

How to keep hospitality industry employees motivated during the festive season

As the festive season is the busiest time of the year, staff in the hospitality industry are under increased pressure.



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“When you are enjoying a summer holiday, the atmosphere of the hotel or restaurants where you choose to spend time makes a considerable difference to your experience. As any successful employer in the hospitality industry knows, there is more to creating a ‘holiday mood’ than merely putting up Christmas decorations,” explains Jacques Snyman, Agility Corporate wellbeing and health product development expert and director of the parent company, Agility Holdings.

“The quality of service and attitude of staff members are vital ingredients in creating the overall ambience that guests feel and the impression of your establishment that they will remember. In an industry where word of mouth referrals and repeat business are so important to a company’s sustainability, it is worthwhile for employers to do everything possible to get this right.”

Physical, psychosocial and holistic wellbeing

The staff who employers rely on to deliver ‘service with a smile’ are far more likely to excel in their duties and remain productive and engaged if they are not only healthy in the narrow sense of being present for work, but enjoy physical, psychosocial and holistic well-being that enables them to perform at their best.

Snyman says that staff in the hospitality industry, particularly those who are ‘front of house’ or client-facing are, in addition to their other duties, engaged in ‘emotional labour’ in their interactions with guests. “Emotional labour is an aspect of work that is often taken for granted, yet is absolutely imperative when it comes to working with customers.

“In service roles especially, employees are expected to be pleasant in their interactions with guests, for example greeting them with a smile and expressing concern, even when the staff member’s emotions may not necessarily match such outward expression. This is a very important aspect of work in hospitality, as a grumpy waitress or stressed-out hotel desk attendant can create a very poor impression. It should be acknowledged, however, that this requires sustained effort on the part of the employee, which can be particularly difficult when staff are fatigued or under stress,” notes Snyman.

Maintaining motivation and morale

Employers in hotels and restaurants often face challenges when it comes to maintaining motivation and morale during this busy time of year when most other people are enjoying their holidays – Snyman advises that this is crucial for ensuring that the ‘faces’ of the business remain engaged and effective in their roles during the festive season.

“It is a good idea to ensure that all staff members have an opportunity to spend some quality time with their loved ones to ‘recharge their batteries’, as ultimately, they will be more productive and able to perform their work to a higher standard, including interactions with guests. While it may take some creativity to get this right, it is worth investing some time in planning work rosters carefully at this time of year.

“The end of the year is a time when many employees may be facing financial or personal stress, and this, for example, can also impact their ability to perform at their best. Employees who are members of one of our partner medical schemes have access to our core employee wellness programme, which includes access to basic financial, legal and psychosocial counselling over the phone with relevant experts.

“In addition to providing greater peace of mind, these services can significantly assist individuals to mitigate a range of common pressures, which can help to offset the potential effects of stress on work performance, including existing health conditions that may be exacerbated by stress.”

According to Snyman, employers who demonstrate a commitment to employees’ well-being can boost staff morale within their company, which in turn promotes productivity and engagement levels.

“For employers in the hospitality industry, my advice is to let your staff know that they are appreciated this festive season as they are your company’s ambassadors and best hope of attracting even more customers for years to come,” concluded Snyman.

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