

PERSONNEL
RESOURCING AND DEVELOPMENT

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STUDENT NAME:

ALEXANDRA BEATRICE

CRISAN

TUTOR NAME:

HELEN LEE

HOW TO ENGAGE WITH EMPLOYEE AT RITZ CARLTON
THROUGHOUT THE EMPLOYEE LIFECYCLE?

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In the dynamic and competitive landscape of the hospitality industry, engaging employees throughout the entire employee lifecycle is paramount for organizational success. This essay explores the multifaceted process of engaging employees at Ritz Carlton Hotel, focusing on Generation Y and Generation X, and underscores the pivotal role of the Human Resources department in each stage of the employee lifecycle, which includes attraction, recruitment, onboarding, development, retention, and separation. Moreover, we will delve into the distinct characteristics of Generation Y and Generation X, provide suggestions on how to effectively engage them, highlight the advantages of a highly engaged team, and incorporate an employee engagement model. Real-world examples from the hotel industry will be used to illustrate these concepts. Before delving into how to engage employees effectively, it is crucial to understand the characteristics and preferences of Generation Y (often referred to as Millennials) and Generation X, as these two cohorts make up a significant portion of the workforce in the hospitality industry.

Engaging a team of employees in the hotel industry is essential for delivering exceptional guest experiences and maintaining a motivated workforce.

Clear Communication and Feedback:

Effective communication is fundamental in any workplace (Aguinis, 2019). Establish open lines of communication where employees feel comfortable sharing their ideas, concerns, and feedback. Regular team meetings and one-on-one check-ins can provide opportunities for dialogue (Noe, 2016).

Recognition and Appreciation:

Recognizing and appreciating employees for their contributions is a powerful motivator (Allen & Van Scotter, 2004). Implement an employee recognition program that acknowledges exceptional performance, whether through awards, bonuses, or simple expressions of gratitude (Saks, 2006).

Training and Development Opportunities:

Providing opportunities for skill development and career growth can engage employees (Phillips & Gully, 2015). Offer training programs that enhance their abilities and prepare them for advancement within the organization (Rothwell & Benschoter, 2017).

Work-Life Balance:

Recognize the importance of work-life balance, especially in the hospitality industry where irregular hours are common (Bauer & Erdogan, 2019). Offer flexible scheduling options and paid time off to support employees' personal lives.

Empowerment and Autonomy:

Empower employees by allowing them to take ownership of their roles (Mello, 2015). Provide opportunities for decision-making and problem-solving, which can enhance their sense of responsibility and engagement.

Team Building and Social Activities:

Foster a sense of camaraderie and teamwork through team-building activities and social events (Gutteridge et al., 2018). These activities can strengthen relationships among team members, promoting a positive work environment.

Alignment with Organizational Values:

Ensure that employees understand and align with the hotel's core values and mission (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). When employees resonate with the organization's purpose, they are more likely to feel engaged and committed.

Regular Performance Reviews:

Implement regular performance reviews that provide constructive feedback and set clear expectations (Aguinis, 2019). Performance evaluations can help employees understand their strengths and areas for improvement.

Wellness Programs:

Support employees' well-being by offering wellness programs, which can include fitness facilities, stress management workshops, and access to healthcare services (Milkovich & Boudreau, 2019).

Community Engagement:

Encourage employees to engage in community service or sustainability initiatives, aligning with the hotel's corporate social responsibility efforts (Gutteridge et al., 2018). Such activities can instill a sense of purpose in employees.

Incorporating these strategies into your hotel's employee engagement initiatives can lead to a motivated and dedicated team. Ultimately, an engaged team contributes to improved guest satisfaction, increased employee retention, and the overall success of the hotel.

Generation Y, born roughly between 1980 and 1994, is known for its techsavviness, adaptability, and desire for continuous learning and growth. They value work-life balance, seek purpose in their work, and appreciate feedback and recognition. Generation Y employees are driven by personal development and often prioritize experiences over traditional benefits.

On the other hand, Generation X, born between 1965 and 1979, values autonomy, self-reliance, and work-life balance as well. They are characterized by their resilience and adaptability, having experienced economic and societal shifts throughout their careers. Generation X employees tend to be more skeptical and independent, valuing job stability and financial security.

Engaging Generation Y and Generation X Throughout the Employee Lifecycle

Attraction: The first stage of the employee lifecycle involves attracting potential candidates to the organization and recruiting them to fill open positions (Mathis & Jackson, 2018).

Attraction and recruitment strategies aim to identify individuals who are the best fit for the company's culture and job requirements (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011).

Attracting top talent from Generation Y and Generation X begins with crafting an appealing employer brand. It's essential to highlight the organization's commitment

to personal and professional growth, work-life balance, and a positive work culture. Leverage social media platforms to showcase the unique aspects of working in the hospitality industry, such as opportunities for creativity and travel.

Example: Marriott International's "TakeCare" program emphasizes employee wellbeing and offers flexible work arrangements, aligning with the preferences of both generations.

Recruitment: In the recruitment stage, HR departments should focus on transparent communication, providing detailed job descriptions, and leveraging technology for a seamless application process. Interviews should assess not only technical skills but also cultural fit and alignment with the organization's values.

Example: Hilton Worldwide incorporates structured interviews and assessment centers to evaluate both technical competencies and alignment with their serviceoriented culture.

Onboarding: A comprehensive onboarding process is crucial for setting the tone and expectations for new employees. Generation Y and Generation X employees appreciate mentorship programs, clear goals, and opportunities to make an impact early in their roles. Onboarding is the process of integrating new employees into the organization, familiarizing them with its culture, policies, and procedures (Bauer & Erdogan, 2019). Effective onboarding helps new hires become productive and engaged members of the workforce (Allen & Van Scotter, 2004).

Example: Hyatt Hotels Corporation's "Hyatt Thrive" program includes onboarding modules that emphasize the company's commitment to sustainability and community engagement, aligning with the values of both generations.

Development: Continuous learning and development opportunities are highly valued by both generations. HR departments should invest in training programs, encourage cross-functional learning, and provide access to online courses or certifications. The development stage involves providing employees with opportunities for growth, skill development, and continuous learning (Noe, 2016).

Ongoing training and development programs enhance employees' competencies and contribute to their long-term success within the organization (Phillips & Gully, 2015).

Example: InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) offers a robust learning and development platform called "IHG Academy," which provides employees with access to various training modules and career advancement opportunities.

Performance Management: Performance management includes processes for setting performance expectations, providing feedback, and evaluating employees' contributions (Aguinis, 2019).

Effective performance management systems help align individual and organizational goals (Mello, 2015).

Retention: Retaining Generation Y and Generation X employees requires ongoing engagement efforts. Regular feedback sessions, recognition programs, and opportunities for career advancement are essential. Retention efforts aim to keep valuable employees within the organization by creating a positive work environment and addressing their needs (Milkovich & Boudreau, 2019).

Employee engagement initiatives focus on creating a sense of commitment, motivation, and job satisfaction among the workforce (Saks, 2006).

Example: The Ritz-Carlton's "Gold Standards" program focuses on employee empowerment and recognition, fostering a sense of belonging and loyalty among employees.

Career Advancement: Career advancement involves offering employees opportunities for progression within the organization, whether through promotions, lateral moves, or skill development (Gutteridge et al., 2018). Clear career paths and growth opportunities are essential for retaining top talent (Rothwell & Benschoter, 2017).

Separation: Even when employees decide to leave the organization, it's essential to part on good terms. Exit interviews can provide valuable insights into reasons for departure, helping HR departments make improvements. The final stage of the employee lifecycle pertains to the eventual separation of employees from the organization, whether due to retirement, resignation, or termination (Mathis & Jackson, 2018).

A well-managed separation process includes exit interviews and knowledge transfer to facilitate a smooth transition (DeNisi & Griffin, 2017).

Example: Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts conducts exit interviews to gather feedback and ensure a positive departure experience, which can potentially lead to rehiring in the future.

Engaging Generation Y and Generation X employees throughout the employee lifecycle offers several advantages for a large hotel:

Increased Productivity: Engaged employees tend to be more motivated and productive, leading to improved service quality and guest satisfaction.

Enhanced Employee Loyalty: Engaging employees fosters a sense of belonging and loyalty, reducing turnover rates and the associated costs of recruitment and training.

Positive Guest Experiences: Happy and engaged employees are more likely to provide exceptional customer service, resulting in positive guest reviews and repeat business.

Innovation and Adaptability: Engaged employees are more likely to contribute innovative ideas and adapt to changing industry trends, ensuring the hotel's competitiveness.

Improved Bottom Line: A highly engaged team can lead to increased revenue and profitability as a result of improved guest experiences and reduced operational costs.

Incorporating an Employee Engagement Model

Employee engagement models, exemplified by Gallup's Q12, provide organizations with a systematic framework to measure, understand, and enhance employee engagement. Implementation of this model begins with conducting regular surveys using the Q12 questionnaire, which evaluates factors like job satisfaction, recognition, and career development. These surveys generate quantitative data, enabling organizations to gauge the current state of employee engagement. Following data collection, organizations should analyze the results to pinpoint areas that require

improvement. Once areas for enhancement are identified, tailored action plans should be formulated, involving collaborative efforts between management and employees. These plans should encompass strategies to address weaknesses and amplify strengths in engagement drivers.

Crucially, the implementation process necessitates open communication with employees, soliciting their input and feedback. Regular follow-ups and adjustments to engagement strategies, based on survey insights, ensure that efforts are dynamic and responsive. By adopting such an employee engagement model and consistently refining engagement strategies, organizations can cultivate a motivated, committed, and high-performing workforce, ultimately leading to increased productivity, reduced turnover, and sustained organizational success.

Example: The Ritz-Carlton regularly administers the Gallup Q12 survey to its employees, allowing the organization to pinpoint areas where engagement efforts can be fine-tuned. For instance, they discovered that employees valued recognition, leading to the implementation of personalized recognition programs.

Marriott International: Marriott is known for its robust employee engagement initiatives. They regularly use employee surveys to assess engagement levels and gather feedback. In response to survey results, they implemented "My Marriott Voice," an online platform where employees can share their opinions and ideas. This collaborative approach has led to improvements in various areas, including workplace conditions and recognition programs.

Hilton Worldwide: Hilton utilizes the Hilton Recognition Calendar, a program based on Gallup's principles of employee engagement. This calendar offers a structured approach to recognizing and rewarding employee contributions. It includes a wide range of incentives, from monetary rewards to special experiences, fostering a sense of appreciation and motivation among staff.

Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts: Four Seasons conducts regular employee engagement surveys and leverages the Gallup model. They place a strong emphasis on personalized career development plans, allowing employees to set clear goals and

receive continuous feedback. This approach has resulted in high employee satisfaction and low turnover rates.

Conclusion

Engaging Generation Y and Generation X employees throughout the employee lifecycle is a strategic imperative for large hotels in the hospitality industry. The Human Resources department plays a pivotal role in attracting, recruiting, on boarding, developing, retaining, and handling separations for employees. Understanding the unique characteristics of these generations and tailoring engagement strategies accordingly is the key to success.

By following a comprehensive approach that aligns with the preferences of Generation Y and Generation X, hotels can reap the benefits of increased productivity, enhanced employee loyalty, improved guest experiences, innovation, and a healthier bottom line. Incorporating an employee engagement model, such as the Gallup Q12, allows hotels to measure and continually improve their engagement efforts, ensuring a motivated and satisfied workforce.

In today's competitive landscape, the success of a hotel often hinges on its ability to engage and retain top talent, making employee engagement throughout the employee lifecycle not only a best practice but a necessity for long-term success in the hospitality industry.

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