



Staffing the Hotel of the Future

Rohit Talwar – CEO Fast Future Research
January 12th 2012

In this interview, global futurist and project director of the Hotels 2020 report Rohit Talwar outlines some of the drivers of future hotels and the implications for staffing and recruitment.

Opinion seems to be divided ... are the hotels of the (not too distant) future going to be all things to all people, or will they specialise, i.e. a MICE destination, or family hotel, or trendy? What do you think?

In our Hotels 2020 research 78% agreed or strongly agreed that by 2020 global hotel groups will increasingly seek to cover the full spectrum from budget through to luxury and heritage properties.

You will have the full spectrum that we have today. You will also have a growth in specialist hotels e.g. ones dedicated to hosting business events. You will also see a growth in women only hotels, single religion hotels and hotels dedicated to particular leisure pursuits. So for example you might find a high tech hotel where you have the opportunity to try all the latest gadgets and gizmos before they hit the market. You may also find a growth in branded hotels whether this be luxury brands like Gucci, technology brands like Apple or celebrity brands like Beyonce and Beckham. 79% agreed or strongly agreed that by 2020 a new category of co-branded and co-designed 'signature' properties will emerge within hotel chain portfolios, providing differentiation and opening up ancillary revenue stream options. You may also see the emergence of invitation only hotels.

Either way owners seem to be putting increasing pressure on management teams to appeal to as wide a customer base as possible. Is this feasible in your opinion and how will/do hotels do it?

You have to know the kinds of customers you want to attract for the price point you are setting and the level of services and amenities you offer. Luxury customers may not be so happy paying \$1000 per night knowing there are people two floors below paying \$200. Equally it can be hard to mix business a family leisure in the same facility and match the expectations of both groups.

Targeting and profiling become very important as will social media commendations – you need to make sure those you target understand exactly what's on offer so their expectations are set from the start and then you avoid the risk of bad reviews on Trip Advisor. Hotels will also need to be careful what they wish for and will have to be very strategic in their targeting. Our Hotels 2020 research found that 97% agree or strongly agreed that 'Hotels will increasingly consider factors such as cost of servicing, level of spend and average length of stay when targeting potential customers in different geographic markets'.

Personalisation is the key here - 92% agreed or strongly agreed that Hotel guests will expect their stay to be personalized around a set of choices they make at the time of booking or prior to arrival.

How will this affect recruitment of staff in the future, and the training of them? What sort of people will the hospitality industry need to survive, grow, differentiate? How will they get them? How will they train them?

Tomorrow's personalised service environment will require hotels to maintain a very high level of investment in training and developing staff that have strong technology understanding, are adaptable and responsive to rapidly changing guest expectations. The research found that 92% strongly agreed or agreed that highly trained staff backed up by technology will be key to delivering personalized service and experiences.

As well as recruiting staff from the hospitality schools, you will see an increasing number come in from other fields such as business, technology firms, retail and financial services. The contraction of the public sector in many countries could also create a new pool of people willing to be retrained to work in the hotel industry.

Rohit Talwar is the CEO of Fast Future Research and he led the Hotels 2020 research programme. Fast Future is a global foresight research and consulting firm that helps clients understand, anticipate and respond to the trends, forces and ideas that could shape the competitive landscape over the next 5-20 years. Fast Future's work draws on a range of proven foresight, strategy and creative processes to help clients develop deep insights into a changing world. These insights are used to help clients define innovative strategies and practical actions to implement them.

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