

PRESS RELEASE

RISPOSTE TURISMO: the central role of human capital in the luxury hotel industry

New Risposte Turismo survey among European General Managers. Some of the results:

- **Acquisition of new talent is the top challenge facing the sector**
- **The right attitude is the most important factor in staff recruitment**
- **Remuneration is the most important factor for staff retention**

The study was presented on Saturday 13 April in Venice, within the framework of the 50th Annual General Meeting of the European Hotel Managers Association (EHMA)

The difficulty in sourcing new talent, the value of the attitude demonstrated by candidates (motivation, desire to learn and interest in improvement) during the recruitment process and the importance of remuneration for staff retention.

These are the main points that emerged from “*The Challenges of Human Capital in the Hospitality Sector*,” the new survey conducted by Risposte Turismo – a research and consulting company at the service of the tourism macro-industry – and presented on Saturday 13 April in Venice during the 50th Annual General Meeting of the European Hotel Managers Association (EHMA).

Conducted at the end of March 2024 among a sample of more than 120 General Managers from 17 European countries, representing both large chains and independent hotels (42% and 58% of respondents respectively), the survey analysed human capital from the perspective of top figures in the hotel sector, with a view to identifying the areas where work is required to support the growth of the sector.

Difficulties in acquiring talent

The study conducted by the research and consulting company led by Francesco di Cesare showed that sourcing qualified candidates is the toughest challenge faced by the General Managers interviewed (62% of the sample). According to 75% of those managers, smaller hotels (<50 rooms) find it difficult or very difficult to recruit qualified staff. This percentage fell to 64% for medium-sized hotels (50-200), and to 54% for large hotels (>200).

If we look at specific roles, the survey showed that professional figures with significant experience in operational roles are the most difficult to find (confirmed by 74% of those interviewed), followed by middle management figures (62%), junior staff or resources in their first operational roles (49%) and senior/top managers (44%).

“We are pleased to have contributed to the 50th Annual General Meeting of EHMA with a specific study on human capital management in the luxury hotel segment”, said the Risposte Turismo President. “Of the issues analysed,” he went on, “the acquisition of new staff is a strategic aspect for the sector, since human resources and their interaction with guests have a huge impact on the overall performance of a hotel. If Europe – the leading world tourist destination – wants to continue to grow, and above all offer tourists quality services, this must become a priority.”

The characteristics General Managers look for most in staff recruitment

As regards the recruitment process, the General Managers interviewed said that the most important factor for them (30%) is a candidate's attitude (motivation, desire to learn and interest in improvement), ahead of experience (25%) and personal values (20%). Just 4% placed importance on academic qualifications, and none of those interviewed mentioned age, indicating that the sector is able to bring on board staff with a variety of training backgrounds, competences and years in the industry.

In order to attract new, young talent into the luxury hotel sector, 42% of the General Managers interviewed believed it is essential to raise awareness among young people, through social media campaigns; 23% mentioned the importance of the contribution of ambassadors for the sector; 19% supported the organisation of careers guidance activities in schools, and 13% believed in the importance of reviewing contract terms (this solution is adopted more frequently in southern than in northern Europe).

"The outcomes of the Risposte Turismo survey provide extremely useful indications on the challenges regarding human capital in the European hotel sector," said EHMA President Panos Almyrantis. "The study highlights persistent issues that reflect a widespread shortage of talent in the various roles in the sector. The survey analysed the attitudes, values and experiences of hospitality professionals, revealing concerns regarding job satisfaction, work-life balance and opportunities for career advancement," continued Almyrantis. "The results provide us with a solid base for tackling the multiple challenges regarding human capital in the European hospitality sector, in line with the EHMA vision of making the sector more competitive by adopting strategic actions for the development of human resources."

Remuneration, welfare and benefits for talent retention

The study went on to analyse the complexities involved in retaining existing staff. A focus on the specific elements that encourage employees to remain with the same hotel or chain showed that the greatest importance is placed on material elements. Compared to 10 years ago, respondents indicated that employees are paying more attention to gross annual remuneration (82%), company welfare programmes and benefits (71%), and career opportunities (61%).

As regards the specific professional categories, it emerged that the most difficult figures to retain are junior staff or resources in their first operational roles (65% of respondents), who remained in the hotel for an average of approx. 2.4 years.

These were followed by more experienced figures in operational roles (47%, remaining for 5.2 years on average), middle management (26%, 6.6 years on average), and lastly senior/top management (11%, 8.4 years on average).

The results of the Risposte Turismo survey also highlighted a high level of mobility of professionals within the sector, with 53% of those interviewed confirming a significant exchange of staff between different hotels. 28% mentioned staff moving from the hotel sector into other sectors within the tourism macro-industry (travel agencies, tour operators...), while mobility within the same hotel is relatively low (10% of those interviewed), as are moves from the hotel sector to other sectors (9%).

"The survey shows," continued di Cesare, that although keeping staff already working in the hotels appears easier than recruiting new staff, talent retention remains an important element for General Managers, allowing them to maintain high-quality services. Our analysis also showed that remuneration, welfare and benefits are the elements most likely to persuade an employee to

remain in their workplace. These are the drivers highlighted to avoid excessive staff and role turnover.”

The 50th Annual General Meeting of the European Hotel Managers Association

The 50th Annual General Meeting of EHMA – the association that represents Hotel Managers and currently has more than 440 members in 23 countries and covers around 400 luxury hotels, 86,000 rooms and 66,000 employees – was held on Friday 12, Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 April in Venice, at the Hotel Excelsior Venice Lido Resort.

The Educational Day held on Saturday 13 was a key moment in the three-day event in Venice, and was dedicated to human capital management and its role in the luxury hotel business, with the aim of exploring ways to convince, engage and inspire young people to embark on a career in the hospitality sector, through the numerous presentations and round-table discussions that took place throughout the day.

Risposte Turismo

Risposte Turismo is a research and consulting company at the service of the tourism macro-industry. It has been operating since 2001 in Italy and Europe, and specialises in providing project and operating solutions for organisations and businesses in the tourist sector.

The company, with its president Francesco di Cesare, deals with consulting, training and the direct conception and management of events and forums (Italian Cruise Day, Adriatic Sea Forum – cruise, ferry, sail & yacht, and Shopping Tourism – the Italian forum) and dedicated activities.

In addition to shopping tourism, the sectors most closely studied include maritime tourism, film-induced tourism (how cinema relates to tourism and local areas), running tourism, wine tourism and glamping, as well as the local impact of major events, and destination management.

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