



Leverage Digital Learning for Competitive Advantage in Hospitality Industry

Online Certifications Offer Important Conduit to Companies that Lack Training Infrastructure

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The hotel and hospitality industry is experiencing high demand following the issues the world has faced over the last couple of years. This is excellent news but does also present challenges.

Currently, staffing and resourcing are core challenges facing the industry worldwide. Part of this is likely due to the COVID pandemic, but this issue is nothing new for the sector. With many staff leaving the industry during the pandemic and demand now returning, the industry has various issues to address concerning learning and development.

The remaining employees within properties have to work hard to deliver service to guests, which reduces the time available for learning and development. A further issue is that many employees have also been promoted during this time, which presents the challenge of upskilling these individuals for their new roles with limited time available.

Now that the dust is settling, many companies are returning to deliver these development programs and invest in their teams. Many hotel and hospitality companies had to reduce these career development training programs over the past few years, focusing instead on operational training during these challenging times. Many companies are now resuming these learning and development initiatives, as they support existing staff members and make their businesses more attractive to prospective employees.





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The companies who lead the way on this and invest in their teams will reap the rewards of having a well-trained workforce which will be best placed to take advantage of the available opportunities.

The cost of labor is widely accepted as the most significant expense for hoteliers, and this expense is growing all the time. A pre-pandemic survey by CBRE discovered that on average hotels spend 31.3% of total revenue on labor costs, which equates to 42.4% of total operating expense. This demonstrates how much is being spent on the hotel workforce, and we are all aware of how essential employees are to the overall success of a hotel or hospitality business.

The same CBRE study also revealed that training spend is only 0.29% of the total amount spent on labor. The amount spent on learning and development is not the only factor here, as it is essential for these programs to meet the needs of the business at the given time. It is also important for these programs to specifically address the core learning aims required, rather than being generic.

Managers and leaders across the industry know the importance of training. Still, when busy and during tough times, it is easy to become stuck in a cycle that includes a lack of time, a reduced budget and a reluctance to spend time away from the business. Immediate operational concerns can assume greater importance than the future development of employees.

Major hotel chains and brands are usually able to dedicate regular resources to learning development due to the structures they have in place. It is much harder for smaller chains and independent properties to do this, as they don't generally have the same infrastructure. This is where digital learning and online certifications can play their part, as they offer a conduit for instant access to learning and development when required.

Digital learning is experiencing incredible growth, and the volume of content produced continues to increase at a rapid rate. Digital learning brings together various factors, including learning content, technology and instructional design. This is focused on delivering a streamlined and innovative learning experience which can be accessed anywhere anytime. Over the past ten years, digital learning has evolved enormously, and there are now many more businesses that have further adopted this delivery mechanism.

Over the past couple of years, we have witnessed a significant acceleration in the adoption of digital learning. A recent Forbes article stated that "the worldwide e-learning market is expected to be worth \$325 billion in 2025, compared to \$165 billion in 2015." This demonstrates that digital learning continues to be an exciting growth area.

This rapid growth of digital learning also presents particular challenges. It is now easier than ever to become a content creator. Over the coming years, it will become increasingly important for digital

learning content to be accredited and approved to ensure the validity of the content being taught. For the hospitality industry, it is therefore essential that these online learning courses are produced by approved sources who have the credibility to be trusted.

The bottom line here is that learning and development builds a more experienced workforce. In turn, this workforce can deliver enhanced levels of service, leading to greater guest satisfaction. This focus on training also leads to decreased staff turnover, which aids hotel operations. These enhancements will likely then lead to increased levels of business, which in turn can deliver higher levels of profitability.

All of this means that the costs incurred from learning and development have the potential to deliver a return on investment across multiple areas of the business, which is certainly something all hospitality businesses will appreciate following these challenging years.

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