



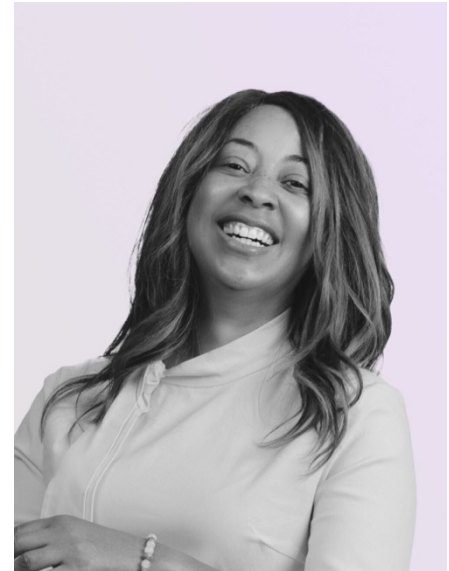
Talent Shortage or Growth Opportunity?

Hotel Talent Management Strategies Must Be Modernized

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Picture this: Gleaming hotel structures in first-tier destinations. In-room Pelotons. Monogrammed linens. Bath butler menus. Locally-sourced culinary delights provided by diverse suppliers. Maybe even an adorable hotel pet ambassador available for snuggles with bleisure travelers.



Group travel is up. Business travel remains consistent. Post-pandemic hotel operation plans are in place, including a hiring plan that offers generous team member benefits and attractive perks. But ...

You can't seem to find talent with the right fit, or your promising new hires aren't staying.

And your guests are complaining about your hotel being short-staffed. They feel like they're getting short service and now are threatening to take their business elsewhere.

Sound familiar?

How do you respond? Do you add to the reverberating industry chatter that there's a talent shortage, or do you see an opportunity to create your own business expansion by modernizing your talent management strategies?



ISHC Global Insights is a partnership of Hotel News Now and the International Society of Hospitality Consultants to bring in-depth analysis to the hotel industry.

As we are intentional about updating our physical hotel assets, we should update our approach to hiring and retaining great talent.

Projections show that over 23% of jobs that will be added to the U.S. economy between 2021 and 2031 will be in the hospitality and leisure sectors. Yet the demand-supply gap between available jobs and “desirable” talent has been an issue that's left many hotel teams believing there's a massive talent shortage.

'They Just Don't Want To Work'

Too often, leaders respond to hiring challenges by assuming “they just don't want to work.” Whether flippant or frustrated, this off-handed response to today's labor statistics shows little understanding of modern needs of the humans who power today's industry. Somewhere in that perceived talent gap lies an opportunity to refresh our talent acquisition and retention strategies. Here are four approaches that hoteliers should consider:

- Use science and tech to minimize biases during recruitment and hiring.
- Follow industry models to develop brag-worthy company culture.
- Audit internal practices and procedures that may actually exacerbate barriers to success.
- Leverage local talent for global competitiveness.

Remove Bias and Focus on Skills

Data shows that 50% of today's workforce are skilled through alternative routes (STARs) yet have been overlooked historically when searching for workers to fill higher-wage positions. Think about the numbers of motivated and talented individuals who are automatically sorted out of interview consideration for certain positions simply because the work experience and education sections of their resumes don't contain the “right” keywords. Then, think about how in real life, these same humans may actually possess the creative problem-solving and empathetic leadership skills that drive our industry but they never connect with our hiring teams for a first look.

Resume bias is real. Hotel leadership teams must consider a shift to skills-based hiring methods as a way to reduce selection biases. While consulting with Komal Kaul and her team of researchers at isotonik, we realized how logic-driven intelligence can power the hiring process.

Using predictive human capital analytics to assess learning styles and personal strengths of potential workers can move hotel teams to rely on data and not just gut-based decision-making when selecting candidates to operate our hotels. Access to such technology is no longer scarce. It's time to use it to connect with — and no longer overlook — talent.

People-First Culture Goes Deep and Wide

Admittedly, I didn't always consider or even care about a company's culture. My point of view as an early hotel careerist: I'm here to do my job, not like people. Blame this outlook on influence from my mentors of the baby boomer and silent generations. Today's workers are motivated differently. More collaborative, innovative, socially-inclusive work environments are in demand. Post-pandemic leaders must listen to such demands and design company culture that attracts and retains workers who are excited to add value to your operation.

In addition to looking and listening to the business landscape around us, we must dive deep to explore our own internal practices and procedures. What might be keeping people who want to build careers with your hotel from actually doing so? There's no single right answer here yet there are models to follow, including the impact hospitality approach found at Revival Baltimore. I recently met with Revival's general manager Donte Johnson to discuss the observed talent gap in Baltimore, Maryland. We resolved that a "people-first" culture has to go as deep as it goes wide.

Rethinking what people wear to work or how they wear their hair, as examples, may conflict with how hotels have operated for a few generations. Yet, these two actions initiated by the culture and impact team at Revival — and respectfully inspired by the 2019 C.R.O.W.N. Act — resulted from taking a second look at work uniform policies. Might a simple decision to welcome hotel workers to choose clothing that suits them or hairstyles that reflect their culture change hiring and retention statistics? Singularly, no. However, experience shows that workers who feel respected tend to be more intrinsically motivated, productive and loyal to your operation. Hoteliers should consider the impact that can result from rewriting outdated company policies and take that kind of deep dive every few years.

Local Talent, Global Competitiveness

Lastly, and most passionately, I encourage you to leverage local talent for global competitiveness. People who live where your hotel operates often have deeply personal reasons to be included in the success of businesses in their neighborhoods. Respect the resident genius! Invite their contributions. Invest in workforce training provided by your city government, nonprofits or community-based organizations. Not only will your hiring team gain an upfront, first look at available talent, your company can become an active participant in creating the best talent.

It's time to modernize our talent management strategies. We need more innovative research-based approaches to hiring and retaining our next generation of hospitality rock stars. Minimizing candidate bias, building a thoughtfully inclusive work culture, reexamining our standard operating procedures, and actively participating in workforce programming and career development that prepares the whole person for long-term success in hotels is just a start. Let's be intentional with our investment in the humans who power our industry. It's a need that's become too big to ignore.

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