



Navigating the Challenges of Hospitality and Tourism Service Culture: The Staffing Dilemma

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The hospitality and tourism industry is often hailed as a cornerstone of the provincial and global economy, contributing significantly to employment and cultural exchange. Despite its significance, this sector is grappling with a pervasive challenge: the difficulty of recruiting and retaining skilled staff. This issue is a part of a broader dilemma affecting many service-oriented industries, where the quality of service is intimately tied to the caliber of personnel.

At the heart of the hospitality and tourism industry lies a commitment to exceptional service. From luxury hotels to bustling tourist attractions, success hinges on delivering memorable experiences. This service culture, characterized by attentiveness, professionalism, and a genuine desire to enhance guests' experiences, is not merely a competitive advantage but a necessity for survival in this fast-paced sector.

However, fostering and maintaining such a culture requires a dedicated and skilled workforce—something that is increasingly difficult to secure. Several factors contribute to this staffing crisis, reflecting a complex interplay of economic, social, and industry-specific issues.

1. Economic Pressures and Wage Constraints

One of the most significant barriers to staffing in hospitality and tourism is economic constraints. Historically, the industry has faced challenges in offering competitive wages compared to other sectors. The financial pressures to keep costs down and the increase in minimum wage often translate to lower wages for employees, which in turn affects recruitment. This wage disparity has been exacerbated by rising living costs and inflation, making it increasingly challenging for hospitality employers to attract and retain talent.

2. The Impact of Seasonal Employment

Seasonal fluctuations are another critical factor. Many roles within the industry are seasonal, tied to peak travel times like summers and holidays. This seasonality can lead to unstable employment for workers, who may seek more stable opportunities elsewhere. The cyclical nature of tourism and hospitality jobs often results in high turnover rates, making it difficult for businesses to maintain a consistent level of service.

3. The Demands of the Industry

The hospitality and tourism sector is notoriously demanding. Employees often work long hours, including nights, weekends, and holidays, which can contribute to burnout and job dissatisfaction. The high-pressure environment, coupled with the need for constant interaction with guests, requires not only skill but also resilience. Prospective employees may be deterred by these demands, seeking professions with more predictable hours and less stress.

4. Skills Gap and Training

There is also a noticeable skills gap within the industry. While many individuals may possess a passion for service, the specialized skills required for various roles—from culinary arts to advanced guest relations—demand comprehensive training and experience. Many potential employees lack the necessary qualifications or are unwilling to invest in the required training, leading to a shortage of qualified candidates.

5. Evolving Expectations and Professionalism

The evolving expectations of guests have further compounded the staffing challenge. Modern travelers increasingly expect a high level of personalization and professionalism, pushing service standards higher. Meeting these expectations necessitates a highly trained and motivated staff, yet the industry struggles to provide the training and support required to achieve this level of service consistently.

Strategies for Addressing the Staffing Crisis

To address these challenges, the industry must adopt a multifaceted approach. Though we all know it increasing wages and providing more robust benefits can make positions more attractive. Additionally, investing in employee training and development can enhance skills and improve job satisfaction. Employers might also consider offering more flexible working conditions and career progression opportunities to retain staff.

Moreover, fostering a positive workplace culture is crucial. A supportive and inclusive environment not only improves employee morale but also enhances the overall guest experience. Recognizing and rewarding staff contributions can also play a significant role in reducing turnover. Creating learning opportunities with free online training courses, WSET and expanding food training opportunities may all be helpful alternatives.

The staffing dilemma in hospitality and tourism is a complex issue, deeply intertwined with the sector's economic realities and the inherent demands of service excellence. Addressing this challenge requires a concerted effort from industry leaders to rethink recruitment strategies, enhance employee support, and elevate the overall work environment. As the industry continues to recover and evolve, overcoming these staffing hurdles will be essential for sustaining the high standards of service that define exceptional hospitality and tourism experiences.