

HR Advisory Operational Plan

Recruitment Strategy for a Mid-Range Full-Service Hotel

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1. Project Context

The project focuses on a mid-range, full-service hotel located in a major UK city, with approximately 120 guest rooms, an on-site restaurant, conference facilities, and a 24-hour front desk. As a high-contact environment, the hotel relies heavily on frontline employees whose behaviour and service delivery directly shape the guest experience. The target market includes domestic and international tourists, business travellers, and families, requiring consistent, guest-focused service across departments such as reception, housekeeping, and food and beverage.

The service philosophy is based on efficient, friendly, and personalised service. In hospitality, service is intangible and evaluated through staff interactions, making employee capability essential to operational success. The sector is labour-intensive, with human resources representing a key source of competitive advantage (Baum, 2019).

Recruitment is therefore critical. High turnover, skills shortages, and seasonal demand create challenges in attracting suitable candidates (CIPD, 2023). Ineffective recruitment can lead to understaffing and inconsistent service, while structured recruitment improves workforce quality, operational performance, and brand reputation

2. Problem or Opportunity Identification

A key HR issue is the challenge of recruiting skilled and service-oriented employees within a competitive, high-turnover labour market. In hospitality, recruitment quality is often inconsistent, resulting in employees who lack the interpersonal skills and resilience required for high-contact roles.

This issue is driven by industry characteristics such as high turnover, seasonal demand, relatively low pay, and the emotional labour involved in customer-facing work. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2023) highlights ongoing labour shortages, while UKHospitality reports persistent skills gaps. These pressures often lead to rushed hiring decisions and poor job–person fit.

The impact is significant. Poor recruitment reduces service quality and employee performance, while increasing stress, dissatisfaction, and turnover (Baum, 2019). This creates a cycle of continuous hiring and a less experienced workforce.

Guest satisfaction is also affected, as service encounters are central to the hospitality experience. Negative interactions reduce repeat visits and can damage the hotel's reputation, particularly in a review-driven market. Addressing recruitment quality is therefore essential to maintain service standards and operational performance.

3. Theory & Literature

From an HR advisory perspective, recruitment in hospitality should be grounded in established theories that explain how employees influence service quality, organisational performance, and guest satisfaction.

The Service-Profit Chain (Heskett et al., 1994) shows that employee capability and engagement directly impact service quality, which in turn drives customer satisfaction and business performance. This model remains highly relevant in hospitality, where organisations increasingly prioritise workforce capability to improve service outcomes

(CIPD, 2024). Therefore, recruitment should focus on selecting individuals with strong interpersonal and customer service skills.

Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964) positions employees as value-generating assets rather than costs. In a hotel context, recruiting skilled and adaptable staff improves operational efficiency and service consistency. This is reinforced by ongoing labour shortages and the growing need for skilled workers in hospitality (UKHospitality, 2025), highlighting recruitment as a long-term investment.

The Psychological Contract (Rousseau, 1989) is also important, as it reflects unwritten expectations between employer and employee. In hospitality, unclear expectations during recruitment can lead to early turnover. CIPD research (2024) shows many employees leave within the first months due to poor role clarity, so realistic job previews and clear communication are essential.

Employer Branding Theory further supports recruitment effectiveness. A strong employer brand improves both the quality and quantity of applicants, particularly in competitive sectors such as hospitality (CIPD, 2025). This is increasingly important given ongoing skills shortages.

Finally, High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) highlight that integrated HR practices, including structured recruitment, improve employee performance and reduce turnover by ensuring better job–person fit.

From an HR advisory perspective, the recruitment strategy is designed to address labour market challenges and strengthen service delivery within a mid-range, high-contact hotel environment. The primary objective is to implement a structured recruitment approach that attracts and selects candidates with the appropriate skills, attitudes, and customer service orientation. This is essential given ongoing industry challenges such as skills shortages, high turnover, and increased competition for talent (CIPD, 2024). The focus is on improving job–person fit to ensure consistent guest experiences across all service areas.

A key objective is to reduce early employee turnover by improving recruitment quality and managing expectations more effectively during the hiring process. The strategy also aims to enhance service consistency by ensuring all recruits meet defined competency and behavioural standards. In addition, strengthening employer branding is a priority, as this supports the attraction of a wider and higher-quality applicant pool in a competitive labour market (UKHospitality, 2025).

Overall, the recruitment strategy seeks to build a skilled, confident, and guest-focused workforce. This will improve employee performance, reduce operational disruption, and enhance the overall guest experience.

4.2 Operational Strategy & Actions

To address recruitment challenges, this strategy outlines targeted HR actions designed to strengthen attraction, selection, employer branding, and early workforce stability. The aim is to improve applicant quality, reduce time-to-hire, and ensure new employees have the required skills and service orientation for a high-contact hospitality environment. The approach is informed by the Service-Profit Chain, Human Capital Theory, and Employer Branding Theory, ensuring recruitment supports service quality and organisational performance.

The strategy is structured into four key phases.

The first phase focuses on strengthening recruitment channels and employer branding. The hotel will use digital platforms such as LinkedIn and Indeed, alongside partnerships with local colleges and training providers. Employee-generated content will also be used to showcase workplace culture. This improves employer attractiveness and expands the talent pool in a competitive labour market.

The second phase focuses on improving selection. Competency-based interviews, structured scoring, and realistic job previews will ensure fair and consistent assessment. This reduces poor job-person fit, a major cause of early turnover. Clear communication of expectations also strengthens the psychological contract and reduces early resignation.

The third phase focuses on onboarding and early integration. A structured three-day induction and buddy system will support new employees in understanding service standards and operational procedures. This improves confidence, reduces early errors, and supports service consistency during the initial employment period.

The final phase focuses on development and performance support. Monthly coaching sessions and targeted training in customer service and conflict management will reinforce standards and improve capability. These actions align with Herzberg's motivation theory, particularly intrinsic motivators such as recognition and development opportunities, which support retention.

Overall, this strategy ensures recruitment is integrated into a wider HR system that supports performance, engagement, and long-term service quality.

Recruitment Strategy Table

Action	Description	Responsible	Timeline	Resources Needed	Expected Outcome	Expected Outcome
Improve recruitment channels	Social media campaigns, college partnerships, job fairs	HR Manager + Marketing	Months 1-2	£1,500 budget, marketing support	Increased applicant quality & volume	Increased applicant quality & volume
Strengthen employer branding	Staff testimonials, "day-in-the-life" videos	HR + Marketing	Months 1-3	Video production, staff time	Enhanced employer brand	Enhanced employer brand
Structured selection process	Competency-based interviews, job previews	HR Team	Month 1	Interview guides, training	Better job fit, lower turnover	Reduced peak period shortages
Seasonal recruitment planning	Forecast peak staffing needs early	HR + Dept. Heads	Ongoing	Planning tools	Planning tools	Reduced peak period shortages
Employee referral program	Referral bonuses for staff hires	HR Manager	Month 3	£100–£150 per hire	Trusted hires, better retention	Faster integration, fewer errors
Structured onboarding	3-day induction & buddy system	HR + Supervisors	Months 2-3	Training materials, mentor time	Training materials, mentor time	Improved staff capabilities
Skills development workshops	Customer service, conflict training	Training Manager	Monthly	Workshop materials	Workshop materials	Improved staff capabilities
Performance check-ins	Monthly coaching sessions	Line Managers	Ongoing	Manager time		Higher engagement, less turnover

4.3 Implementation Flow (Optional)

From an HR advisory perspective, the following implementation model is proposed to ensure that recruitment is fully embedded within the hotel's wider operational strategy and applied in a consistent, structured, and evidence-based manner. By standardising each stage of the process, the organisation can improve the quality and reliability of hiring decisions, strengthen workforce capability, and reduce the risks associated with poor job fit and early turnover. In turn, this approach supports improved employee performance, greater operational stability, and more consistent service delivery across all guest touchpoints, which is essential in a high-contact hospitality environment.

Step 1: Workforce Need Identified

Line managers, in collaboration with HR, will identify staffing requirements based on occupancy forecasts, seasonal demand, and operational needs. This ensures recruitment is aligned with business demand and prevents service disruption caused by understaffing.

Step 2: Recruitment Strategy Activated

Once staffing needs are confirmed, the recruitment strategy is activated. This includes

selecting appropriate sourcing channels, strengthening employer branding, and ensuring job adverts reflect required competencies. This stage is informed by Employer Branding Theory, which highlights the importance of organisational reputation in attracting suitable candidates.

Step 3: Selection and Hiring

HR, alongside department managers, will conduct structured selection processes, including CV screening and competency-based interviews. Candidates will be assessed on both technical ability and customer service orientation to ensure strong job-person fit. Structured interviews improve consistency, fairness, and predictive validity in hiring decisions (CIPD, 2024).

Step 4: Structured Onboarding

New employees will complete a structured induction programme, including department orientation and a buddy system. Research by Bauer (2010) shows that effective onboarding improves early performance, confidence, and commitment, particularly in hospitality.

Step 5: Training and Development

Ongoing training will be provided to develop service capability. This reflects Human Capital Theory, which views employee development as an investment that enhances service quality and operational performance.

Step 6: Performance Monitoring

Line managers will conduct regular check-ins to monitor progress, provide feedback, and address performance issues early. This aligns with modern performance management approaches that prioritise continuous feedback.

Step 7: Review and Continuous Improvement

Recruitment outcomes, turnover data, and guest feedback will be reviewed to refine the

strategy. This ensures continuous improvement and supports long-term workforce stability and service excellence.

4.4 Risk Management

During implementation, several operational risks may arise. A key risk is resistance from line managers to new recruitment and onboarding processes. This can be mitigated through clear communication, training, and involvement in the process design (CIPD, 2021).

A second risk is budget constraints, which are common in hospitality due to rising employment costs. A phased implementation approach is recommended to prioritise high-impact actions.

Finally, seasonal fluctuations may affect staffing stability. This can be managed through workforce planning and flexible staffing models to ensure service continuity during peak demand periods (Baum, 2019).

5. Impact on Service & Guest Experience

Strengthening recruitment, onboarding, and development has a direct impact on staff capability, engagement, and service quality. Improved recruitment and clearer expectations enhance the psychological contract, increasing employee commitment and reducing early turnover (Rousseau, 1995). Structured onboarding further supports early performance by building confidence and clarity (Bauer, 2010).

Service consistency improves through standardised induction, competency-based selection, and ongoing training. In hospitality, service quality is strongly influenced by employee behaviour, and well-trained staff deliver more consistent guest interactions (Baum, 2019). This directly supports the Service-Profit Chain, linking employee capability to customer satisfaction and loyalty.

As staff performance improves, guest satisfaction increases through faster service, clearer communication, and more positive interactions. This enhances perceived value and encourages repeat visits (Torres and Kline, 2013).

Finally, consistent service quality strengthens brand reputation through positive online reviews and improved customer perception. A strong employer brand also helps attract higher-quality applicants in future recruitment cycles (UKHospitality, 2023). Overall, this creates a clear link between workforce capability, service excellence, and long-term business success.

Conclusion

From an HR advisory perspective, this operational recruitment plan directly addresses the key challenge of attracting and selecting suitable employees within a competitive hospitality labour market. By implementing structured recruitment processes, strengthening employer branding, and supporting effective onboarding, the plan improves job–person fit and reduces early turnover. This contributes to more consistent staff performance and operational stability. In the long term, these improvements support business success by enhancing service quality, increasing employee engagement, and strengthening the hotel’s reputation. Ultimately, a well-executed recruitment strategy ensures a more positive guest experience, leading to higher satisfaction, loyalty, and sustained competitive advantage.

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