

A STAFF INDUCTION PROGRAMME FOR HOTELS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract

This paper discusses the development and enrichment of a theoretical framework for a staff induction programme for South Africa. Such a research project could add value to the hospitality industry in South Africa and further afield, by providing a solution to the challenges involved in the recruitment, development and retention of qualified and skilled hospitality employees.

A literature review paved the way for the formulation of a generic four-stage staff induction programme. Semi-structured personal interviews were conducted with five representatives responsible for the staff induction programmes at five of the best companies to work for in South Africa, to contextualise this to the South African context. Personal interviews were then conducted with two representatives of two major hotel groups in order to contextualise the staff induction programme to the South African hospitality industry. This led to the proposal of a staff induction programme that consists of three stages, namely the anticipatory, encounter and adjustment phases.

The implementation of this proposed staff induction programme for hotels in South Africa may act as a best practice in the development of new staff induction programmes, and may improve the effectiveness of current staff induction programmes. This may lead to better staff retention rates, reduction in absenteeism, a higher level of skills and productivity, as well as increased staff morale and motivation.

Keywords: Staff induction programme, hotel, theoretical framework, best practice

1. INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is regarded as a major global growth sector (WTTC, 2011:7), and one of the world's most important and biggest sectors (Pizam & Shani, 2009:134). It provides for a range of career opportunities and employs around sixty million people globally, annually contributing about US\$950 billion to the global economy (IH&RA, 2012).

The latest available Tourism and Sports Skills Audit of 2007 showed that hospitality is the largest industry of the South African tourism sector, with approximately 290 000 employees and 28 000 employers (Grant Thornton, 2007:30).

The 2012 Tourism Satellite Account (STATSSA, 2012:14) estimates that accommodation services and restaurants had annual domestic supplies of R36 880 million and R41 344 million respectively in 2010. These products made meaningful contributions towards the South African tourism sector, since 95.3% of the supply of accommodation services and 35.9% of restaurants' supply were consumed by tourists. The demand of international tourists for accommodation services and restaurants amounted to approximately R1 242 million and R 8 296 million in 2010.

The South African hospitality industry, however, experiences a serious skills shortage on all skill levels, and hotels find it increasingly difficult to appoint experienced staff (CATHSSETA, 2012:24). As a result of the fierce competition, talented people are becoming more difficult to retain, which is aggravated by poor performance in the industry. In 2010, the South African Department of Labour inspected 2 622 hospitality enterprises, and found that 56% of these employers were not complying with legislation related to annual increases in minimum wages; irregular deductions or deductions from employees' salaries without the employees' consent; compressed work weeks; work without compensation at night, Sundays and public holidays; and a lack of contracts of employment. Hospitality employers were furthermore contravening unemployment and occupational health and safety legislation resulting in the sector being listed on the government's list of high-risk and problematic sectors (CATHSSETA, 2012:24).

The National Tourism Sector Strategy's second objective aims to address these human resources challenges aspiring to provide excellent people development and decent work within the industry (South Africa. Department of Tourism, 2011:12). Major South African hotel groups acknowledge the challenges involved in the recruitment, development and retention of quality employees, and view an effective staff induction programme as fundamental for the development and retention of quality employees.

The role of staff induction in staff retention is supported by researchers (Totterdell, Woodroffee, Bubb & Hanrahan, 2004:2; Swinney, 2007:148). Gustafson (2005:34) states that it is likely that new employees will begin to plot an exit strategy if a good first impression is not reinforced at the start of an induction programme. According to the Harvard Business Review (2011:28), 40% of new recruits in the top three levels in an organisation who left the organisation within their first two years, left because of integration difficulties, which may have been overcome by an effective staff induction programme. The best companies acknowledge that it is a good investment to share information with new employees to assist them to understand the organisation, as well as what it expects from new employees (Blanchard & Thacker, 2010:378). Staff induction assists in reducing incidents of lateness, absenteeism and poor performance (Brogan, 2007:Online), and aids in fostering a positive impression of the organisation (Mathis & Jackson, 2003:286).

Blanchard and Thacker (2010:378) also add that anxiety may be reduced, roles may be more clearly defined, staff turnover may be reduced, job performance may increase, commitment levels may be increased and the organisation may become more effective.

Limited research has, however, been conducted on the specific aspects that should be addressed by a staff induction programme for the hotel industry, with no similar research being conducted in the South African context. Therefore, this study aims to propose an effective staff induction programme for hotels in South Africa.

This article presents a literature review on the different aspects that could be addressed by a general staff induction programme. The methodology is then discussed, proposing a staff induction programme that is enriched and contextualised to the South African hotel context. The article concludes with the important implications of the findings of the study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Considering the limited available literature on hotel staff induction programmes, the literature review focuses on those aspects that could be included in a general staff induction programme regardless of the industry. It was firstly important to outline the staff induction programme's position in the human resources management function, arranging the aspects of a general staff induction programme according to different phases.

2.1 Staff induction as a human resources training, development and evaluation function

The basic human resource management functions include planning; job design; recruitment and selection; performance management; and training, development and rewards (Bratton & Gold, 2012:13). As part of the training function, an induction programme aims to introduce new employees to their organisation and their job, while other training programmes usually aim to assist employees with the skills necessary to do their job (Lussier & Hendon, 2013:240, 241).

2.2 The staff induction process

Most induction programmes treat the first few weeks and months of employment as a transitional period in which the culture, passion, pride and procedures of a company are communicated to the new employee (Gustafson, 2005:34). The British Teacher Training Agency estimates that induction may take at least one year to complete (Swinney, 2004:178).

The staff induction programme involves several stages, and following a review of literature, the researchers decided to adopt the four stages of induction proposed by Thomas (2003:Online), namely the anticipatory stage; the encounter stage; the adjustment stage and the evaluation stage, which are confirmed by Blanchard and Thacker (2010:386, 287) and are discussed in the following sections.

2.2.1 Stage one: The anticipatory stage

The first stage of induction occurs from acceptance of the job offer to the first day of employment (Thomas, 2003:Online). An orientation kit or information pack is prepared for each inductee (Byars & Rue, 2004:187), with key information communicated through the line manager (Byars & Rue, 2004:186), which the human resources department is responsible for initiating and coordinating (Byars & Rue, 2004:186).

A personal note or call from a direct supervisor is preferable (Sanders & Kleiner, 2002:86). This stage can be used to educate the new employee's prospective supervisor, with a checklist, regarding his/her role in the induction programme (Robbins, 2002:29).

2.2.2 Stage two: The encounter stage

Robertson (2007:Online) states that induction should be provided shortly after the new person starts and usually lasts approximately one month (Thomas, 2003:Online). It is during the encounter phase that newcomers are integrated into the organisation, their job and the organisational culture (Harvard Business Review, 2011:29).

It is suggested that the employee's supervisor greet the new inductee and make him/her feel welcome (Phillips & Gully, 2014:232). Information on technology-specific topics should be discussed (Mathis & Jackson, 2003:288). The necessary administrative paperwork, such as the employment contract and any additional paperwork regarding fringe benefits, are completed and inductees also receive information regarding certain legal aspects and financial information (Chapman, 2006:Online; Westcott, 2008:1). On their first day, employees also require knowledge, including lines of authority and current job descriptions, and other basic job information regarding their role in the organisation (Messmer, 2000:12).

New employees may attend staff or management meetings, to allow them to feel that they are a part of the organisation, and an event to celebrate their first day or week at their new job could be organised (Messmer, 2000:12; Westcott, 2008:1).



The new employees' skills and qualities obtained during induction will not be tested until the employee starts to work (Lashley & Best, 2002:7). Differences between newcomer anticipations and the reality of the organisation must be assessed as these may lead to a reality shock (Couzins & Stuart, 2005:53; Lam, Baum & Pine, 2002:162). A checklist of should be kept which ideally should be signed by the employee and human resources department (Walsh, 2006).

2.2.3 Stage three: The adjustment stage

The adjustment phase usually lasts from the second to the sixth month of employment (Thomas, 2003:Online), and may continue throughout the employee's first year of employment (Hacker, 2004:89).

The employee can shadow other employees and departments to learn about his/her role. Sanders and Kleiner (2002:85) and Richards (2006:Online) state that a mentor may also be appointed, who should preferably be someone that falls within the peer level of the inductee and from the same department. In contrast, Starbucks pairs newcomers with experienced supervisors for practical training (Shelat, 2004:3; Fuller, 2006:5). The experienced supervisors support the inductees in job-related activities, counselling support and role-modelling support by being a role-model to the inductee (Sloman, 2005:9).

The difference between a “buddy” and mentor is that a mentor assists the individual with both personal and professional development, whereas a “buddy” is not responsible for the development of an individual, but only for the provision of operational information. A “buddy” can be appointed who provides the employee with information that helps him/her proceed through the encounter stage (Lashley & Best, 2002:7; Thomas, 2003:Online) and to personally socialise the employee into the organisation's culture.

2.2.4 Stage four: The evaluation stage

Implementing a feedback form (Toten, 2005:2), questionnaire (Blanchard & Thacker, 2010:391), observation method or interviewing technique, is important to evaluate the effectiveness of the induction programme (Cirilo & Kleiner, 2003:24).

The literature review paved the way for proposing a general staff induction programme. This staff induction programme was, however, not contextualised to the South African context, and secondly not specifically aimed at the hotel industry. The methodology that was followed to contextualise the proposed induction programme to the South African-specific context and the hotel industry is subsequently discussed.

3. METHODOLOGY

A case study approach was followed due to the fact that the staff induction practices at five of the best companies to work for in South Africa and two hotel groups were investigated. Babbie and Mouton (2008: 281) define a case study approach as the intensive investigation of one or more cases.

A qualitative research design was followed to make a contribution towards the theory (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:313) of staff induction. An in-depth survey, conducted in 2006 by the Corporate Research Foundation (Dicey & Lockhart, 2006: 2), identified SAB, Ernst & Young, Netcare, Edcon and Accenture as the best companies to work for in South Africa.

No companies from the hospitality industry were listed among these companies, but they were selected due to their effective South African human resource management practices. Interviews are a common form of inquiry used in qualitative research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005: 146; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 435). A semi-structured interview approach, as suggested by De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2005: 297), was followed and open-ended questions utilised, so as to enrich the theoretical framework of an effective staff induction programme, by means of contextualisation.

Representatives responsible for the management of the induction programmes of the five companies were contacted via e-mail, whereby the objectives of the interview were outlined and the representatives' consent to partake in the study was requested. All five representatives agreed to participate and the study then followed interview techniques. Consent for participation was thus received from these representatives, with only one of the representatives requesting to stay anonymous. Thus, the names of all the representatives were omitted to ensure consistency. The personal interviews with representatives were documented in writing and, where necessary, follow-up telephone calls were made for clarity. The data was analysed, and an enriched staff induction programme that incorporated staff induction best practices of the five best companies to work for in South Africa, was formulated.

The enriched staff induction programme was then contextualised to the South African hotel industry by interviewing representatives of two major hotel groups in South Africa, namely Tsogo Sun and City Lodge Hotels. These hotel groups were used for this study, as they represent the largest hotel groups in South Africa. City Lodge has over 54 hotels, while Tsogo Sun has over 90 hotels. In addition, the first researcher has more than seven years' experience in the placement of hospitality management students for work integrated learning at leading hotels all over South Africa.

The reports of students to the first researcher consistently revealed that Tsogo Sun and City Lodge Hotels implemented more effective staff induction practices when compared to other hotels, and were therefore used as a benchmark for the study. Representatives from the human resources departments from both hotels were known to the researcher and willing to participate in the study. Representatives from each hotel agreed verbally and in writing to participate in the study.

Southern Sun was previously used as the umbrella brand for the hotel division of Tsogo Sun group, which was founded in 1969 by South African Breweries and Sol Kerzner. Since 2005, Tsogo Sun became a brand owner instead of simply managing brands, and has invested heavily in African countries. In April 2012, the group's casino and entertainment division (Tsogo Sun Gaming) and hotel brand (Southern Sun Hotel Interests) were incorporated into the Tsogo Sun identity. Tsogo Sun has over 90 hotels with more than 14 300 hotel rooms across all sectors of the market (Tsogo Sun, 2014:Online).

Tsogo Sun's vision is to “provide the greatest possible variety of quality hospitality, leisure, gaming and entertainment experiences at every one of our destinations” (Tsogo Sun, 2014:Online). According to the the Training and Development Manager of Tsogo Sun, Karen Borain (2009: personal communication, 26 June), Tsogo Sun offers its employees excellent opportunities in terms of training and development. An employee engagement survey conducted in April 2009 rated Tsogo Sun exceptionally high in terms of company image and customer service, confirming Tsogo Sun as a leader in the hospitality industry.

City Lodge Hotels Limited was founded by Hans Enderle in 1986 with capital from Mine Pension Funds. The focus has always been on quality accommodation, a homely feel and friendly service. The portfolio of City Lodge Hotels Limited includes: six Courtyard Hotels (451 suites), 15 City Lodges (2 811 rooms), 10 Town Lodges (1 244 rooms) and 21 Road Lodges (1 969 rooms). According to their website (City Lodge, 2014:Online), it is ranked among the 250 largest hotel chains in the world .

The vision of City Lodge Hotels Limited is formulated as follows: “We will be recognised as the preferred Southern African hotel group. Through dedicated leadership, teamwork and kindness we will demonstrate our consistent commitment to delivering caring service with style and grace. We will constantly enhance our guest experience through our passionate people, ongoing innovation and leading edge technology. Our integrity, values and ongoing investment in our people and hotels will provide exceptional returns to stakeholders and ensure continued, sustainable growth. Through acts of kindness we will make a positive difference to our guests, our colleagues, our communities and our environment” (City Lodge, 2014:Online).

Marcel Kobilski (Kobilski, 2013:personal communication, 25 June), Human Resources Manager of City Lodge Hotels, emphasised that attitude, service skills, and work ethic of employees are more important than their knowledge, which can be supplemented and taught. The succession programme at City Lodge Hotels is good, taking only eight years to move up the ranks to become a general manager.

A qualitative research design was followed, and semi-structured personal interviews, in line with the suggestions of De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2005:297), were held with Karen Borain (Borain, 2009:personal communication, 26 June), the Training and Development Manager of Tsogo Sun, and Julie Maclaren-Kennedy (2009: personal communication, 8 December), the Training Manager of Tsogo Sun. Personal interviews were also conducted with Marcel Kobilski, Human Resources Director of City Lodge Hotels; and Maxine Muir, Talent Manager of City Lodge Hotels (Kobilski and Muir, 2013:personal communication, 25 June). The qualitative data obtained from these professionals were analysed and a staff induction programme for the South African hotel industry was proposed.

4. FINDINGS

The qualitative data obtained from the interviews with representatives of five of the best companies to work for in South Africa are discussed, followed by a discussion on the qualitative data obtained from representatives from the South African hotel industry. The data was then analysed, and enabled the researcher to propose a staff induction programme for hotels in South Africa.

4.1 Interviews with representatives of five of the best companies to work for in South Africa

4.1.1 Stage one: The anticipatory stage

In all five companies, the induction programme commences before the employee starts working. Participants regarded it as important that inductees already receive information about the company during the recruitment and selection stages, and provided a welcome pack or orientation kit.

Hard copies of the welcome packs are prepared by SAB, Ernst & Young and Netcare, while Edcon uses a small suitcase of information as an orientation kit, which is provided to senior management. In order to ascertain whether senior management has understood and read the information on the induction programme compact disc (which contains all presentations of the induction programme), a short online self-reflection assessment must be completed after each topic has been studied. The results of this assessment are used in stage two to determine whether the inductee has in fact read and understood the information. Accenture provides inductees with a USB containing vital company information.

Contrary to the literature review, the five participants did not regard it as important that the line manager contact inductees prior to their first day at work, stating that a representative contacting them served as a motivational tool. In all companies, the supervisor received a short checklist or at least an indication of what the inductee's induction entailed, which educated the supervisor, and also differentiated between the supervisor and human resources departments' role in the induction programme.

4.1.2 Stage two: The encounter stage

At the five companies investigated, a current job description and basic job information, such as departmental objectives and goals, are usually discussed during the interview and again during stage three. All five companies discussed the organisational chart and lines of authority with inductees during stage two.

Four of the companies request inductees to complete relevant documentation on the first day of work. Netcare used a day prior to stage two, during which inductees were invited to the company premises to complete the relevant documentation necessary to commence work. New inductees met other inductees during a tea break on this day. The day offered inductees the opportunity to interact and feel welcomed by the organisation, but it may not be practical for all inductees, as there is often no time between the completion of one job and the commencement of another.

Although a working relationship can be encouraged through the use of a welcome note or personal message (Phillips & Gully, 2014:236), this was not found to be of vital importance for the companies investigated.

The length and commencement of the induction programmes vary among the five companies. SAB has a one-day organisational induction programme, which occurs on the first working day of each month. At Edcon, a one-day group induction programme is held for senior management every second month, and a regional induction of two days is held monthly for lower management. A compulsory national organisational induction programme is implemented at Ernst & Young that lasts for three days. Accenture offers a two-day induction programme. Netcare, on the other hand, offers a three-day organisational induction programme when inductees commence working at the organisation. Only Edcon has induction on definite days of the month. This could pose a problem, as in some cases, inductees would have worked for several days before attending the formal induction programme.

In none of the five companies were the inductees met by their supervisors, instead they were met by the recruiter or the facilitators of the induction programme. This did not seem to affect the inductees' feeling of belonging, as they usually meet with their manager at the interview and again during stage three.

A welcome card or letter does not seem to be important in the five companies investigated. Only at Accenture is a “first-day letter” with information regarding where they need to report as well as induction information provided to the inductee and as a welcoming tool. Information on technology-specific topics and employee performance appraisals are discussed with inductees in each company.

During the induction, all companies focus on the organisational culture by providing keynote speakers or having executives speak to inductees about the company history and values. All five companies introduced inductees to colleagues, either while doing a company tour during stage two or individually at scheduled meetings. At Ernst & Young, an introductory meeting is held with the inductee's line manager to introduce them to other colleagues. Depending on the department or job that the inductee has accepted, meetings with directors in all the regions are held. Only at Accenture, the inductee is not involved in team meetings during stage two.

No event is held to celebrate the inductees' first days at any of the companies investigated, but Edcon has a “meet-and-greet” function for the internship students as well as for trainees from their training academy. Netcare does, however, provide inductees with “tea and cake” during stage one on the day when they visit the organisation in order to complete their paperwork.

All five companies monitored the training the inductee received by making use of a checklist. At Edcon, a workbook is kept in which inductees completed all the relevant sections of their induction and training, which was then signed off by a supervisor. This is in line with the recommendation by Walsh (2006), who stated that the training checklist should ideally be signed by both the inductee and the human resources department. Netcare keeps an attendance register during the induction programme. Induction is compulsory for all new employees at Edcon, and attendance is followed up.

At all five companies examined, inductees' skills and qualities obtained during induction were tested in stage three.

4.1.3 Stage three: The adjustment stage

Tasks such as discussing organisational goals (shared by all five companies) in this stage may be ongoing or may occur only months or weeks after the employee has started working.

SAB, Ernst & Young and Accenture do not provide the opportunity for inductees to shadow other employees, due to the nature of the respective industries. At SAB, Accenture and Netcare, a mentor is assigned to the inductee to assist him/her with networking and career advice (for example, help in applying for a promotion). An inductee at Ernst & Young may request a mentor at any level in the organisation or even outside the firm.

At Accenture, the mentor assigned to the inductee is someone who is two or three levels above the inductee in seniority. This mentor is paired with an inductee who has a similar background and who works in the same workforce as the inductee. Netcare makes use of a mentor or coach chosen from a talent pool. Mentors must undergo mentor trait testing before becoming part of the talent pool that inductees can choose from. Although the above information is in direct conflict with literature stating that the mentor should preferably be someone at peer level and who works in the same department as the inductee (Degenaar, 2004: 100; Sanders & Kleiner, 2002: 85), this method seems to work for the companies studied. After reviewing the five companies, it is clear that the inductees usually choose their own mentor, who does not need to be at a peer level or in the inductees' department.

SAB, Accenture and Edcon do not have “buddy” systems in place. Ernst & Young allocates a “buddy” (a rank above the inductee) to each inductee after induction. Netcare makes use of a “buddy” system for casual employees, such as nursing staff and new inductees.

In all five companies, an employee assistance programme was implemented to ensure the well-being of employees. Although the manner in which each company approached shadowing, mentoring and “buddy” systems differed, most companies implemented at least one or more of these methods in order to adjust and socialise inductees to their environment and their job.

4.1.4 Stage four: The evaluation stage

Contrary to the literature that requires feedback from inductees directly after their completion of the induction programme (Messmer, 2000:12), Edcon, Ernst & Young, Accenture and Netcare enter stage four of the induction programme directly after both stages two and three, and not only after stage three. SAB could not provide a response to whether, or when, feedback was given. The inclusion of feedback at the end of the first three stages made sense to the researchers, and continuous feedback may lead to corrective actions, leading to a more effective staff induction programme. Therefore the last stage of the staff induction programme was deleted, as suggested by literature and feedback was included in each of the three other stages.

The qualitative data was used to enrich the general staff induction programme, and to reduce it to three stages that included evaluations by inductees at the end of stages two and three. This induction programme was then contextualised to the South African hotel industry.

4.2 Interviews with representatives from the South African hotel industry

According to Karen Borain (Borain:2009: personal communication, 26 June) the Tsogo Sun induction programme aligns well with the best practice found in five of the best companies to work for in South Africa in 2006. Tsogo Sun's induction programme is similar in that it commences immediately after employment, and information referred to as "house rules" was provided to inductees. Tsogo Sun allows for a "buddy" training programme and on-the-job training, as recommended in a best practice. A disadvantage of the Tsogo Sun induction programme is that it does not provide for a mentorship system similar to those of SAB, Accenture and Netcare.

The five best companies investigated are from industries that rely on a more skilled workforce than perhaps the hospitality industry, therefore their new inductees may require less initial guidance than new inductees in the hospitality industry, who tend to be less skilled and qualified. The Tsogo Sun staff induction programme improves on best practices of the five best companies to work for in South Africa by implementing additional best practices, which would add to a less skilled workforce becoming productive sooner.

The Tsogo Sun staff induction programme differs from the induction best practices of the five best companies to work for in South Africa by including five compulsory extra training courses and assessing training needs during regular intervals. Regular reviews also form part of Tsogo Sun's staff induction programme, which allows for feedback on the induction programme, progress and performance.

City Lodge Hotels' structure for staff induction is very similar to that followed by Tsogo Sun. Three main variations were found between City Lodge Hotels and Tsogo Sun. City Lodge Hotels do not send a welcome letter to inductees prior to their induction. Sending a welcome letter can, however, play an important role in creating the image and brand of the hotel group, and in making the inductee feel welcome and part of the team, even before they actually arrive at the hotel for induction. Secondly, City Lodge Hotels also do not make specific note of inductees attending general staff meetings, although this is deemed as very important in the flow of communication and making the inductee feel like part of the team. The third and most important difference is that City Lodge Hotels do not offer inductees the opportunity to stay at the hotel overnight. However, by allowing inductees to do this, inductees would gain empathy for guests and staff by experiencing the hotel and service from a guest's point of view.

City Lodge Hotels improves on stages one and two by offering their "house rules" and other information to inductees on a CD as well as on the intranet.

This is deemed to be a good induction practice, as inductees can keep the information, accessing it online, and refer to it during their career. City Lodge Hotels also asks inductees to write a product knowledge test. Although this was not evident from the literature review, it seems to add value by ensuring that inductees take responsibility for their own learning and have the proper knowledge about the hotel and services before they start working.

The length of induction training varied between the hotels. City Lodge Hotels spends two weeks on training, which includes a day being spent in each department, whereas Tsogo Sun requires one week of induction, which includes exposure to several departments per day. Although the length of the induction training might be a matter of personal preference, hotels are usually keen to induct new employees and have them as productive and efficient as soon as possible.

4.3 The proposed staff induction programme for hotels in South Africa

The data obtained from the representatives of the best companies to work for in South Africa and the two major hotel groups in South Africa was analysed, and a three stage staff induction programme for hotels in South Africa was proposed. It is important to note that the design of the induction programme should ideally take the inductee's position, level of experience and qualifications into account.

4.3.1 Stage one: The anticipatory phase

The company representative responsible for the induction of new employees (e.g. general managers' secretaries) needs to inform all relevant parties (e.g. "buddies", mentors, supervisors, heads of department, etc.), as soon as possible before the induction programme, about their responsibilities and what is expected of them. The company representative should furthermore consult with relevant parties about the scheduling of the induction programme so as to avoid the inductee being in a department when it is "peak time" (for example, check-in time at the front desk).

At least a week before the commencement of the induction programme, the supervisor or induction programme representative provides the inductee (via e-mail, courier or fax) with a welcome letter, which is accompanied by correct and sufficient company information, the "house rules" or policies and procedures of the hotel, an explanation of the specific dress code/uniform, and a copy of the attendee's job description. The contents, scheduling, and objectives and/or rationale of the induction programme also need to be highlighted in the welcome letter. Inductees are requested to acquaint themselves with the contents of the information before they report for service at the hotel. The effectiveness of the anticipatory phase is evaluated on the first day of work by the inductee and other role players.

4.3.2 Stage two: The encounter phase

To make inductees feel welcome, they are greeted on the first day by the supervisor or induction programme representative (well trained in human resources and informed about the induction programme).

Inductees commence with the induction programme (which is specifically tailored to the hotel and its departments) before they start with their work-related duties in the hotel. Management members need to show sufficient commitment towards the induction programme and could consider welcoming inductees on their first day. The inductee is informed or provided with a presentation of the hotel policies and procedures, values and culture, hotel marketing material, hotel history, lines of authority, as well as hotel mission and philosophy (on a CD or the intranet). The induction programme could include information on social responsibility endeavours, as well as environmental sustainability projects. The inductee is requested to write a product knowledge test regarding products/services offered by the hotel as soon as possible.

The supervisor or induction programme representative provides the inductee with information on important location information (such as site layout, other sites, maps and the location of washrooms). The induction programme is used as an opportunity to convey the hotel's expectations, and their commitment to equity and diversity in the workplace.

The inductee is informed and instructed to act in terms of South African laws (e.g. Labour Relations Act, Liquor Act, Employment Equity Act, Unemployment Insurance Fund, Occupational Health and Safety Act, Basic Conditions of Employment Act, and the South African Constitution). Safety induction (e.g. location of fire extinguishers, drill procedures, etc) takes place and the inductees are instructed to comply with the hotel's safety risk plan.

The inductee completes all the necessary administrative paperwork regarding employment (e.g. contract of employment, medical aid application, etc.) during the first few days of the induction programme. The inductee is informed of financial information (such as salary advice, pay, etc.). If the inductee has access to a computer and the internet, the inductee receives an introduction to information-technology-specific topics (such as computer usage, login name and the organisation's internet policy).

To make inductees feel part of the hotel, they are introduced to all relevant members of staff by the "buddy" in each department, and are given the opportunity to be involved in general staff meetings. A mentor is assigned to each inductee in order to assist the inductee with their career planning and information on how to access further training and development. Additional training courses are implemented to upgrade inductee skills.



The supervisor of the inductee explains the performance management system to the inductee. After being made aware of the rationale behind the night's stay-over, the inductee is given the opportunity to stay at the hotel (and not work during this time), so as to gain first-hand experience regarding the service and culture of the hotel. A friend or family member may share the dinner and accommodation with them. The inductee and hotel induction role players are given the opportunity to give feedback on stage two of the staff induction programme.

4.3.3 Stage three: The adjustment phase

Staff induction programme role-players should aim to adhere to the schedule in order to ensure that all inductees rotate amongst all departments. A "buddy" is assigned to the inductee in each department to assist the inductee with job-related support and the socialising process, and to sign off work completed by the inductee.

The inductee is introduced to employee-assistance programmes that he/she could make use of in terms of personal problems. The inductees' training needs are assessed during their "on-the-job" training, and again at a review session.

The inductee is given the opportunity to give feedback regarding stage three of the induction programme. A checklist of training that was received by the inductee is kept. During the review process, inductees are also encouraged to provide feedback on the difference between their perception of the hotel and their actual experience at the hotel.

A follow-up session (by human resources or a manager/supervisor) is scheduled at regular intervals with the inductee to determine how well the inductee is adjusting to his/her job. The mentor may also be present at this stage, in order to assist with career planning.

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

It is recommended that South African hotels take note of the proposed induction programme, as its implementation could lead to better staff retention rates, a reduction in absenteeism, higher levels of skills and productivity, and increased staff morale and motivation. As such, the study could contribute towards providing excellent people development in the tourism sector and decent work - a strategic priority outlined in the responsible growth strategy of South Africa (South Africa. Department of Tourism, 2011:12). This objective aims to improve career-progression opportunities and employment conditions for a number of qualified employees in the industry.

This study is reflective of the best practices of five of the best companies to work for in South Africa and two major hotel groups. The inclusion of only two

hotel groups in the study could be seen as a limitation. The proposed induction programme for the South African hotel industry can, however, be utilised by other hotel groups, organisations and industries to develop new induction programmes, or to improve the effectiveness of their current induction programmes.

A follow-up study could evaluate the suitability/effectiveness of the proposed staff induction programme in reducing staff absenteeism and increasing staff retention rates, productivity, morale and motivation. A mixed-methods design could be followed, and perspectives from hospitality managers, inductees, mentors and buddies could be explored and considered to adapt/improve the proposed induction programme for South African hotels.

6. REFERENCES

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