
Retaining Hospitality Graduates: Employer, graduate and recruitment perspectives

Introduction

Developing and implementing an effective hotel recruitment strategy is all very well, but how many organisations actually seriously focus upon employee retention, which is arguably the most important component of a resourcing strategy?

There are obvious benefits of managing effectively employee retention, and these are well documented academically. Reduced recruitment costs, reduced labour turnover percentages, higher workforce efficiency and competency, reduced training costs, higher customer satisfaction... all common sense really. For hospitality graduate recruitment, the issues and benefits of managing employee retention are magnified. Generally speaking, it is likely that a higher level of training and time investment have gone into both the recruitment and induction of a graduate. Perhaps more importantly though, the benefits that can be gained by retaining and developing a graduate within a business, far outweigh the argument of cost.

Managing graduate retention – a recruitment expert’s perspective

Graduate recruitment remains a valuable yet relatively poorly managed recruitment segment within the international hospitality industry. Few companies have found the right strategy for understanding and managing effectively this diversity of talent that is eager and motivated to enter the workforce.

Understanding hospitality graduate expectations is a key component in ensuring effective management of this recruitment channel. Here complications arise. The sheer diversity of international schools, universities, qualifications and of course students, means that it is hard to treat the topic in a generic fashion, and almost impossible to consider graduate expectations uniformly. Employers must therefore make more effort to understand the offerings of each educational establishment, correlating this information to the recruitment needs of their organisation. They should try to understand better what the finished (graduate) ‘product’ variables look like. The good news about this diversity, is that it means that there are hospitality graduates in the market that look for entry level, supervisory and junior management roles. No longer can we entertain the misconception that the hospitality graduate purely seeks a management position.

Some basic ‘must do’s for hotel employers

- Ensure your salary and benefits packages are fair for the role and experience of the graduate

- Ensure the graduate has clearly defined personal objectives that are measurable and regularly appraised. Most graduates are used to environments where they receive high levels of performance feedback
- Ensure the manager or supervisor of the graduate clearly understands the expectations of both the graduate and of the organisation employing the graduate
- Give the graduate relevant, project based tasks in addition to their daily role
- Ensure the early weeks of employment are very well structured, with plenty of contact with management personnel
- Manage the long term career expectations of the graduate from the beginning via open, honest and realistic discussions and planning of how the graduate can progress in the organisation. Make clear and define what needs to be learned, experienced, and achieved before any future role can be realistically considered

Managing graduate retention – an employer’s perspective

Henrik Mansson, Senior Vice President Human Resources, Moevenpick Hotels & Resorts, states that “the industry’s challenge is that only 30 per cent of hotel school graduates stay in the industry two years after graduation. One solution against this low retention statistic is to provide entry-level roles in revenue management, conference and events management, finance and sales. These are roles that capitalise upon graduate’s strengths and education. Furthermore, hotels must understand that the key to retaining talented graduates is to provide and deliver individual development plans. As an industry we have to partner with hotel schools to ensure we understand what motivates students, and to help tailor hotel school curricula to the needs of the industry and the graduates”.

It is refreshing to hear Mansson’s views, and it is clear that those organisations who do invest time into implementing and managing effectively a graduate retention policy will reap the rewards.

Managing graduate retention – a graduate’s perspective

Tatiana Belyaeva, a recent Swiss hotel school graduate, states that “managerial jobs for graduates are rare. The current standard hotel internship and graduate programmes offer good exposure to the industry, but little chance to develop the applicant’s managerial skills. A generic issue that contributes to poor graduate retention in the hotel industry is that of the employee’s working conditions. A graduate with a low salary, living in a poor quality staff house, working longer hours than in his or her contract, is likely to look around for other employers that offer better. Employers that have senior management who are interested in the development of their employees will always be seen as a favoured employer for hospitality graduates”.

From a graduate perspective, frustrations are evident where employers do not consider the right way to manage and control their vocational expectations. Some want the earth, but most do not. The majority merely seek an element of recognition and discussion around what they may or may not be capable of, and what areas of development would benefit both graduate and employer.



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 150 global hospitality management schools and universities, producing a diverse database of fresh talent. Visit 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

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