

Luzern, Switzerland - 28. February 2008

Challenges and Solutions in Marketing Middle East Employment to Today's Student and Graduate

Large numbers of Middle Eastern destinations and hotel projects are still creating a huge buzz within the global hospitality community, yet these same high profile locations and employers have difficulty in marketing themselves to today's student and graduate. Jeff Ross, Managing Director of Hospitality Graduate Recruitment (www.h-g-r.com), briefly explores some of the issues and potential solutions.

Some Challenges and Solutions

1. Cultural awareness - In general, there is a large degree of ignorance within graduates about working and living in the Middle East (ME). Any misperceptions need to be proactively managed; employers can do a lot more to market their vacancies and destinations to potential candidates. It is no longer enough to advertise positions off the back of the reputation of a city or hospitality project or to advertise an opportunity with only the minimum of information. We all know that salary packages are a sore point in the ME; employers must be more creative about selling what else they can offer to new employees.
2. Training programmes & maximising retention – Not every group or individual employer has the resources to market an official management or leadership training programme. Do not, however, underestimate the power and value of very simple training and development strategies. By consistently managing a quality induction and ongoing mentoring process of a new employee (graduate or other), employee retention can be easily maximised. Employers that manage graduate expectations well, will witness great output. These basic employer processes then need to be marketed effectively in the ongoing recruitment process to demonstrate the commitment of the employer to staff development. In the ME market where recruitment is becoming increasingly challenging, this is a no-brainer.
3. Corporate politics – Frankly, it is sometimes a little comical to witness the lack of corporate communication and follow through on HR strategies and innovation within many large international hotel chains, compared to what is happening and experienced at the individual hotel level. In the ME with the high pace of development, this is particularly relevant. The organisations that succeed at avoiding this issue, are those that manage to achieve a sensible level of 'change culture' (i.e. allowing a process to embed before thinking about changing it again), those that manage to control the employee turnover of their senior corporate (and hotel) HR personnel, and those that manage to achieve a strong parity in HR strategy and vision between their General Managers and Corporate Offices. We see many examples where investment has been made in a recruitment medium, then it is either forgotten about, not used, or not handed over to a successor, and all continuity and return on investment is lost. The employers in today's market that continually succeed in attracting the best students and alumni are those that control the above pitfalls, and do not let the applicant witness their internal HR challenges and shortcomings.

In summary, there are some issues in terms of how Middle Eastern hospitality employers market their workplaces globally, but equally there exist relatively simple solutions. To maximise competitive advantage as a region, a collective (re)focus on the topic would be a positive step for all concerned.



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