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Upgrading Hospitality Staff Skills through Training

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Annotation. The study aims at proving the importance of training for hospitality workforce. The concept “training” has been analyzed in the paper. It also shows the correlation between the upgrading of the skills and the level of the provided hospitality services. There is a shortage of skills of hospitality workforce nowadays. These skills are classified in different ways depending on the grounds taken into account. One of the grounds is categorization of the hospitality staff. There are different gradations of the staff which are used nowadays. In the view of training needs, a new classification was offered. According to it, hospitality workforce is grouped into four categories: managers, supervisors, skilled craft and semi-skilled employees. Hospitality staff are severely lacking a lot of skills today. All skills have been analyzed as “general” and “specific”. General skills include both basic and specific. The latter one is common to all categories of the hospitality workforce, but at the same time it denotes special activities. It is called “specific common” skills. The other group is named “specific individual”, because it denotes skills which are necessary to perform job responsibilities which are typical to a particular group of hospitality staff. The paper graphically represents this classification of skills. The summary of all considerations and analysis has been offered in the table. Training aimed at developing general skills makes hospitality staff more competitive and mobile in the labour market. The development and upgrading specific skills stimulates better performance of job responsibilities.

Key words: *hospitality staff, training, classification, skills, needs.*

Introduction. Travel and tourism industry is a very complex labor-intensive branch which encompasses a wide range of economic activities and at the same time it employs a great number of people. The challenge of globalization emphasizes the creation of new approaches to the industry itself and to its staff.

One of the priority issues in the policy of most countries has become the “upgrading of human resources in tourism” [4]. The way to achieve this is a substantial investment in human capital which leads to improving not only training of the staff but also to competitiveness, mobility and better employment opportunities within tourism. This has become a key factor of development for all worldwide industries including travel and tourism industry.

The core activity in tourism is hotel and catering which are also known as hospitality industry. For a long time the hotel industry has been viewed as an essentially non-specialized sector of activity associated with cleaning and personal services while food services were classified as part of retail food [11, p.34]. Since 1997 hotel and catering activities have been included into one sector, under the heading “hospitality industry”, whose product is services offered to customers. Thus, there is an obvious interdependence: the more qualified staff, the better services they offer, the more profit hotels and restaurants have.

Review of the Related Literature. Theoretical and practical studies in which training process in the field of hospitality services has been discussed are not numerous, though the benefits of training are obvious. In such studies the researchers represent different practical aspects of educating and training hospitality staff: impact of training on improving hotel service quality [7; 16]; the role of training managers and innovations in the accommodation industry [10]; regional approach to the training [3]; comparative analysis of training skills systems in different countries [2; 6; 11].

Statement of Problem. Accommodation and restaurant industries are, in fact, experiencing a skills gap and the lack of the qualified labour nowadays. Training is one of the tools to improve the situation crucially and upgrade the level of hotel and restaurant services. Hence, it is necessary to investigate the concept “training” from the different points of view: trainers, trainees, training officials. This article focuses on the hospitality industry, thus the definition of training herein will refer specifically to improvements or changes that affect hotels and restaurants. As a result of training, the staff will acquire a number of skills. It is customary to distinguish between three types of skills: personal, social and operative. Thus, the **main goal of the research** is to examine the skills, hospitality staff can get through their training within the organizations. Clearly, all skills can be acquired, developed and upgraded. It is possible only through training of the staff. Hence, the development of these skills is the reason of organizing training in the hospitality industry. They are even called so “training needs of hospitality workforce” [4].

To achieve it, the following specific **tasks** should be carried out:

- to analyze the content of the concept “training” in the hospitality industry;
- to consider the available classifications of hospitality workforce;
- to offer a new classification of hospitality workforce categories and the one of their skills;
- to define the basic skills which are common to all hospitality employees;

- to distinguish the skills which are characteristic only of a particular category of the staff;
- to summarize the information into the table.

Methodology. To achieve the objectives of the study, an extensive review of literature on the mentioned problem has been made and the content of previous studies which handle the same topic has been analyzed. The methods which were used in the paper include:

- analytical descriptive approach;
- analysis of the content of previous studies which handle the same topic;
- categorization and classification of information.

Analysis. Training has become “the Holy Grail” to some organizations, evidence of how much the management truly cares about its workforce [3, p.72]. Without any doubt, hospitality can become effective if the hotels and restaurants pursue the people-oriented policy. The organizations which invest in training of their staff, get in return higher skills and greater competence that help them to improve productivity. There are a lot of challenges on the way to successful training and educating the hospitality staff possessing the required knowledge and skills. For example, not all organizations want to invest in their people, because this return is long-range and they want to get an immediate profit. There is a Chinese wise saying which proves the necessity of training people: “If you wish to plan for a year, sow seeds. If you wish to plan for ten years, plant trees. If you wish to plan for a lifetime, develop men” [cited in 3, p.72].

Education is an excellent tool to develop people. Concerning our study, it is better to use the term “training” as we speak about educating process in organizations. Such education in the job place gives an excellent opportunity to enhance the knowledge and skills of the employees. However, it does not mean that it restricts the opportunities to get formal education in the corresponding universities, institutes, colleges. On the contrary, the training in hotels and restaurants has to continue in all stages of work. Especially it is getting more important in the terms of adult education within the continuous (lifelong) learning framework. As for hospitality employees, this can be called continual hotelling education [7, p.84].

Though researchers stress on the “economic value of education and training [3, p.73], in general, the importance of training has not yet been widely recognized in tourism industry. And the question of training hospitality staff is becoming more urgent, as the skill employment structure in accommodation and restaurant industries seems to be poorer than in other sectors of economy [10]. That is why, hotels and restaurants should “redouble their efforts to offer staff the opportunity to improve knowledge through training” [14].

The concept “training” has been widely used by scholars, employees, training managers. But the meaning they put into the term can be quite different. The concept is usually understood as a continuous, organized administrative process which has specific purposes.

Other definitions are:

- an active means to enable individual to make use of his capability and his potential capability [13, p.54];
- a planned persistent activity aiming to create change in data, experience, methods, views, behaviors and attitudes of individual and group to make them competent. The purpose is to empower them to conduct their business in arrangement and to get high productivity as base to accomplishing firms’ goals [7, p.87].

To sum up, we list the most crucial points in the definitions from the point of view of everyone who is engaged in the training process. To the workforce, it is important that training makes them capable of performing new duties, flexible and mobile, competitive in the labor market. The essential point for trainers is that this educational process is planned, persistent, coherent with the organization policy and empowers them to be creative and develop new approaches to staff training. For both groups: trainers and trainees, training provides an opportunity for self-realization. As for training officials, training is an excellent means of upgrading staff skills and knowledge which leads to accomplishing the organization goals –higher productivity, profitability and competitiveness in the market.

Clearly, staff training should involve every employee from a chambermaid to the General Manager. As the staff is multi-level and diverse, the choice of training programs should be corresponding. To select the appropriate program, forms and methods of training, it is necessary to classify the hospitality staff according to some criteria. In the terms of the contact with public, all the staff is commonly divided into two groups: contact (those who have direct contact with the customers) and non-contact (those who do not have face-to-face dealings with the public). In view of professional qualifications, the staff is traditionally classified into three levels: highly skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled.

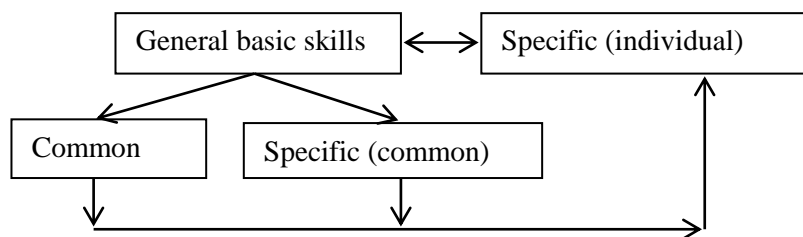
But the majority of the researchers [3; 5; 8] distinguish between four categories of the workforce in tourism. All studies do not use similar subject area names, which makes comparison and generalization more difficult. For example, P. Jonkers calls the staff categories in the following way: management level,

supervisors, skilled craft workforce and the semi-skilled [5, p.8]. L. Knodel gives such terms: front-line personnel (employees who have a lot of direct dealings with the guests – waiters, secretaries, porters, etc.), supervisors (those who supervise the group of employees, but not the whole departments - housekeepers, maître d’hotels, etc.), middle-level management (the staff responsible for the whole department – PR manager, senior housekeeper, personnel manager, etc.) and high-level management (the employees responsible for the strategic development of the organization – General Manager or Executive director) [8, p.22].

S. Hamid recognizes the classes: Class I – Managing Director and Joint Managing Director; Class II – Company Secretary, Chief Accounts Officer, Accounts and Assistant Accounts Officers, Managers (grade I and II), Executive Engineers; Class III - Executive Assistants, Executive Accounts, Chief Assistants, Purchase Assistants, Communications Assistants, F&B Assistants, Telephone operators, Barmen, Chefs, Timekeepers and Security Supervisors. Class IV – Drivers, Electricians, Plumbers, Waiters, Helpers, Security Guards, Gardeners, Cleaners, Sweepers, Lift Operators, Commis, Carpenters, Room Attendants, Porters [3, p. 75].

By analogy, there have been recognized four levels of hotel and restaurant staff, though the names of the positions are different: managers, workers, technicians and cooks [7, p.84]. There are other classifications of the workforce in hospitality industry: according to S.A.Meriot: managerial, supervisory and operational levels [11, pp.32-35]; according to V.S.Senin: general management, front of the house, housekeeping and kitchen (restaurant, bar) [15, p.205].

To the needs of our research we adapt the first mentioned classification of jobs in tourism and offer a new one. Because the established task is to distinguish between basic common and specific skills of hospitality staff, we categorize all employees into four groups: management, supervisors, skilled craft and semi-skilled employees. Such classification will allow us to define and to group basic skills which are typical to all employees and they can be called general basic skills. In their turn, they are comprised of two subgroups of skills: common and specific. Though one of the subgroups is named specific, it concerns special skills to be developed and trained, no matter what staff category is considered. Opposing to the general basic skills, there is a group of those specific skills which are characteristic only to a particular category of employees. We call them individually specific. To clarify the point, the classification can be represented in the following way:



Classification of hospitality employees’ skills

Without any doubt, personal and social skills can be referred to the common basic skills and they are requested most frequently in the hospitality industry. The capacity to learn and to work independently is also gaining in importance today [14, p.24]. The lack of foreign languages knowledge has been recognized by National Tourism organizations in some European countries as “a lasting problem and even a competitive disadvantage” [5, p.9]. Another basic skill is entrepreneurship. This concept has not been clearly defined yet, but a great number of education providers are working on this notion and offering to implement it at the compulsory school level. In addition, the specific knowledge and skills which are linked to technological innovation and information technologies have penetrated onto all levels of the workforce. Due to extensive contact of the hospitality staff with the public, one of the important specific skills is the ability to provide First Aid. These specific skills are common to every labour category and they are often listed as lacking [9, p.24].

On the other hand, as it has been mentioned above, in addition to common specific skills there are those which are characteristic for only one level –individually specific. For instance, the researcher Peter Jonkers remarks that at management level tourism managers have an educational background in different subjects: accountancy, marketing, law, economics, etc. and their skills are rather transversal [5, p.9]. However, they are expected to have the following skills: computer, business and strategic planning, strategic alliances, management skills, management through visions and values, yield management, accounting, product development, innovation, human resource management, destination management, project management, management skills to cope with globalization influences, change management, marketing and sales skills. There are appearing new dimensions in the learning needs for managers: the impact and potential use of ICT,

the increased focus on quality and Human Resource Management, the concept of sustainable tourism which adds to the need of the development of new approaches to training [4, p.8].

Supervisors in tourism need basic computer skills, human resource management, hygiene, hazard analysis and critical control point concerning food safety methodology (HACCP), accounting, supervision and training skills. Personal skills, problem solving and basic computer skills are especially important for the skilled craft workforce. Semi-skilled tourism staff need to further develop personal and specific technical knowledge (cleaning, catering, bar attendance).

For supervisors, skilled craft and to some extent semi-skilled craft the learning needs has to be considered in the light of emerging new job profiles [4, p.8].

There is a growing pressure today for combination of skills typical for various qualifications which are required from hospitality staff. Consequently, the traditional simple and repetitive tasks are evolved to complex multidimensional tasks in order to deliver the complex products. Hence, it is leading to emergence of new hybrid occupations – multiskilling [9, p.24].

No matter what category of workforce is being spoken about, jobs in hospitality industry require a combination of different skills. Generally, they include three main fields. According to their content, they are divided into:

- technical skills: those required to perform the routine tasks associated with the positions;
- interpersonal skill: how employees interact with staff members and guests;
- self-management or supervisory skills: how well the employee organizes his or her time, acts responsibility and/or leads others [1, p.74].

The basis for such grading is the opportunity to achieve a career success. As researchers state, hospitality industry needs employees who are attitudinally as well as technically developed [12]. It means that hospitality workforce should possess not only technical skills, but also the latter two ones: interpersonal and supervisory. It is these skills which are severely lacking today and employers are seeking for. As for their effectiveness in performance, they are of equal importance. In our opinion, this classification does not contradict the one described before. They correlate with each other, the difference being the grounds for classifications. In the first one, belonging to the category of the hospitality staff is taken into account. In the second, the content of skills is considered.

All mentioned skills which represent training needs of hospitality workforce can be grouped according to the above-described gradation of the workforce along with the classification of the skills in the following way:

Training needs of hospitality staff

All Categories	Managers	Supervisors	Skilled Craft	Semi-Skilled
General basic skills	Specific (individual) skills	Specific (individual) skills	Specific (individual) skills	Specific (individual) skills
Personal and social skills; The capacity to learn and work independently; New technologies; Quality; Customer care; Communications: -languages; -cross-cultural understanding; Team work; Project work; Sustainable development; Entrepreneurship; Safety and security;	Computer skills; Business planning; Strategic alliances; Management skills; Yield management; Accounting; Product development innovation; Marketing; Sales; Human resource management; Train the trainer; Management	Basic computer skills; Human resource management; Hygiene; Accounting; Supervision skills; Training skills.	Problem solving; Basic computer skills; Induction training.	Technical skills (bar, kitchen, restaurant, cleaning); In-house training; House-keeping training; Induction training.

First aid.	skills to cope with globalization reality; Change management.			
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General basic skills are in urgent need for two reasons. Firstly, they are typical for all categories of hospitality staff. Secondly, they are easily transferrable to other industries. These skills make hospitality staff more competitive and mobile in the labour market. The development and upgrading specific individual skills help hospitality employees perform their job responsibilities efficiently. Training is just the educational tool which helps employees acquire, develop and upgrade their skills and proficiency.

Human Resources Management scholars and practicing training managers offer useful recommendations to organize an adequate training in the job place. Among them, for example, the following suggestions which are essential to successful training and education in the tourism industry, in general, and which can be applied to hospitality industry, in particular, can be offered:

- make training process job-related;
- where possible, apply innovative methods of training;
- get support from both management and workers;
- integrate training in the career path of every employee;
- develop general and specific at the same time;
- motivate and stimulate employees to training;
- encourage employees to learning and self-learning in the perspective;
- training plans should be transparent;
- the goals of training should be clearly established and realizes by employees;
- results and outcomes of the training should be evaluated.

Conclusion. To conclude the analysis and considerations, it should be noted that knowledge of skills which the industry and employers require, can help realize which skills are lacking and develop or upgrade them with the help of organized training. As a rule, the role of training is underestimated, there are a lot of challenges to overcome to make it more efficient. Scholars and practical training managers should pay more attention to this educational tool, as it provides excellent opportunities to learn continuously. Thanks to the new technologies and the globalization processes, it is impossible to be a professional without such life-long education.

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С. Р. Бабушко

Повышение навыков персонала индустрии гостеприимства через обучение

Аннотация. В статье показана важность обучения работников гостеприимства, раскрыто содержание концепта “training” (обучение). Показана взаимосвязь между повышением навыков работников и уровнем предоставления ими услуг гостеприимства. В современных условиях наблюдается нехватка самых необходимых навыков у работников индустрии гостеприимства. Эти навыки классифицируются по-разному в зависимости от критериев. Одним из них является классификация персонала. В научной литературе существует множество классификаций персонала для различных целей. В данной работе предлагается классификация работников с учетом подготовки и организации обучения персонала. Она охватывает менеджеров, инспекторов, квалифицированных работников и работников низкой квалификации. Навыки, которые выделенные группы работников могут развивать и повышать в процессе своего обучения, классифицируются как общие и частные. В группу общих входят основные базовые и частные. Последние характерны для всех выделенных нами групп работников и названы “общие специфические”. Вторую группу составляют частные, которые типичны только для определенного класса персонала и, соответственно, названы “индивидуальными частными”. Автор предлагает графическую репрезентацию данной классификации навыков. В предложенной таблице наведены примеры общих и частных навыков, наиболее характерных для менеджеров, инспекторов, квалифицированной и малоквалифицированной рабочей силы. Обучение для приобретения общих навыков способствует повышению мобильности и конкурентоспособности работников на рынке труда. Развитие частных навыков способствует повышению качества выполняемой работы.

Ключевые слова: персонал индустрии гостеприимства, обучение, классификация, навыки, потребности.