

## How to Become One of the "Best Companies to Work For"

This week Fortune magazine publishes its annual "Best Companies to Work For" top 100 list. Is your company on the list? If not, why not? As luck would have it, two are in the hospitality industry, the Four Seasons at #53 and the Marriott at #89. So, why do people want to work at these companies?

### The Top Ten Companies to Work For In America

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1 Google	6 Network Appliance
2 Genentech	7 S.C. Johnson & Son
3 Wegmans Food Markets	8 Boston Consulting Grp.
4 Container Store	9 Methodist Hospital Sys.
5 Whole Foods Market	10 W.L. Gore & Associates

Source: Fortune Magazine, January 22, 2007

This month we discuss what makes the "Best Hotels to work for in America" so good. While the rest of us struggle to recruit and train staff to manage turnover, these properties are blessed with a loyal group of dedicated, attentive and professional staff. So, how do they do it?

You might be surprised to learn that the hotels people most want to work at don't necessarily pay their staff more than others. Many pay their staff less than you currently pay yours. How can this be?

### The Four Keys to a Rewarding Job

What staff wants from the "ideal" job:

- **To Make a Difference**
- **To Be Appreciated**
- **To Learn**
- **To Make Money**

The secret ingredient at the country's leading hotels is they overflow these "basic needs" for their staff. And this is true not only of hospitality companies, but companies of all types around the world. After all, work is the place where we spend a significant part of our days and, over the years, our lives. And so it's no surprise that job satisfaction is more about making a difference and feeling valued, than how much money a job pays. Not to say that the almighty dollar isn't important, just that other factors contribute in often greater proportions.

### Staff Want to Feel Like They Make a Difference

People want to feel like what they do in life matters. That for showing up, they made a difference. In hospitality, opportunities are endless. Perhaps you helped take care of a guest's problem, went "over the top" to provide outstanding service. Or, maybe you discovered some way to improve operations, to cut costs or streamline the business. At the end of these days,

you walk out of the building with your head held high, feeling great! And why not? You actually have made a difference and that feels good. So as a manager, provide opportunities for your staff to make a difference. Most guest facing jobs provide ample opportunity to make a difference with them, but consider things like accepting and rewarding suggestions from staff on how to improve the property. Review these, acknowledge all staff providing input and recognize or reward staff whose ideas you decide to implement.

### **Staff Want to Be Appreciated**

When we do special things that make a difference, we want to know that our efforts are appreciated. And it doesn't take much. A smile from a guest, a supporting comment from your supervisor (especially in front of peers), or being recognized as employee of the month. The important point is that the appreciation feels genuine, and that it is provided soon after the good deed is done. And it's not about waiting for these recognition opportunities to pop up. It is your job to create regular opportunities for each of your staff to feel appreciated, to show up. And the more specific the recognition, the better. Here are some ideas for how to do this:

- Write short stories about employees “caught caring” in the company newsletter or intranet.
- Posting specific ways one or two staff has made a difference each week in a highly visible place or in a break room.
- Give guests an opportunity to provide feedback on staff that made a difference during their stay.
- Give staff the opportunity to recognize each other. Let them recognize outstanding performance they have observed by other staff. This could be done during staff meetings or provided to you on a recognition card in the break room.
- Create a custom nametag or nametag holder that is awarded to outstanding staff either weekly or monthly, and that clearly identifies them as a high performer. Perhaps indicating “Outstanding Service Award” or something that is visible to everyone during their day and which they are proud to wear.
- Award, Award, Award! Provide awards, from frequent small things like tickets to the movies or meals, to once a year larger awards such as trips to coveted destinations (perhaps within your chain) or other big items that your team will take note of. Be creative, think outside the box!

### **Staff Want to Learn**

Perhaps the most overlooked aspect of what makes a job rewarding is the desire to learn. People love to learn. It's interesting. It provides you with a sense of empowerment. You feel good about yourself. So, continuously provide staff with opportunities to learn. Not just about their job, but about the property, the company and industry. Ideas include:

- Provide regular training for all staff in their specific jobs.
- Provide the opportunity to learn about the property and its operation. Don't assume this is obvious to staff. And learning these details empowers staff and makes them feel like a valued part of the team.
- Provide educational assistance. Offer to pay for some portion of tuition for courses related to their job, or the hospitality industry.

You don't have to spend a lot of money to make a big difference. Here, it's often the thought that counts more than the specific financial contribution. So, ask yourself "what things relating to our property do I know, that staff might find interesting to learn?" Or, what would you like to learn more about, that others might also benefit from. Make your hotel a place of learning and you'll be way ahead of the game.

### **Staff Want to Earn a Living**

This is the easy one. At the end of the day, we all have bills to pay, food to buy and families to care for. So, naturally, what we're paid does make a difference. However, for hotels, this is the place that it is often the hardest to change. In order to run a profitable property, staff costs must be carefully managed. However, combining pay with recognition can have a multiplier effect. Award small bonuses to staff for performance or on service anniversaries. Finally, be smart about compensation levels for staff. Some jobs are more important than others, or particularly hard to fill with the right people. Invest in these positions by paying staff well. High turnover in these positions is costly, not only in terms of pure dollars, but also in distraction to your job and impact on guest experience. So, don't be penny wise and pound foolish.

Running a hotel is like being a good parent. Good parents know that their children want to feel special, want to feel important and want to do important things in the world. And they thrive on learning and being rewarded. Good parents spend their days providing opportunities for their children to experience these things and noticing them when they occur naturally. It's no different at work. Good managers take care of the staff, by fulfilling these basic needs.

The magic here is in being consistent and being creative. Sporadic on and off appreciation will soon be viewed with skepticism and not feel genuine to staff. And being creative will make staff feel important and appreciated as the extra thought put into supporting your staff will be evident to them.

So, have fun with this. Take care of your staff's four basic needs every day, and watch your property flourish.

Sincerely,

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