Transforming The Employee Experience In Hospitality

Why team recruitment, engagement and retention are top priorities in 2022—and how technology can optimise them

harri | CGA

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Welcome to our report

The Harri team are pleased to present this report on understanding and improving the experiences of employees across hospitality.

As the sector recovers from the huge challenges of the last two years, team recruitment, engagement and retention will be central to success. The well-publicised staffing crisis facing restaurants, pubs, bars and hotels is focusing all our minds on the best ways to find and keep talented individuals—and that is where this report comes in.

Effective people strategies start with good knowledge of the views and motivations of those who are working in hospitality or considering it as a career. Over the following pages we share insights from our in-depth 'Working in Hospitality' survey, revealing their expectations and satisfaction levels and their attitudes to pay, training, wellbeing and much more. Those findings are complemented by in-depth interviews with leading employers to build a rich picture of hospitality as a workplace, both now and in the future. The research leads us to some conclusions about employee experiences, and actionable recommendations for improving practices—especially through technology.

Our report is a powerful combination of Harri's extensive experience in hospitality and CGA's expert analysis of the market we work in, and we hope you find it interesting and useful in your planning. We would be pleased to hear your views, or tell you more about how Harri can support you with the issues raised here.

Contents

Sources

Hospitality in 2022

As we enter the second quarter of 2022, there are plenty of causes for optimism about the future of hospitality—and a few reasons to be cautious as well.

Sales and confidence nudging up

There is no escaping the size of COVID's impact on hospitality. The latest UKHospitality and CGA Quarterly Hospitality Tracker estimates that nearly **£115 bn** of expected sales were lost between March 2020 and December 2021. But data since the start of 2022 is much brighter. The Coffer CGA Business Tracker reveals that Britain's leading managed restaurant, pub and bar groups increased their like-for-like sales by **3%** in both January and February compared to early 2019, while delivery and takeaway sales are running at well over double pre-pandemic levels.

After two tough years, the optimism of business leaders and investors is returning. This is reflected in the latest Market Recovery Monitor from CGA and AlixPartners, which shows there was a net increase of just under **2%** in Britain's number of licensed premises between September and December 2021. It's a modest change, but a welcome sign of business confidence after two years of steady closures.

Consumers' confidence is increasing as well. CGA's Consumer Pulse survey in early 2022 found that two thirds **(70%)** of adults felt confident about visiting pubs, bars and restaurants—double the number of **34%** who felt confident at the start of 2021—while one in five **(19%)** planned to visit them more often than they did last year.

Cost pressures rise

However, while spending is now starting to increase, high inflation is making it difficult for businesses to achieve real-terms growth. Some consumers remain anxious about COVID, and there are mounting concerns that the cost-of-living crisis will cut disposable incomes as the year goes on. On top of that, rising prices in energy, food and many other areas are squeezing margins in hospitality, while supply chain problems are dogging the sector.

The labour crisis

Another major problem facing businesses as they recover from COVID is in staffing. UKHospitality says hundreds of thousands of hospitality jobs remain vacant, and anecdotal evidence suggests many leaders are concerned about recruiting and retaining staff over the rest of 2022. These shortages are having a material impact on sales, and driving up labour costs.

This particular crisis is so critical because of the inextricable link between the quality of employees and the quantity of sales. CGA's latest BrandTrack survey shows there is a very strong correlation between service quality and overall customer satisfaction levels. Good service is also very strongly linked to a willingness to pay more money, and positive impressions of a brand's quality.

Put simply: the better the service an operator provides, the higher the guest satisfaction and spend. Over the next few pages we show how businesses can optimise service levels by providing better employee experiences.

Why staff and service are pivotal to success

CGA's latest hierarchy of needs research shows 'how friendly staff', 'knowledgeable staff' and 'good service' are among consumers' essential requirements for visits to restaurants, pubs and bars. It's clear that happier employees can provide the first-class level of service that customers expect.

Exceeds expectations

- Experiential activations
- Exclusivity
- New experiences
- Good food presentation

Elevated

- New or different food/ drink choices
- Value for experience
- Community links
- Ethical values
- Extensive range of drinks
- Locally sourced produce and drinks
- Premium / high quality alcoholic drinks
- Extensive / varied range of plant-based options

Essential

- A good atmosphere / ambience
- Friendly staff
- Sustainable ingredients
- Quality food offering
- A venue where I feel safe
- Clean toilets and facilities
- Knowledgeable staff
- Healthy options
- Use of technology for payment and ordering
- Value for money
- Good service

🟩 New   🟦 Increased in importance

The employee mindset

What do people working in hospitality really think about their employers? Harri and CGA's 'Working in Hospitality' survey provides the honest answers, and the insights can help businesses transform the way they engage their teams. Here are the key findings in seven key areas for employers: recruitment, training, retention, satisfaction, challenges, wellbeing and career-building.

Recruitment

To improve employee engagement, it's important first of all to understand how, where and why they find their work.

Digital channels now dominate hospitality job hunts. More than two thirds **(69%)** of surveyed employees say they have searched online for new roles, and two in five **(41%)** have used social media. Digital channels are especially popular among younger adults, and those seeking work in pubs and QSR venues.

However, traditional recruitment can still be effective, with just under a quarter using boards in recruitment centres **(23%)** and in-venue job ads **(23%)**. Word of mouth remains important too. Nearly a third **(30%)** say they have used recommendations from family or friends to find work, and a fifth **(21%)** have used networking.

People also look for different qualities in their potential employer. The most common are honesty **(47%)** and mutual respect **(41%)**, followed by knowledge **(39%)**, trustworthiness **(39%)**, social skills **(38%)** and equality **(38%)**. Appreciating the importance of these qualities to job hunters, and emphasising them in ads, can give businesses a head start in their recruitment.

Harri and CGA's survey reveals some interesting technology habits of jobseekers. For example, two in five **(40%)** have

used online application forms, and smaller numbers have used CV scanning **(18%)**, job matching tools **(16%)**, smart screening **(11%)** and psychometric tests **(10%)**. Smart use of tools like these can help firms make the recruitment process easier—for both candidates and themselves.

It's important to remember that employees consider a wide range of factors before deciding whether or not to accept a job—not just pay, but things like flexibility and work-life balance, which have become much bigger priorities during the pandemic. This highlights the importance to employers of understanding how employees approach their recruitment processes—and the risk that if they don't like what they see, they will look elsewhere.

What do employees consider before deciding whether to accept a job?

63%
Pay

49%
Flexibility and work-life balance

37%
Benefits

43%
Role descriptions

35%
Opportunities for progression

Training

The 'Working in Hospitality' survey flags the importance of good training in hospitality, and suggests that current provision falls short of some people's expectations. More than a third say either that it has been too basic **(30%)** or too long **(7%)**, and only a quarter **(25%)** were very satisfied that their training had left them confident to fulfil a role to the best of their ability.

Training methods vary from company to company. The leading method is shadowing other employees, something experienced by **66%** of employees—though online training **(51%)** and top-up face-to-face training **(43%)** are used too. Four in five **(80%)** said their online training was compulsory.

Attitudes to onboarding are similarly mixed. While **60%** thought their onboarding process was thorough, well over a third thought it was either too basic **(28%)** or too long **(13%)**, and only **29%** said they were very satisfied with it. In both training and onboarding, this points to the need to optimise onboarding and training processes—strategies in which technology has a major role to play.

37%

Of employees thought their training was too basic or too long

Retention

Hiring is tough at the moment, so employers need to think carefully about how they retain their most talented people. While Harri and CGA's survey highlights the importance to employees of things like being good at the job **(59%)** and salary and benefits **(45%)**, many other factors are significant too, including flexibility **(45%)**, good management **(42%)** and general care **(29%)**. With such a large supply of jobs in hospitality, employers that don't consider these factors risk losing staff to competitors.

There are lots of reasons why employees leave hospitality, with unsociable hours **(54%)**, insufficient pay **(47%)** and difficult customers **(42%)** among the most common. Around half **(49%)** say that staff shortages themselves are causing more people to leave, because they are now facing an increased workload. This shows how hospitality has become trapped in a vicious circle of shortages.

Employees' top ten reasons for current staff shortages

1. Lots of unsociable hours **(54%)**
2. Staff shortages means increased workload **(49%)**
3. Pay does not match the job **(47%)**
4. Difficult customers **(42%)**
5. The jobs are hard work **(38%)**
6. Overwhelming job for little reward **(38%)**
7. Little benefits **(38%)**
8. Poor management **(36%)**
9. Time off is limited **(28%)**
10. The jobs are not fulfilling **(27%)**

Nearly half **(48%)** think employers aren't doing enough to increase staffing levels. Employees have various ideas for fixing shortages, like providing better pay and promotion opportunities, or offering better rota flexibility and variety—things that have become much more important over the last two years. Not all of these solutions are practical of course, but considering them could help to reduce staff turnover.

54%

Of employees think unsociable hours are a reason for staff shortages

Satisfaction

Hospitality teams seem reasonably satisfied with their jobs. Well over half **(61%)** of employees say they are very or somewhat satisfied with their current role, while **18%** feel somewhat or extremely dissatisfied. Older workers, and those who have been in the industry for more than a few years, tend to feel more satisfied than newcomers.

However, the pandemic has taken a toll on people's satisfaction levels, and nearly half **(45%)** think hospitality jobs are less appealing than they were before the pandemic, citing factors including insufficient pay rises **(72%)**, a lack of appreciation from employers **(53%)**, a lower level of support for hospitality **(41%)** and a decrease in tips **(34%)**. Conversely, those who find the sector more appealing now say they enjoy more flexibility **(54%)**, greater appreciation **(42%)** and more demand for hospitality roles **(33%)**.

Emphasising the positive aspects of COVID's impact on hospitality, while addressing the negative consequences, may help to bring job satisfaction levels back to where they were before the pandemic hit.

61%

Of employees feel satisfied in their current roles

Challenges

The 'Working in Hospitality' survey leaves no doubt about employees' biggest problem at the moment. Well over half **(58%)** cite staff shortages as their biggest challenge, making it even more significant than perennial challenges like unsociable hours **(51%)**. Well over a third **(38%)** say they are challenged by inexperienced staff—another sign of employers' recruitment difficulties. The scale of these difficulties is spread right across the sector, though it is particularly high in quick service restaurants and bars.

Employers can't do a great deal to fix some of employees' challenges, like unreasonable guest demands **(28%)** and food waste **(29%)**. But it is possible to tackle other big bugbears like ineffective communications **(30%)**, a lack of training **(29%)** and pressure from managers **(25%)**. By addressing these, businesses can make a significant difference to retention rates.

Employees' top ten current challenges in hospitality

1. **Staff shortages (58%)**
2. **Unsociable hours (51%)**
3. **Inexperienced staff (37%)**
4. **Pressure increased over the pandemic (33%)**
5. **Nervousness around COVID-19 (32%)**
6. **Ineffective communication (30%)**
7. **Lack of training (29%)**
8. **Food waste (29%)**
9. **Unreasonable guest demands (28%)**
10. **Pressure from managers (25%)**

58%

Of employees think staff shortages are their biggest problem at the moment

64%

Of employees say emotional support is more important than it was pre-COVID

Wellbeing

Employees' wellbeing has come into sharp focus during the pandemic. Positively, more than a quarter of employees surveyed by Harri and CGA say they were happy **(29%)**, satisfied **(28%)** and comfortable **(28%)** in their work at the moment. More concerning is the finding that even more employees felt stressed **(38%)** and challenged **(34%)**. Smaller but significant numbers said they felt overwhelmed **(20%)**, anxious **(19%)**, nervous **(13%)** and sad **(12%)**.

Of course, these emotions are far from unique to hospitality. Numbers feeling stressed and challenged may well be even higher in many other industries, and they will have increased further over the course of the pandemic. However, they do show the scale of the wellbeing challenge facing employers at the moment.

Some employees are receiving good support, like help with a better work-life balance **(19%)**, opportunities to socialise with colleagues **(15%)** and monitoring of wellbeing **(15%)**. Others say they get opportunities to have their say **(14%)**, one-to-ones with managers **(13%)**, helpful information (12%) and support sessions **(10%)**. But well over a third **(38%)** say they get no help at all, while more than half **(52%)** think their employers aren't doing enough to support their staff's wellbeing. The numbers are notably higher among younger staff than older ones.

The pandemic has heightened the demand for better care, and nearly two thirds **(64%)** say emotional support is more important to them than it was before COVID. It highlights the opportunity for hospitality businesses to find new ways to promote their teams' wellbeing. In doing so, they can improve employees' experiences and make themselves a more attractive workplace.

Career-building

As an industry, hospitality has long found it hard to sell itself as a place to build a career, despite all the opportunities it offers—especially to young people without formal qualifications.

Harri and CGA's survey confirms this reputational problem. Fewer than a quarter **(23%)** of the sample have chosen hospitality as their career path—a much lower number than those who said they had fallen into it as a career **(36%)**, or were working while studying, saving or finding work in another sector **(41%)**. Men, older employees and people working in restaurants are all more likely to have chosen hospitality as a career path.

Those who are not seeking a long-term career in hospitality cite a variety of reasons including pay levels, unsociable or limited hours, stresses and a lack of career progression. Addressing these impressions—as the new cross-industry 'Hospitality Rising' campaign is trying to do—will hopefully start to improve the sector's reputation, but there is clearly a long way to go. Improving paths of progression in hospitality would be a particularly powerful solution, because only half **(53%)** of employees are currently satisfied with the career opportunities they see.

23%

Of employees have chosen hospitality as a career path

Employees and technology

Harri and CGA's 'Working in Hospitality' survey reveals the importance of technology in employees' experiences and the areas of both strength and potential improvements.

Most team members think their employers could be making better use of tech. Three in ten **(30%)** think the technology available to staff—like digital clocking-in and out—is not at all advanced, and just under a quarter **(22%)** think the same about the technology that is available to customers. Unsurprisingly, frustrations are particularly high among young, digital-savvy employees.

Some businesses now equip employees with digital tools, but they are far from widespread in hospitality. Around half **(52%)** of survey respondents have access to a smartphone app for tasks like viewing payslips and shifts, and a similar number **(55%)** use another online platform.
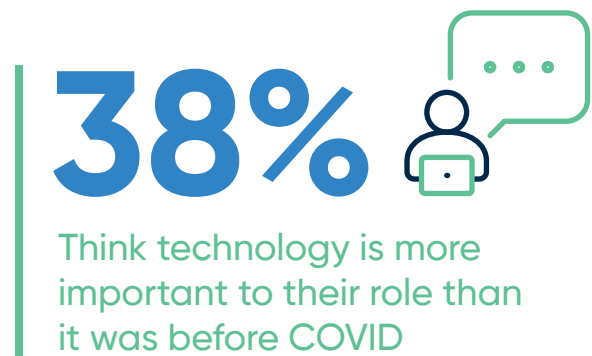
Companies' apps offer a growing range of staff services, but take-up could be improved. Accessing payslips **(60%)**, viewing and booking holidays **(46%)** and reading company news and announcements **(35%)** are the three most popular functions, followed by a host of other activities (see table). Nevertheless, fewer than one in five employees use apps for things like submitting paperwork, contacting managers, enrolling in pensions, booking sick days, online reviews, booking breaks or leaving feedback for colleagues.

There is clearly scope to make wider use of technology to improve employees' experiences—and the survey confirms the demand for it. Around a quarter say digital clocking-in and out **(25%)**, smart scheduling **(24%)** and shift management **(24%)** would make their experiences better, and there is interest in many more tasks like redistributing shifts, monitoring attendance, performance reviews and internal communications (see table).

Employees are ready to embrace this technology. Nine in ten **(91%)** say they find it easy to use—but only **32%** say it makes their job easier. That means there are a lot of people who are currently frustrated by technology, often because it is not efficient, not user-friendly, outdated, slow—or all four.

The pandemic has dramatically accelerated hospitality's take-up of technology. More than a third **(38%)** of employees think it has become more important to their role since COVID hit, while just **2%** think it is less important, and the gap is even wider among restaurant workers. But the overwhelming majority would like to see it significantly **(45%)** or slightly improve **(43%)**. There has never been higher demand for technology in hospitality, and this is an ideal time to invest in solutions that can make a material difference to the satisfaction levels of both consumers and employees.

38%

Think technology is more important to their role than it was before COVID

91%

Find staff engagement technology easy to use

Employees' top ten uses of staff apps

1. **Access payslips (54%)**
2. **View or book holidays (44%)**
3. **Digital clocking-in and out (31%)**
4. **Company news or announcements (28%)**
5. **Trade shifts with colleagues (22%)**
6. **Rules guidance (21%)**
7. **Communicate with team outside work (20%)**
8. **Wellness support (20%)**
9. **Submit paperwork (18%)**
10. **Online pension enrolment (17%)**

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Employees' ten most wanted technology options to improve their experiences

1. Digital clocking-in and out **(25%)**
2. Smart scheduling **(24%)**
3. Shift management **(24%)**
4. Unassigned shift distribution **(18%)**
5. Attendance monitoring **(18%)**
6. Submitting review/ performance processes online **(18%)**
7. Online internal communication **(18%)**
8. Team Intranet **(17%)**
9. HR payroll **(14%)**
10. Automatic meal breaks and deductions **(14%)**

88%

Would like to see technology in the hospitality sector improve

Employer perspectives

Ten experts in hospitality and HR talked to Harri and CGA about a host of big issues—from challenges like staff shortages, hospitality's image problem and the difficulty of retaining staff, to opportunities including better career progression, improving wellbeing and making smart use of technology. Here's what they had to say.

Employers on... Staff shortages and hiring

Employers agree it's a very tough time for recruiting staff at the moment. Brexit and then COVID have prompted many European workers to return home, and the 'pingdemic' added to severe shortages in 2021. It has led some businesses to streamline menus and limit opening hours in an effort to reduce the pressure on remaining workers.

It has also created intense competition for staff. This is reflected not just in rising pay levels, but by brands' moves to present themselves as the most attractive places to work. Employers are promoting the specific benefits they can offer and telling their stories to potential recruits—and social media and other platforms have an important role to play in that.

Leaders report a growing use of technology in other areas of the hiring process. Video-based applications and interviews have become popular alternatives to traditional methods, though employers still prefer to see people in person for back-of-house positions. Applicant tracking systems and filters are becoming more popular, as employers don't want to miss out on talented people who have applied for jobs.

"I think a lot of people are feeling the pressure [of shortages]. It's common in all industries, but ours got hit particularly hard by COVID."

James Grist, D&D London

"It's a candidate-driven market at the moment, so we've really worked on how we present ourselves. We changed all of our adverts to focus not just on the duties of the job but on the benefits that we can provide to people, so they can see why they should pick us over someone else."

Sarah Caines, Fridays

"I'm a massive advocate for putting in place as many apprenticeship structures as you can, because you'll reap the benefits in five years' time. The only way anybody gets out of a skills shortage is to find people and give them the skills."

Steve Rockey, Home Grown Hotels and Lime Wood Group

"Everything [in recruitment] is framed around values and behaviours. What's their approach? What's their interaction with the team?... We can equip people with the skills and experience that they need—but what is very hard to change is somebody's own personal values."

Helen Buckler and Sarah Hutchings, Cote

"I think video will become a big part of our [hiring] process, and that people will want to submit their applications via video, because they'll feel more comfortable with that."

Melissa Davis, Big Table Group

"All of our initial applications are accompanied by a video now—it helps us get a flavour for the person before we meet them. It's a simple little thing, but it's really helped us narrow down CVs and save time."

Paul Spencer, Edyn Group

Employers on... Hospitality's image

Some of hospitality's recruitment problems are connected to the negative impressions that some people still have of work here. Unlike in many European countries, where work in restaurants and bars is viewed as a desirable long-term career, British hospitality has found it hard to shake off its unfair reputation as a low-pay, low-prospects sector. Employers are now focused on improving its image—not just by showing the great opportunities their business can offer, but by joining cross-industry projects like the 'Hospitality Rising' campaign. These efforts are going to be a crucial part of fixing hospitality's image problem in the long term.

"Hospitality needs to be doing a bit more to attract people to the industry and make them stay, because we lose loads of great people... If we can't get people to want to come and work in hospitality and stay here... things are not going to get better. If you don't have enough people to trade, you don't have a business."

Jamie Smith, Revolution Bars Group

"There aren't many sectors when you can run a million-pound business at 21. You can create a career at pace in hospitality in a way that you can't anywhere else. It's about energy and ambition and a willingness to put your arms around things... hospitality is a super place to have a career."

Dawn Browne, Fuller, Smith & Turner

"You get to work with great people, and one day is never the same as the next... But in the UK there's a bit of a stigma—it's not seen as a career. That's a huge challenge for hospitality—to make people proud of it and know they can grow and learn."

Frankie Baird, Pot Kettle Black

Employers on... Retention

As well as improving the sector's reputation, businesses are focused on ways to reduce staff turnover and keep their most talented people. As with recruitment, this is being done through a variety of measures, like raising pay, adding benefits and improving working conditions. Perks, like generous discounts, trips abroad and retention bonuses, are increasingly visible.

There are widespread efforts to help staff revise their work-life balance, with more flexibility in shifts and more sociable hours where practical. HR leaders are also driving better management and internal communications. Company apps and intranets and internal messaging systems are valuable here, because they bring staff closer to their employers and ease their access to important things like payslips and bookings for shifts and holidays.

> **"We've got a lot of people who had never thought about a career in hospitality and are still with us five and sometimes ten years later—but we've also got people who just join us for a summer job. Both are equally fine."**
>
> *Steve Rockey, Home Grown Hotels and Lime Wood Group*

> **"We're always looking at our retention strategies—at pay and rewards, learning and development."**
>
> *Nina Marshall, Stonegate Pub Company*

> **"They say that if you find a job you like, you'll never work a day in your life. Now that's not exactly true in hospitality, because it is challenging at times—but ultimately the reason people stay is because it's a fun and enjoyable experience."**
>
> Jamie Smith, Revolution Bars Group

> **"If you're not careful, hospitality can be a revolving door. We need to make sure that our people experience is good enough for them to want to stay with us, and we've made some brilliant inroads on that."**
>
> *Dawn Browne, Fuller, Smith & Turner*

Employers on... Career progression

Providing clearer career paths, and signposting hospitality's opportunities to move up the ranks quickly, is a good way to hold on to staff. It can be particularly attractive to younger people without qualifications. Many employers are promoting from within wherever possible, and showcasing people in the business who have moved from junior positions up to management and even board level. High quality and well-structured training, delivered online as well as in-person so that people can access it when convenient, is an increasingly important focus for employers as well.

> **"Our objective is by 2023 that I'm not externally sourcing senior leadership... We've created a very clear path so that you can clearly see yourself from when you start to becoming a GM within our business."**
>
> *Paul Spencer, Edyn Group*

> **"We've always been pretty good at talent development, and we've got some really good programmes in place to help people move either across the business or up the business... There are lots of ways to develop your own career, both internally and by getting transferable skills."**
>
> *Dawn Browne, Fuller, Smith & Turner*

> **"I've never met such great, like-minded positive people as I have in hospitality. You can learn so many different skill sets and become a real business-minded person."**
>
> *Melissa Davis, Big Table Group*

> **"We need to tell the story as part of our employer brand that you can join us at any level in Cote and we will get you to wherever you want to be—and that it's not always upwards or sidewards, but horizontal, diagonal or whatever. There are so many routes... The opportunities are endless."**
>
> *Helen Buckler and Sarah Hutchings, Cote*

Employers on... Wellbeing

As Harri and CGA's survey shows, COVID has had a negative effect on the wellbeing of many people in hospitality. As well as being the right thing to do, supporting these team members and demonstrating care can help businesses improve their reputation among current and prospective employers.

HR leaders are rolling out various support packages. Perhaps the most significant change has been to end the stigma of talking about mental health, and to make it clear that people can feel free to ask for help. Mental health first aiders are increasingly visible in businesses, as are details of where people can turn for help externally. Apps and other digital platforms are excellent places to access resources, and can act as one-stop-shops for wellbeing support.

"At our last company conference, we did panels on inclusion, understanding Black Lives Matter, mental health, wellbeing... We could have been talking about what we're doing for sales or how we're driving the business, but our priority was to make sure that people were OK."

Paul Spencer, Edyn Group

"We get feedback in a whole host of different places around wellbeing and how people are feeling, and we've definitely ramped up our communications around it internally... We talk about the healthy habits that exist in hospitality and bring that to the forefront. We're creating a space where it's alright to talk about this stuff—to say when things aren't going well."

Jamie Smith, Revolution Bars Group

"A lot of people are looking for a better work-life balance, so we're tapping into new markets... We're looking at people who can benefit from flexible schedules, like parents, carers and people who have other responsibilities... we can work quite well with that, and fit around other commitments."

Sarah Caines, Fridays

Employers on... Technology

Hospitality's use of technology has soared during the pandemic, and it can be as valuable for employees as for consumers. If they haven't done so already, business leaders are exploring ways that apps and other tools can give employees better experiences—and, by doing so, improve their commercial performance. They can speed up time-consuming processes like recruitment, payroll, communications and training as well.

HR teams know that generations of digital natives are entering hospitality, and that they will expect the same easy access to smartphone-based solutions as they do in their personal lives. Businesses that don't invest in the technology they want risk being left behind in the recruitment race.

"The expectation is there from guests and employees that technology will support everything they do."

Nina Marshall, Stonegate Pub Company

"Technology has a role [in recruitment]. Anything that helps with the arduous task of streamlining it, and then making sure you get the right candidate, helps."

Paul Spencer, Edyn Group

"Hospitality is about being people—focusing on guests and engaging them... But we also understand the need for technology in our business to support employees, so it's a combination of both for us."

James Grist, D&D London

"It'll be interesting to see whether [customer] apps stay... or whether it'll go back to face-to-face [interaction]. It'll depend on the company, but there are a lot of places that switched but are going back to table service again."

Frankie Baird, Pot Kettle Black

"I think our workforce are much more willing and able now to have a relationship with an employer using technology... You've got to have a strong, compelling and honest employee brand, but if you've got that then you need to get your message out to people, and brilliant technology can help you do that in a really simple way—it can attract candidates to you and help your managers manage the process."

Dawn Browne, Fuller, Smith & Turner

Transforming the employee experience:
Ten takeaways

Good engagement with employees has never been more important. So what can employers—and hospitality as a whole—do to improve their practices? Here are ten conclusions and recommendations from our surveys and interviews.

1. Employees are core to success

Recent staff shortages have reminded us that businesses are only as good as their people. CGA research continues to emphasise the very close links between employee performance, guest satisfaction and sales—so businesses with the best recruitment and retention strategies are often the best in commercial terms too.

2. Hiring starts online

With more than two thirds of employees now searching online for new roles, investment in digital recruitment platforms gives businesses access to the deepest pool of talent. Social media—especially LinkedIn—are increasingly effective sources of staff too.

3. Training and onboarding can be improved

Only a quarter of employees are very satisfied that their training has fully equipped them for their duties, so there is room for improvement. With more than a third thinking that what they have received was too basic or too long, finding the right length for training and onboarding is particularly important.

4. Flexibility is key

Both employees and employers recognise that demand for a better work-life balance has massively increased during the pandemic. Where possible, increasing flexibility over shift patterns and helping people fit their work around other commitments could give employers an advantage in recruitment. Technology has a crucial role to play in delivering and managing this flexibility.

5. Wellbeing is a top priority

Many people have found the pandemic stressful and isolating, and long periods of closures and disruption have hit hospitality staff especially hard. Some have turned to their employers for help, and businesses that can show genuine care and help people access practical support can improve their reputations.

6. Hospitality has an image problem

Our survey highlights the negative reputation of hospitality among many prospective employees, which is holding back recruitment. Businesses, and the hospitality sector collectively, are working hard to improve their image, but support from the media and government is needed too.

7. People want clearer career paths

One of the most common misconceptions about restaurants, pubs and bars is that they don't offer long-term careers. Updating hospitality work's reputation as a stop-gap solution, and creating clear progression paths so individuals can see where they can go, will help fix hospitality's retention crisis.

8. COVID has revolutionised tech in hospitality

The pandemic has triggered a wave of interest in digital solutions. Consumers and employees alike have seen how technology can make many aspects of their experiences safer and more convenient—but the last two years have also highlighted the large gaps in the use of digital tools and the investment needed to fill them.

9. Teams want more tech

Nearly nine in ten employees want to see technology in the hospitality sector improve. Operators that can lead the way in this area can get a powerful competitive edge on talent attraction and retention, especially among younger and digitally-confident staff.

10. Digital solutions have untapped potential

From digital clocking-in to smart scheduling to attendance monitoring to online reviews and documentation, there are many areas of employee engagement where technology can help. Providing easy, on-demand access to these and many other functions can substantially improve business efficiencies.

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Workforce Management
Built For The Frontline

Unify all workforce management processes into one single system.

Improve labour efficiency with intelligent scheduling

- Build smarter schedules that factor in demand forecasting, employee availability, compliance requirements, and more.

- Easily configure shift-related rules for clocking-in/out, breaks, employee-driven shift swaps, and more.

- Optimise labour strategies with real-time labour costs and granular scheduling analytics.

Deliver payroll accurately, quickly, and confidently

- Automate payroll processes to save time, improve accuracy, eliminate unnecessary costs, and improve payroll transparency.

- Significantly decrease resources required to address real-time payroll compliance and auditing needs.

- Empower your employees to achieve financial wellness with the ability to opt into Instant Pay.

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