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TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT NEEDS IN HOTEL COMPANIES IN INDIA: AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH

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Training and Development Needs in Hotel Companies in India: *An Inconvenient Truth*

Ask a hotel company in India about its training initiatives, and it will be quick to respond with the multiple training programmes it currently offers across all levels at the work place. Some of the international hotel companies are likely to additionally mention the various hotel schools and universities they partner with globally.

However, if one were to dig deeper, they would find that:

- Some of these **hotel schools and universities that the international hotel companies collaborate with are located in their home country** (where the company's global headquarters are). So, if you were to ask how many of their Indian associates are sent to these educational institutions, you would usually get just a smile back in response.
- Typically, the **training managers themselves are threatened by an external presence or support for the training and development function**. Any admission of such a need is reckoned to be a reflection of their own inability to perform that role internally for their company – which is quite a misplaced notion.
- In many cases, **ignorance or lack of time results in poor resource allocation towards training and development**, and often companies consider this very important function to be best handled at the property-level.

While **training at the property-level** is the correct way to ensure that skills are passed on from one set of employees to the next, the **challenge comes when this is not structured**. The assigned trainer for the department could be great at his/her core area of work, but may not be a great trainer – which requires a unique set of skills. Alternately, the assigned trainer may or may not be competent in his/her core area of work itself, which could result in the transfer of poor skills and knowledge. In either scenario, the trainee will need to rely on sheer luck to receive good training and guidance required for his/her career growth.

Moreover, **lack of consistency in the training imparted** could be a major hindrance to the process based upon who the chosen trainer of the month is for a particular hotel department. This situation is aggravated further when the appointed trainer moves to a new role or job. Then, who takes his/her place? Often someone volunteers or is simply chosen randomly for the role, thus starting yet another flawed training cycle.

Two years ago at a gathering of about 100 hotel owners in India – **training or the lack of it was identified as one of the four most pressing issues faced by them in the country**. One does not need to look too far back to understand their concern. Today an individual can become a hotel General Manager in 10 years or less, which used to previously take 20 years or more. The question is how well-trained are these individuals compared to their seniors? We often find that executives are being lured with higher designations to switch companies by desperate brands that are growing their footprint in India, irrespective of whether these individuals are ready for the role or not.

We at **HVS Professional Skills Development (PSD)** took the initiative to research this further and realised the following:

- One of the **biggest challenges in the Indian hospitality industry** today is the **widening skill gap and skill shortage**. This is coupled with inadequate supply of experienced trainers and subject matter experts.
- The leading domestic brands have well-established training schools, but in most cases there is a **shortage of adequate number of experienced trainers for specialised domains**.
- The international brands, on the other hand, have put together plans to train their manpower but are inundated with issues such as **prohibitive costs of providing consistent training programmes led by international trainers and the high attrition of experienced trainers**. Also, in most cases specialised courses are facilitated by employees who are not subject matter experts and nor are they well versed with the fundamentals of training.
- Additionally, many international brands use **training material**, which has been passed on from their global corporate offices and **has not been customised keeping the Indian workforce, customer or the local economy in mind**.
- In this age of outsourcing where hotel functions such as housekeeping, F&B, spa, security and laundry, among others are being outsourced, **it is only a matter of time when hospitality leaders in India realise that Training too should be outsourced**. The only question to be answered then is when and to whom!

Therefore, about six months ago we launched **HVS PSD**, a vertical with the **objective to fill this void and become the unbridled champion of outsourcing training in the region**. We decided to create the basic programs and then customize it to the specifications laid down by the brands. In addition to leveraging our superior hospitality industry knowledge, we have tied up with reputed universities such as Cornell and Fore School of Management for specific courses. Their experienced facilitators will be delivering quality content through innovative teaching techniques. This symbiosis will help us provide **relevant, well researched, industry-focused training programmes, potentially paving way for outsourced training in India**.



About HVS

HVS is the world's leading consulting and services organization focused on the hotel, mixed-use, shared ownership, gaming, and leisure industries. Established in 1980, the company performs 4500+ assignments each year for hotel and real estate owners, operators, and developers worldwide. HVS principals are regarded as the leading experts in their respective regions of the globe. Through a network of more than 30 offices and 450 professionals, HVS provides an unparalleled range of complementary services for the hospitality industry. HVS.com

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HVS SOUTH ASIA established in 1997, conducts assignments within the Indian sub-continent and other countries in Asia for leading hotel companies, banks, and hotel development and investment groups. We are the only dedicated hospitality consulting firm in the region to offer end-to-end solutions through the entire lifecycle of hotel assets - Development, Pre-opening, Operations and Sale. Services offered are: Consulting & Advisory, Executive Search, Marketing Communications, Energy & Sustainability and Professional Skills Development.

HVS PROFESSIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT aims to provide superior Learning and Development solutions that emphasize Talent Development and Performance Enhancement. Our training solutions in key areas like Finance, Human Resources, Revenue Management, Sales & Marketing and Leadership Development, as well as specialized programs in contemporary subjects are designed exclusively for executives and managerial-level professionals. HVS' superior industry knowledge and valuable partnerships with reputed universities and subject matter experts enable us to deliver these best in class training programs. HVSPSD.com

About the Author



Manav Thadani, Chairman, HVS Asia Pacific, founded the New Delhi office in 1997. Over the last 17 years, Manav has been involved in over 1,000 hotel projects in India and continues to provide strategic advice to key clients. Besides serving as a mentor to HVS verticals in India, Manav provides direction to the larger team across Asia Pacific, ensuring that the HVS offices in the region operate cohesively and effectively. Manav also developed the Hotel Investment Conference – South Asia (HICSA) and has planned and directed this very successful conference since its inception in 2005. He also runs two other conferences in the Asia Pacific region – the China Hotel Investment Conference (CHIC) and Tourism, Hotel Investment & Networking Conference (THINC) Indonesia. Additionally, over the past few years, Manav has helped launch HVS Energy & Sustainability Services as a global operation, with regional headquarters in Miami, US and New Delhi, India. On a personal level, Manav co-founded SAMHI in 2011, a leading Indian hotel investment and development firm with focus on ownership of branded hotels in the mid-scale and economy segments across key cities. mthadani@hvs.com