

Talent Training Practices in SME Hotels

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Abstract:

Purpose: This study explores and analyzes the intricacies of talent management and employee development practices within the hospitality industry. By delving into various training methodologies and assessing their impact, the study seeks to unveil the strengths, challenges, and opportunities each presents.

Design/methodology/approach: We did a qualitative research design, utilizing an inductive and exploratory approach. Given the nuanced and dynamic nature of talent management in the hospitality industry, this methodology allowed for a comprehensive and in-depth exploration of practices, impacts, and underlying dynamics.

Findings: The diversity in talent management within the hospitality industry is highlighted. Outsourced courses and peer-to-peer learning were common, each presenting unique advantages and challenges. Coaching was valued but faced scheduling and cost issues. Notably, exclusion from talent pools resulted in employee frustration, mistrust, and increased turnover intentions, underscoring the need for inclusive and adaptive talent management strategies.

Practical Implications: The findings offer actionable insights for enhancing talent management strategies, improving training modalities, and addressing the impacts of talent pool exclusions to boost employee satisfaction and retention in the hospitality industry.

Originality/value: This investigation is distinguished by its detailed examination of talent management in the hospitality sector. It offers unique insights into training modalities and the impacts of talent pool exclusions, thereby providing valuable data for enhancing organizational and academic approaches to employee development.

Keywords: hospitality industry, hotel management, talent management, small and medium-sized enterprises, training

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1. Introduction

The hospitality sector is multifaceted, comprising a range of sub-industries. While there is a common thread in various definitions of the term, nuances exist. According to Hayes and Ninemeier (2009), the core of hospitality lies in offering accommodation and food services to individuals away from their homes. King (1995), however, expands this definition to include entertainment as a pivotal element, underscoring the industry's commitment to ensuring guest satisfaction through providing food, drinks, lodging, and entertainment. In this industry, managers have a consensus that employees are invaluable assets, as stated by Hayes and Ninemeier (2009). This sentiment is especially profound in the tourism and hospitality sectors, where the staff plays an integral role in shaping guests' experiences. As Cismaru and Iunius (2020) pointed out, employees are not just part of the operational framework but are fundamental in delivering unique experiences that stand as a core competitive advantage for businesses in this sector.

As we have seen, effective management of human resources is pivotal to a business's success. However, specific HR groups hold key positions in certain organizations, wielding considerable influence over the organization's long-term competitive edge. These influential HR clusters necessitate strategic Talent Management (TM) approaches. Montero-Guerra, Danvila-del-Valle and Méndez-Suárez (2023) noted that the ongoing digital metamorphosis within organizations directly shapes and refines talent management practices and strategies. Marinakou and Giousmpasoglou (2019) point out a notable gap in research concerning Talent and TM within the hospitality industry. Despite advancements and evolutions in TM over the past twenty years, a conspicuous void exists in studies tailored to the unique contexts of hospitality businesses. Kravariti, Voutsina, Tasoulis, Dibia and Johnston (2021) echo this sentiment, emphasizing that existing research in the TM landscape within the hospitality and tourism sector is dispersed and lacks cohesion.

The literature on TM presents various perspectives from which the concept can be analyzed and understood. A prevailing viewpoint in existing literature characterizes TM as a progression of distinct activities or stages. Among these stages, Development, understood as the forecast of staffing requirements and overseeing the advancement of employees through various roles (Lewis & Heckman, 2006), is frequently cited, as highlighted in works by renowned authors like Collings and Mellahi (2009), Scullion, Collings and Caligiuri (2010), Piansoongnern, Anurit and Kuyawattananonta (2011), Raman, Chadee, Roxas and Michailova (2013), Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen (2016), Stahl, Bjorkman, Farndale, Morris, Paauwe, Stiles et al. (2007), Hajikaimisari, Ghalambor and Hajikarimi (2010), and Baum (2008). This underscores the unequivocal importance of talent attraction, development, and retention, positioning them as paramount challenges for global companies (Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen & Scullion, 2020). Johnson, Huang and Doyle (2019) further accentuates this point, asserting that organizational success is inextricably linked to talent-adept identification, nurturing, and management.

A noticeable gap exists in the research concerning Talent Development within the scope of TM practices (Kaliannan, Darmalinggam, Dorasamy & Abraham, 2023). Further, Thunnissen and Gallardo-Gallardo (2017) highlight a distinct trend in academia where the focus has predominantly been on talent identification and attraction stages – with 22.2% of articles exploring talent identification and 20.9% centered around attraction, recruitment, and selection. In contrast, talent retention and development topics have received comparatively less attention, accounting for 16.5% and 10.1% of the literature, respectively. Based on this situation, this paper aims to describe and compare TM training practices by different hospitality industry stakeholders.

2. Training in the Hospitality Industry

Hajikaimisari et al. (2010) describe development as a set of diverse activities including training, marking it as a crucial element of Talent Development, particularly within the tourism and hospitality sectors (Johnson et al., 2019). Training is perceived as an evolving process dedicated to enhancing employees' knowledge, skills, and attitudes to adeptly execute the tasks associated with their roles (Hayes & Ninemeier, 2009). Kumar (2022) offers an intriguing perspective, suggesting that developmental opportunities within an organization play a pivotal role in various facets of Talent Management, including attracting talent. In the context of hospitality, training is geared towards specific objectives. It is instrumental in ensuring that employees perpetually project a positive

organizational image and is vital for thriving amidst the intensifying market competition (Johnson et al., 2019). Besides, more skilled and educated staff may increase employee earnings and enhance employee benefits for individuals and society (Murphy, Gaytan & Endres, 2023).

The comprehensive understanding of TM's practical impacts, benefits, and evolution within organizations remains incomplete, as Thunnissen and Gallardo-Gallardo (2017) articulated. A thorough exploration of the practicality of TM, its direct and indirect contributions to organizational growth and employee development, and its adaptive processes within varying organizational structures is notably absent. Given this context, there is a pressing need to delve deeper into the intricate dynamics of training, one of the pivotal stages in TM. The inquiry should extend beyond the conventional boundaries to encapsulate a holistic view of training's multifaceted impacts, both apparent and nuanced. This encompasses investigating the elements that influence training, the methodologies employed, the efficacy of these strategies, and the resultant outcomes on employee performance, satisfaction, and retention.

Training exerts a direct influence on various stages of TM, notably Performance and Retention, as highlighted in studies by Ohunakin, Adeniji, Ogunlusi, Igbadumhe and Sodeinde (2020), Marinakou and Giousmpasoglou (2019), Hayes and Ninemeier (2009), and Barron, D'Annunzio-Green, Maxwell and Watson (2008). Yeswa and Ombui (2019) results further revealed existence of a positive and significant correlation between training and retention of employees in Kenyan hotel industry. The quality of training is also significantly correlated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment, underscoring its broader impacts on the workforce and organizational health (Deery, D'Annunzio-Green, Maxwell & Watson, 2008). Saad and Mayouf (2018) point out that based on the results of their studies on five-star hotels, more than half of sample designed a variety of training modules for talent staff development and formulated their talent development plans based on the results of the performance appraisal.

Although many studies point to a clear connection between the training and retention stages of talent management, there is research that sees this concept from a different angle. Based on Xing (2023), it appears that, rather than accepting training opportunities within the hotel, achieving personal development in the hotel industry is perceived as a normal path through frequent job hopping.

Deery et al. (2008) delineate specific parameters that shape the effectiveness and outcomes of training. Directly impacted factors encompass personal employee dimensions and workplace dynamics, including stress arising from lack of role clarity and resource inadequacy, job burnout, emotional exhaustion, and work-life conflict. These elements play a critical role in determining the efficacy of training interventions and their subsequent impacts on employee performance and retention. Indirect factors influencing training outcomes entail organizational and job-specific conditions, such as long and unsociable working hours, low remuneration, minimal skill requirements, educational mismatch, and limited opportunities for career progression. While not directly linked to training, these elements significantly influence its effectiveness by shaping the employee's workplace experience, engagement levels, and receptivity to training.

This intricate interplay of direct and indirect factors necessitates a holistic approach to training within the TM framework. It underscores the need for organizations to address these multidimensional aspects, ensuring that training is comprehensive, qualitative, and responsive to the nuanced needs and challenges of the workforce. By doing so, organizations can optimize the positive impacts of training on performance, retention, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, thereby fostering a conducive environment for employee growth and organizational excellence.

Despite the significant emphasis placed on talent and TM by business leaders and practitioners actively seeking effective resolutions for talent-related challenges, academia has not thoroughly addressed the intricate nuances of TM implementation (Thunnissen & Gallardo-Gallardo, 2017). Our academic literature review unveiled approximately 20 distinct practices related to training, spanning three core concepts: Hospitality Human Resource Management (HRM), TM, and Hospitality TM. Within this compilation, a subset of five practices is tailored explicitly to Training in TM within the hospitality sector. These encompass On-the-job training (Deery et al., 2008),

Engagement (Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou, 2019), Adhoc training modules (Johnson et al., 2019), Outsourcing training processes (Grobler & Diedericks, 2009), and Virtual learning platforms (Johnson et al., 2019).

In the hotel sector, the significance of training and the trained workforce has consistently been a crucial aspect. According to Marinakou and Giousmpasoglou (2019), hotel managers are challenged by the scarcity of trained experienced employees and staff retention; hence they were forced to develop HR practices to address these issues, which perhaps may justify the rapid TM development in HR in hospitality. It is important to understand the degree to which hotels prioritize the training of their talented employees and how they prefer to handle it. Xing (2023) prioritizes recruitment over a focus on training and expresses that in terms of development opportunities, it is usually difficult for grass-roots employees or front-line employees to get promotion opportunities if they work in a hotel for a long time, because hotels rarely choose to train them, but instead prefer to recruit employees with complete knowledge and experience, so that employees need to resign to obtain a higher job position.

In tourism SMEs, training tends to be unstructured and takes on a more ad hoc approach (Johnson et al., 2019). Despite all these features, frequency and continually of training should be considered in hotel sector (e.g., Yeswa & Ombui, 2019; Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou, 2019). Furthermore, Marinakou and Giousmpasoglou (2019) mentions that luxury hotels have both an exclusive and an inclusive approach with the implicit engagement of the individuals as well. The noteworthy point is that typically, organizations focus on developing employees' technical skills. However, it is important to place emphasis on the development of both technical and generic skills of tourism employees (Johnson et al., 2019).

3. Methodology

Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2020) concluded that there is a pressing need for more empirical studies on talent management practices, considering their specific contexts. Similarly, Sigroha and Dahiya (2023) support this assertion, emphasizing a noticeable deficiency in empirical research concerning talent management and the associated practices. This highlights a consensus on the necessity for enriched, context-sensitive empirical insights to enhance the understanding and application of TM strategies.

We opted for an inductive/exploratory approach in light of the limited research on talent and TM within the hospitality sector, as Marinakou and Giousmpasoglou (2019) noted. There exists a significant gap that necessitates in-depth exploration. To gain richer insights into this underexplored phenomenon, we gathered qualitative data to glean a more nuanced understanding of talent and TM practices in this specific industry context. This decision is rooted in our objective to unravel TM's intricate aspects and dimensions that are yet to be extensively examined in the hospitality industry.

In our research, we define the unit of analysis as a hotel. In contrast, the unit of observation is an employee in the hospitality industry, such as top managers, line managers, and hotel employees. We decided to select only independent small and medium-sized or SME hotels. The objective was to remove the influence of headquarters on the hotel policies. Besides, the literature shows that many multinational enterprises have adopted TM strategies, with medium and small-size companies being less involved (Al-Ariss, Cascio & Paauwe, 2014). That means there is a lack of research on these hotels (Thunnissen & Gallardo-Gallardo, 2017). We decided to focus on this kind of hotel in Catalonia, with four or five stars.

For selecting the hotels of the sample, we focused on the active hotels published on Booking.com, the leading online travel agency (OTA) by revenue. Then we visited the websites of hotels not to doubt the independence of hotels. We compared the number of employees and each hotel's annual income using SABI platform to see if they really were SME organizations (according to the definition of SME organizations in the European Union: Companies that employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million).

We utilized LinkedIn to identify and connect with general, HR, and Sales managers from the targeted organizations. To enhance the reliability of our findings, we gathered data from multiple informants within each selected hotel. However, at the core of these studies is the semi-structured interview, which is employed to gather both retrospective and real-time narratives from individuals directly experiencing the phenomenon of theoretical

significance (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2012). Initial contact was made via LinkedIn messages and emails, extending interview invitations. We successfully conducted interviews with ten managers, comprising three general managers, three HR managers, and four sales managers, across seven hotels, including five 4-star and two 5-star establishments. This diverse mix of participants enriched the depth and breadth of our insights. Regarding professional experience, the interviewees boasted an average of 16 years in the hospitality industry. They had spent an average of 5.8 years at their current hotels and held their specific job positions for an average of 9.2 years. This wealth of experience provided a multifaceted perspective, contributing to the comprehensive and nuanced understanding of talent and TM practices within the hospitality sector.

We crafted an interview protocol (see Appendix 1) encompassing an invitation letter and a consent form to formalize the interview process. The protocol is divided into four sections: the interviewee's background information, details about the selected hotel, the participant's perspectives on pertinent topics, and insights into TM practices. Each section contains tailored questions to align with and address the overarching research question and objectives. The flexible interview approach included both in-person and remote sessions, adapting to the availability and preferences of the interviewees. This adaptability ensured comprehensive data collection, capturing varied and rich insights to paint a holistic picture of the subject under. The interviewees' responses were instrumental in delving deep into the nuanced layers of TM practices within the hospitality context, paving the way for a well-rounded analysis.

The interviews, once recorded, were meticulously transcribed and integrated into qualitative research software for in-depth analysis. Adhering to the grounded theory methodology, each interview was reviewed multiple times, undergoing a process of classification, coding, and iterative insights incorporation, continuing until no further insights emerged from consecutive reviews. While we initiated the process with a predetermined set of codes aligned with the research objectives, this roster of codes was not static; it evolved and adapted throughout the review process. Each ten transcribed interview underwent this dynamic encoding process, contributing to a layered, comprehensive analysis. The objective was to move from seeking similarities and differences among the categories to a 2nd-order analysis, where we were in the theoretical realm (see, Gioia et al. 2012).

Following the encoding phase, each interview was individually analyzed to distill specific insights and patterns. Subsequently, we engaged in a collective analysis, examining the interviews as a cohesive block, guided by the methodologies suggested by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2019). This approach facilitated a dual lens of examination, enabling us to extract particular insights specific to each hotel while also drawing overarching conclusions representative of the collective dataset. This meticulous and multifaceted analysis method enriched the depth and breadth of our insights, grounding the findings in the nuanced realities and experiences encapsulated in the interviewees' narratives and fostering a holistic understanding of TM practices within the hospitality sector.

4. Discussion of the Results

The Discussion section is equally important to write convincingly (Gioia et al., 2012). This made us focus on this sector. Our analysis revealed a prevailing trend in training practices within the hospitality industry - the predominant reliance on outsourced courses. This finding was corroborated by responses from five of the interviewed managers, underscoring the widespread adoption of this approach. This outcome aligns seamlessly with the insights presented by Grobler and Diedericks (2009), affirming the recurrent theme of outsourcing as a central pillar in hospitality training initiatives.

Delving deeper into this pattern, it becomes evident that the hospitality industry values the specialized expertise, diverse content, and tailored training methodologies external providers offer. Outsourced courses enable hotels and similar establishments to access a reservoir of knowledge, skills, and competencies that may not be readily available in-house. This ensures that the staff is equipped with cutting-edge skills and fosters an environment of continuous learning and development. Furthermore, utilizing outsourced courses underscores the industry's commitment to quality and excellence. By engaging external experts, hospitality entities can infuse their training programs with a level of sophistication, innovation, and relevance that is attuned to the dynamic landscape of the sector. It acknowledges the rapidly evolving service expectations, technological integrations, and competitive pressures that

characterize the modern hospitality landscape. The prevalence of outsourced courses also speaks to the industry's adaptive nature. With the inherently dynamic and customer-centric hospitality sector, the infusion of external insights, perspectives, and expertise ensures that the workforce remains agile, informed, and adept at meeting guests' diverse and evolving needs.

The notable inclination towards outsourced courses reflects not merely a training preference but indicates the hospitality industry's strategic approach to workforce development. It underscores a commitment to quality, excellence, and innovation, ensuring that employees are equipped with requisite skills and aligned with the emerging trends, standards, and expectations that define the global hospitality landscape.

The practice of colleague-to-colleague training emerges as the second most prevalent approach to workforce development in the hospitality industry, a finding supported by studies from Deery et al. (2008), Murphy et al. (2023), and Goh and Okumus (2020). This approach underscores the intrinsic value of experiential learning and knowledge transfer within the workplace, leveraging staff members' diverse skill sets, experiences, and insights.

Employees become learners and educators in this paradigm, engaging in a dynamic exchange of knowledge, skills, and insights. It fosters a learning culture characterized by collaboration, mutual support, and continuous development, where the collective knowledge and expertise of the workforce are harnessed to facilitate individual and organizational growth. Colleague-to-colleague training is not a one-size-fits-all practice but is rather fluid and adaptable, tailored to each organizational context's unique needs, challenges, and opportunities. It capitalizes on the real-world experiences, practical skills, and contextual insights of employees, making the learning process highly relevant, engaging, and impactful.

The benefits of this approach extend beyond skill acquisition and enhancement. It fosters a sense of community, collaboration, and mutual support among staff members, strengthening team cohesion, enhancing communication, and promoting a culture of shared learning and collective advancement. Every employee, irrespective of their role or seniority, becomes a contributor to the organizational learning ecosystem, instilling a sense of value, recognition, and empowerment.

Moreover, the colleague-to-colleague training model aligns with the dynamic and interactive nature of the hospitality industry. It facilitates real-time learning, enabling employees to adapt and respond to the evolving needs, expectations, and challenges of the service environment with agility, proficiency, and excellence.

Beyond the prominent training methods of outsourced courses and colleague-to-colleague training, the interviews unveiled six additional practices integral to workforce development in the hospitality industry:

Coaching Sessions - Echoing the insights of Marinakou and Giousmpasoglou (2019), coaching sessions are pivotal. Employees engage with coaches for personalized learning experiences, receiving tailored guidance to enhance their skills and address specific challenges. The one-on-one nature of these sessions ensures focused attention, enabling employees to explore, learn, and grow in a supportive and customized environment. The adaptability and personalization inherent in this approach foster employee empowerment, skill mastery, and enhanced performance.

Regular All-Employee Meetings - As Johnson et al. (2019) supported, organizing regular meetings involving all employees fosters an environment of communication, collaboration, and collective learning. These meetings serve as platforms for knowledge sharing, feedback exchange, and collaborative learning, integrating diverse perspectives and insights to enhance organizational performance and innovation.

Defining Success Points and Managing Workflow - Drawing parallels with the concept of virtual learning by Johnson et al. (2019) and Murphy et al. (2023), the practice of clearly delineating success metrics, managing workflow, and task allocation is fundamental. It ensures clarity, efficiency, and productivity, aligning employee efforts with organizational goals and fostering an environment of accountability and achievement.

Sharing Updates - In line with Cismaru et al. (2020), the practice of consistently sharing updates ensures that every member is informed, aligned, and responsive to organizational developments. This fosters transparency, engagement, and adaptability, ensuring that the workforce is attuned to the dynamic organizational landscape and can navigate it proficiently.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) - The creation and utilization of SOPs ensure consistency, quality, and efficiency in operational execution. These documented protocols serve as reference guides, aligning employee efforts with organizational standards and expectations, ensuring service delivery is consistent, high-quality, and reflects the brand's promise.

Intensive Short-Term Training for New Employees - For newcomers, an intensive, focused short-term training program ensures rapid onboarding, skill acquisition, and integration into the organizational culture. This accelerated learning pathway equips new hires with the essential skills, knowledge, and insights needed to contribute effectively from the onset, enhancing their confidence and productivity.

Based on the recommendations by Gioia et al. (2012), we move from our analysis to a data structure where we show the most practices mentioned in the interviews align with those read in the literature review, either in similarity or as subsets (see table 1). In the following sections, we will try to advance from Table 1 to a discussion of these elements.

	Interview	Literature review
1	Outsourcing	Outsourcing (Grobler & Diedericks, 2009), Virtual learning (Johnson et al., 2019), Ad hoc (Johnson et al., 2019)
2	Colleague-to-colleague training	On the job training (Deery et al., 2008), Engagement (Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou, 2019), Ad hoc (Johnson et al., 2019)
3	Coaching Sessions	Engagement (Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou, 2019), Ad hoc (Johnson et al., 2019)
4	Regular All-Employee Meetings	Engagement (Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou, 2019)
5	Defining Success Points and Managing Workflow	Ad hoc (Johnson et al., 2019)
6	Sharing Updates	Engagement (Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou, 2019)
7	Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)	
8	Intensive Short-Term Training for New Employees	On the job training (Deery et al., 2008), Engagement (Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou, 2019)

Table 1. The comparison between the practices in literature review and interviews

4.1. Advantages, Disadvantages, and Barriers in Practices

During our conversations with the interviewees, we ventured beyond identifying prevalent training practices to explore advantages and disadvantages. These discussions were intricate and insightful, drawing from the participants' lived experiences and professional insights to glean a nuanced understanding of the practical implications, challenges, and benefits associated with each training approach.

Organizing Outsourced Courses - By tapping into outsourced courses, hotels can leverage the expertise and resources of external providers. However, these establishments must ensure that the quality and relevance of such courses align with their specific needs and standards. Proper vetting, continuous feedback, and periodic assessment can help bridge the potential gaps and ensure that the outsourced training truly adds value to the employees and, by extension, to the hotel's service quality and guest experience. Five interviewees referred to this type of training in the interviews.

- **Flexible Learning:** Outsourced courses, especially online, provide individuals the flexibility to update and enrich their knowledge at their own pace and at their convenience. This empowers learners to integrate their training with their personal and professional commitments, optimizing learning outcomes.
- **Reduced Burden on the Hotel:** Outsourcing training courses alleviates the responsibility of the hotel to design, develop, and facilitate training modules. Instead, external experts handle the curriculum and delivery, ensuring the content is up-to-date, relevant, and aligned with industry best practices.

- **Potential Quality Discrepancies:** While outsourced courses often come with the appeal of certifications, there's an observed disparity in some cases between the number of certificates an individual accumulates and their actual skill proficiency. Just because an individual has many certificates doesn't always translate to being well-trained or competent in practical scenarios. This mismatch can sometimes lead to challenges in ensuring that the training has genuinely equipped employees with the required skills and competencies for their roles.

Some of the comments made by interviewees concerning this practice were as follows:

“We offer outsourced courses free of charge for employees. Also, we offer some specific courses for people in specific departments. for example, English course for room maids, a specific rocky pastry course to kitchen, etc.”

“Not everybody is motivated participating in the courses like me who is launching the project. The courses are normally virtual, so they are as easy as what you have in your pocket. HR department just define and present the courses but outsources it for operating.”

Colleagues Train Each Other - To mitigate the challenges associated with the informal nature of peer-to-peer training, organizations can consider implementing structured guidelines and criteria to ensure consistency and comprehensiveness in the training content. Additionally, integrating feedback and assessment mechanisms can help evaluate the effectiveness of peer training and identify areas for improvement. Furthermore, combining peer-to-peer training with formal training methods can create a balanced, comprehensive learning ecosystem. While colleagues impart practical insights and real-time experiences, formal training can ensure that theoretical knowledge and standard procedures are consistently and thoroughly communicated. This hybrid approach can maximize the benefits of both formal and informal training methodologies, ensuring that employees are well-rounded, competent, and equipped for optimal performance. Two interviewees referred to this type of training in the interviews.

- **Empowerment and Fulfillment:** When employees take on the role of training their peers, it fosters a sense of empowerment and fulfillment. They not only contribute to their colleagues' development but also enhance their own understanding and mastery of the subject matter.
- **Efficiency:** Peer training often accelerates the learning process. Since colleagues are already acquainted and understand each other's learning styles and pace, training can be tailored and direct, leading to quicker assimilation of knowledge.
- **Experience Sharing:** This practice facilitates a rich exchange of experiences, insights, and practical wisdom. Every employee brings a unique perspective, and sharing these diversified insights can enrich the learning environment and outcomes.
- **Diverse Perspectives:** Learning from peers offers multiple viewpoints on various concepts. This diversity in perspectives can foster a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of topics, promoting creativity and innovation.
- **Enhanced Communication:** Peer-to-peer training can particularly benefit those who may be reserved or shy. It fosters a safe, supportive environment for communication, encouraging participation and expression, and strengthening interpersonal relationships among team members.
- **Informality and Inconsistency:** Since colleague-to-colleague training is typically informal, there's a risk of inconsistencies and incomplete instruction. It may lack the structured rigor of formal training, leading to potential gaps in knowledge transfer.

Some of the comments made by interviewees concerning this practice were as follows:

“Although we have a book including SOPs and all procedures, it is important for us to train people in person. Colleagues are here to help you, train you and to show you what we are doing, that's like a family. We help you and we teach you by heart. In general, the training process is same for everybody, but it is done by different persons. For example, if the person is head of department, he would be trained by me directly or if he is a

receptionist he would be trained by other receptionists. It depends on the job position. This process is very simple, but it is fine for a hotel like this which is small.”

“We usually try to use the potential of current employees to train new people. So that everybody feels involved in the management of the hotel.”

Organizing Sessions with Coach - To mitigate these challenges, hotels could explore flexible scheduling, offering coaching sessions at varied times to accommodate the diverse schedules of their employees. Virtual coaching could also be a viable option, leveraging technology to facilitate access to coaching regardless of time constraints. Moreover, hotels can explore cost-effective coaching solutions, such as group coaching sessions or integrating internal coaching capacities, where experienced in-house personnel are trained to coach their peers to address the cost factor. Balancing quality and cost while ensuring accessibility can optimize the benefits of coaching sessions, making them a sustainable and impactful component of the hotel’s employee development strategy. One interviewee referred to this type of training in the interview.

- **Access to Modern Insights:** Sessions with coaches provide talented employees with an opportunity to be informed about cutting-edge solutions and experiences. Often equipped with the latest knowledge and trends, coaches can offer bespoke learning experiences tailored to each employee’s individual needs and potential, ensuring their skills are enhanced and aligned with modern industry standards.
- **Personalized Learning:** Coaching sessions offer a personalized approach to learning, allowing employees to receive individualized attention and tailored learning experiences. This level of customization ensures that learning is directly applicable, actionable, and designed to optimize each employee’s unique strengths and address their specific challenges.
- **Enhanced Performance:** With a coach’s direct guidance, employees can identify and address their areas of improvement, leading to enhanced performance. Coaches provide actionable feedback, strategies, and tools, fostering an environment of continuous improvement and excellence.
- **Additional Costs:** Engaging coaches incur extra expenses for the hotel. Professional coaching services, particularly those that are specialized and of high quality, require a financial investment, which could be a limitation for some establishments.
- **Availability Issues:** Given the 24-hour nature of the hotel business, scheduling challenges may arise. Due to their work shifts or operational demands, some employees might find participating in scheduled coaching sessions challenging, leading to potential inequities in access to this valuable learning opportunity.

The comment made by interviewee concerning this practice was as follows:

“Sometimes a coach come here who is very helpful specially when you work in Hospitality. He is like a psychologist but also, he focuses on team grow and team building which is very important in hotel.”

Organizing General Regular Meetings with All Employees - To amplify the benefits of these regular meetings, the management could incorporate varied learning modalities, like workshops, interactive sessions, and guest speakers, to enrich the content and engagement. Digital tools and platforms can be employed to facilitate continuous learning and interaction beyond physical meetings, creating an ongoing loop of learning, feedback, and improvement. One interviewee referred to this type of training in the interview.

- **Training Opportunities:** Regular meetings offer management a platform to introduce and train employees on new concepts. It’s a collaborative space where learning and communication intersect, ensuring that all staff members are aligned, informed, and equipped with the latest knowledge.
- **Feedback Exchange:** These gatherings facilitate a two-way communication channel, allowing employees to provide feedback, ask questions, and clarify doubts. It fosters an environment of openness and engagement, ensuring that the learning process is interactive, responsive, and adaptive.

- **Team Cohesion:** Regular meetings enhance team unity and cohesion by bringing everyone together. They instill a sense of belonging, ensuring that every employee feels valued, heard, and integral to the organizational ecosystem.
- **Real-time Updates:** Such meetings are pivotal for disseminating real-time updates and information, ensuring that the entire team is apprised of the latest developments, changes, and expectations. It fosters alignment, consistency, and collaborative effort toward shared goals.
- **Identifying Challenges and Opportunities:** Regular interactions provide insights into the challenges and opportunities existing within the team. Management can gauge the pulse of the workforce, leading to informed decision-making and strategic interventions.

The comment made by interviewee concerning this practice was as follows:

“We normally organize general meetings three times a year, one before the summer, one before the end of the year and one in winter when it is low season. In this way, we prepare the team for the next high season. In the meetings we update related information, resolve doubts, etc. Actually, we don’t have specific training programs for employees in house. When there is an update, we share it with everyone, then the meetings are a good opportunity to train and prepare the team.”

Moreover, recognizing and celebrating achievements, milestones, and contributions during these meetings can bolster morale and motivation. It underscores a culture of appreciation, recognition, and encouragement, propelling employees to engage, contribute, and excel with renewed enthusiasm and commitment. Incorporating a mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of the content delivered during these meetings and the impact on employee performance and satisfaction can also be pivotal. It ensures that the meetings are not just a formality but are instrumental in driving tangible growth, development, and enhancement for both the employees and the organization.

This study underscores the consequences of excluding employees from talent pools, a scenario thoroughly examined by Kichuk, Brown and Ladkin (2019). The affected employees often experience a mix of frustration and mistrust towards the organization, stemming from feelings of being overlooked and undervalued. Their expectations for career development within the company diminish, leading to low morale and productivity. This disenchantment often culminates in a pronounced inclination to seek employment opportunities elsewhere, where they anticipate their contributions will be more recognized and valued. Addressing this issue requires organizations to adopt a more inclusive and transparent talent identification and management approach. Implementing strategies that ensure fairness and inclusivity can help mitigate feelings of exclusion and negative repercussions. Focusing on continuous communication, recognition, and providing development opportunities for all employees can foster a sense of belonging and value, alleviating the adverse impacts of exclusion from specialized talent groups. These efforts not only boost morale but also enhance organizational cohesion and performance.

5. Conclusion

Throughout this study, a multifaceted exploration into talent management and development dynamics within the hospitality industry was conducted. Various training methodologies, including outsourced training, peer-to-peer learning, coaching sessions, and general employee meetings, were discussed, each with its unique advantages and challenges. Most reviewers of qualitative research intended for publication in the journals have an overriding concern with getting a satisfactory answer to the question, “How do I know that you know (what you are claiming)?” or more simply, “Where is the evidence for your assertions?” (Gioia et al., 2012). It is a common concern. Although our research is qualitative, the claims are resulted from the literature review (qualitative and quantitative) and interviews. In this way, the findings are justified.

The study highlights the significance of balancing formal and informal training approaches, underscoring the need for adaptability, inclusivity, and innovation in employee development strategies. Challenges such as the potential inconsistency of informal training and the scheduling and financial constraints of formal methods like coaching were highlighted. Solutions proposed involved integrating flexibility, leveraging technology, and ensuring that training and development initiatives are as dynamic and diverse as the workforce they aim to uplift. Issues related to

talent pool inclusion and exclusion were also a focal point. The emotional and professional ramifications of exclusion were explored, pointing to the need for transparent, fair, and inclusive talent identification and development mechanisms. The emphasis was placed on fostering an organizational culture where employees feel valued, engaged, and integral to the company's success.

This study shows the complexities and opportunities inherent in talent management within the hospitality sector. It underscored the pivotal role of strategic, inclusive, and adaptive approaches in optimizing employee development, organizational performance, and service excellence. The insights gleaned point towards a future where the balance between formal and informal, inclusive and exclusive, and strategic and adaptive practices will define the trajectory of employee development and organizational success in the hospitality industry.

On the one hand, we have identified several theoretical implications that can help researchers to keep working in this line. For instance, the trend towards outsourced training aligns with SHRM theories, emphasizing the strategic alignment of HR practices with business objectives. This demonstrates the hospitality industry's strategic planning in developing a competent workforce to meet evolving market demands. We also have seen that the industry's preference for diverse training methods, including coaching and regular employee meetings, reflects the principles of a learning organization. This concept emphasizes continuous learning and adaptability as key to organizational success, fostering an environment where learning is integrated into the daily workflow. Based on the results, colleague-to-colleague training exemplifies Bandura's Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1986), which posits that people learn from one another via observation, imitation, and modeling. This approach emphasizes the significance of experiential learning and knowledge sharing within a social context. Finally, investing in outsourced courses and personalized coaching sessions highlights the industry's commitment to human capital development. This aligns with the theory that investing in employee skills and knowledge improves performance and competitive advantage.

On the other hand, we also have found some practical implications related to the previous ones, for instance, colleague-to-colleague training fosters a collaborative culture and enhances skill sharing, but it requires structure to avoid inconsistencies. Implementing guidelines and integrating formal training elements can enhance its effectiveness. Along the same lines, training methods that include active employee participation, like coaching and peer training, promote employee engagement and empowerment, leading to higher job satisfaction and retention rates. The hospitality industry's reliance on varied training methods demonstrates adaptability to the sector's dynamic nature. It allows the workforce to stay abreast of evolving customer expectations and technological advancements. Finally, the study also highlights the importance of inclusive talent management. Ensuring all employees have equal access to training and development opportunities is critical in maintaining morale and productivity and reducing turnover.

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Appendix 1: Interview Protocol

Section 1: Interviewee's background information

- Organization
- Interviewee
- Job position
- Gender
- Email to send the report
- Other information
- How long have you worked in this industry?
- How long have you worked in this position?
- How long have you worked in the organization?

Section 2: Details about the selected hotel

- Number of beds
- How many employees work in the organization?
- Is your organization independent, or it has other branches?
- What are your roles in the organization?
- Does your organization have an HR department?
- Is there any specific person in charge of the HR department?
- Does your organization have programs for HR?
- How many people are working in the HR department?
- Does your organization's HR department have inclusive programs?
- Does the organization have any written HRM or TM plan?

Section 3: Participant's perspectives on pertinent topics

- Employees are the most important assets in hospitality businesses. Do you agree with this sentence? Why?
- What do you understand from HR and HRM?
- What do you understand from Talent and Talent Management?
- Who are the talents in your organization?
- Are you talented in your organization?
- What are the key positions in your organization?
- How many talents does your organization have? (1-2 talents; $3 < X < 10$ talents; > 11 talents)
- Are all employees' talents in your organization?
- How can you be a talent in your job position, organization, and industry?
- How do talents affect hotels?
- What are TM's goals?

Section 4: Insights into TM practices

For each of the following four talent management practices (Attraction, Selection, Training, and Performance), answer the following questions:

- Describe the practice
- Is the previous practice formal (with a standard regulation) or informal?
- Does your hotel use the same practices for people in key positions?
- What are the advantages of this practice?
- What are the disadvantages of this practice?
- What barriers did you face to implementing this practice?
- Who is in charge of this practice?
- Who is involved in this practice?
- Who runs this practice?

Conclusions

- From your point of view, which steps in TM are the most important?
- Can you order TM steps from the most important ones?

