

## The Impact of Training on Your Bottom Line



Training is an important aspect in every hotel as it is the basis for cultivating superior guest service, maintaining costs, retaining employees and increasing profitability. While some owners and operators may question the return on investment (ROI) of training, the effects of not placing importance on consistent, ongoing staff training can be far greater over the long run. Preparing employees for situations, outlining role responsibilities and explaining how they are important in overall success can lead to happier employees, alleviate misunderstandings, skirt potential issues and result in better guest experience. That leaves more time for staying focused and creating a positive guest experience.

### **Select a Training Method to Meet Your Property Needs**

The good news about hotel staff training is there are different methods to embrace to help achieve your property goals. What often occurs is training becomes a mixture of solutions.

*Outside Speakers* - Hotel owners and operators may utilize outside speakers to visit a property ranging from brand representatives, motivational speakers to notable local personalities.

*Employee Handbook* - Most properties assemble an employee handbook for new hires, while branded hotels may pay to send a representative to conduct training sessions on their brand. The key to effective training is assuring the handbook is comprehensive and continually updated to reflect changes in roles, responsibilities, policies, etc.

*Dedicated On-Site Training* - Properties may choose to have dedicated staff for on-site employee training, or assign a human resources staff member the responsibility to dedicate part of their time to training new and existing employees..

*On the Job Training* - A popular way for property owners and operators to training employees is with on-the-job training or 'shadowing' with their direct supervisor or another co-worker.

*Online, Computer-based Training* - A progressive way to provide training on all roles throughout the property, computer-based training is self-paced and promotes depth and breadth of education. Courses are available in multiple languages and aimed at helping with employee engagement and satisfaction aimed at reducing attrition rates and raising service culture scores. Course can be repeated for increased retention. Management can then monitor and review progress and scores employees receive.

Typically, owners and operators will find a balance between these training types. There are pros and cons for each approach, and finding the right combination for your specific hotel may take trial and error.

Outside speakers can be costly, and require a majority of staff be available on-property at the same time. Speakers can inject a boost in morale while employees may view attending a motivational session as a benefit. It can break up the routine of an average workday. Outside speakers can be useful in increasing overall motivation and team cohesiveness, but they are unlikely to help your employees develop specific skills for their positions, since they will likely be speaking to a group of employees on a myriad of positions throughout the hotel.

Employee handbooks are essential onboarding tools for new staff. These should include company policies and procedures. You should always include anti-discrimination policies, compensation policies, scheduling information, standards of conduct, safety and security information and benefits -- all basic information that each and every employee needs to be aware of.

Sending staff for training with a parent company or brand team is a fantastic experience, as they are able to meet counterparts in other locations and bounce ideas off one another. They will undoubtedly leave with more information about the brand and be able to bring that back into their everyday roles. But, it can be enormously expensive to send staff out for training. If a brand holds a weeklong training session, your hotel will likely incur a training fee, as well as the employee's travel costs and compensation during the time when they are away from the hotel. Brand-level training is usually reserved for the most senior employees, such as the General Manager or the Director of Sales.

At larger hotels, you may choose to have an HR staff member dedicated to training employees or who spends part of his or her time training employees, such as a Learning Manager. This person keeps track of training initiatives and helps to ensure continuity with employee training at all levels. Salary and compensation for a dedicated training employee is a more expensive option to consider.

When new employees begin at a hotel, many spend their first few days paired with another employee for on-the-job training. This may mean working in a team with a more experienced employee at the same level, or spending time with their direct supervisor during their first days and weeks at the property. The advantage is the employee learns to prioritize according to his or her boss's preferences. The challenges are that it can be hard to find employees willing to train others, and it takes time away from their primary responsibilities. Training the employee receives is dependent on the type of day the trainer is having as well. If they are having a bad day, the training may be compromised. Additionally, any bias the training employee has may be imparted on the trainee.

Unlike the other options mentioned above, online training can be a more timely and cost-effective way to train all roles within the property. Each employee's training curriculum can easily be a mixture of skill-based training for his or her specific position and service culture training that would relate to any position in the hotel. Though this option does not provide the face-to-face connection of the other options, it does provide enormous flexibility because each employee can complete the training when it is convenient, either during the workday or at home and repeat, if needed, for added retention.

### **Training Content – Choosing Topics for New Hires and Seasoned Employees**

As you decide the best mix of outside speakers, online and on-the-job training for employees, it is important to consider the content of what the training includes. All employees benefit from motivational and service culture training, as well as team building exercises. Additionally, leadership training can apply across all levels – both for existing leaders to hone and develop their skills and line-level employees to learn as they aspire to be promoted within the organization. Skill-specific training does not apply to all levels and should be focused on individuals or small groups.

Training for everyone can impact morale, and morale impacts employees' productivity. Consider, for example, running a wellness series at your property. The effects of this are hard to measure, but can be anecdotally observed easily. Wellness topics might include nutrition and fitness, personal safety, and mindfulness. At first glance, none of these relate directly to an employee's necessary skills for completing their specific job. But, diving a little deeper, each impacts the employee's ability to thrive in the workplace. If employees make healthy choices, they are less likely to miss work due to illness. If they feel safe in the workplace and outside it, they may have increased focus while on the job. If they have learned stress management techniques, such as mindfulness, they will be better equipped to deal with tough situations with a high level of service and grace.

Training for everyone that has a direct impact on the business goals of the property should be a high priority. All hospitality employees should be formally trained in service culture, and informally trained by practicing and modeling this culture when on the job. Additionally, training on what to do in an emergency can help employees function as a team if they need to do so. Many properties offer basic first aid and/or CPR training to employees while others send certain employees off property to attend sessions. Having a written emergency plan that is routinely shared with all employees may seem like a simple, essential step, but can be too often overlooked.

Employees who feel they are great at their jobs and know their importance are typically happier, more productive, and more likely to spread positive service culture within a hotel. Ensuring they have the skills to feel efficient and confident in their roles can be achieved with different methods like online training that includes courses specific to each position. Additionally, property-specific materials should be kept on-site and updated for the employee handbook or new hire packet. For example, front desk staff should be familiar with not only the property, but also the surrounding area, so they are equipped to recommend local restaurants and attractions. Engineers should complete online training about engineering, but should also have access to the manuals and co-workers notes about the systems and machinery on place at the property.

### **Marketing Training to Employees – Is It a Class or an Opportunity?**

Training employees on their specific roles and expected conduct is an essential aspect for running an excellent property. It is an important investment. To ensure it is appreciated and highly regarded by employees, a lot can be gained in the way it is marketed to them. Consider how you would feel if your boss came in and said that you must attend a class next week or complete an online course as a requirement? Would you be excited about it?

Managers should be ready to discuss training opportunities with enthusiasm and insight. Employees might be more excited to attend a training session if their manager builds it as an opportunity the hotel is offering them to learn and grow -- both in their role and as a valued employee. When new training is scheduled, ensure a communication plan is in place to help employees get excited about taking

advantage of the opportunity being offered to them and by adding context about how it can benefit with their career goals.

Training greatly benefits your hotel, from teaching employees hard skills like upselling to soft skill for service culture. Ensure the greatest impact on your bottom line by adding a mix of speakers, on-the-job and online training, and you will notice the positive impact on morale and revenue.