt that most of the big hotel chains are under resourced in their (often centralized) Human Resources and Recruitment departments, and employee turnover has been worryingly high in the last 5 years in these key senior management HR roles generally. Resourcing continuity has unquestionably been damaged in those organisations where this has been the case.



G) When asked to select the department of interest for their first role (at time of graduation), participants responded as follows:

2010 results

- 1 – Food and beverage
- 2 – Front office
- 3 – Sales and marketing (including events)
- 4 – Human resources
- 5 – Finance
- 6 – Culinary
- 7 – Housekeeping

2011 results

- 1 – Front office
- 2 – Food and beverage
- 3 – Sales and marketing (including events)
- 4 – Culinary
- 5 – Finance
- 6 – Human resources
- 7 – Housekeeping
- 8 – Other

Results in 2011 are largely similar to the last survey. Encouraging is the increased ranking of the culinary department, and also the fact the top 2 departments chosen are again both operational departments, and not administrative/back office.

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Hospitality Graduate Recruitment (HGR) helps global hospitality employers find hotel school students and alumni for entry level, supervisory, trainee and junior management positions. HGR operates a leading website which allows you to search for candidates and allows students and alumni to apply online to vacancies. HGR works with over 300 partner hospitality management schools internationally, offering an extensive and diverse network of fresh talent.

Visit [www.h-g-r.com/employer](http://www.h-g-r.com/employer) for more information or contact Jeff N Ross, Managing Director, Hospitality Graduate Recruitment, Luzern, Switzerland, [jeff@h-g-r.com](mailto:jeff@h-g-r.com)

Should you have suggestions for future questions or themes to be included in this regular survey, please do send them to us for consideration.