

HUMAN RESOURCES TRAINING IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IN CRISIS CONDITIONS

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ABSTRACT

Human resources are already becoming important in hospitality industry. It is very important for all employees to understand the role they play in the hospitality. A great number of researchers mentioned the positive effects that training offers and gave solutions in order training to become a more productive instrument of improving the service. There are three main components that an individual requires in order to do a job effectively: knowledge, skills and attitudes. Each of these can be developed or improved upon by effective training.

The paper gives an outline of tourism training with description of current state of businesses working to develop tourism in the region of Korca, as they practice for their staff training and see opportunities for improvement of this situation.

Questionnaires have been prepared with hotel and restaurant workers in the region of Korca, to see more closely how they practice training . It is understood that improving and increasing the quality of human resources helps to increase competitiveness and employment opportunities in the tourism industry

Key words: training, human resources, quality levels, tourism sector, knowledge.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a people-based service industry. More than in many other sectors, its competitiveness and quality depend on the over eight million people working in tourism throughout the European Union. Hence, the importance of good skills, learning and training for the future success of the sector and of every single tourism enterprise.

Tourism is a very diversified and complex industry, encompassing a wide range of economic activities and job profiles in every region and involving a substantial investment in a good workforce. Tourism is also one of the sectors of the European economy with the best outlook. One of the main components of the tourism industry are human resources, which must be formed as professionally, to provide a quality service and to advance the progress and development of the region and country in general.

Training needs in this sector are increasing, especially in the area of information and communication technology. High staff turnover is a problem and is directly related to both seasonal working conditions and the low status associated with the tourism sector in general. Although there is a demand for qualified employees, employers often find it difficult to recruit new staff because of a lack of qualified personnel. Many employers do not consider it a priority to invest in qualified seasonal staff.

Existing skills must be upgraded and skills must be developed to meet new demands in the tourism industry. Professional trainings are an essential tool to develop work skills and her performanve in this sector. It is understood that improving and increasing the quality of human resources in the tourism sector, helps to increase competitiveness and employment opportunities.

2. REVIEW OF TRAINING AND ITS COMPONENTS

The unique nature by which the tourism and hospitality product is both supplied and consumed means that any generalized assertion such as ‘training can improve the quality of the tourism and hospitality product’ must be considered with care. This is a result of the diverse sectoral makeup of tourism and hospitality, being as it is, highly fragmented and poorly organized in a representational sense.

Indeed, “in services the employee’s role and behavior take on even greater importance than in manufactured products” (Dotchin and Oakland, 1994: p. 29). At the heart of quality service is the difficulty in ensuring consistency due to the variability of the human element. Kamdampully (1997: p. 6) spells out the directions of this variability and the centre stage part played by employees in quality service:

- the quality of service performance varies from one service organization to another;
- the quality of service performance varies from one service performer to another; and
- the quality of service performance varies for the same performer from one occasion to another.

So, we know that training, in particular, and skills, in general, are a problematic issue for the tourism and hospitality industry. We are now also aware that the structural features of the industry lead to and exacerbate the industry’s poor record of personnel management. However, the point here is that *training* cannot be considered the main issue in relation to *quality* if poor training is, in fact, a consequence of sectoral structural problems and generally poor employment conditions. “Skills can undoubtedly play a part in promoting the success of the sector, but will only have a major, strategic impact as part of a wider strategy for change and upgrading in the industry” (Keep and Mayhew, 1999: p.18).

So, while weak employment conditions continue to exist, product quality will continue to suffer. Baum and Nickson (1998: p.75) state how there is a contradiction in that “there is an expectation that quality service is delivered by those receiving the poorest remuneration, working in the least attractive conditions and in a casual or temporary capacity.”

Of course, not all training needs emerge only from an annual analysis of training needs. They also derive from sudden changes in the terms of trade or business. For example, agents of the many restaurants do not pay importance of proper and sufficient benefits that can bring the sale of liquor. In this case, if a company decides that liquor sales should be considered and grow, useful and effective training of waiters in product knowledge, service and sales methods may play an important role in increasing sales and profits. Training needs can be identified in three broad directions:

1. Organization needs - increase and improve customer relationships - a need may influence and affect all employees.
2. Group needs -has to do with the need in the group, for example: a specific group of employees in reception may need training on management techniques and methods of income.
3. Individual needs - for example, when proposed to be computerized and processed in the

computer payroll. From this proposition can be concluded that the officer who deals with the pay-roll should be trained to take appropriate skills and suitability for the job.

The responsibility for ensuring that working people are equipped to cope with changes is threefold.

First, the state carries part of the responsibility, particularly in providing education and training for leavers and for those who need retraining due to the decline of their own industries, nationally or regionally. From the hospitality industry's point of view the government was instrumental in a number of important initiatives aimed at improving the industry's standards.

Apart from the traditional training work of industry training providers, the government also set up a national scheme for the development of open access and distance learning programmes, designed for anyone wishing to acquire technical expertise without having to have prior qualifications and without having to attend conventional college courses. A number of courses have now been developed for the industry. Secondly, employers, too, have their share of responsibilities and they discharge these by providing training intended to suit their individual needs. Some employers provide excellent training, whereas others are quite content to recruit trained individuals from the labour market without putting any trained people into the market themselves.

The third part of the responsibility rests with individuals. No amount of training will be effective unless an individual wishes to make the most of what is available. The state and employers may provide facilities, but it remains for individuals to make the most effective use of these facilities for the benefit of themselves, their employers and the community.

A fourth participant in training and development are the professional bodies.

Many of the industry's traditional employers, particularly the smaller, privately owned businesses, do not implement proper training for a number of reasons:

1. Many employers are concerned constantly with immediate operational problems and do not plan ahead.
2. Many proprietors and managers have had no formal training themselves and therefore are unaware of the standards that can be achieved and of the benefits of training.
3. Many are undercapitalized and cannot afford the investment.
4. Many believed that it is the responsibility of others, such as colleges, to provide them with trained staff.

But it is not suggested that training alone can solve all problems. If a hotel or restaurant is badly planned or wrongly situated, no amount of training can rectify this. However, training can often provide the solution or part of the solution.

There are three main components that an individual require in order to do a job effectively: knowledge, skill and attitudes. Each of these can be developed or improved upon by effective training, but each components, needs a different training approach. The two main approaches are "on the job" and "off the job" training.

3. THE STRATEGY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TRAINING IN TOURISM

There are some human resource strategies that should be adopted from the tourism and hospitality sector in an effort to strengthen employee performance levels. Tourism and hospitality businesses should attract, retain, and motivate its employees, particularly its front line employees in order to achieve service quality impotents. Zeithaml and Bitner (2000) provide the 'human resources strategy wheel' of four key sections that serving a principal conceptual framework:

- hire the right people;
- develop people to deliver service quality;
- provide needed support systems; and
- retain the best people.

Since employee turnover is very costly to hospitality companies (Wood, 1997), competing for the best people, hiring for service competencies, and being a preferred employer are crucial aspects of operating a tourism and hospitality business with a number of employees. Due to the unique and seasonal nature of the sector competing for the best people is of great importance. In order to attract new employees whose abilities match those of hospitality and tourism ones, sector's stakeholders has to develop a variety of recruiting strategies.

In addition to the above, an excellent way to attract the best people to a company is to be known as the preferred employer in a particular industry or region (Wood, 1995). For many sub-sectors in tourism and hospitality, and in most developed countries, the negative employment image of the sector is a major issue and barrier to the recruitment and retention of quality and well educated employees (Choy, 1995; Wood, 1995). Wood (1995) argues that both industry employees and wider society view hotel and catering labour as relatively low status, principally due to the personal service nature of the work involved. Consequently, this negative picture should be transformed if hospitality and tourism stakeholders are in favor of improving the quality of service.

Furthermore, with the purpose of developing and maintaining personnel that are customer oriented and focused on delivering quality, an organization be supposed to build up its employees to deliver service quality. Consequently, once it has hired the right employees, the organization must train individuals for service quality excellence. In order for enterprises be responsive to customer needs, frontline employees need to be empowered to satisfy customer needs and take responsibility for their own actions (Pastor, 1996; Bowen and Lawler, 1992). As Erstad (2000) suggested, effective empowerment strategies regularly result in happy, motivated employees ready to training sessions. Accordingly, customer needs are addressed faster and service issues are addressed and resolved further efficiently. As far as the above issue is concerned, employees are taught to think systematically, to be able to identify problems and actively design solutions that are in the best interest of the individual and organization. Training should teach critical thinking skills and make the employees partners in the strategic planning process. In actual fact, organizations that treat employee in such a way facilitate them bring a superior quality of service to the clients.

Along with Zeithaml and Bitner (2000) hospitality and tourism employees in order to be efficient and effective in their jobs, require internal support systems that are aligned with their need to be guest focused. The importance of internal service quality measurement and the provision of supportive technology and equipment are imperative. By developing of service oriented internal processes the organization by setting service quality levels and standards, it could be easier and more effective to apply, control and evaluate training programs. Recognition of performance achievement allows employees to recognize co-workers and verbally reward them after successfully completing a project or a task. Moreover, the more the employees feel valued and their needs are taken care of, the most they are likely to stay with an organization and perform accordingly.

Additionally, Redman and Matthews (1998, cited in Nickson *et al*, 2002: p.56-58) suggest the following key practices that are "likely to support organizational strategies aimed at securing high quality service:

- *Recruitment and selection*: Redman and Matthews note the need to ensure the recruitment and selection of staff with the correct attitudinal and behavioural characteristics which will support a quality approach.
- *Retention*: and the need to avoid the development of a 'turnover culture', which may of course, be particularly prevalent in the hospitality industry.
- *Teamwork*: Redman and Matthews believe that the use of semi-autonomous, cross process and multifunctional teams is likely to positively affect service quality.
- *Training and development*: for example, the need to equip operative level staff with team working and interpersonal skills to develop their 'service orientation' and managers with a new leadership style which encourages a move to a more facilitative and coaching style of managing.
- *Appraisal*: Redman and Matthews support the move away from traditional top down approaches to appraisal and support things such as customer evaluation, peer review, team-based performance, and the appraisal of managers by subordinates.
- *Rewarding quality*: it is suggested that there is a need for a much more creative system of rewards and in particular the need to payment systems that reward employees for attaining quality goals.
- *Job security*: the use of organizational restructuring, delivering and re-engineering are suggested as often being fatal for quality initiatives. Conversely promises of job security are suggested as being an essential component of any overall quality approach.
- *Employee involvement and employee relations*: generally by seeking greater involvement from employees the emphasis is on offering autonomy, creativity, cooperation and self-control in work processes".

The aim of the training program is to enhance the quality, skills and competence of tourism training.

4. ANALYSIS OF TRAINING SITUATION IN KORCA REGION

To analyze the situation of human resource training in the area of study, questionnaires were designed. They were completed in the town of Pogradec and Korca. Questionnaires addressed the main hotels and restaurants. Let's see the following results

A. General information

1. Asked for the number of full-time employees and part-time, who are employed in the hotels of the city of Korca, was found that:

- The greatest number of full-time employees has Grand Hotel with 16 employees.
- Smaller number of full-time employees has Hotel Smerald and Hotel Dardha with 4 employees.
- The greatest number of part-time employees, has Hotel Dardha with 7 employees.
- Three hotels: Grand Hotel, Hotel "Konti" and the Smerald Hotel, do not take part-time employees

2. When asked about the number of full time and part-time employees, in the city of Korca restaurants have these results:

- The greatest number of full-time workers is found in Bar Restaurant "Valbona" and in the Bar Restaurant "Prince Park" with 10 employees each.
- Smaller number of full-time employees has Taverna "Qilari", which takes no part time employees.
- The greatest number of part-time workers has Hotel Dardha with 7 employees.
- Smaller number of part-time workers has Bar Restaurant "Prince Park", with no such workers.

3. When asked about the average of visitors per month in peak season and normal season in the city of Korca hotels, found that:

- The greatest average tourist month in peak season has Grand Hotel Palace, with an average of 800 visitors per month
- The lowest average monthly tourists in peak season has hotel "Smerald" with an average of 40 visitors per month.

Let's see what is the situation for the city of Pogradec

1. Asked for the number of full-time and part-time employees, who are employed in the hotels of the city of Pogradec, was found that:

- The largest number of full-time employees has Enkelana Hotel, with 25.
- Smaller number of full-time employees has Hotel "Agjensia" with one employee.
- The highest number of part-time employees have three hotels: Hotel «Bimbli», Hotel "Shenarena" and hotel "Agjensia." These hotels do not take part-time employees.

2. When asked about the number of full-time and part-time employees, in Pogradec restaurants, found that:

- The largest number of full-time employees is found at Restaurant «Dallga» with 4 employees.
- The largest number of part-time employees has Bar Restaurant "Genton» with 6 employees.

3. When asked about the average stay of tourists per the month in Pogradec hotels, found that:

- Hotels with the highest average stay of tourists are. Hotel "Millenium", Hotel "Rritja e koranit", Hotel "Bimbli" and Hotel "Agjensia", with an average of 4 nights stay.

Smaller-average stay of tourists has Enkelana Hotel, with 1 night stay.

Let's see what is the situation for the Korca city

1. When asked about the average stay of tourists in hotels of the city, have the following conclusions:

- Grand Hotel Palace, Hotel "Smerald" and hotel "Konti" have the greatest average number of stay (nights), with 3 nights .
- Hotel "Kocibelli," Hotel "Regency" and Hotel Dardha have the least average number, with 1.5 nights .

2. Asked about the average number of clients per month in the restaurants of the city, showed that:

- Bar Restaurant "Valbona" has the greatest number of clients in the peak tourist season,(2000 clients).
- Taverna "Qilari" has the least number of clients per month in peak season with 300 clients.
- Bar restaurant "Valbona" has the greatest average of clients per month in normal season with 1500 clients.

For the city of Pogradec:

1. When asked about the average monthly number of tourists in hotels of the city, was found that:

- The greatest average number of tourists in peak season has hotel "Millennium" on average 2500 tourists per month
- The least tourists number in peak season has Hotel "Sirena", on average 40 tourists per month
- The greatest average number of tourists to the normal season, has Millennium Hotel, with 500 tourists on average per month.
- The least average number of tourists in the normal season, has hotel "Sirena", on average 15 tourists a month.

2. When asked about the average number of clients per month in the restaurants of the city, was found that:

- Bar Restaurant "Genton", has the greatest number of clients in peak season, on average 700 tourists per month. But Bar Restaurant "Dallga" has averaged 100 tourists per month in peak season.
- The greatest average number of clients in normal season, has Bar Restaurant "Genton" on average 200 clients per month, while the bar restaurant "Dallga" has 50 clients per month in a normal season.

B. Training needs

The second part of questionnaires gives information for training needs.

1. Asked about how training is perceived and its values, respondents answered that it has a positive impact by influencing in :

-qualification of personnel

- enhancing the quality of service and thus brings the number of clients increased

2. Asked about the overall goal of training, the respondents showed that:

- 70% of respondents think that the purpose of training is to increase productivity at work.
- 55% of respondents think that the purpose of training is to increase efficiency
- 50% of respondents think that the purpose of training is to teach skills.
- 20% of respondents think that the purpose of training is to provide accreditation
- 55% of respondents think that the purpose of training is the acquisition of knowledge.
- 10% of respondents think that the purpose of training is for other reasons, but not specified.

3. Asked for reasons that are carried out training in the tourism sector, found that:

- 30% of respondents think they can make training due to changes in technology
- 25% of respondents could make training due to changes in the system of work.
- 50% of respondents could make up the training to international standards.
- 40% of respondents could make training due to launching new products and services.
- 85% of respondents could do training for a greater professionalism.
- 65% of respondents can do training to improve productivity at work.
- 55% of respondents can do training to correct mistakes repeated.
- 50% of respondents can do training to be better than competitors.
- 5% of respondents could do training for other reasons such as: increasing the accountability to the employees.

The analysis of results and interviews with staff of hotels and restaurants was noted that training is seen as a necessity for a better development of their business, but training was minimal in most of them.

4. Asked about the most basic training, the necessities were found in: waiters, bartenders, cooks, receptionists, bars, restaurant services.

5. Asked about the types of problems encountered in organizing and participating in training, was found that:

- 80% of respondents see as problem the lack of financial resources
- 70% of them view as a problem the lack of trainers
- 5% of respondents see as problem the unqualified trainers.
- 10% of respondents see as problem the unexperienced trainers.
- 5% of respondents see as problem trainers out good communication skills
- 20% of respondents see as a problem not well- organized training
- 30% see as problem inappropriate way and tools in training
- 45% of respondents see as problem the irregular attendance of training.
- 5% of respondents see as problem the lack of connection between training and business purpose.

- 20% of respondents see as problem the lack of information on the effectiveness of training.
6. Asked about preferred methods of training resulted that more than:
- 80% prefer traditional classroom development, face to face
 - 20% prefer independent manual studies and exercise books
 - 36% prefer CDs and DVDs.
 - 44% prefer the Internet training.
 - 22% prefers videoconferencing.
 - 18% prefer distance learning by email, fax, phone, in the supervision of teachers.

CONCLUSION

There is clearly a need for better training to be provided throughout tourism and hospitality industry. Academia, business and governmental bodies have all recognized the range of benefits that can occur by training staff.

Human resources are the most important resources for the organizations, either productive or in the service sector. Their knowledge, skills, capabilities, motivation and commitment influence the quality of their output. In case of the tourist organizations these human resources attribute influence the quality of their services for clients. Special character of the services, as a type of the output, manifests in its nonmaterial form. Therefore the quality of services depends on those who realize the services. Since the expansion of the service sector expected in future, the importance and the role of employees for the organizations and their competitive priorities will raise significantly. But, since every organization should take care of its costs, this is also the obligation of the tourist organizations. Employees are the key factor which may bring the superior performances to organizations, on one side, but on the other side they cause different types of costs: costs of recruitment, selection, employment, assesments, rewarding, etc. So, the tourist organizations face the challenge to make the balance between the employees as their most valuable resource and the costs they cause. In the tourist organizations the complexity of this requirement is strengthening because of the seasonal work in most of them. The fact is that in some periods of the year the need for the employees increases, and in others periods of the year the need for them decreases. This situation produces the specific requirements for the human resource function in tourist organizations: to create the specific human resource architecture with right number and structure of the employees and to manage human resource costs appropriately. These requests create the need for the human resource function to choose different employment models for the different people and to realize different managing practices according to them. In fact, this function can make the choices between permanent or temporary employees, between full time employees and part time employees

In order to provide high quality service to customers it is imperative that all hospitality organizations utilize their human resources successfully. Because of the significance of the service encounter it is therefore argued that human resource management is a central key managerial task.

After studying the information collected we arrive at some conclusions:

- Training of staff in the tourism sector in Korce is seen by all businesses as highly significant, although not applied much.

As increased competition among tourism businesses, training is also required for the staff to have an appropriate position in the market.

3. Training courses are important and help to improve the present condition of tourism businesses.

4. There is a lack of information from the tourist business for institutions and organizations that develop and implement training programs in tourism

5. Three problems were identified for organizing or participating in training was: lack of financial resources, lack of trainers and follow no regular training.

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