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### Effective Hotel Brand Management - Don't forget the role of your employees!

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## **Effective Hotel Brand Management - Don't forget the role of your employees!**

### **Abstract**

Employees are a vital element of a customer's hotel experience. Responsible for delivering the differentiated experience reflected in the hotel's brand, employees are an important brand resource, necessitating brand management adopt an external and internal perspective. This report explains internal brand management and the favorable brand outcomes that result.

*Keywords:* internal brand management, internal branding, hotel brand management, hotel branding, hotel employees, brand ambassadors

### **Why should you consider your employees in brand management?**

While the brand promise that customers seek when selecting their accommodation is initially communicated through online platforms, it is ultimately delivered by hotel employees, thus making them central to the customer's evaluation of their hotel purchase. As guest expectations of the experience are compared to the actual experience they receive, employee understanding of the brand and what it means to them in relation to performing their role, is critical for realizing customer satisfaction. It is from this perspective that internal brand management (IBM) is advanced as a critical management strategy that ensures employees are capable of being strong brand ambassadors for their hotel brand.

### **Practical insights: How can you create hotel brand ambassadors?**

IBM effectiveness is predicated on it being regarded as a strategic priority. Every effort should be made to inform all human resource (HR) related activities with brand insight (e.g., customer expectations and brand values). This brand exposure, which is specifically tailored to an internal audience, provides hotel employees with an opportunity to understand the importance of the brand to the hotel's success and what their role is in realizing that success. From recruitment efforts that are intended to attract prospective employees who authentically align with the brand's values, to orientation, training and development, as well as initiatives that seek to recognize current employee efforts that enhance the hotel's brand, it is imperative that all employees are constantly exposed to the brand so that they understand the brand and what it means for them in their role. Across all levels in the hotel organization, employees should be able to (1) identify and understand what the hotel's core brand values are; (2) know how those brand values relate to their roles and responsibilities and; 3) have the confidence and motivation to exhibit the brand's value and thus support the brand when interacting with guests.

From an operational perspective, departmental plans should emphasize core brand-related skills and examples of best practice actions that are department specific to guide employee behavior. Such initiatives need to be supported by brand aligned job descriptions as well as performance evaluations that acknowledge and reward such efforts. HR departments are encouraged to create initiatives that honor properties, departments, teams, projects, and individuals for their outstanding performance in championing the brand. For example, a hotel brand that promotes a value proposition of authentic luxury requires every department in that hotel, even engineering, to define what authentic luxury means to their employees respective roles and responsibilities. Best practice stories should be systematically collected and shared throughout the department and the organization.

### **What can you expect from your employees when they embrace the hotel's brand?**

IBM has the potential to strengthen employee brand related performance through (1) brand endorsement, such as saying positive things about the hotel brand they work for to others; (2) brand allegiance, such as the intention to keep working for the hotel brand they currently work for; and (3) brand consistent behavior, such as an employee's initiative to make sure their own work behaviors are consistent with core brand values. From a personal employee perspective, IBM may inspire employees to love the brand they work for, resulting in behaviors that include (1) forgiveness behavior, such as the intention to forgive internal policies that could harm their personal interests; (2) supportive voice behavior, such as spending time and efforts talking with colleagues about how to support the brand; and (3) helping behavior, such as helping colleagues work on tasks in the same service team. IBM has the ability to benefit employees individually by providing them an opportunity to connect with the brand. This bodes well for employee retention but also contributes to employee wellbeing through increased efficacy and motivation.

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