



European Federation of Food, Agriculture
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Joint Recommendation by EFFAT and HOTREC

“Guidelines for training and development, especially in SMEs, in the hotel, restaurant and café sector”

As a result of

- the study on “New training and development models in the European hospitality sector”, conducted by the Hotelschool The Hague on the request of EFFAT and HOTREC and;
- the “interactive” seminar on the same topic, organised in Brussels on 11 December 2003;

EFFAT and HOTREC adopted the following guidelines for training and development in the hotel, restaurant and café sector, with particular emphasis on the needs of SMEs.

They recommend to their member organisations to review carefully the 12 “successful tips” listed in the guidelines. These tips should inspire future training activities in the sector.

Done in Brussels, 11 June 2004

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Attachment: Guidelines for training and development, especially in SMEs, in the hotel, restaurant and café sector



European Federation of Food,
Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions



**Guidelines for training and development,
especially in SMEs,
in the hotel, restaurant and café sector**

These guidelines were adopted on the basis of :

- The study on “New training and development models in the European hospitality sector”, conducted by the Hotelschool The Hague on the request of EFFAT and HOTREC;
- The conclusions from the “interactive” seminar on the same topic, organised in Brussels on 11 December 2003.

This work was developed with the financial support of the European Commission.

Brussels, January 2004

1. Introduction

These guidelines for entrepreneurs in the hospitality sector for training and developing their staff is derived from the report “Training and development under construction” (January 14th 2004). The report is a result of a study on new training and development models in the European hospitality sector, launched by HOTREC and EFFAT, the organisations representing the social partners in the hotel and restaurant sector at European level, and conducted by the Hotelschool The Hague.

Through desk research and questionnaires – sent out to industry, trade unions and government organisations, large size companies and small and medium sized companies in the EU Member States - a number of best practices of training and development initiatives were selected for in-depth study. A short description of these best practices is given in Annex I. The results of this study were presented and discussed in a seminar where representatives of the above mentioned parties were present.

In these guidelines you will find the most important conclusions with regard to organising and implementing training and development, especially in small and medium sized enterprises.

2. Why train employees in the hospitality sector?

The hospitality sector, more in particular its environment, is on the move. The interaction between customer and employee is growing more complex, driven by technology, individualisation and the information age. The customers, armed with more information, will expect frontline and other hotel staff to be at least as knowledgeable about the firm’s offering as they are themselves. The new workers – sometimes higher skilled than the old ones, and surely more diverse (in terms of age, gender, ethnical background) – , will expect and demand more modern leadership.

In this study the focus was on one of the most important challenges for the hospitality sector with respect to the labour market and to enterprises:

The hospitality industry has to put more emphasis on knowledge and has to increase the level of competencies in order to meet the changing demands of society.

Investment in learning and training has a number of benefits:

- Improving individual, team and corporate performance in terms of output, quality, speed and overall productivity.
- Attracting high quality employees by offering them learning and development opportunities, increasing their levels of competence and enhancing their skills, thus enabling them to obtain more job satisfaction, to gain higher rewards and to progress within the organisation.
- Improving operational flexibility by extending the range of skills possessed by employees (multi-skilling).
- Increasing the commitment of employees by encouraging them to identify with the mission and objectives of the organisation.
- Helping to manage change by increasing understanding of the reasons for change, and providing people with the knowledge and skills they need to adjust to new situations.

- Helping to develop a positive culture in the organisation: for example, one that is orientated towards performance improvement.
- Providing higher levels of service to customers.
- Minimising learning costs (reduce the length of learning curves).

3. Differences between training in SMEs and in large businesses

Small and medium-sized enterprises constitute more than 80% of the companies in the European Union. The hospitality sector is largely made up of small and medium-sized enterprises. In small businesses, proprietors are able to develop a close relationship with their staff and suffer far less bureaucracy than larger businesses. On the other hand, the SME organisation often lacks the time, money and know-how to invest in human resources management. From a service and professional point of view, the challenges for large enterprises, on the one hand, and for small and medium-sized enterprises, on the other, are two sides of the same coin in the hospitality sector. Whereas large organisations are perceived as professional, their challenge will be to appear as small and personal rather than 'high tech'. On the other hand, while SMEs often come across as more 'high touch' and personal, their challenge is to become more professional.

4. How to organise training and development in SMEs

All involved parties in this study concluded that the lessons that can be drawn from the studied best practices are transferable to SMEs and identified possibilities for SMEs to invest in training and development. They also concluded that some barriers have to be overcome. By breaking down these barriers the transferability of ideas can be drastically improved.

Economic & organisational barriers and solutions:

1. The most important shortcoming of SMEs is that they lack scale and therefore infrastructure. This is especially a disadvantage for coordination, administration and organisation. Also measuring/evaluating effects and other follow-up after a training (or training programme) is more difficult to realise in smaller companies.
2. Another problem SMEs experience consists in time and operational constraints. SMEs have a small number of staff, one (general) manager or just a few, no HR-department or -manager. Hence, it is almost impossible for micro companies to set up a training course by themselves.
3. Important solutions for the mentioned shortcomings of SMEs lie in cooperation. SMEs may need to work together. Some kind of mentor system (see Annex I) could perhaps be implemented on a national level, on the basis of a central pool of experts. Suppliers could play a stronger role in providing training, as well as branch-organisations and social partners. Sometimes, short 15-minute type training could prove ideal. When organising different kinds of joint initiatives, one has to realise that the infrastructure (and financing) is different per country. Financial barriers to organise training in SMEs could be overcome by systems of mutualised funds for training, as established in Belgium, France, the Netherlands.

4. Finally, training and development initiatives in smaller companies need ongoing attention; experience has shown that initiatives on short-term subsidies eventually fail. Secondly, training taking place at company level needs the support of everyone involved.

The role of social partners has been underlined repeatedly. There are specific initiatives they can undertake to assist the hospitality sector in training and developing employees.

1. Social partners could provide training infrastructure, project support and subsidies, they could organise a system of external accreditation. Social partners should also think about ways how informal training can be recognised. Formalising earlier acquired competencies could be a first step. Furthermore, social partners could jointly monitor the changing environment and advise companies how to react upon this.
2. During desk research and selecting the best practices, the usage of e-learning was regularly encountered. E-learning has a vast potential and should be on the agenda of social partners. The Internet offers the opportunity to reduce the costs of providing a training to SMEs and can therefore help to overcome the 'economic barriers'.

5. Implementing training and development in SMEs

Based on the in-depth study of the best practices and the seminar, a number of successful tips and ideas for training and developing staff may be suggested.

1. Make it job related
The training and/or development initiative should cover subjects that are directly work-related. There has to be a real understanding of - for example - the way restaurant owners and kitchen chefs work, so a diverse teaching team with a broad range of previous experience is preferable. Also, a clearly identified need for training is necessary. In the end, employees, as well as the employer, and the guests, will benefit the most from training efforts when it adds to their knowledge or improves the skills they need to perform their job optimally (see also no. 6). To achieve this objective, it may also be helpful to use blended learning, i.e. a mix of on- and off-the-job training.
2. Apply the mentor model
In this study it was proven to be both efficient and effective to use employees as internal trainers or 'mentors' in training programmes. A mentor programme offers the employee-mentors a chance to develop themselves, and they will stay longer within the company. It provides useful learning opportunities to other staff on all kinds of job-related subjects in a controlled, well-planned and monitored way.
3. You need strong support from management and workers
Whatever training- and development initiative is undertaken, it can only be successful given the discipline and commitment of all groups involved. If some staff members or managers are not really committed to the programme, it will not last. If the basis in the organisation is not strong enough it will be difficult to continue the programme whenever a key person leaves the organisation.

4. Integrate training in (individual) career path (horizontal/vertical)

The concept of a career is important, because people often leave a hospitality organisation because there is little prospect of advancement. Development possibilities will attract employees. So, any single training course will be more effective if it is integrated in some kind of Human Resource Development programme. A training course in itself results in better or more knowledge/skills, but when it is part of an integrated and coherent development programme, the training course serves a higher goal: to prepare and develop an employee for a career within the company. As not all employees aim for a career as supervisor or manager, other career paths, such as mentor, staff representative or health & safety representative, should be developed. In this way, the opportunities for further growth are improved.

5. Embed in a strong framework

A training & development programme has to be truly integrated in the business processes so that managers and employees cannot get around it. A number of conditions have proven to be important for the continuation of a training programme and for embedding the training courses in the day-to-day routine. Strong support, control and coaching from a training department or a HR department are needed as a follow up to the training. Project coordination, administration and organisation is also important. For smaller companies, outsourcing these tasks to an external (consultancy) company could be helpful for the continuation of the project. Also, cooperation with comparable companies that have similar training programmes is a possible solution.

6. Include basic skills: language, behaviour, culture and organisation

The hospitality sector asks for better-trained and more employable employees. Research shows that the three above mentioned training areas of basic knowledge can be identified. It is necessary to train in these areas because work skills/basic knowledge (craft) and some skills to enrich the work need to be provided.

7. It takes passion, or at least motivation with ongoing stimulation

You need a man/woman with a mission and drive. To educate, teachers/trainers need dedication and a genuine desire to make a difference for people. Key persons have to have real faith in training, because motivating employees to finish the training course (retention) is a continuous challenge and also some of the management needs (repeatedly) to be convinced that training followed by employees is also work.

8. Training plans need to be transparent to users

Employees (trainees and their managers) must understand what they are going to learn and why. Involving employees in the development of training courses can help as well as frequent and correct communication. The relevance of themes covered in the courses is important and also individualisation of training courses. Preferably, a mix of on- and off-the-job-training (blended learning) should be used.

9. Learning needs to be fun

The whole programme and the involved key persons have to emit that learning is fun and that it is important to celebrate success. To get employees involved and enthusiastic, and in order to make it “their” course training courses should be developed together with employees. Furthermore, possibilities for positive rewards to involved staff that – for example - take on a mentor role could be thought of.

10. Qualification needs to be recognised

Apart from financial incentives, rewards could lie in external verification and certification. In that case it should be made sure that courses followed internally are, if possible, equivalents of national wide recognised professional qualification certificates.

11. It's important to establish goals and measure/evaluate results

To 'celebrate success' it is necessary to measure and evaluate regularly. If possible, 'hard' facts should support the success: labour turnover, staff satisfaction and morale, customer satisfaction, results, net profit, etc. It is also wise to create a channel for (continuous) feedback. Frequent communication to every involved party is again very important. If there is a lack of time or staff, an outside company could be used to help with the evaluation. Finally, external accreditation can also be a tool for realising tangible results.

12. The social dialogue is important

Training and development can be implemented with input from social partners. There must be a common understanding of training circumstances. Agreement between social partners may seem cumbersome in the short run, but is positive in the long run. We would like to stress the own responsibility of the companies. The social partners can take the initiative and act as a catalyst, but without the participation of the companies all initiatives will fail.

13. Partnership in general

As mentioned in nos. 5 and 10, cooperation can be very helpful to develop and implement training programmes in smaller companies. Opportunities for cooperation are plenty: with comparable (smaller) companies, with sector organisations, with social partners, with suppliers, with consultancy and training companies.

Annex I

Some examples of best practices of training and development initiatives, which were presented at the December 2003 seminar

The Mentor programme, Mövenpick, Switzerland

The Mentor Programme of Mövenpick restaurants in Switzerland, Germany and Austria, was chosen as a best practice for training and development in the hospitality for several reasons. On the one hand, the Mentor programme of Mövenpick offers experienced employees an opportunity to develop themselves as trainers. It has proved to be an effective way to retain those employees and thus decreases staff turnover.

On the other hand, within the Mentor Programme, new or less experienced staff at the restaurants are trained and educated in the basic skills and knowledge they need for working in a Mövenpick restaurant. It thus increases inflow of staff, because it prepares new staff for the hospitality industry.

Another interesting approach was that short training sessions on specific issues were conducted, sometimes lasting only 10 minutes, integrated into regular meeting sessions.

Monopolise your career, Botanic Inns, Ireland

Botanic Inn (11 pubs, 1 hotel and 2 retail stores) accomplished to integrate Human Resource Management in the daily business. All employees follow introduction and basic training during the first year and a half. After this period the employees can choose different career opportunities within the company.

Key words: measuring the effect of training, working together with suppliers, strong management support, external verification of internal training, creativity, mentor system and standards of performance.

Research Centro di Studi Superiori sul Turismo, Italy

This project was chosen because the Assisi Tourism Institute had done a study on professional and educational needs of the tourism sector, including the hospitality sector. The research aimed at employability and links with previous research into needs of the sector. The sector has made the strategic decision to develop a mix of courses and qualifications. For that purpose a new Italian initiative was started to classify skills and specifications of the industry. The second aim was to set up a registry to identify all initiatives to modernise training.

Vasco Da Gama, Denmark

The main goal of this project is the integration of immigrants in the restaurant and catering sector. It focuses on the inflow of persons that normally do not have a chance on the labour market. The practical training in combination with language classes provided to the immigrants is a crucial factor of success. The project further focuses on the relationship between immigrants, enterprises and the government. 'It is an example of what can be achieved when public authorities and social partners work together.

More information on these best practices can be obtained from EFFAT and HOTREC