

HOTEL MAGNUS, TRENCIN, SLOVAKIA

It Pays to Work With Young People: Recruitment Practices and Strategic Approaches to Human Resource Management

Introduction

Hotel Magnus is a new 4 star hotel located in Trencin, a city in the western part of Slovakia, 130 km from the capital Bratislava. The hotel is a part of the Magnus Centre, a shopping and relaxation complex. The hotel management operates not only the hotel but also the whole shopping and relaxation complex. The operation of the complex may be considered as falling into two categories. The first category relates to premises operated by the hotel management and includes the hotel itself, restaurant, bars, bowling alley and wellness centre. The second category includes a number of services and outlets operated on a lease contract basis. Franchisees are set very strict conditions that need to be abided to after signing the contract, such that customers should not be able to distinguish between services operated by the hotel and operated by the franchisees.

The name of the hotel "Magnus" translates from Latin as meaning "large/great/important". This is also a core philosophy underpinning the hotel's business plan. Besides the hotel's focus on high quality services, the hotel interior has been carefully designed to give a contemporary modern feel. The hotel rooms provide a larger space than that normally expected for hotels in this category. Another core element of the business plan is the belief that hotel guests should not have reason to leave the hotel, but should be able to find everything they needed for their stay in the Magnus Centre.

The Hotel Magnus is oriented mainly towards business customers. It prides itself on providing excellence and offering a top quality service. As such, the shopping and relaxation complex has to date enjoyed much success through its distinctive product and service mix and has benefit both the town of Trencin and the surrounding region.

The hotel itself has just 34 rooms. The main restaurant has capacity for 92 diners. However, there are other restaurant facilities in the Centre, such as the Gallery Café and Family Food outlet which serve not only centre visitors but also hotel guests. The bowling alley and wellness centre have achieved high usage rates, particularly amongst locals. The hotel itself achieved an occupation rate of 55% in its first year of operation and was rated amongst the best hotels in Slovakia according to national ratings.

Recruitment Practices and Strategic Approaches to Human Resource Management

The Managing Director of the centre was part of the Centre's development team and provided significant input into construction plans, the Centre's business plan and the interior design of the hotel. This was hugely important to the successful launch of the hotel itself.

Human Resources planning is an important component of the business plan which is updated and developed for every year. The Managing Director is responsible for the development of the business plan. Every hotel department has established its own goals and performance criteria. Human Resource planning is conducted for each department and is carried out according to the goals and planned performance of these departments. Human Resource planning is seriously taken by the hotel. Equally, the business plan is carefully developed and its implementation monitored. The initial business plan was important also for successful recruitment of the hotel and Centre's employees.

In relation to employee recruitment, management use all possible means for hiring quality people, starting from job advertisements through personal contacts to professional recruitment agencies. Communication skills, personal attitude and self-motivation are the most important criteria for the selection of the new employees. Applicants undergo a demanding personal interview with the Managing Director as part of the selection process. The interview is focused on the service offerings of Hotel Magnus and determining the service quality orientation of applicants. The majority of new staff are young people. The Managing Director explains the qualities that a young workforce can bring in the following terms:

"I am glad to work with a team of relatively young and ambitious people with good knowledge of languages. Results gained throughout one year's operation as well as our customers' satisfaction levels have proved that it pays to work with young people."

The management pays particular attention to building personal contact with hotel guests. This is the means by which "visitors" become "guests" and also how management and staff can obtain feedback from guests to improve hotel services. As the Managing Director explains:

"Personal contact is vitally important. It is important not only for reception staff but also for chambermaids. Through personal communication and a smile, our guests can feel that there is warm atmosphere here. A warm relaxed atmosphere is what I wanted to achieve in this hotel. Quite often, our guests thank us personally or through written feedback for the pleasant time they have spent in the hotel".

The continual improvement of services is a key imperative for the hotel. The hotel's reputation for quality is often reflected in the eagerness of applicants who wish to work at the hotel. The hotel supports the training of its staff and has provided investment for staff to participate in various professional activities within Slovakia or abroad. Selected employees for instance also took part in an international Olympiad in Erfurt, a place where European gastronomy meets rest of the world. These activities help the hotel keep abreast of new trends and further improve product and service offerings at the hotel.

Hotel Magnus uses operational guidelines for every department to support quality and service standards. The guidelines are based on those developed by the Slovak Hotel Association for its' members. The hotel works in partnership with a number of professional associations and through this cooperation, obtains information about available training courses, conferences and other professional events. Working with professional associations also gives employees an opportunity to meet colleagues from other facilities in Slovakia to share experiences and learn from each other.

The performance of individual departments is closely related to the salaries of the employees working at the hotel. As the Managing Director explains:

"We meet with the heads of department and employees on a monthly basis to evaluate the results achieved across an assessment rubric, including service quality, revenue generated and occupancy rates. It is very important that employees have access to correct information about the occupancy and revenue rates and that nothing is hidden. Motivation is very important since the flexible wage component is closely connected with our revenue. This has proven to be the right system for this hotel".

Conclusion

This case study focused on recruitment practices and strategic approaches in human resource management at the Hotel Magnus. It also provides a useful example of a successful hotel launch. Hotel Magnus is a small hotel with only 34 rooms, but it is also part of the Magnus Centre, a shopping, relaxation and wellness complex. The whole Centre is operated by the hotel management. While the hotel is oriented toward business customers, the majority of the wellness and relaxation customers are local people.

The management utilises planning as an important human resource tool. Planning has played an important role in the successful recruitment of staff for the launch of the Centre. Plans are regularly developed for all hotel departments, and these reviewed regularly against performance, with adjustments made as required. This approach may be common amongst larger hotels, but is relatively rare in smaller hotels.

Management display a preference for working younger people who have good language skills given that the majority of customers are German and English speaking. Everyday personal communication with guests and a relaxed atmosphere in both the hotel and the Centre are key to achieving customers satisfaction and loyalty.

