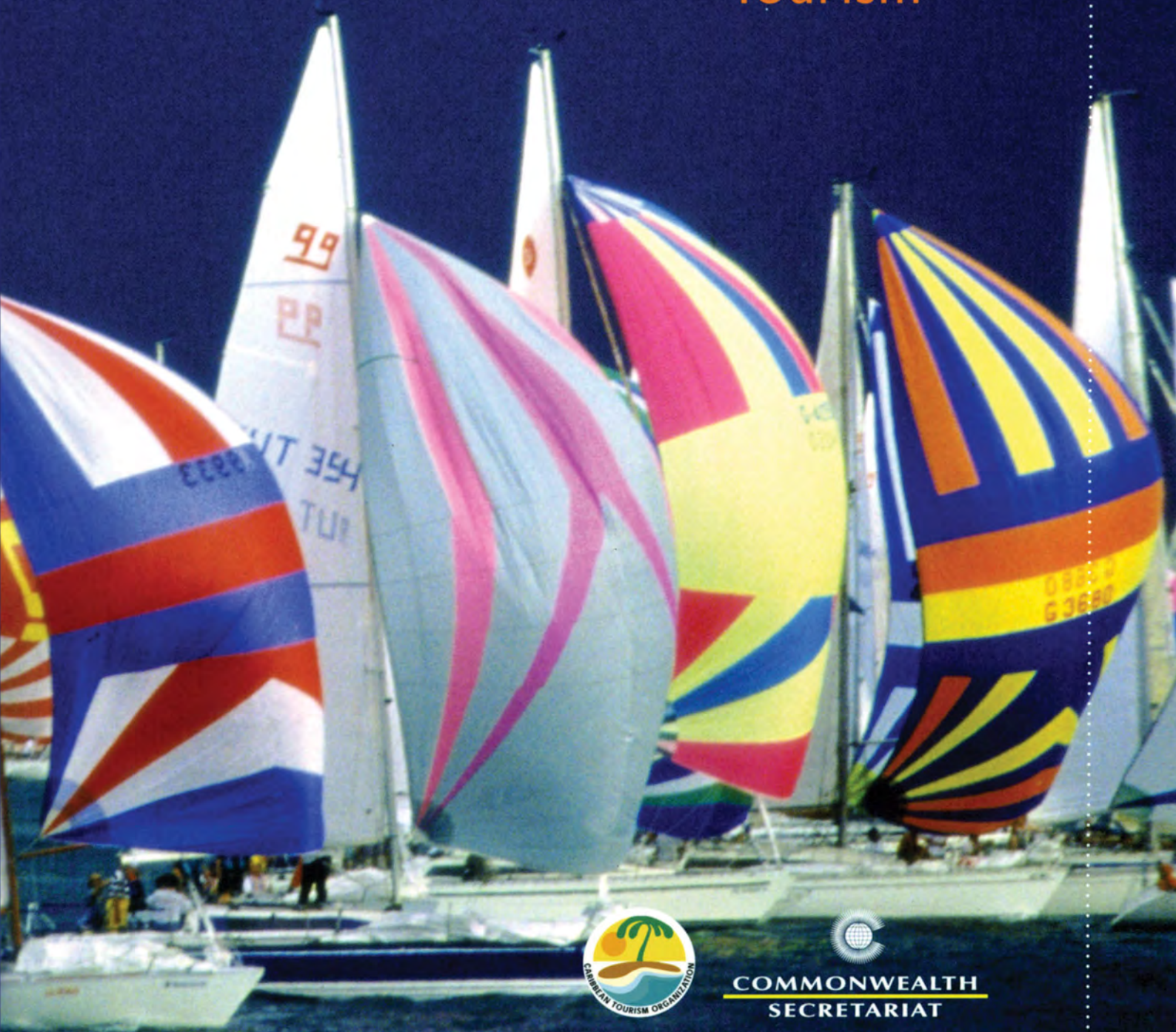


Competing With The Best

HANDBOOK I

*Good Human
Resource
Practices in
Caribbean
Tourism*



**COMMONWEALTH
SECRETARIAT**

Competing With The Best

HANDBOOK I

Good *Human* *Resource* Practices in Caribbean Tourism



This handbook provides helpful tips and resources on how to find, train, oversee and keep good employees. It has been produced by the Special Advisory Services Division (SASD) of the Commonwealth Secretariat for the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO). Published within the framework of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation, on behalf of Commonwealth Caribbean countries, the handbook documents some of the best people-management practices from customer-driven industry leaders in the region.

The Caribbean Tourism Organization, with headquarters in Barbados and marketing operations in New York, London and Toronto, is the Caribbean's tourism development agency and comprises 32 member governments and a myriad of private sector companies.

The CTO's mission is to provide to and through its members the services and information needed for the development of sustainable tourism for the economic and social benefit of the Caribbean people. The organization provides specialized support and technical assistance to member countries in the areas of marketing, human resource development, research, statistics and sustainable development.

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Please mail, fax or e-mail your comments and suggestions for improving the usefulness of future editions of this handbook to the CTO. Thank you.

Additional copies can be obtained from the Caribbean Tourism Organization, or the Commonwealth Secretariat, Marlborough House, Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5HX, United Kingdom
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Foreword

It is our pleasure to bring you this first handbook on good practices in Caribbean tourism produced by the Special Advisory Services Division (SASD) of the Commonwealth Secretariat for the Caribbean Tourism Organization. The handbook launches an annual series of good practices resources, called **Competing with the Best**, which the CTO will be putting together to showcase positive tourism management and development practices in our region.

The global environment for the tourism industry is highly competitive and we can learn from each other's successes. CTO's commitment is to investigate, compile and share home-grown examples of programmes, business strategies and initiatives with proven success. We believe that this will serve to highlight valuable approaches that can be shared with and adopted/adapted by other Caribbean tourism businesses and organizations.

Each year our focus will be on a different aspect of tourism management and development. In 2005 we are featuring 'Good *Human Resource* Practices in Caribbean Tourism'. This handbook is presented in a reader-friendly manner. There is a Company Snapshot at the beginning of each section, providing general information on the company being profiled. This is followed by an identification of The HR Challenge, an Overview, Implementation Steps/What Was Done, Results and Discussion Questions.

As you read the profiles, the personalities and convictions of the storytellers come across in a forceful manner and enhance the stories being told. Additionally, there is no doubt about the level of commitment that the companies profiled have with respect to creating a performance culture in the workplace, where employees feel that they can make a positive contribution to their company's overall performance and at the same time derive greater job satisfaction from the work they do.

We are a region that has a rich tradition of story telling, and as we launch this first handbook on good practices in Caribbean tourism, we wish to thank all the businesses that have willingly come forward and shared their success stories. We strongly encourage other Caribbean companies and organizations to do likewise, as we seek to create a collection of good practices that showcase Caribbean companies that are doing the right things and competing with the best.

Happy reading!



Bonita Morgan

Director of Human Resources
Caribbean Tourism Organization

Acknowledgements

This handbook would not have been possible without the support of the talented people at each of the Caribbean businesses profiled.

By agreeing to share their successful training programmes, strategies and experiences in human resource development, they have benefited us all as a regional tourism destination. We are grateful for their time and patience as we recorded their achievements, and we are proud to share these successes with the Caribbean tourism community.

In addition to the profiled businesses, the Caribbean associations and organizations listed below deserve special mention for their contributions throughout the nomination process, planning and development of this handbook.

Associations

Anguilla Hotel & Tourism Association; Aruba Hotel and Tourism Association; Association of Caribbean States; Association of Caribbean Tertiary Institutions; Bahamas Hotel Association; Barbados Hotel & Tourism Association; Belize Hotel Association; Bermuda Hotel Association; Bonaire Hotel & Tourism Association; British Virgin Islands Chamber of Commerce & Hotel Association; Caribbean Culinary Federation; Caribbean Hotel Association; Caribbean Society of Hotel Association Executives; Curacao Hotel & Tourism Association; Dominican Republic Hotel & Restaurant Association; Grenada Hotel & Tourism Association; Jamaica Hotel & Tourist Association; Puerto Rico Hotel & Tourism Association; St. Croix Hotel & Tourism Association; St. John Hotel & Tourism Association; St. Kitts & Nevis Hotel & Tourism Association; St. Lucia Hotel & Tourism Association; St. Maarten Hospitality & Trade Association; St. Thomas-St. John Hotel & Tourism Association; Tourism and Hospitality Association of Guyana; Trinidad Hotels, Restaurant & Tourism Association; Turks & Caicos Hotel & Tourism Association

Organizations

Bahamas Ministry of Tourism; Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism; Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat; Caribbean Congress of Labour; Caribbean Hospitality Training Institute; Caribbean Tourism Organization; University of the West Indies

Consultants

Tourism Training Canada

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Included in this Handbook

The company profiles presented in the handbook explain how some of the best customer-driven industry leaders in the region have developed good human resource (HR) practices within their businesses.

HR Topic Sections 1-7

The seven human resource topics examined in this handbook are:

1. Recruitment, screening and hiring
2. Employee orientation, training and professional development
3. Building a performance culture
4. Management and leadership styles
5. Rewards, recognition and benefits
6. Job mobility and career development
7. Performance planning and employee evaluation

Discussion Questions

- Located at the end of each section are a number of questions specifically designed to stimulate discussion when you use this handbook in your staff and management meetings. They can help initiate an exchange of views among colleagues and assist in strengthening your own company's HR policies.
- These questions are also designed to be of use to tourism/hospitality educators. They can be set as written assignments for individual students or asked to prompt group discussions.

HR Challenges Facing the Tourism Sector in the 21st Century

The need to develop a professional tourism workforce that can meet emerging labour market issues has never been greater, given the rapid changes in our industry. Changing visitor expectations and the significant impact that social, political and economic events can have on tourism all create staffing and professional development challenges that supervisors and managers must address.

“It is important for the industry to realize that the events of September 11, 2001 and their aftermath have been a catalyst for more fundamental changes in market behaviour and travel patterns that have been emerging since the mid-1990s. Demographic shifts and lifestyle trends are altering the characteristics of [travel and tourism] markets, while technology and the Internet revolution have changed the way we do business and expanded travel horizons for the consumer”. [World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), Progress and Priorities 2003, London: WTTC, 2003, p. 5.]

There is something all businesses need to do as a first step in dealing with these HR challenges: they must recognize that their employees are their greatest asset. Management must also understand the importance of committing to effective training and the impact that this can have on guest satisfaction and the company's bottom line.

HR professionals can play a major role in creating workplaces where all employees can see meaning in and experience satisfaction from their work, develop their individual potential and be productive workers. Achieving this starts with good people management practices being incorporated into the company's strategies.

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) Human Resources Task Force, HR is possibly the single most critical issue facing the tourism industry over the next decade. Their research concludes that the biggest challenges facing the global tourism industry are:

Economic impact

- Fierce competition for tourist dollars

Human impact

- Travellers' changing needs and expectations regarding services and value

Attracting and retaining staff

- The industry's often poor image of career opportunities
- Staff lured away to better-paying industries
- Public perception of the industry's stability as a result of long-term impacts from world events, current changes in the airline industry and other global challenges
- Restrictive immigration policies and limited labour mobility

Education and training

- Requirement for quality on-the-job training and job enrichment
- Need for formal management – and vocational-level training that meets industry needs
- Convincing businesses to invest in training
- Need for government involvement in national education and training programmes to better match labour supply and demand

Leadership and management development

- Talent drain of skilled managers and technical leaders
- Require visionaries to develop the leaders of tomorrow

Discrimination

- Gender, racial and age discrimination

Future roles of HR

- Need to manage the knowledge economy and different organizational structures
- Need to develop technology to support the delivery of HR services electronically
- Need to improve the public's knowledge of the industry's economic impacts

Source: Human Resource Task Force, HR Opportunities and Challenges, London: WTTC, 2002, pp. 3-4 and 7-11

The Caribbean Tourism Organization conducted a study in March 2001 that focused on HR issues in Caribbean tourism, and the findings are still valid today. The following are some of the key issues that were raised in this study:

Economic impact

- The Caribbean is highly dependent on tourism and will likely be more so in the future.

Human impact

- Today's tourist is more discerning, more environmentally conscious and less likely to accept a third world standard and mentality.

Attracting and retaining staff

- Acquiring and maintaining a workforce capable of delivering high quality tourism services in a competitive environment is a major challenge.

Attitudes and feelings

- Attitudes towards tourism remain generally positive throughout the region.
- Working conditions – both physical and economic – have to be paid attention to since they influence attitudes towards tourism/tourists.
- Critical issues appear to be feelings of being undervalued and sometimes underpaid, which are held simultaneously with feelings of pride in being a part of the industry.
- Workers in general see a connection between the quality of service provided and the income that they earn, the survival of the business and the survival of the industry.

Rewards, recognition and employee motivation

- Money is a powerful motivator, as are recognition, appreciation and the opportunity for job mobility/growth.
- Motivation is influenced by whether or not the job holders perceive that their needs are being met by the organization.

Education and training

- Caribbean governments are very involved in operating training institutions to develop tourism and hospitality skills.
- Significant gaps in training are in the areas of foreign languages, marketing, food preparation and managerial skills.

Organizational culture and management style

- Companies that consistently provide high levels of service have a management culture that rewards, supports, plans for and expects service excellence and provides tangible evidence of equipment, supplies and facilities to deliver this kind of service.
- The kind of management that involves a high degree of worker involvement in decision-making is not often part of the Caribbean tourism workplace experience.
- A major deficiency evident among tourism enterprises is inadequate attention to the HR management function, particularly among smaller enterprises.
- Highly skilled HR professionals often complain that their advice is ignored by top management. Even when they are accorded high status on paper, they are frequently not given the opportunity or resources to operate effectively.

Highlights of the Handbook's Good HR Practices

- At the **Malibu Visitor Centre**, a screening programme factors in employees' opinions to select the best candidates for job openings and help this organization to make better hiring decisions.
- Staff involvement in the customer service programme at the **Accra Beach Hotel** is responsible for the continued enthusiasm that employees have towards the programme.
- The **Trinidad Hilton Hotel and Conference Centre** created its own programme to attract and develop the best talent in the organization for future managerial positions.
- To improve the status of its room attendants, the HR department at the **Amaryllis Beach Resort** found a way to give these employees a higher and more appreciated profile.
- Within the Sandals chain, the **Ocho Rios Resort & Golf Club** raised guest comment scores to 95 per cent through a programme called PEGS.
- **Bahamas Experience Tours & Transfers** has been focusing its attention on delivering a consistent level of service among its employees.
- Strong leadership at the **Belize Zoo and Tropical Education Center** has its entire team focused on running an efficient and sustainable organization.
- Weekly evaluations and employee of the month awards are part of why staff have to be reminded that their shifts are over and it is time to go home at **Sammy T's Resort**.
- Monthly cash incentives and other strategies encourage employees to provide service and actions above and beyond the call of duty at the **Bucuti Beach Resort, Aruba**.
- You have probably heard of an understudy in a play, but what about at a hotel? **Beaches Turks & Caicos Resort & Spa** pairs inexperienced workers as understudies with experienced employees from one of the company's other properties.
- **Stafford Creek Fishing Lodge** is slowly breaking down old stereotypes and successfully helping employees to get a better sense of the career opportunities that are available within the tourism community.
- A sensitive HR issue was tackled by **Atlantis Submarines** through the establishment of a drug-testing policy that has the support of employees because it keeps guests and staff safe.



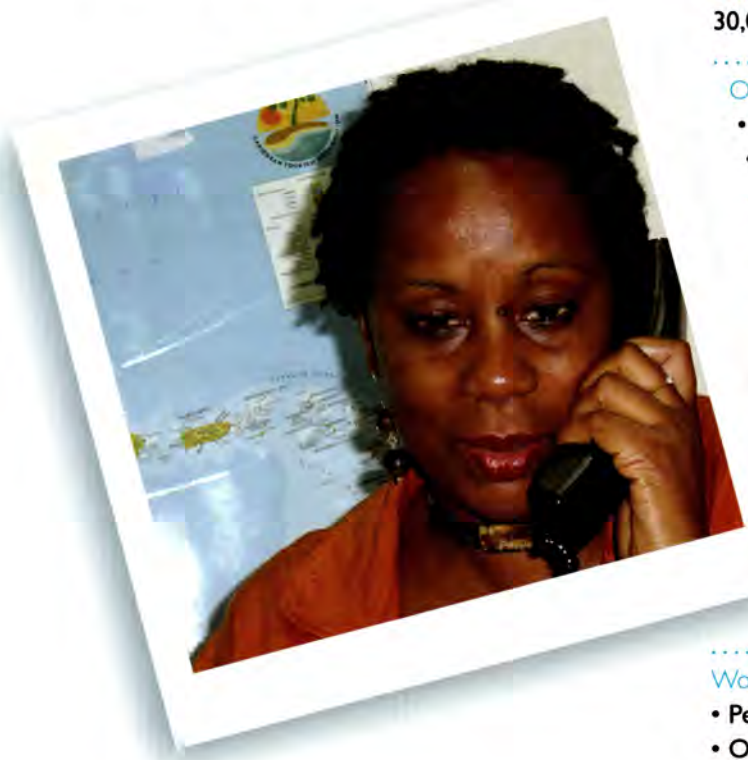
Recruitment, Screening and Hiring

Attracting, interviewing and hiring the right person for a job are essential for good customer service. Until recently, recruitment and selection of those working in the tourism/hospitality sector in many parts of the world was somewhat haphazard. However, recruitment, selection and hiring have become more formalized lately, guided by requests for curricula vitae, in-depth interviews, basic aptitude tests, background checks, references and properly developed job descriptions that clearly identify the responsibilities of positions.

Finding the Right Fit

Malibu Visitor Centre

Learning from past experience, this small attraction created a screening programme to select the best candidates for new job openings. When making hiring decisions, management factors in its employees' opinions – including staff on the interview panel and listening to the feedback of those who have worked along side potential participants in the pre-employment component.



COMPANY SNAPSHOT

Where
Barbados

Mission statement

- To treat every person who walks through our front door as if he/she is our own personal guest
- To encourage visitors to visit and to re-visit both Barbados and the Malibu Visitor Centre
- To maintain the highest standards of friendliness, cleanliness and all round service to all who visit

Type of business

Attraction

Size

30,000 visitors per year, and increasing

Ownership

- Private sector
- Unionized

Operating

7 years

Management structure

- Independent
- Subsidiary of Goddard Enterprises

Key products and services

- Half-hour tours of the distillery that produces Barbados Malibu Rum
- Cocktail bar, seafront patio lounge, gift shop and beaches

Workforce

- Peak season: 16 full-time, 5 part-time
- Off season: 16 full-time, 2 part-time

In-house incentive programmes

- Salary increases annually
- Medical plan
- Non-contributory pension plan
- Group life insurance plan

Awards received

Nominated for the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association Service Provider of the Year (2002)

The HR Challenge

The challenge was to develop better recruitment and screening strategies, enabling management to confidently select the best candidates for the operation. It is disappointing and costly to have to let an employee go or to have him/her leave because the fit was not right.

Overview

Cruise ships recommend the Malibu Visitor Centre to their passengers as the one attraction not to be missed on a tour of Barbados. The Centre is the home of the West Indies Rum Distillery, where Barbados Malibu Rum is made. This is the island's largest coconut rum distillery, and visitors learn the history and secrets behind rum production by seeing various stages of fermentation, age blending and the ancient art of barrel making.

The Malibu Visitor Centre has a reputation for being exceptionally clean and for providing visitors with friendly, quality service during tours of the seafront centre. Having a small number of staff, the Malibu Visitor Centre relies on its employees to work as a close-knit team. Although its HR activities are carried out through its parent company, Goddard Enterprises, the manager is responsible for hiring decisions.

Implementation Steps:

1. Concerns about turnover prompted management to develop an in-house programme that would help in hiring the candidates best suited to the work of a busy visitor centre.
2. The manager and assistant manager developed the objectives and basic programme components, with input from staff.
3. With staff cooperation, the programme was incorporated into the Visitor Centre's recruitment and hiring practices.
4. Before selecting new employees, management reviewed the pre-employment interview, observed the candidate's trial performance and asked for staff feedback from those who had worked closely with the candidate.
5. Management tracked turnover through informal staff performance reviews. To improve this monitoring system, performance reviews are being conducted more frequently. When an individual leaves the organization, management conducts a follow-up interview with the employee to find out if organizational policies and/or procedures need to be modified to prevent further turnover.

What Was Done

Concerned about its annual 7 per cent turnover rate over a seven-year period, the centre developed a better recruitment and selection process two years ago to help find candidates with good language and interpersonal skills. The idea of creating the resulting programme came from informal discussions between the manager and assistant manager on how to better screen prospective employees. While developing the programme, the manager felt that it was important to include staff in the process. Employees embodying the best attitudes and skills were asked to:

- make suggestions
- sit in on interviews with candidates
- observe a candidate's behaviour and skills while working with him or her for a day

The screening and selection programme developed into seven basic steps:

1 Application form

2 Pre-employment interview

The manager, assistant manager and one or two staff members interview all new applicants. During the interview, management observes the individual's interaction with other staff members. The manager always asks the prospective employee:

- Why are you interested in this position?
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?

The Malibu Visitor Centre has found that asking candidates to talk about their strengths and weaknesses can help the interviewer see how well individuals know themselves. If the individual is hired, this candid information can be used in orientation and training sessions to focus on perceived weaknesses and turn them into strengths.

3 Pre-employment paid work

Candidates are invited to undergo a trial day of work at the centre so that management can see how they perform in the workplace. The potential employee is observed while shadowing a staff member and also when on breaks. He or she is not scrutinized but merely observed in a casual way. Not all staff members participate in this monitoring. The Malibu Visitor Centre can be very busy, so it is important that an employee can handle the stress of many people asking questions and making requests. During the pre-employment work period, management and staff are observing:

- how the candidate interacts with guests
- whether the candidate's personality comes through in a positive manner
- how the candidate treats co-workers
- whether the candidate can take direction well

Sometimes prospective employees can only give short periods of time, but management likes them to work for at least one full day and during a busy period. This gives the candidate a good idea of the actual working conditions and job.

4 Initial walk of the property with junior staff

The initial walk of the property is to allow potential candidates to:

- ask some general questions
- meet some of the current staff
- observe working conditions

How a candidate reacts and the questions that he or she asks both give the manager valuable insights, as candidates often say things or ask questions that might not be asked or said in the formal interview.

5 Second language skills tested practically

Since knowing how to converse in a second language is part of the hiring criteria, once a candidate has gone through the first four steps, he or she is asked to have a conversation with one of the staff members who is fluent in the second language that the candidate speaks. The employee asks general questions and gathers a sense of the candidate's personality and bilingual proficiency.

6 Informal debriefing of staff

At the end of the first five steps, the manager asks staff members who participated in the interview and interacted with the candidate for their impressions of the prospective employee in terms of:

- the candidate's overall feel for the job
- how the candidate handled stressful situations
- how the candidate answered guests' questions

The candidate's reactions and conduct is not measured against a rating system. Rather, the manager trusts the staff members to be objective because they will be working with the new candidate every day should he or she be hired.

7 Employment decision

Ultimately the manager makes the employment decision after evaluating the interview and reviewing staff opinions.

Results

Since implementing its new recruitment and selection programme, the Malibu Visitor Centre does not have difficulty retaining staff. Better hiring choices has meant that the employees are well suited to their jobs. In addition, a good working relationship between staff members, coupled with pleasant working conditions, are reasons why employees stay on.

There may not be opportunities for professional development at the centre, but employees appreciate the positive incentives such as the medical plan, non-contributory pension and group life insurance coverage and annual salary increases.

As a result of the new recruitment and selection programme, employee performance has improved, as has employee commitment to the company. These results have been sustained for the medium term and the system has proven to work well. The manager sees the pre-employment work component as its main strategy for hiring qualified employees. There have been situations where potential employees have come in for a work session and found that they were not suited

for the position. It is easy to resolve such a situation at this time, as there is no formal contract. Potential candidates are told up-front that the day's work is for assessment purposes – assessment by both the candidate and the manager.

Candidates are paid for their time. If there is not an obvious fit, in most cases both parties see that the position does not suit the individual's skills and abilities.

Generally, there is more than one person competing for a job, so the individual that is viewed as the best candidate is selected. No explanation is required for those parties not chosen. However, other good candidates are kept on file for future reference.

Staff Reactions

Since the centre has an informal work atmosphere, and considering the level of staff involvement, the manager did not feel it necessary to train staff members before the new programme was implemented. All employees were briefed on the programme's objectives and asked to cooperate, and this they did freely because they recognized that their feedback was taken into account when new employees were being hired.

Monitoring

The programme continues to be monitored by the manager through general observation. Over the two years that it has been operating, there has been no need for programme refinements.

Key Lessons for Smaller Operations

For small and medium-size operations wanting to implement a similar programme, the Malibu Visitor Centre has these suggestions:

- Give front-line staff the autonomy to be involved in the decision-making process.
- Be guided by staff opinions in recruitment and selection.

Discussion Questions

1. The Visitor Centre has achieved good results by allowing front-line staff to be involved in decisions about future team members. Why does careful thought and care have to go into this process? What guidelines would you consider creating regarding front-line staff and management working together in this way?

2. The cost of unplanned turnover is high. In addition to the expense of recruitment advertisements, what do you think are other actual costs to a business when a staff member leaves and another has to be hired and trained?

3. What are some other ways that businesses can encourage staff loyalty and retention?



Employee Orientation, Training and Professional Development

Companies should not underestimate the importance of a well-thought-out orientation programme. New employees often have an inadequate picture of the working environment and job requirements/expectations. Moreover, employee training has to be seen as part of regular operations that will give a business a competitive advantage and a better return on its investment. Providing for your staff's ongoing professional development makes solid business sense.

Customer Service Plus – Creating Customer Loyalty

Accra Beach Hotel

This hotel discovered that enthusiasm for its custom-designed customer service programme continued long after the initial programme launch. This was due to staff involvement in the programme's development, in-house incentives and awards, management's commitment and the hotel's continued investment in human resources by providing further learning opportunities for staff and good monitoring systems for continuous assessment.

Where
Barbados

Mission statement

- To provide the highest level of efficiency and friendliness, and a captivating environment, maximizing financial rewards, employee satisfaction and guest experiences

Type of business

Hotel

Size

- Number of rooms – 148
- Dining room capacity – 240
- Conference room capacity – 250

Ownership

- Private sector
- Unionized

Operating

50 years

Management structure

- Independent

Key products and services

- Accommodation, food and beverage facilities, conference/meeting space

Workforce

- 120-150 full-time
- 10 part-time

In-house incentive programmes

- Employee of the month
- Supervisor of the quarter
- Employee and supervisor of the year
- Back- and front-of-house performance awards

Awards received

- Hotel of the year (2002: BHTA)
- Honesty award for housekeeping staff (2002: Minister of Tourism)
- Restaurant employee of the year (2002: Minister of Tourism)

www.accrabeachhotel.com

COMPANY
SNAPSHOT



The HR Challenge

After assessing its departmental links and determining the factors that affect guest service, the Accra Beach Hotel saw the need to create a customer service training programme that would:

1. develop customer loyalty
2. increase the hotel's quality of guest service
3. distinguish the hotel from its competitors
4. improve communication within departments
5. create monitoring systems to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme

Overview

Businesses learn all too quickly that customer satisfaction cannot be overlooked in any operation, let alone in the highly competitive and sometimes vulnerable tourism industry. The Accra Beach Resort in Christ Church, Barbados knew its spectacular beaches and elegant facilities were not enough for it to stay ahead of its competitors. Its reputation for providing friendly, quality service had to become second nature to all staff. This meant:

- investing in training
- implementing additional programmes and activities that would encourage staff productivity
- improving job performance and job satisfaction

HR management is the primary responsibility of the Accra Beach Hotel's general manager. Training resources are purchased when needed and the HR policies remain flexible. Supervisors and managers are encouraged to respond to staff issues arising from the implementation of new and existing in-house training programmes.

Implementation Steps:

1. An external consultant was hired to design a customer service training programme to suit the specific needs of the Accra Beach Hotel.

2. All the stakeholders (i.e., staff, supervisors and management in all departments) were invited to contribute to the development process.

These activities included:

- informal discussions with staff
 - conducting focus groups with management
 - using 'mystery shoppers' (i.e., paid individuals acting as customers and reporting their observations) to determine the level of existing service
 - undertaking team-building exercises with staff
 - having a forum for departmental heads and managers after the first meeting with the general manager
- Involving the stakeholders in the initial development stages is thought to have decreased the number of modifications that had to be made to the programme after implementation.

3. The Customer Service Plus programme was implemented in stages to all staff over a period of six to seven months. The external consultant trained staff mainly during working hours, although some training had to take place on off-days and during pre-shift sessions.

Training took place in both individual and group sessions and used videos, workbooks, role-playing, interactive discussions and follow-up activities.

4. Managers and supervisors were given additional support and further learning opportunities. This was needed as these individuals had to practice new skills and become competent in the new procedures.

5. To foster cross-departmental cooperation and to keep morale high, various award and incentive programmes were created, such as:

- employee of the month
- supervisor of the quarter
- employee of the year
- supervisor of the year
- back- and front-of-house performance awards
- management performance-based bonus programmes

6. Ongoing monitoring systems were devised to monitor guest satisfaction indexes.

suitable candidates who:

- wanted to make a career in the tourism industry
- demonstrated the best potential fit within the organization
- had the ability to learn the job and the inter-personal skills required

Two components used to measure a candidate during the panel interviews were:

- the stability of the individual's past employment record
- the candidate's post-secondary studies, i.e., his/her personal development and growth since leaving high school/college

Additional learning opportunities provided

The hotel provided all front-line staff, supervisors and middle and senior management with additional learning opportunities, including the payment of registration fees to attend local non-credit training courses. Examples of some professional development opportunities include:

- Each year, the Accra Beach Hotel pays all travel and course expenses for one manager to attend the Cornell Professional Development programme. During the one-week programme, the manager undergoes intensive training sessions at Cornell. Upon return, he or she is encouraged to complete Cornell's online courses.

The objective is for managers to apply what they have learned to their daily work regime at the hotel.

- To encourage staff to participate in local training, the hotel circulates advertised courses that meet with management's approval. Staff can seek out courses, but it is generally at the encouragement of managers that individual staff members undertake additional training. If a course

What Was Done

Training to our standards

Without an abundant supply of qualified workers to choose from, the Accra Beach Hotel developed its own in-house orientation and training programmes to teach staff the required performance standards.

Selection and retention

Using panel interviews, and involving departmental managers, the hotel's general manager used a hiring strategy to select

directly relates to an employee's job and directly benefits the individual as well as the work environment, the hotel reimburses up to 50 per cent of the cost.

Customer Service Plus programme

The purpose of developing a unique customer service programme was to:

- improve employees' performance by providing them with the required service excellence training
- distinguish the hotel's products and services from its competitors
- create a high level of customer loyalty

Results:

Staff reactions

Initially, there was some resistance from managers to the new programme, but this was largely alleviated with the use of focus groups during the development stages of the Customer Service Plus programme.

Some supervisors and middle managers were more concerned with daily operations. The new training programme required taking extra time to practice the new skills and to provide follow up to their staff.

However, in time all staff experienced greater camaraderie and were highly motivated. Service excellence became everyone's priority.

Monitoring

Guest satisfaction indexes (GSI) improved immediately after the programme was implemented, but then fell. Subsequently, incentive and award programmes were put in place to encourage and sustain high levels of customer service and this has resulted in stabilized GSI and reinforced training skills.

With no established monitoring system in place, ongoing feedback comes from guest comment forms that are tabulated on a chart on a monthly basis. This gives each department feedback on how guests perceive their services through related guest service indicators.

Challenges

The greatest obstacles encountered during the implementation of the Customer Service Plus programme were:

- unavailability of training dates
- limited meeting space available for training
- systematically having staff attend the sessions
- difficulty in gathering data directly related to the training transfer outcomes and in evaluating the effectiveness of training
- resistance from some departmental managers

Future HR issues

The Accra Beach Hotel is addressing its current HR needs with training programmes and incentives, but it realizes that its most important human resource issue in the future will be staff retention. It acknowledges that it must continually provide new and additional incentives to junior and front-line employees.

Key lessons for smaller operations

For small- and medium-size operations wanting to implement a similar programme, the Accra Beach Hotel has these suggestions:

- Have a training officer or HR staff member attend all training sessions.
- Keep successes alive by ensuring that supervisors and managers play an essential role in maintaining the momentum of the programme through incentive and recognition programmes.
- Cross-train staff members.

- Manage emotions and expectations to ensure that they are realistic.

Discussion Questions

1. What approaches can be taken when introducing a new programme to encourage the support and buy-in of senior administrators and supervisory/management staff?
2. How important is the continued monitoring of guest satisfaction? Does this need to be done formally?
3. What are ways that a tourism business can maintain freshness in ongoing customer service training programmes?

Developing Managerial Talent

Trinidad Hilton Hotel and Conference Centre

To meet its future staffing needs, the HR department of this hotel customized a training programme from its parent organization, Hilton International Americas. The programme was designed to attract and develop the best talent in the organization in order that those staff – or ‘team members’, as Hilton prefers to call them – with high potential can build their knowledge and skills and prepare for future managerial positions.



COMPANY SNAPSHOT

Where
Trinidad

Mission statement

- Determined to delight the customer in all aspects of Trinidad hospitality, gaining repeat business and referrals

Type of business

Hotel

Size

- 98 rooms

Ownership

- Public (owned by Government of Trinidad and Tobago)
- Unionized

Operating

41 years

Management structure

- Contract (Hilton International Americas)

Key products and services

- Pleasure and business services
- Spa services, dining facilities, entertainment and conference space

Workforce

- 450 full-time
- 200-225 part-time

In-house incentive programmes

- Hilton Moments Award for Excellence
- Departmental incentives
- Group life and health insurance
- Bonuses for management
- Subsidized educational assistance
- Two free meals a day while on duty
- Discounted room and food and beverage rates at other Hilton International properties

Awards received

- National Award for Excellence in Human Resources (2000 & 2002: Prime Minister)

www.hiltoncaribbean.com

The HR Challenge

The Hilton hotel philosophy is to provide opportunities for personal development at all levels of the organization. For the Trinidad Hilton Hotel and Conference Centre, the launch of a new company-wide programme to identify high-potential team members within the organization and to facilitate the development of these individuals at each property initially met with poor results.

The challenge for the Trinidad Hilton HR department was how to customize a North American programme – developed and perfected by Hilton International for all Hilton properties – to suit the specific needs of the Caribbean.

Overview

Nestled on 25 acres of beautifully landscaped gardens overlooking the capital city of Port of Spain, the Trinidad Hilton Hotel and Conference Centre has a reputation for providing quality service. This historic hotel is part of the Hilton chain of hotels.

Hilton hotels consider that *“Only those that feel valued can truly add value”*. By making available the extras that make a difference to guests, Hilton provides its team members with an exciting and beneficial work environment to develop their careers in tourism.

Team member development issues are an important component of the Trinidad Hilton Hotel and Conference Centre’s everyday business practices. This is particularly true when implementing corporate programmes. The hotel’s HR department has found from past experience that any new programmes designed to assist team members’ personal

development or career paths need to be adapted to reflect individual needs. For this reason, team members’ potentials are incorporated when designing individual goals and monitoring programmes to ensure higher success rates.

HR team members participate in decision-making with senior management during strategic and business planning sessions. People-management and training requirements – often seen as a business expense that can be cut when profits are low – are viewed here as an essential part of the hotel’s business strategy.

The Trinidad Hilton Hotel and Conference Centre credits its high retention rates to the fact that it offers better terms and conditions of service (as compared to its competitors) and premium salaries. These compensation and benefit strategies are viewed as part of the organization’s competitive strategy, which pays attention to issues such as:

- service quality and excellence
- training and development systems
- autonomy and empowerment, allowing team members on the front lines to respond immediately to the needs of the customer

By focusing on developing and retaining top-quality team members, the Trinidad Hilton Hotel and Conference Centre has gained a reputation for service excellence and for being an employer of choice.

As part of the Hilton family, the Trinidad Hilton Hotel and Conference Centre is able to offer outstanding on-line training and learning opportunities to both front-line and senior management team members through the Hilton University in areas such as:

- supervisory management
- train-the-trainer
- leadership development training
- computer literacy
- high-potential team member training
- workplace language training
- departmental trainer programme

Hilton University courses are offered through the Internet, accessible from the comfort of team members' homes or via the hotel's intranet. If team members are not computer literate, the property provides training to ensure that they can benefit from on-line courses. One of the hotel's objectives is for all team members to become computer literate.

With access to a range of training resources from a large international organization and support from head office, HR team members have what they require to meet their daily training needs.

Implementation Steps:

1. All departments were informed of the new programme to be launched. Departmental involvement was requested from inception.

2. Hilton International head office sent external trainers to train in-house facilitators, training managers, the HR director and other trainers in how to administer the programme.

3. The programme was launched. Team members with high potential were selected from various levels within the hotel using:

- past performance reviews and milestone achievements at the hotel
- psychometric testing:

For team members – a personality questionnaire was used to assess customer service skills.

For supervisory and management levels – a verbal and numerical evaluation test and a personality questionnaire (to assess aspects of personality and leadership competencies) were used.

The assessment tools used to determine the potential of the candidate were from Saville Holdsworth Ltd.

4. A meeting was held with each team member individually so that a personal development plan and career path could be developed to reflect the individual's potential.

5. Each department manager developed a plan of action that the department head focused on with the high-

potential team member.

6. HR team members arranged training programmes internally for team members. They also identified and funded external programmes, including diploma and degree programmes where needed.

7. Monitoring was incorporated into quarterly performance evaluations.

What Was Done

Workplace restructuring

To address the company's future HR development issues, Hilton International began restructuring and redefining job descriptions within its entire organization in 2000. At the Trinidad Hilton Hotel and Conference Centre, the organizational restructuring was completed two years ago. This restructuring is part of the hotel's five-year strategic HR plan to prepare the workforce for present and future customer needs.

Specifically, team member roles were redefined. Each department's strategic objective was tied directly to a score card system. This system encourages all team members to work toward strategic objectives and to meet the department's target goals related to people management, quality service, customer satisfaction and profit.

Selection and retention

While job descriptions were restructured and redefined within the hotel, so too was the selection and retention process for new hires. As part of the five-year restructuring process, all new recruits, and those promoted, now have to take selection tests.

Hi and Road programmes

Two programmes developed by Hilton International Americas in 2000 were company-wide initiatives to identify high-potential team members within the organization and to facilitate the development of these individuals at each property. These programmes are:

- Hi – for line-level and supervisory-level team members
- Road (Resourcing Opportunities and Development) – for managers and director-level team members

HR team members at the Trinidad Hilton Hotel and Conference Centre found that the North American programmes did not suit the Caribbean culture's work and socio-economic setting. To enhance the programmes' success, therefore, they added an individual focus to each of the programmes.

Results:

There have been a number of promotions at all levels of the organization over the last four years. Every year, the objectives of the HR department are to:

- identify a number of high-potential team members for the Hi and Road programmes
- assist each team member while he/she works toward the next level in his/her individual development plan

Staff reactions

Team members welcomed the new programmes as these provided a clearer picture of career advancement within the local company and within the Hilton chain of hotels. Also, there was the opportunity to take advantage of job openings.

For management, the programme is seen as 'win-win'. It is a motivating tool that develops

the talents of key employees in every department, and it helps to improve overall team morale. Management has to devote extra time to the team members participating in the programme, but it is well worth it as more junior team members are prepared for managerial levels within the organization.

Challenges

The greatest challenge that had to be overcome was the follow through required by department heads. Each department head had a number of new activities identified in their department's plans of action, such as:

- special projects in the department
- cross-exposure to other functions
- mentoring with a colleague in the department and identifying a strength that the team member needs to improve

Future HR issues

The Trinidad Hilton Hotel and Conference Centre wants to continue to create a more flexible workforce to meet what it feels is one of its biggest HR challenges for the future, that is, management development and succession planning.

Also, over the past two years management has been gradually taking over the role of overseeing staff industrial relations that had been played by a union for the past 37 years. This has been challenging, given both that the union has served in this capacity for so long and that the hotel wants to maintain a collaborative relationship with the union.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it important to consider customizing any internationally-developed training resource that might be available to a tourism business?
2. The Trinidad Hilton Hotel and Conference Centre encourages team members to become computer literate and to then take advantage of available on-line training. What would you define as the advantages and disadvantages of Internet-based skills development training?
3. What are some ways that a small- or medium-sized tourism business could incorporate the principle of identifying high-potential employees and then preparing a set of well-defined career path opportunities for them?

Room Attendants Not Forgotten

Amaryllis Beach Resort

This resort believes that staff members who feel good about themselves and their job functions can deliver excellent service for the benefit of the business. So when the house-keeping department wanted to improve the status of its room attendants, the HR department invested in a new training programme to give these employees a higher and more appreciated profile, while introducing cleaning practices and products beneficial to the local environment.

Where
Barbados

Mission statement

- To provide the highest quality service to our guests, opportunities for total development for our staff and a viable operation for our shareholders

Type of business

Resort

Size

- Number of rooms – 150
- Dining room capacity – 330
- Conference room capacity – 200

Ownership

- Private
- Unionized

Operating

32 years

Management structure

- Owner-managed through a management team

Key products and services

- Accommodation with food and beverage facilities, bars, catering services and function hosting

Workforce

- 105 full-time
- 3 part-time

In-house incentive programmes

- Performance incentives
- Employee and supervisor of the quarter
- Employee of the year
- Profit sharing (senior management)

Awards received

- Green Globe 21 certified

www.amaryllisbeachresort.com

COMPANY
SNAPSHOT



The HR Challenge

Committed to staff development and concerned about preserving the local environment, the Amaryllis Beach Resort faced the challenge of implementing a training programme that improved the status of its housekeeping staff while, at the same time, meeting the resort's environmental principles.

Overview

It takes a large staff, each skilled in their area of expertise, to operate a resort. Many jobs often receive little recognition from guests or fellow colleagues due to the nature of the work or to negative stereotyping of the occupation. These jobs can include dishwashers and sanitation and cleaning staff. However, these are all essential positions in every hospitality business.

The Amaryllis Beach Resort sought to improve the profile of its room attendants, that is, to raise the employees' low self-esteem regarding the job and themselves by increasing their skill levels and strengthening the importance of housekeeping staff within the resort.

People management practices

The Amaryllis Beach Resort encourages all staff to develop by providing ongoing training and broad, flexible job descriptions. There is no overstaffing and there is a low staff/rooms ratio throughout the organization.

By keeping the working environment friendly, dynamic and progressive, the Amaryllis Beach Resort has fewer job function issues and little turnover.

Training programmes are considered to be

vital and are thus mandatory for all staff. Management believes its most important HR issues for the future will be acquiring people who are:

- flexible
- skilled in their area of expertise
- genuinely hospitable

The resort offers in-house programmes designed to encourage employee productivity. These programmes include performance incentives impacted by attendance and other measures. Opportunities for upward mobility are also provided as situations arise.

Implementation Steps:

1. The HR and housekeeping departments agreed that improving the room attendants' morale and job profile were important for the entire organization.
2. A programme that had been successful in the region and that met the resort's environmental concerns was purchased.
3. External trainers trained all housekeeping staff and supervisors during six visits to the resort during a calendar year.
4. The Rooms Division Manager, the Quality Assurance Manager and the external trainers conduct spot checks of guest rooms to monitor performance.
5. Incentives were developed to encourage housekeeping staff to voluntarily apply for room attendant certification.

What Was Done

The housekeeping department identified the need for a training programme and recommended that the Amaryllis Beach Resort adopt the Talkabout Housekeeping Program that was being used at other properties in the region. Developed by a hospitality and management professional, the programme sets sustainable standards in guest room and public areas for cleanliness, hygiene, safety, staff pride and accountability, with an option of room attendant certification through Talkabout Skills.

Housekeeping with a Hint of Green

The Amaryllis Beach Resort purchased the new hospitality programme and called it Housekeeping Training With A Hint of Green. The objectives of the programme were to:

- make the cleaning standard of room attendants consistently high
- improve the self image of room attendants
- make the cleaning process more efficient and environmentally-friendly

Trainers were brought on-site to teach line staff and supervisors in the housekeeping department. During work hours, in conference facilities and in guest rooms, staff awareness training and sustainable standards were covered in three stages:

- large group activity
- small group activity
- individual activity, i.e., over-the-shoulder and on the job

Using handouts, the actual cleaning agents and demonstrations of real-life cleaning situations, housekeeping attendants learned a new technique called circular room cleaning. This technique involves the use of environ-

mentally-friendly mixtures and general environmental best practices.

Having a genuine concern for the environment and being Green Globe 21 certified, the Amaryllis Beach Resort ensured that its housekeeping attendants understood the importance of its new environmental practices. Monitoring took place to make sure that standards were maintained.

In the final phase of the programme, the Amaryllis Beach Resort will give room attendants the option of becoming certified by Talkabout Skills. Incentives will be offered to encourage staff participation in the certification programme.

Results:

The programme is still a work-in-progress so the overall results are not completely determined. Over time, the results measuring the increased number of rooms completed per room attendant and the reduced cost of chemicals are expected to offset the cost of the programme (US\$12,500). It is anticipated that the benefits will include:

- increased efficiency in time use
- less use of materials
- better feelings among employees about themselves and their job functions

Staff reactions

Overall, most staff welcomed the new programme. The small amount of initial resistance was soon overcome as the programme was clearly shown to benefit staff.

Challenges

The greatest obstacle was scheduling training. As all housekeeping staff needed to be trained, training sessions were staggered and scheduled around busy periods.

Key lessons for smaller operations

For small- and medium-size operations wanting to implement a similar programme, the Amaryllis Beach Resort has these suggestions:

- Train small numbers at a time.
- Proceed methodically.
- Consider joining with other similar businesses to reduce the per unit cost.
- Every function is important and people have to be made to feel important.

Discussion Questions

1. Room attendants at the Amaryllis Beach Resort were provided with important knowledge and skills that were part of the hotel's Green Globe business strategy. What additional kinds of learning opportunities would be appropriate to provide to housekeeping staff?

2. There is always the need to consider the financial resources required when providing additional support for staff. Why should this kind of innovative training be seen as a business investment as opposed to a questionable cost?

3. What other departments of a resort property can benefit from increasing staff knowledge and skills relating to environment-friendly practices?

Raising Guest Satisfaction Levels

Sandals Ocho Rios Resort & Golf Club

Providing Extra-ordinary Guest Service (PEGS) is a Sandals original programme that was conceived and developed by in-house team members (staff) to raise guest comment scores for service at this resort.



COMPANY
SNAPSHOT

Where
Jamaica

Mission statement

- Sandals is committed, through teamwork and staff development, to increasing staff profitability, maintaining consistent standards of quality and providing the highest level of guest satisfaction possible

Type of business

- Resort
- Private sector

Size

- Number of rooms – 237
- Dining room capacity – 394

Ownership

- Private
- Not unionized

Operating
15 years

Management structure

- Owner-managed

Key products and services

- All-inclusive accommodation with gourmet restaurants, golf, various water sports and fitness centre

Workforce

- Peak: 327 full-time, 28 part-time
- Off-season: 288 full-time, 26 part-time

In-house incentive programmes

- Discounts with various local businesses
- Savings and loan club
- Pension, medical and life insurance
- Incentive trips (local and overseas)
- Monthly, quarterly and yearly awards
- Inter-departmental and inter-hotel sporting competitions

Awards received

- Top Caribbean Hotel Group (UK Travel Industry)
- Signature Vacations Award for Excellence Service (4 years)
- World's Leading All-inclusive Company (World Travel Awards)

www.sandals.com

The HR Challenge

Concerned that guest comments for service were not reaching the minimum 95 per cent rating, the HR department at the Sandals Ocho Rios Resort & Golf Club created a new in-house service excellence programme to improve its customer service training. They called the programme Providing Extraordinary Guest Service – PEGS for short.

Before PEGS could be implemented throughout the property, department heads were faced with the challenge of how to sell the programme's concepts to team members (staff). The key was to inform all team members about the benefits to be gained personally and for the hotel. Once this was accomplished, greater levels of prompt and efficient service followed.

Overview

'A little taste of Eden' is how Sandals Ocho Rios Resort & Golf Club describes what a stay in this Jamaica resort resembles. Nestled between the lush St. Ann Mountains and the Caribbean Sea, it is a sanctuary for couples. When guest comments regarding the resort's service were ranked at 80 per cent rather than the minimum standard set at 95 per cent, the HR department felt its paradise travel escape was not fully meeting guests' expectations and developed PEGS.

PEGS

PEGS incorporates the five basic components of the existing Sandals Quality Advantage Programme:

1. Total Customer Focus
2. Total Commitment
3. Job Knowledge
4. Team Work
5. Continuous Improvement

The Sandals Ocho Rios Resort's HR and training departments made sure that every department head understood the resort's goal for implementing PEGS. When selling PEGS to team members, department heads explained how the new programme would benefit individuals personally as well as how the hotel and the community would profit.

The benefits of implementing PEGS for: Team members –

During work hours, individuals would learn new customer service skills that would increase their occupational skills knowledge. These skills, although developed specifically for Sandals, are also valuable for résumés and when starting a new business.

The hotel –

Satisfied clients make for repeat clientele and good word-of-mouth advertising. A hotel with no, or next-to-no, vacancies needs a full- and part-time workforce, which means steady employment.

The local community –

A popular resort benefits the community as tourists buy goods and ancillary services from the surrounding area. Local residents own many businesses, which in turn support family, friends and the economic livelihood of the community.

Those departments that had received lower-than-expected ratings on service were anxious to be a part of the programme. Selling team members on the programme was easy when the benefits for individual employees, for the hotel and for the community were fully understood.

Implementation Steps:

1. An enhanced training programme for front-line, supervisory and management team members was developed in-house, incorporating the corporate office's Sandals Quality Advantage Programme.

2. The resort's training manager trained all department heads in the programme's components and sought buy-in by explaining the benefits related to individuals, to departments and to the resort as a whole.

3. Department heads explained the programme's concept to supervisors and front-line team members. During work schedules, the training manager provided instruction to team member groups using audio-visual materials, role-playing and prepared hand-outs. Outside professionals were brought in for motivational presentations.

4. Monitoring was done through a programme called TLC and a weekly guest questionnaire review.

5. Weekly training sessions continued over the long term to ensure that guest satisfaction results remained in the mid-90s.

with guests had a major input. Suggestions from team members on ways of improving service scores were incorporated.

The remaining 10 per cent – covering the technical components – was outsourced to a team of experts.

Pre-shift briefings let all team members become familiar with the programme. Over a period of six weeks, the entire programme was implemented throughout the resort.

A total of 20 group training sessions were needed for team members to be completely trained in the programme's 13 modules, covering:

- Creating Great First Impressions
- Customer Expectations and How to Satisfy Them
- Successful Bartending
- Dining Room Skills
- Great Dining and Bar Service
- Customer Service is Everybody's Business
- How to Give Delightful Guest Service
- Customer Service Sensitization
- Customer Relations
- Community and Environmental Awareness
- Winning Words
- Cultural Sensitivity
- Tourism Awareness

Local motivational speakers were brought in to speak in some group sessions. Customer service videos were borrowed from a local hospitality college and used in some training sessions. Titles of the videos borrowed included:

- Anticipating the Customer's Needs
- Putting the Customer First
- Smile
- Becoming a Service Star
- Pleasing the Challenging Customer

What Was Done

Ninety per cent of this new service excellence programme was developed in-house from the expertise of the team members on staff. All departments that deal directly

Selection and retention

The HR department has a selection process that is used to screen applicants who apply for positions at the resort. This process is based on a range of minimum requirements that differ depending on the area of work.

During the interview process, the HR department looks for candidates with the desired service attitude. Learning the specific job skills begins after orientation, and further training is ongoing throughout a team member's career at the resort.

At the Ocho Rios Resort & Golf Club, a team member can expect to receive continuous training and the opportunity for:

- promotions from within
- transfers to other Sandals or Beaches properties
- scholarships and fellowships to local and overseas post-secondary institutions
- exchange programmes in similar capacities at other Jamaican resorts

These incentives are some of the reasons why the resort has low turnover and little difficulty in retaining team members.

Additional learning opportunities

For those candidates seeking to further their management careers, Sandals Ocho Rios Resort & Golf Club offers a Trainee Manager's Programme overseen by the HR director. Eligible candidates are those with a Bachelor of Science degree from a tertiary institution. The programme is two years in length, with on-the-job training throughout the Sandals/Beaches chain.

Further team-building exercises for team members at all levels include the Sandals

Ocho Rios quiz, covering local and overseas Sandals/Beaches properties, customer service and Jamaican history and culture. The quiz is known as the Sandals All Star Competition, and there are group fun days throughout the Sandals chain that promote friendly competition.

Each team member is expected to meet a mandatory number of training hours per year in customer service, technical skills and other personal development educational programmes, such as:

- Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) in English and Mathematics
- Caribcert – CHA Certification
- First Aid
- Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)

This training is a factor considered when evaluations are done and possible promotions and transfers are examined.

Staying ahead of competitors

The Sandals Ocho Rios property manager does all the daily training with team members and uses guest presenters when required. Cross-training between departments is an important component, as it enables properties to fill vacancies from within. This also acts as a powerful motivational tool for employees. Team members become more marketable as they learn new skills. By continuously investing in training throughout the resort chain, Sandals is confident that it is able to stay ahead of its competitors.

Results:

During the implementation stages, guest satisfaction scores slowly but steadily improved. They reached the mid-90s in the fourth week after PEGS was completely implemented throughout the resort. As a result of this success, a portion of PEGS

is now used at other Sandals and Beaches properties.

Monitoring

Monitoring is two-fold at the Ocho Rios Resort. There is the existing TLC programme, where managers make courtesy calls to in-house guests. It has been shown that these calls help to improve guest service scores as concerns are dealt with prior to a guest's departure.

There is also a weekly guest questionnaire review not only to focus on areas of concern but also to highlight outstanding achievements in guest service. This review specifically helps the training managers to monitor PEGS' success.

The questionnaire is a summary of all guest comment cards by area and is compiled into a weekly report by the Guest Services Department.

This report is then discussed in departmental team members' regular two-hour meetings. During these sessions, departmental team members discuss and arrive at effective, workable solutions to documented guest comments and concerns. For example, following comments about the unavailability of food during the early morning, the beach grill had its opening hours moved to 6:30 A.M. Early continental breakfast was also instituted, starting at 7:30 A.M.

Department heads also discuss these solutions with front-line team members in their daily pre-shift briefings. Copies of the report that the Guest Services Department compiles, along with the solutions and any subsequent changes in hotel operations, are posted on the departmental notice boards

and in staff areas.

Written communication to guests who have expressed concerns is undertaken directly by the hotel manager.

Challenges

The biggest obstacles to overcome while implementing PEGS were employee buy-in and scheduling training sessions during busy high-occupancy periods. Having shorter training sessions and repeating the topic over the entire week in both morning and evening sessions overcame this second obstacle.

The majority of team members welcomed the new programme. However, there were a few who were initially sceptical. Once enthusiasm grew and team members were instructed in the benefits, more team members came on board.

Future HR issues

Filling key roles in its food and beverage departments is the resort's most important HR issue for the future. To address this, the resort is one of the corporate representatives on local school boards. The resort also works with local hospitality schools by visiting institutions and sensitizing students to the various career and personal growth opportunities available in the hospitality industry.

Students are also invited for property tours of the resort so that they can get a first-hand view of the operations. The Ocho Rios Resort & Golf Club has created an on-the-job training programme for teens to be exposed to all areas of the hotel's operation. The programme helps students to acquire new skills and to develop an appreciation for tourism in the community and in Jamaica's

economy. This programme helps to fill key food and beverage positions by heightening interest in this choice of career.

Key lessons for smaller operations

For small and medium-size operations wanting to implement similar programmes, the resort has these suggestions:

Ensure that all your employees understand:

- the importance (on an individual level) of repeat and increased business
- how to deliver prompt and efficient service in all guest-host interactions

Discussion Questions

1. Selling the employees on the PEGS programme was a key consideration in its successful implementation. What are some of the personal benefits that employees would enjoy from actively engaging in a programme such as PEGS?

2. Scheduling training is often a significant challenge in busy hospitality and tourism properties. What are some ways to ensure that in-house customer service training gets the attention it requires?

3. What ideas do you have that will support the ongoing reinforcement of customer-service strategies, such as those in the PEGS programme, once the initial training has been completed?



Building a Performance Culture

Employee morale, retention and job performance all increase when staff have a role in helping to achieve business objectives. Managers and supervisors need to create work environments in which people want to work and where contributions toward achieving company goals and objectives are recognized.

Delivering a Consistently High Level of Service

Bahamas Experience Tours & Transfers

This ground transportation company has found that by focusing its attention on delivering a consistent level of service, it is improving its bottom line. Better working conditions, and more front-line training, have enabled employees to get better tips and have motivated them to help the company reach its goal of targeting a higher-end clientele.



COMPANY SNAPSHOT

Where
Bahamas

Mission statement

- To be a progressive, customer-driven organization while offering clients a wide range of high-quality products and travel and travel-related services designed to satisfy their needs and give them value for money

Type of business

Transportation

Size

- 26 luxury limos
- 6 Cadillac SUVs
- 18 motor coaches
- 12 mini vans

Ownership

- Private sector
- Not unionized

Operating

19 years

Management structure

- Owner-operated

Key products and services

- Provide round-trip airport/hotel transfers, deluxe meet and assistance services, translation, destination and event management and tours

Workforce

- 179 full-time
- 23 part-time

In-house incentive programmes

- Uniforms
- Benefit packages that include group insurance
- Bonus system, based on merit

www.bahamasexperiencetours.com

The HR Challenge

The performance culture at Bahamas Experience Tours & Transfers (also simply called 'Bahamas Experience') changed for the better with an overhaul of the company's brand image, new employee uniforms and a universal script used by all employees when interacting with guests. To encourage employee buy-in to this new work culture, incentives were used.

Bahamas Experience upgraded its training programmes in order to encourage employees to deliver quality service the same way every day. Its HR challenge was to determine how to standardize the company's service delivery and make it better than its competitors.

Overview

Over the last five years, Michael Symonette, the owner of Bahamas Experience, has been aggressively changing his company's HR policies. In a push to gain new business, he has adopted some 'guerilla' marketing tactics. These are unconventional tactics that are intended to obtain maximum results with minimal resources.

Mr. Symonette has been pleased with the results he has received so far but is not completely satisfied. What he has come to realize is that HR is an important component of his company's growth strategy. Ten years ago he never would have thought that his company's success would be so dependent on HR issues. Now he realizes the importance of a greater focus on people.

Selection and retention

Mr. Symonette is proud to say that his company has a good reputation for treating employees well. For example:

- Drivers are not required to clean their own cars. Bahamas Experience is the only company that provides cleaners for its drivers.
- Instead of firing an employee who is not happy with what he/she is doing, management (after discussion with the employee) has in the past opted to move an individual to another department rather than lose the employee.
- The company has also continued to provide benefits to an employee who was on sick leave for a year. After the year, the employee returned to work.

These types of positive experiences are discussed throughout the industry, mostly through word-of-mouth, and improve the company's reputation, making it an employer of choice in the transportation and travel trade industry.

Mr. Symonette finds that there is an abundant supply of qualified workers for clerical and hospitality front-line positions. However, because the local post-secondary institutions (university and college) do not offer many courses in sales and marketing, employees qualified in this business area are in short supply.

Bahamas Experience keeps a database of possible future candidates. These are people who have sent in résumés or applied for specific positions who were not hired at the time but were felt to be good employees. To help them find employment, the company will let other operators know of these candidates. This arrangement allows worthy

applicants to find employment until Bahamas Experience has a place for them.

In addition, Bahamas Experience gives 10 scholarships (with a value of US\$10,000) to the College of the Bahamas each year. Although these students are not obliged to work for Bahamas Experience, recipients are urged to consider the company in their future employment plans. In Mr. Symonette's view, this approach gives him an inside track to securing their employment some time in the future.

When selecting a candidate, Bahamas Experience does a background check on the individual in question. In the process of hiring, the company considers what likely fit the applicant will have in the company's environment.

Overall, retention is not an issue as turnover is very low. However, some of the company's less skilled front-line occupations attract a more transient individual, so turnover there is higher.

Additional learning opportunities provided

Mr. Symonette will pay a percentage of tuition for any approved professional development course an employee chooses to take. Employees have taken motivational seminars, and some management staff members recently participated in a University of Miami session on creating a business plan. This particular course, while not directly applicable to their day-to-day work, helped managers to gain a better appreciation of what they need to know to run a business.

As part of the company's employee-wide initiative for improving its front-line training, Mr. Symonette enrolled all staff in the

Ministry of Tourism's BahamaHost and S.M.A.R.T. (Smart Marketing and Royal Treatment) programmes.

Implementation Steps:

1. The owner recognized the need for a programme to improve the company's standard of service and make it consistent in all departments and locations of the operation.
2. The HR director was added to the existing management committee, which was made up of representatives from other administrative departments. Buy-in was needed from all departments if new training programmes were going to work. Input was gathered from staff and the owner.
3. This input was incorporated into the revised training procedures. For example, front-line employees were provided with scripted statements (such as, "Welcome back to the Bahamas" and, "Hope you enjoy your stay with us") to use in various situations in order to promote the service culture.
4. The owner hired various consultants to help with specific issues, such as branding, standardizing services and preventative maintenance.
5. A performance review committee was created, which reports to the management committee on such tasks as:
 - developing and maintaining standards
 - determining new ways to enhance

the performance of individual company departments

6. The management committee saw to it that all employees took the Ministry of Tourism's training programmes, BahamaHost and S.M.A.R.T.

7. The management committee developed an orientation programme, overseen by one manager. The purpose was to ensure that all employees started out with the same information. For example, on an employee's first day, the individual is driven around to meet all of the company's employees at the airport and other locations.

8. The management committee and performance review committee meet regularly to discuss progress in each department.

9. There are regular performance reviews to monitor and support the growth of employees. Customer feedback and the results from 'mystery shoppers' (i.e., paid individuals who act as customers and report their observations) are additional ways that this company monitors the working environment.

What Was Done

Mr. Symonette recently hired a number of consultants to review company policies and operations. He wanted to enhance the existing screening and recruitment processes and to incorporate a new system of testing that better identified certain skills and

qualifications, such as computer experience. These consultants also helped the company in standardizing services such as:

- selecting a signature colour for all vehicles
- designing a new logo using the colours of the Bahamas flag
- creating the slogan, 'You Can't Beat the Experience'
- initiating preventative maintenance programmes
- making it standard policy to place water, ice, magazines and daily newspapers in all vehicles
- hiring a full-time signage consultant to keep all company signs fresh
- hiring a full-time tailor to provide custom-made uniforms for staff

Staying ahead of competitors

A major component of what positions a company ahead of its competitors is doing a better job. To make this happen, retaining good employees must be at the top of the list. The right kind of incentives help Bahamas Experience to do this.

In addition to the regular benefits provided, the company is able to offer employees discount travel and free tickets because it also owns a travel agency. Birthdays are recognized with flowers and other gifts. It is also customary that when the company gets a contract to move large groups of people, there is a celebration afterwards to thank employees for their work.

There is also an in-house 10-point system. When department heads see that an employee has provided service above and beyond the call of duty, he or she is awarded a point. When an employee has earned 10 points, he/she is eligible for a bonus prize, such as a day at a spa.

Even with all the professional opportunities and personal rewards and benefits provided, Mr. Symonette has found that staff most appreciate being brought into the decision-making process. To many, it is the best bonus of all and it helps to keep the company ahead of its competitors.

Results:

The goal of this major effort was the consistent provision of high-level service. As a result of all initiatives, including the additional training procedures that were put in place, employees are now better motivated to do their jobs.

Most customers do not bother to write letters and provide guest feedback for this type of transportation service. Since the programme has been implemented, however, the number of positive verbal comments received from clients has increased. For example, when Mr. Symonette received a call from a client telling him how pleased she was to be called by her first name in a return telephone call from one of his staff, he realized the importance of this detail. Since then he has implemented a policy of using the customer's first name in conversations throughout the company.

Staff reactions

Initially the new company procedures caused some apprehension, but this was mainly due to the fact that many people do not welcome change. When staff members saw their tips increasing, they started paying closer attention to the purpose of the procedures, and buy-in improved.

After trial and error, Mr. Symonette can say that before new HR policies or procedures take place, employees need to be consulted. Securing buy-in is important and a key part of this company's practices.

Monitoring:

Regular staff performance reviews monitor how well employees deliver service on a consistent basis. In addition, the director of HR pays special attention to customer feedback, uses mystery shoppers and notes employee attitude in all employee assessments.

To encourage employees to keep up the good work, rewards are given for positive comments from customer feedback cards. Unfavourable comments are dealt with immediately.

Mr. Symonette has observed that there is significant peer pressure among his employees on those who are not performing to the level expected.

Future HR issues

Mr. Symonette feels that the HR issue that will challenge him the most in the future is getting management buy-in to new HR policy changes. For example, all employees may not initially appreciate a mystery shopper programme, but it is a good way to assess the level of service that employees are providing. Continued efforts will need to be made to build management support for these and other similar initiatives.

Key lessons for smaller operations

For small- and medium-size operations wanting to implement a similar programme, Mr. Symonette suggests:

- Develop an aggressive HR programme to attract good staff.
- Provide perks that fit the employees' needs.
- Remember that your company's HR function is just as important as sales, marketing and operations.

Discussion Questions

1. The owner of this transportation services company reports an improving reputation as a good place to work. Which of the various HR strategies highlighted do you think might have had the largest impact on this reputation? Why?

2. The mystery shopper method is often used in the tourism/hospitality industry to gauge levels of customer service. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of such a system? How could the disadvantages be reduced?

3. One of the successful techniques used by Bahamas Experience is to ensure that the appropriate messages for customers are scripted and are followed by staff. What would you do to ensure that staff members are comfortable with and accepting of this approach?



Management and Leadership Styles

In today's tourism environment, a more demanding customer and a constantly evolving business environment require leaders to focus as much on the management of people as on other aspects of business operations.

Leading the Way in Employee Involvement

The Belize Zoo and Tropical Education Center

Knowing that its daily operation affects the preservation of the region's wildlife and habitat, the Belize Zoo and Tropical Education Center is concerned about running an efficient and sustainable organization. For this reason, the Zoo Director has trained all managers to be strong leaders, focused on the management of people and the zoo's bottom line, and to work as a team with the understanding that they all hold a stake in the success of the organization.



COMPANY SNAPSHOT

Where

Belize

Mission statement

- Committed to the conservation of Belize's wildlife and its habitats, through the establishment of a well-maintained zoological facility and education centre
- To bring about greater environmental awareness in the people of Belize

Type of business

Zoo and wildlife education facility

Ownership

- Private sector
- Not unionized

Operating

21 years

Management structure

- Independent

Key products and services

- Exhibits over 125 native animals of Belize in natural savanna surroundings and provides research and internship opportunities, environmental education and enjoyable recreation

- 26 full-time

In-house incentive programmes

- Transportation to work (bus fare)
- Health care when required
- Loans with lower interest rates and automatic deductions from pay cheques
- Recognizing staff efforts to improve zoo services
- Monthly social events

www.belizezoo.org

The HR Challenge

Located in a remote geographical area, the Belize Zoo and Tourism Education Center provides an opportunity for local and foreign visitors to learn about the animals of Belize and to understand why it is important to protect the Belize savanna environment. The management team at the zoo needed to enhance its leadership skills in order for:

- the team to work together and create better communication between departments
- the facility to effectively address its mission and values
- the organization to run efficiently in the absence of the Zoo Director
- managers to confidently empower front-line employees and provide them with the skills to do their jobs effectively

Overview

In 1983, a number of wild animals used in making documentary films about tropical forests found a home when the Belize Zoo was created on 29 acres of savanna land. It did not take long for this small backyard operation to develop into a dynamic wildlife education facility. The zoo created a department specifically for public education and established the Tropical Education Center on 84 acres adjacent to the zoo three years later.

Selection

It is management's role to make sure that all the zoo's employees know the importance of their jobs and the impact that the entire organization has on the wildlife, habitat and people of Belize. Because of this, the Belize Zoo aims to hire the best possible staff. A new staff member is only hired if the

management team is in agreement – all hiring decisions are made together.

Employment positions at the Belize Zoo are made known through word-of-mouth promotion by existing staff and through advertisements in the local newspapers. These two recruitment sources generate numerous candidates for vacant and new positions at the zoo.

During the selection process, management uses set skills criteria regarding what they look for in a potential candidate, and the requirements from the job description are used to evaluate individuals during the interview. The right personality is extremely important, as the individual needs to be a good fit in the organization.

Learning opportunities provided

Once hired, both front-line staff and middle management have the opportunity to:

- take training courses
- participate in professional development activities
- attend conferences

The zoo pays for all costs as long as the learning opportunities deal with natural resources, are beneficial to staff and are appropriate to the employee's particular position. Recently, for example, the Animal Management Supervisor attended a conservation workshop in Mexico. Two other employees have participated in an internationally-known zoological/conservation training course on the Island of Jersey in the Channel Islands.

Managing rare and endangered species means that employee training at all levels is tailored to the specific position and the importance of

the responsibility. For this reason, adequate resources are devoted to purchasing books, videos and cassette tapes that deal with Belize's zoology and natural history.

In addition to furthering individual skills, the Belize Zoo provides many social events for front-line staff and management. Such activities include:

- monthly after-work events that include food, music and drinks
- celebrations on the completion of special events, such as when a visiting film crew wraps up its work at the zoo
- staff birthday celebrations at a local restaurant with cake, games, contests and a gift for every child (family members are also included)

Staying ahead of competitors

By introducing HR strategies and activities that improve employees' skills, knowledge and contentment in their place of work, the Belize Zoo is staying ahead of its competitors. Its positive working environment keeps turnover low and contributes to an important cause – preserving the wildlife and natural environment of Belize.

By bringing people into contact with wildlife and the area's natural heritage, the Belize Zoo encourages them to recognize that these natural resources are worth saving. For the people of Belize, the zoo instills a sense of pride and offers a unique opportunity to learn about wildlife.

Implementation Steps:

1. An in-house programme was developed to create an open work environment (i.e., one in which staff members are encouraged to offer constructive feedback without fear of retribution) with two main purposes: (1) to get managers to work as a team and (2) to make employees and managers understand that the organization can only meet its goals if departments work together.
2. The Zoo Director and team leaders discussed ideas, issues and solutions from each department every week. For example, the Gift Shop Manager suggested that the zoo purchase ice cream from a local small business rather than from a US distributor. The management team approved the idea because a local company could provide ice cream at a lower cost and the gift shop could continue to generate a profit.
3. Each manager conducted on-the-job training covering all areas of the zoo so that every employee understood the organizational structure and the importance of roles within the operation.
4. Regular meetings between the five managers and the front-line staff were established to voice concerns and to address problems and any other issues affecting zoo operations. Informal communications were also encouraged to discuss specific issues in each area.

5. To build on the positive working environment, regular social events and monetary bonuses were created to generate a team atmosphere. This also rewarded good ideas from all staff.

6. Visitor comments are assessed every year to monitor whether the zoo is achieving its mission. Improvements are implemented continuously.

What Was Done

The zoo's education programmes are geared toward the general public and international visitors, as well as to primary and secondary students throughout Belize. It is estimated that 10,000 students and over 600 teachers visit the zoo and education facility annually and participate in its programmes.

The zoo's success, however, depends on all employees understanding the importance of their jobs and roles at the zoo. For management, everyone matters, as do all employees' opinions and concerns. By creating a positive and pleasant work environment, the Belize Zoo has gained the respect of its employees, of the people of Belize and of visitors and colleagues from around the world. From the beginning, the Zoo Director created a positive, team-focused atmosphere to foster a cooperative and empowering environment for all employees and management.

Results:

Empowering managers and front-line staff increases open discussions between all levels of the organization. Such discussions include the order in which to renovate particular exhibits and the use of vehicles to reduce the

two-hour bus ride to work for employees. The zoo's success is dependent on good leadership within the management team.

Staff reactions

There was no resistance from staff members to the new programme, as they liked the informal and empowering environment that rewards cooperation and individual initiative.

Monitoring

The success of the leadership programme is monitored by tracking the annual number of visits and by reviewing visitor comments.

Challenges

Sometimes new employees arrive with negative perceptions of this type of open management style, i.e., an informal working environment in which staff members are encouraged to offer constructive feedback without fear of retribution. If this occurs, experienced staff members work with these individuals to help them understand that the focus of all employees is to help the organization meet its mission and values.

Future HR issues

For the Belize Zoo, the most important HR issue in the future will be the transfer of leadership to a new zoo director. A new director will need to continue to work toward achieving the zoo's mission and values. Succession planning and developing new skills for managers are ongoing. The management team will select a new zoo director when it becomes necessary.

Discussion Questions

1. The Belize Zoo encourages employees to participate in outside professional development conferences and workshops, provided that learning opportunities are directly related to the job. The fact that it meets the costs of employees attending such activities is often much appreciated by staff. While improving their job-related knowledge and skills development, it is also seen as a perk. What are the guidelines that should be in place to ensure that outside professional development activities are a good investment for the business?

2. This successful attraction has emphasized the importance of interdepartmental communication, through regular meetings, as a key HR strategy. What are other ways in which interdepartmental communication can be improved?

3. The Belize Zoo is considering how these progressive HR strategies can be continued under the leadership of a future new director. This is a challenge for all businesses as good managers choose to move on or retire. What advice would you have for this business to ensure that succession planning is successful?

Hands-on Management Works for Small Operator

Sammy T's Resort

It took Sammy Thurston 24 years to realize his dream of running his own hotel. Now a resort owner and operator, Sammy eats and sleeps there to be involved in everything and, more importantly, so that he can understand the experiences of his guests. His hands-on approach is applied in every aspect of his resort, particularly his philosophy of customer service, which involves anticipating the guests' needs.

Where
Bahamas

Mission statement

- Take it to the next level

Type of business

Beach resort

Size

- Rooms: 6 (1-2 bedroom) villas
- Restaurant and patio seating: 44
- Pool deck seating: 24

Ownership

- Private sector
- Not unionized

Operating

1 year

Management structure

- Owner-operated

Key products and services

- A restaurant that has "the best cook on the island"
- A pool, fishing boats and water sports
- Catering facilities for local banquets and parties

Workforce

- 6 full-time

In-house incentive programmes

- Employee of the Month
- Medical
- Travel discounts
- Meals in the on-site restaurant

www.sammytbahamas.com

COMPANY
SNAPSHOT



The HR Challenge

Having hired all staff members from the small island where his resort is situated, Sammy Thurston has a knowledgeable team that knows the history of the area and can advise guests on what to see and do on Cat Island. The island is a 30-minute plane ride from Nassau, with no main town but rather a collection of small communities.

Sammy's challenge has been how to impart to his employees his philosophy of providing the ultimate in customer service so that, in his absence, the same level of guest service is provided. The management style he is using to oversee his staff's training is one he has developed on his own and is based on his experiences in other hotels, retail operations and the banking industry.

Overview

Since 1980, when Sammy told his graduating class that he would one day own his own hotel, he has worked diligently to achieve this goal. Now, as a resort owner, he instructs his staff in how they are to deliver on his vision of providing the ultimate in customer service. Sammy frequently reminds his employees to, *"Stand in the shoes of the guest. What do YOU think they would expect?"* It is this philosophy that is behind all of Sammy T's HR policies. Since he has developed the resort's policies himself and trained his employees in all daily operations, there is not one person solely responsible for HR matters. According to Sammy, *"Everyone does everything. We are all HR representatives, working towards the same goal of providing the ultimate in customer service."*

Implementation Steps:

1. The resort's in-house policies and procedures manual was developed from past work experiences.
2. Sammy trained staff and continually remains on-site to ensure that the policies are followed.
3. A 10-point programme to provide employees with weekly performance evaluations was developed.
4. Weekly staff meetings were initiated to go over each employee's 10-point evaluations and to discuss guests' questions, how staff answered the questions and the best response, given the situation. For example, a guest ordered a local beer to take down to the beach. It is a bit of a walk, so Sammy suggested to the employee that he offer to put six chilled beers in a cooler for the guest to take with him. This way the guest could have another cold beer without having to walk back to the resort's bar. Any unused beer could easily be returned.
5. Sammy conducts a performance appraisal every six months and reviews it with the employee.
6. Sammy constantly provides training on a one-on-one basis.

What Was Done

Sammy's management approach is hands-on. Guests and staff alike see Sammy at all times. He does not expect his staff to do anything he would not do himself, including clearing tables and taking out the garbage. So that his employees understand the guest experience, he invites them to dine in the restaurant where he will serve them so that they can see how it should be done.

Having spent his summers on Cat Island at his family home, he knows the history and island way of life. However, often his local employees have not understood the expectations of the high-end clientele. Sammy developed training procedures to help his employees understand what those expectations are and how to follow through on them 100 per cent of the time.

Selection and retention

On an island with high unemployment, Sammy found an abundant supply of workers with front-line experience in housekeeping and food and beverage service. Candidates with people-management, organizational, supervisory and hotel management experience are harder to find, however.

Having only been open for one year, Sammy has the same staff that he initially hired. There is no change in staff levels between high and low season. During the low season, staff members provide more banquet functions to the local community and remain employed full-time.

Concerned about keeping his qualified employees, however, Sammy makes sure that they are happy and have an enjoyable work environment. He provides his staff with good

health and insurance benefits and encourages employees to contribute their ideas for improvements. For example, the staff came up with the system of pooling tips received from guests, a programme they find is working well.

Learning opportunities provided

Since Sammy T's Resort is so new, the employees are focused on learning the policies and procedures of the in-house training manual that Sammy developed. Each of his employees has participated in BahamaHost, which is the country's service quality training programme. To remind staff of their local customer service training, Sammy posts signs at the back-of-house saying, 'Remember to Smile'.

He also developed a 10-point programme that evaluates employees on:

- guest interactions
- performance of duties
- willingness to assist

Sammy observes the employees as they are working and he grades them on a scale of 1-10 each week. Employees can gain points for performing 'above and beyond' and lose points for overlooking something that they should have done.

The ratings are reviewed at weekly meetings so that employees know the areas where they are falling short and need to improve. Also highlighted are successes for other employees to follow. At the end of the month, scores are tallied up and the employee with the highest score is awarded Employee of the Month. Prizes for this award include discount flights to Nassau and dinners.

Staying ahead of competitors

Ensuring that all employees are cross-trained to deliver all aspects of the resort's daily operations and also that they provide quality service is the resort's strategy for staying ahead of its competitors. In a challenging environment, Sammy hopes that focusing on cross-training will be a strength. For example, when front desk employees have been pulled away from their duties, it is not uncommon for the cook to come out and staff the front desk.

Results:

Sammy's leadership style has worked well. He tries his best to make Sammy T's a place where employees look forward to working every day, and sometimes he has to remind them that their shift is over.

Sammy frequently accompanies the staff to guest rooms, in the restaurant and around the grounds noting what needs attention or what may have been missed.

Within the first year of operation, Sammy T's Resort has had a lot of repeat business and referrals. Having 'the best restaurant on the island' is why the resort also gets local business for graduation parties and banquets.

Staff reactions

Employees have easily accepted Sammy's hands-on management and leadership style as he does not ask them to do anything that he will not do himself. With a small staff and constant one-on-one training, Sammy has created a real family feeling at the resort. This is part of his management approach. If employees feel a part of the resort, they will deliver customer service as if it is their own business.

Monitoring

Sammy is constantly monitoring his employees

to be sure that they have learned how to anticipate the needs of the resort's guests. This is a new concept for his island staff but one that they are working at embracing.

Challenges

The main challenge has been instructing staff on how to anticipate the resort guests' needs. This comes from the employees having had little exposure to the outside world and not being familiar with the expectations of a discerning clientele.

Future HR issues

The most important HR issue for Sammy T's Resort is finding a junior manager. Sammy is constantly looking for someone to bring on with hotel industry experience in people management, supervision and local knowledge.

After talking to recent graduates of the hotel management programme in Nassau, he feels his biggest challenge will be to find someone who will want to move to a small island where there is little infrastructure.

Discussion Questions

1. This small resort is off to a good start, with no turnover in the first year and a staff that is growing into their expected roles. What HR challenges would you predict might need to be addressed in the second and third years of an operation such as the one described?
2. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of employee of the month recognition schemes?
3. Sammy T's has weekly meetings with its team. What do you feel is the ideal frequency for meetings of employees of a small tourism business? Why? Should this be different for larger organizations?



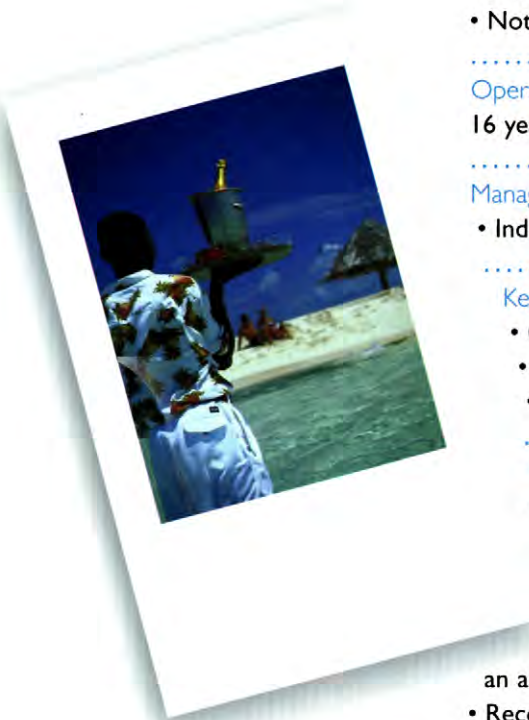
Rewards, Recognition and Benefits

An organizational strategy focusing on rewards, recognition and benefits for staff can provide an effective, low-cost way of encouraging higher levels of performance. There are numerous approaches that can be used for any size of organization. This set of key HR practices does, however, need regular attention and fine-tuning to avoid staleness.

Exceptional Service with *Bucuti's Best*

Bucuti Beach Resort Aruba

This world-class resort developed *Bucuti's Best* – an employee recognition programme with monthly cash incentives that encourages staff members to provide service and actions above and beyond the call of duty.



COMPANY SNAPSHOT

Where
Aruba

Mission statement

- Where personal touch creates unforgettable memories and customers for life

Type of business

Beach resort

Size

- Number of rooms – 63
- Dining room capacity – 160 seats

Ownership

- Private sector
- Not unionized

Operating

16 years

Management structure

- Independent

Key products and services

- Quality lodging beach resort
- Food and beverage operations
- Complete concierge services

Workforce

- 58-63 full-time

In-house incentive programmes

- Monthly and yearly cash prize draws
- Bonus for additional work, e.g., filling in for an absent co-worker
- Recognition of good work and gift on 10-, 15- and 20-year anniversary

Awards received

- 2003 CHA Green Hotel of the Year
- 2002 CHA Hotelier of the Year
- Green Globe 21 – certified since 2000
- ISO14001 environmental certification

www.bucuti.com

The HR Challenge

Ewald Biemans created Bucuti Beach Resort Aruba as a home away from home. His challenge was how to develop a type of service that was as individual as his resort.

He came up with Bucuti's Best. This programme is able to motivate employees and get them to willingly contribute to a team environment, providing exceptional service beyond standard job requirements.

Bucuti Beach Resort Aruba is tucked away on one of the Caribbean's top nine beaches, according to Dream Beaches of the World magazine. This European-style resort offers world-class hospitality and charm for both leisure and business travellers. Wireless broadband connectivity throughout the resort, including in guest rooms, enables business travellers to remain connected to the world of work.

Excellent surroundings must be equalled with quality service. So, less than five years ago, the HR department, with the assistance of department heads, made some changes to the resort's employee manual.

These changes included:

- adding more employee benefits
- clarifying procedures and expectations
- adding the history, mission, vision and company values

Procedural changes were also needed if employees were to consistently achieve the resort's vision of providing the friendly, caring touch that distinguishes Bucuti service.

Implementation Steps:

1. An incentive programme was developed to:

- improve teamwork
- help employees understand that they must work together to achieve excellent service and business results

Using cross-training, management also encouraged employees to help with tasks not necessarily in their job descriptions. When ability or potential is seen in an employee, that individual is given the opportunity to grow and move on.

2. Department heads developed programme criteria and procedures with input from line staff.

3. The programme was implemented over a period of just under two months. Employees were informed of the programme through department heads, meetings, updates in the employee manual and cards available in all hotel areas.

4. Monitoring is conducted by observation and continuous communication with staff to ensure that the programme is relevant and useful. The committee always welcomes employee feedback on the programme.

5. Any programme changes are made by committee and are then explained to staff through the department heads. These changes are then made on the Bucuti's Best nomination cards, and employee procedure

What Was Done

Bucuti's Best was developed in 2001 to provide employees and guests with an opportunity to nominate employees who demonstrate outstanding levels of service to staff, management or guests. This recognition covers service delivered in their job duties or through suggesting and/or implementing new environmental practices at the hotel.

Bucuti's Best programme

For a staff member to join the select ranks of Bucuti's Best, another staff member or a guest must select the employee for outstanding service in one of the four programme areas:

- Continually assists management and co-workers without being asked
- Bends the rules to benefit a guest without damage to the resort
- Exceeds job duties without complaint
- Suggests and implements new environmental practices

These four areas are clearly detailed on Bucuti's Best cards that are located throughout the resort.

A committee of four or five employees (the resort manager, a department head and two or three line staff) reviews card nominations every month to ensure that criteria have been met. If they have, the card is included in a monthly draw for cash prizes:

- First prize: US\$42
- Second prize: US\$28
- Third prize: US\$14

All valid nominations (including winners) received during the year are placed in a draw

at the end of the year for a grand prize totalling US\$560.

Selection and retention

To attract qualified employees, the resort's job advertisements list the skills and qualifications that a candidate is required to perform or have. During the interview, the HR department provides the applicant with a detailed job description and the resort's mission and vision statements.

Candidates are informed of the requirements that the resort must meet to sustain its Green Globe 21 environmental certification, and what the individual's role is in resort processes and procedures.

Retaining staff is not a problem. The resort's positive working environment and good benefits (both monetary and non-monetary) encourage qualified employees to stay. The biggest challenge for the organization is finding food and beverage staff (line and management) who have the necessary experience and knowledge.

Learning opportunities provided

Providing new learning opportunities from front-line through to senior management is important at the Bucuti Beach Resort Aruba. New hires receive a checklist that lists all the training that they need to receive. Their progress is tracked and noted, which is important for maintaining the resort's Green Globe 21 certification.

Each employee has a training plan that includes service standards, emergency procedures and current issues. Mandatory training is offered during working hours and delivered either in-house or by an external organization.

Professional development is flexible. If an employee provides proof that he/she has completed a relevant programme or seminar, the resort will reimburse the employee for the cost. Employees also attend the Aruba Hotel Association (AHA) professional development sessions, and senior managers frequently participate in AHA strategic planning sessions.

If possible, a retreat is organized each year for all department heads (supervisors and managers), led by a professional from outside the resort. This retreat is intended to review past performance and to strategize for the future.

Staying ahead of competitors

The Bucuti Beach Resort Aruba has a reputation for remaining current due to the owner/manager's insistence on employing the latest HR methods. For example, this year all employees have an extra two days off in the year with pay. By employing current HR strategies, using good marketing and providing exceptional service to guests, the resort keeps ahead of its competitors.

The resort's priority is customer service, not only to its guests but also to the resort's employees, i.e., its internal customers. The best motivation has proven to be letting employees know that they make a difference and recognizing them for doing so.

Results:

Management reports that there have been more positive guest comments on service and an increase in repeat business since Bucuti's Best was implemented. Approximately 40 per cent of business is from return guests, which management attributes to the quality guest service that

the resort provides. This business success has been sustained over the last two years with no changes being required to the Bucuti's Best programme.

The Bucuti's Best nomination cards have worked well as they are easy to fill out and conveniently located throughout the property. The yearly cost of the programme is approximately US\$1,500, which management views as a worthwhile cost considering their return on the investment.

Staff reactions

Employees welcomed the new programme. This positive reaction can be credited to the resort's overall HR strategies and policies that reinforce the company's vision of providing good service.

Employees are reminded of the programme on a regular basis. The names of winners are posted monthly on the staff bulletin board and are noted in press releases. In quarterly meetings, there is also a recap of all winners for past months.

Employees know that they are as important as the guests. The Bucuti's Best programme is one more tool that motivates employees to achieve the resort's goals.

Monitoring

Since implementing Bucuti's Best, there has been no formal system put in place to measure the programme's success. Management monitors the programme through observation and continuous communication with staff to ensure that it is still relevant and useful.

Challenges

The only challenge encountered was deciding what service goals staff should meet, but this

was quickly resolved through discussion with department heads. It was decided that the programme's attributes should reflect the hotel's goals for good service as well as environmental, cultural and social responsibility, while reducing costs.

Future HR issues

The balancing of work and home life among staff is an important issue for the Bucuti Beach Resort Aruba. Continuous improvement is needed in all areas. Currently, operations employees work 6 days a week and office employees work 5.5 days a week. By working with other organizations in Aruba, the resort aims to reduce staff hours so that operations employees work 5.5 days a week and office employees work 5 days a week, enabling all staff to spend more time at home with their families.

Discussion Questions

1. Management and staff helped create the four key attributes on which this recognition programme is based. What are additional measures/criteria that could be included as programme attributes?
2. Monthly and annual monetary rewards are featured in this programme. What do you feel are the advantages/disadvantages of monetary rewards over other kinds of employee recognition?
3. *Bucuti's Best* was developed in 2001. What are ways you can suggest to keep a successful programme like this fresh and motivating for staff over time?



Job Mobility and Career Development

Creating a great place to work that also provides staff with the prospect of a bright future helps organizations to keep good people. Whether full-time or part-time, employees are more committed to an organization that can provide them with a clear picture of potential, ongoing career advancement opportunities. When upward advancement is not likely because of the size of the business, then creative job-sharing and multi-tasking opportunities provide variety and ongoing interest for employees.

Understudy Programme – Enhancing Front-Line Customer Service Skills

Beaches Turks & Caicos Resort & Spa

Needing to share experienced workers' skills and knowledge with staff who are new to the tourism industry, this island resort developed an in-house programme, pairing understudies with experienced employees.

Where

Turks and Caicos Islands

Mission statement

- To offer the ultimate Caribbean vacation experience by innovatively, reliably and consistently providing the safest and highest quality services and facilities to guests

Type of business

- Resort
- Private sector

Size

- Number of rooms – 456
- Dining room capacity – 917
- Conference room capacity – 460

Ownership

- Private
- Not unionized

Operating

8 years

Management structure

- Independent

Key products and services

- Three conference and banquet rooms with state of the art audiovisual capabilities and wireless Internet

Workforce

- Peak season: 800 full-time
- Off-season: 700 full-time

In-house incentive programmes

- Monetary awards and prizes for service
- Employee of the Month award
- Birthday club (gift and card on each staff member's birthday)

Awards received

- General Manager's Award
- Manager of the Year
- Supervisor of the Year
- Team Member of the Year

www.beaches.com/main/tc/tc-home.cfm



The HR Challenge

The Turks and Caicos Islands' climate, high-quality beaches and coral reefs are a paradise setting for Sandals Resorts International to operate an all-inclusive resort catering to those who wish to relax. Many local residents, however, were not familiar with the high level of customer service skills required of the island's newest income-generating sector: tourism.

The HR department at this Beaches resort needed to develop a training programme for its island staff in order to share the knowledge of experienced workers and to provide professional development opportunities for all employees.

Overview

Sandals Resorts International was a pioneer of the all-inclusive resort concept and is now world famous. One of the Caribbean's leading hotel groups, Sandals owns and operates 11 couples-only resort hotels in Antigua, the Bahamas, Jamaica and St. Lucia, offering upscale amenities such as gourmet dining and spa services. The company also operates six Beaches resorts that cater to families and singles.

Through its parent organization, Beaches Turks & Caicos Resort is able to draw on the experiences and ideas of a large number of employees. It can also capitalize on training opportunities through the many partnerships that Sandals has developed with local and overseas educational institutions. Beaches has created a reputation for itself as a good place to work by providing employees with opportunities for career development and job mobility within the Caribbean hospitality industry.

The Understudy Programme

The Understudy Programme was developed in-house to improve employees' front-line basic customer service skills and to assist the HR department in identifying candidates with the initiative to further their career goals.

Individuals who have been employed at the hotel for at least one year and have had a minimum of two good performance evaluations are eligible for the programme

Implementation Steps:

1. The HR department developed an on-the-job programme to mentor/coach workers by drawing on the resources of other experienced workers in the resort chain.
2. The HR department recommends employees that it feels are candidates for the Understudy Programme because they (1) need to improve existing skill sets and/or (2) show initiative in wanting to advance career goals.

The HR department identifies potential candidates by reviewing past evaluations and current work practices.

3. The HR department meets with the employee to explain the programme and why the HR department feels the individual would be a good candidate. If an employee agrees to participate, a mentor/coach from another resort joins the Beaches team and is paired with the under study. The coach can work with

more than one employee at a time.

4. By working with employees on the job, mentors improve less experienced employees' skills and knowledge. In addition, all participants attend a weekly class that covers a relevant topic, explaining the issue in detail and including hands-on participation.

Understudy candidates are also involved in occupational training and professional development activities available in-house through the training department. Courses are purchased from the American Hotel and Lodging Educational Institute for the following certifications:

- Certified Hospitality Supervisor (CHS)
- Certified Hospitality Departmental Trainer (CHDT)
- Certified Hospitality Trainer (CHT)
- Train-the-Trainer

5. The length of the Understudy Programme varies, depending on the individual and the position. Generally it is between six and twelve weeks. The programme focuses on front-line employees but is open to all staff levels.

6. The programme is monitored by the head of the employee's department, a government labour representative and the HR department. Regular meetings occur where this group sits down with the understudy to discuss the programme and to review the candidate's progress.

What Was Done

Because the resort was developed in an area where tourism is a large part of the economy, the available workforce fell short of the required skills and knowledge. Beaches responded by creating its Understudy Programme to improve the basic customer service skills of front-line employees. How better to use the knowledge and skills of experienced workers than to pair them with individuals with less experience?

The resort's HR department also offers career advancement opportunities, from certificates to support for master's degrees, through Sandals' many educational partnerships. Job mobility, staff exchanges and further education foster the corporate culture that Sandals is proud to call its own.

The Sandals approach involves selecting quality employees, providing its people with the skills and knowledge to do a job well and paying them better than many of its competitors.

Selection and retention

Beaches and Sandals are careful in selecting their employees. Management positions are hired by Sandals' head office in Jamaica. Executive management, management, supervisory and line positions are advertised in local papers. Interested individuals complete an application form and are interviewed by the manager of the individual property.

Beaches sets aside one day per week to conduct preliminary interviews. Qualifications are checked and, if results are positive and the first interview goes well, the applicant is interviewed by the head of the department. If this interview meets expectations, the applicant completes a final interview with the

hotel manager or general manager.

Beaches finds it has little difficulty in retaining staff. Its HR philosophy is to:

- emphasize training
- provide opportunities for exchanges with other properties
- treat staff members with respect
- encourage a friendly work environment

Additional learning opportunities provided

All employees have additional learning opportunities at Beaches' (and Sandals') properties. To begin with, each employee participates in a detailed orientation training when he or she is first hired. Also, a daily newsletter is circulated to all departments noting any training courses scheduled for the day, week and upcoming months.

Every team member must complete 120 hours of departmental training per calendar year. Topics include customer service, attitude and many other front-line service topics. Managers must complete 40 hours of training per calendar year. The department heads and the HR department monitor employees' progress and evaluations take place every six months.

Employee career development is important but so too are social/fun events at the resort. Beaches holds a quarterly staff fun day where employees and their families enjoy a beach outing including drinks and food. There is also a sports club at the resort that organizes games and regular competitive sporting activities throughout the year.

Staying ahead of competitors

Beaches provides intensive training to all staff to maintain its excellent service and facilities. Department heads and supervisors make coaching a regular part of their department's programmes.

HR strategies and policies are designed to create a positive environment for staff and to encourage employees to discuss ideas that will improve human resources within the organization. There are suggestion boxes for staff to provide comments.

At the suggestion of staff, department heads and supervisors do not attend all staff meetings and team members air issues of concern to HR and operations. As a result, employees are more comfortable expressing themselves and are willing to voice their grievances. Employees appreciate that HR and operations will provide a suggested course of action and respond to concerns at a later meeting, with anonymity being protected.

Results:

Implementation of the Understudy Programme continues, as the organization has approximately 800 employees and every employee needs to be assessed to determine if he or she is a good understudy candidate. The HR department is working with each department to implement the programme in all areas of the resort. Weekly departmental meetings are an important way for departments to keep abreast of how the programme is progressing.

So far the programme has worked well and, from the resort's perspective, is responsible for preparing participants for new career opportunities within the chain of resorts.

Staff reactions

Employees at Beaches welcomed the new programme. It has enabled employees to learn new skills, develop the confidence to express their ideas, have more career development opportunities and build a stronger team spirit.

Monitoring

The programme is monitored through the understudy's department head and three appointed representatives in-house. Quarterly meetings with these representatives and candidates have helped managers to develop a better link with staff and to better understand staff career goals. Guest customer service comments have indicated that the resort is exceeding service expectations and is providing a higher-than-normal satisfaction rate.

Future HR issues

Beaches identifies maintaining a good relationship with its staff as its most important HR issue for the future. To address this, the corporation's HR department continually encourages employees to develop their skill levels and regularly evaluates its existing HR programmes to make sure that these programmes motivate employees to do this.

Key lessons for smaller operations

For small and medium-size operations wanting to implement a similar programme, the Beaches Turks & Caicos Resort & Spa has these suggestions:

- Use open discussions to find out about staff members' career development needs.
- Determine how employees would like to develop the necessary skills to achieve career goals.

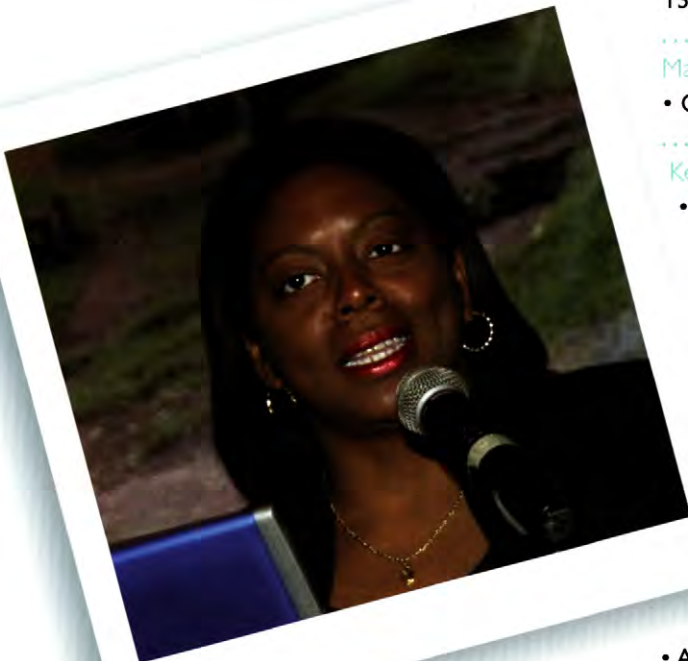
Discussion Questions

1. Beaches Turks & Caicos Resort & Spa has had some initial success with the Understudy Programme. What do you feel are the main pros and cons of this kind of employee support and skills-development programme?
2. Progress meetings are held quarterly with Understudy Programme candidates and the management/labour support team. What do you feel is the ideal frequency for informal and formal performance review meetings with employees going through a training support programme such as this one? Explain your reasons.
3. In addition to a willing and experienced mentor/coach, what other resources do you feel would be required for a programme like this to be successful?

Empowering Local Staff

Stafford Creek Fishing Lodge

While the owners of this small fishing lodge provide guests with an authentic Bahamian fishing experience, they also strive to give their staff daily encouragement to become tourism entrepreneurs. With the breaking down of old stereotypes, employees get a better sense of the career opportunities that they have with their employer and in the wider community.



COMPANY SNAPSHOT

Where

Bahamas

Mission statement

- To provide the highest level of service in the fly-fishing industry worldwide
- We aim to promote conservation through fly-fishing and to make Bahamian stakeholders number one in the industry

Type of business

- Fishing resort

Size

- 8 lodge rooms

Ownership

- Private
- Not unionized

Operating

13 years

Management structure

- Owner-operated

Key products and services

- Reputed to be one of the finest small bonefish fishing lodges in the world
- Offers specialized personal attention to all of its guests
- Small team is part of a big family that makes guests feel at home during their stay

Workforce

- 14 full-time

In-house incentive programmes

- Medical coverage
- Year-end bonus system
- Annual awards: Best Overall Employee
Most Improved Employee
Most Outstanding Staff Member

Awards received

- Endorsed by Bahamas Sport Fishing and Conservation Association

www.staffordcreeklodge.com

www.flyfishthebahamas.com

The HR Challenge

Stafford Creek Fishing Lodge has encountered many obstacles while trying to market its small fishing operation and promote sustainable development in an industry that is often dominated by US conglomerates.

By giving locals a stake in the fishing lodge and encouraging them to take charge of their own career paths, the owners hope that their staff will be encouraged to start their own tourism businesses or provide the lodge with local, value-added services developed in partnership with other community members. The lodge's biggest HR challenge is empowering its employees.

Overview

Prescott Smith, owner and premier fishing guide, is not shy about speaking his mind. He is the unofficial spokesperson for the need to empower local operators. Prescott wants to see an increased role for Bahamians in the Bahamas tourism industry. He is passionate about sustainable development and supporting local tourism operators.

Prescott and his wife Samantha have been providing guiding services since 1993 on a quiet creek-side opening on the east side of Andros Island. In 1998, they built eight cottages and furnished each with one-of-a-kind Andros pine furnishings and all the modern conveniences, offering clients comfortable surroundings and specialized personal attention. Prescott, Samantha and their small team of staff are dedicated to providing a world-class fishing experience.

Prescott has a high profile in the community

– due to his attempts to affect change in the way the locals are treated and his position on sustainable development – and he will tell you that his company is under a microscope. He is often judged with more scrutiny than other operators to make sure that he is 'walking the talk'.

Implementing environmentally-sustainable policies and procedures has sometimes cost him more money. Not all small operators could bear the additional cost of purchasing the necessary environmentally-friendly products and equipment. His dedication has, however, not gone unnoticed. The lodge has been used as a beacon for the Bahamas, and even the country's Prime Minister mentioned it as an example in a recent speech.

Implementation Steps:

1. Created methods to improve employees' work ethic and to educate local people as to why it is important to conserve an area's natural resources, that is, to:
 - (1) provide good careers for local people and
 - (2) sustain a renewable resource that employs local people in the sport fishing industry.
2. Developed various initiatives, such as:
 - getting employees to interact positively with visitors to reduce stereotypes of the local population
 - educating employees in what is needed to run a small business by allowing them to experience the reality of cause and effect
 - getting staff input in the development of workplace policies

- and procedures to obtain buy-in
- providing employees with the financial assistance and encouragement needed to develop their own businesses, so that employees can then operate as independent fly-fishing guides or continue on as staff members and provide ancillary services to the lodge, thus benefiting guest service.

3. Developed performance evaluations to monitor employee performance and encourage the development of a good work ethic.

4. Provided professional development courses to train employees in trade specialty courses, good customer relations and small business operating skills.

What Was Done

Stafford Creek Fishing Lodge depends on repeat business for its success. To meet repeat clients' needs and desires, a database is used to record their preferences, including the type of fishing they prefer and the foods and beverages that they like. This information allows the staff to tailor a return guest's experience to meet his/her every wish.

Prescott's HR strategies are focused on ensuring that his guests are provided with a quality fishing trip that is an authentic Bahamian experience. He focuses great energy on empowering the local people that he employs to make this happen. This is difficult, as many of them are neither used to being given these added responsibilities nor want to be given them. They often see tourism as just a job.

To change old habits, and to improve the guest-host relationship, Prescott requires that his staff have dinner with their clients. This helps employees to understand that they need to:

- keep up with current affairs and investments, so that they can talk intelligently to other people
- learn that they should not be nice to guests only to receive a good tip, but that they need to have a genuine interest in them, as employees are involved in guests' fishing holidays

Stereotypically, many of the locals are intimidated by Caucasians and revert to a role of being subservient. Sitting down with guests puts residents on an equal footing and helps broaden their views on what is required to run a tourism business. Prescott and Samantha have seen some progress. For example, the lodge's former chef started his own restaurant in Nassau.

Another strategy, although it has been slow to implement, is teaching and encouraging staff members to tie fishing flies. Employees can earn extra money in their spare time by tying these flies, an activity that is highly demanded by visitors.

Employees have also done well at producing and selling souvenirs, such as mugs with the SCL logo on them, to sell at the lodge. This has been a great exercise in learning about business income, expenses, profits and losses. All of these initiatives have been implemented gradually since the lodge opened. The ideas are a combination of input from guests, family and friends and from Prescott's and Samantha's experiences.

Selection and retention

The lodge has little staff turnover. However, Prescott will tell you that there is a shortage of qualified fishing guides in the area. Although there is an abundant supply of local workers for a variety of positions, often the work ethic of the local inhabitants is not what the lodge is seeking. According to Prescott, *"Finding the people is easy, but they do not want to do the job that is required."*

To keep fishing guides, in particular, Prescott will tell you that money is not enough. To be successful, a guide needs to have excellent local knowledge on topics such as weather, tides, fish species and regional ecology. A number of individuals hired have not been motivated to become better informed, even when they can make US\$300-\$400 a day as guides.

When recruiting employees for their lodge, Prescott and Samantha first look for a good work ethic in a candidate. They test individuals before they hire them to make sure that the candidate has a passion for what he/she does. For a guide, for example, Prescott wants an individual who loves the outdoors and has a keen interest in fishing. The guide needs to be committed to making sure the anglers are having a good time.

Once an individual is hired, Prescott and Samantha make the employee a stakeholder in the business. For example, Prescott has helped his guides to purchase their own boats and vehicles (costing anywhere from US\$50,000 to US\$60,000) so that they can operate as independent business people. There is ample business at the lodge for Prescott's guides to operate independently. Prescott wants his guides to build up their own businesses because it promotes

conservation among the locals and it helps them become stakeholders in the industry.

Guides quickly learn the importance of providing good service. They need not fear penalties for bad performance from Stafford Creek itself, because the cost of poor service may be losing a client while they must still make payments on their equipment.

Learning opportunities provided

Prescott and Samantha developed an employee handbook and encouraged staff to provide their input to increase their buy-in to the lodge's policies and procedures. According to Prescott, *"Having [staff] involved has made the policies good for them and good for the company."*

All employees take the BahamaHost programme, delivered through the local labour board, to improve their front-line communication and customer service skills.

Prescott is also very supportive of the Fly-Fishing Guide Certification. He not only ensures that all guides go through the process, but has also been involved in the development of certification and has taught some of the courses. The certification process involves taking courses in HR, public relations and business ethics.

Staying ahead of competitors

Prescott and Samantha pay attention to the little details of their business. Anglers tend to come back to the places where they have had good experiences, and they do not hesitate to tell Prescott what they like and do not like. Examples of personalized service include flying the Canadian flag for Canadian guests and getting a local fisherman to deliver fresh crab

for the evening's dinner when it is known that a guest likes crab.

Results:

Encountering local resistance in the community and from his staff does not deter Prescott. He challenges the stereotypes. What Prescott has found is that by encouraging more employee input, he is helping staff to understand the benefits of the local tourism industry and how important it is to be involved in it.

Staff reactions

Overall, employees have come to appreciate the work environment that Prescott and Samantha have developed at Stafford Creek, although some employees struggle with the freedom they are given to interact with guests. Generally, most of them have not had this opportunity in other jobs. With continued encouragement and confidence-building, however, employees are doing well and interacting effectively with these high-end guests.

Efforts to make employees independent entrepreneurs – whether as fishing guides, or selling souvenirs or tying fishing flies – has helped all staff members understand what it is like to run a small business. According to Prescott, staff members, especially the guides, realize, *“There is nothing to hide under. Their success is determined by their own actions.”*

Monitoring

To monitor lodge employees, regular performance appraisals are conducted. The reviews are not always good. Prescott expects constant improvements because this is what his clients expect.

Guides do not need to be monitored because they have a stake in the business. If a guide does not perform well, he/she will not get reprimanded as the guest will simply ask for another guide. It is a cause-and-effect relationship, says Prescott.

All guest comments, however, are taken seriously and acted on. Since so many customers are repeat business, the guests are like family and they do not hesitate to report any deficiencies immediately.

Future HR issues

Prescott's biggest HR issue is the attitude some clients have toward the locals, and the locals' intimidation by Caucasian visitors. It demoralizes staff when clients view the Bahamas as a third world country and appreciate its local inhabitants only in serving roles. To address this, Prescott has empowered his staff to own and operate their own businesses and encouraged joint ventures within the company. This has made a big difference in boosting employee self-confidence. Employees are more self-assured and less intimidated. According to Prescott, *“They have to understand what they can do to make it happen and that it is not all revenue.”*

Key lessons for smaller operations

For other operations wanting to implement a similar programme, Prescott has these suggestions:

- To get the customer back as a repeat guest, everyone must work together to deliver the level of service expected.
- Set a good example for your staff by doing everything that you expect of them.

Discussion Questions

1. The Stafford Creek Lodge has raised the sensitive issue that many tourism operations face – that of employee’s perceptions relating to service versus servitude, and dealing with the sometimes difficult attitudes and outdated values of visitors. What are some additional ways that management and supervisors can deal with this in a productive way and help staff realize that excellent service is essential, but depends upon a mutually-respectful guest-host relationship?

2. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of the kind of working relationship that Stafford Creek Lodge has developed with its fly-fishing guides?

3. This operator has noted that (except for the fishing-related programmes) it has been difficult to find additional training for its contract employees. What are some options that operators in smaller or remote communities could consider in this situation?



Performance Planning and Employee Evaluation

Businesses committed to developing employees to their full potential regularly measure employee satisfaction, skills, abilities and motivation as well as the work climate. They do this to ensure that positive attributes, such as staff empowerment, job satisfaction and knowledge of business objectives, continue to be part of the corporate culture.

Random Drug-Testing Policy – Safety First!

Atlantis Submarines (B'dos) Inc.

Anticipating the potential problems that can arise with substance abuse among employees, Atlantis took the progressive step of setting up a random drug-testing policy. This underwater tourism operation has eliminated the chances of operator error due to drug abuse and improved guest and staff safety – its number one concern.

COMPANY SNAPSHOT

Where
Barbados

.....
Mission statement

- To be a leader in providing leisure-seekers in Barbados with customer-centred entertainment experiences or adventures that are safe, high quality, fun, unique, educational and perceived as value for money

.....
Type of business

- Underwater adventure tourism operator
- Private sector

.....
Visitation

- 50,000 persons carried per year

.....
Ownership

- Private
- Not unionized

.....
Operating

16 years

.....
Management structure

- Independent

.....
Key products and services

- Atlantis Submarine
- Rhino Rider water safari tours

.....
Workforce

- Peak – 22 full-time, 15 part-time
- Seasonal – 20 full-time, 10 part-time

.....
In-house incentive programmes

- Awards for 5, 10 and 15 years of service
- Pay for performance (annual appraisal)
- Pay scales increase with each higher set of skills achieved
- Profit sharing (reservations staff)

.....
Awards received

- Complimentary remarks from the Coordinator of the National Council for Drug Abuse

.....
www.goatlantis.com



The HR Challenge

A key challenge facing Atlantis Submarines was maintaining its impeccable safety record as it moved to more part-time employees. An HR policy was required to teach existing staff to be responsible and wary of the effects of drugs, as well as to ensure that new part-time employees did not have drug abuse issues.

Overview

An adventure tourism operator has many liabilities, including dealing with the unpredictability of Mother Nature and the range of risks associated with guided outdoor expeditions. Policies and training procedures need to protect the safety of guests and staff, while at the same time minimizing an operator's legal liability through proper risk management.

Atlantis Submarines has a reputation for providing excellent customer service as well as having friendly, professional and knowledgeable staff. This tourism operator works hard to maintain its reputation and is proud to be insured by Lloyds of London.

It was the increasing use of illegal drugs in society, and the concern that new employees might have drug abuse problems, that prompted Atlantis Adventures to establish a random drug-testing policy five years ago.

Implementation Steps:

1. A drug-testing policy was developed in-house by adapting a similar system from an organization in the United States.

2. A local, recognized medical laboratory was contracted to randomly select and administer drug tests in all departments.

3. During a work day, the management team held group discussions with all staff on-site, providing explanations as to how the testing would work.

4. Once a month, a laboratory technician visits the office to test those randomly selected from the various departments. Tests are conducted on-site from the samples collected and are witnessed by the staff member concerned.

What Was Done

Like many tourism operators in the area, Atlantis Submarines does not have an abundant supply of qualified workers to select from. Management finds it particularly difficult to find staff qualified in the area of operations who also know how to swim.

Selection and retention

Most candidates learn of job openings through student internships available through Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic or through advertisements in the local newspapers. Potential candidates become aware of Atlantis Submarines' random drug-testing policy as its company policy is posted within advertised job descriptions. During detailed interviews, candidates are selected as much for their attitudes as for their qualifications or skills.

Other than its reliance on seasonal staff (often university students with varying availabilities), Atlantis Submarines finds it

does not have problems retaining staff once they are hired.

Motivating training environment

Employees of Atlantis Submarines receive on-the-job training in an enjoyable, open work environment, i.e., an informal working environment in which staff members are encouraged to offer constructive feedback without fear of retribution. In-house manuals and texts cover training content and, where relevant to the job, employees take courses at local institutions. These courses are paid for by the company.

The company believes its low turnover is because it provides:

- learning opportunities to all levels of employees, from front-line to senior management
- non-salary monetary benefits, such as pay-for-performance incentives
- higher pay scales for all employees if they study new manuals about their work and then successfully complete skill tests

Additional learning and motivating opportunities

Atlantis Submarines further encourages staff productivity and is able to improve job satisfaction through staff development programmes and activities such as:

- reimbursing staff for gym fees, thus encouraging health and fitness
- recognizing one employee monthly as the outstanding employee of the month
- giving awards for 5, 10 and 15 years of service
- establishing profit-sharing for reservations staff if retail sales targets are met

Staying ahead of competitors

By focusing on its service excellence and overall reliability as an adventure tourism operator, Atlantis Submarines feels it is competitive. It also believes, however, that to further its competitive advantage it should formalize informal practices that are working well. The company has begun updating the employee handbook and policies manual by including and detailing the procedures and policies that are showing results.

Random drug testing procedure

One of the key activities focused on staff performance is the random drug-testing procedure. Each month, Atlantis Submarines provides a staff schedule to the Barbados laboratory and a laboratory technician randomly selects staff from each department who will be tested for the month. The technician then visits the Atlantis Submarines' office and indicates who is to be tested. Approximately ten per cent of all employees are tested at a cost of US\$180.

The policy was initially in place only for staff members who were operating vessels, i.e., submarines and boats. The management team, however, agreed to be included as a show of leadership to all staff.

Onsite testing steps

1. Random drug testing is done with a male or female staff member accompanying the chosen employee to ensure that a fresh urine sample is taken.
2. The option to take a second sample for private testing is offered to the employee (he or she can take the second sample to a lab of his/her choice for consecutive testing). The employee signs to confirm whether he/she has requested a second

sample or not.

3. The employee gives the sample to the technician in the receptacle provided, and witnesses the testing.
4. The employee returns to work if the test is negative.

Positive testing policy

If a test is positive, the employee is asked to report to a supervisor.

1. The positive sample is taken to the lab for confirmation.
2. Results are returned to Atlantis Submarines for final review and a meeting with the employee is scheduled.
3. If the sample is positive, the employee is terminated and Atlantis Submarines provides a brief counselling session where it is suggested that the individual seek counselling from a professional agency.

Results:

The random drug-testing policy has worked well, particularly with new employees. The policy is credited for providing the company with:

- drug-free employees
- the continuation of an excellent safety record
- a more sensitive workplace

As one of the few companies that has an active drug-testing policy, Atlantis Submarines demonstrates that it remains focused on safety first, with corresponding benefits to its human resources.

Staff reactions

Coordinated through the operations manager, the new policy met with no significant employee resistance. There were a number of questions on the procedures, but otherwise, all staff recognized that a random drug-

testing policy assured a safe environment for those taking part in Atlantis Submarines' boating adventures.

The monthly testing only takes approximately 15-20 minutes from the work day and is credited with reinforcing the importance of the policy with only minimal disruption.

Challenges

Due to limitations of the contracted agency, it took six months before the random drug testing could be done monthly.

Modifications to the policy also occurred and were a result of management needing to speak with staff who had failed the test. As a result, management can now provide all staff with better guidance, advice and support in daily operations.

Future HR issues

Atlantis Submarines needs to maintain its high service standards as the company moves to employing more part-time staff. To address this challenge, plans are underway to strengthen the orientation process and the internal audit process.

Key lessons for smaller operations

For small- and medium-size operations wanting to implement a similar programme, Atlantis Submarines offers these comments from its experiences:

- Involve your employees throughout the development process.
- Openly discuss the mutual benefits of the programme.

Discussion Questions

1. How important is it for a company planning this kind of employee screening to use a reputable outside agency? Why?
2. What do you feel the appropriate supportive role of an employer should be when dealing with non-work personal issues (e.g., substance abuse, family stress) that may interfere with work performance? Why?
3. Atlantis expanded this random testing procedure to include management level staff as well. What do you feel the benefits of this decision might be?

A Final Note

Tourism is a labour-intensive, quality-driven service industry. Good employees are crucial to achieving objectives, delivering results and being successful. This handbook has looked at how to find, train, monitor and keep good employees, providing practical examples from industry leaders in the Caribbean region.

Finding employees who are keen, qualified and ready to work can be costly without better recruitment and screening strategies. Examples given here suggest the benefits of involving staff members in the interview process. Additionally, one company found that observing the candidate in a busy working environment for a day seems to reap real rewards. After new employees are hired, an in-depth orientation has been shown to be a very useful and effective way not only to welcome them, but also to help them become productive faster and stay with the company longer.

Successful companies have recognized that their employees are their greatest asset and that HR development is an investment for the future. Many of those featured here reimburse employees for courses that they take and/or enrol them in local training programmes. The handbook also provides examples of a number of in-house and customized training programmes that have helped friendly, quality service become second nature to staff members. Key to many of these programmes has been staff involvement in their planning and an open work environment, where employees are

able to express their opinions without fear of retribution.

Good managers and supervisors try to create workplaces in which people want to work and where contributions toward achieving company goals and objectives are recognized. One way of recognizing achievements is through a policy of in-house incentives and awards, as initiated by many of the companies included in the handbook. They have found this to be an effective, low-cost way of encouraging higher levels of performance.

The bottom line is for all employees to be well trained, competent, motivated and satisfied. The good practices showcased here have provided examples that can be adopted and adapted to improve HR strategies and procedures in the region – and help make the Caribbean tourism sector more productive and able to compete with the best.



This handbook is one of the outputs from a programme of technical assistance provided by the Special Advisory Services Division (SASD) of the Commonwealth Secretariat to the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO), to assist the Caribbean region to improve the quality of its tourism product. The first phase of the project focussed on strengthening the region's tourism training programmes with the objective of improving the quality of service delivery at both the technical and professional levels. The second phase of the CFTC's support sees the launch of a unique user handbook on good practices in training and human resources planning from customer-driven industry leaders in the Caribbean region.

The handbook provides helpful tips and resources on how to find, train, manage and retain good employees. It is the first of an annual series of good practices handbooks, which the CTO will be showcasing to highlight positive tourism management and development practices in the region. The Handbook will profile valuable approaches that can be adopted or adapted in other Caribbean tourism businesses and organisations, many of which will also be relevant in other parts of the Commonwealth.