



The effects of training satisfaction, employee benefits, and incentives on part-time employees' commitment



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ABSTRACT

Training in hospitality organizations is associated with several benefits including consistency in job performance, greater job satisfaction, higher guest satisfaction, and reduction in business costs. Unfortunately, companies do not tend to put forth much effort into implementing effective training techniques, particularly for part-time employees. This study surveyed part-time hotel employees to determine if training method and duration impacted training satisfaction. The impact of benefits and incentives received, and training satisfaction on job commitment was also determined. On-the-job training and job shadowing were found to impact training satisfaction. Select benefits and incentives and training satisfaction impacted commitment. Implications are discussed.

1. Introduction

Training and development is a crucial activity in hospitality organizations because of the high costs associated with employee turnover. There are several benefits associated with training including consistency in job performance, greater job satisfaction, higher guest satisfaction, and reduction in business costs, to name a few (Wesley and Skip, 1999). Unfortunately, companies do not tend to put forth much effort into implementing effective training techniques. The hospitality industry has a poor reputation for lackluster techniques although this is not well supported empirically (Poulston, 2008). Specifically, management in hotels is usually reluctant to invest in proper training for their employees and in programs to train the trainer. Because of management's lack of willingness to invest in these types of programs, a cycle is being created in this industry where poor training of employees and the consequential lack of motivation and poor commitment of employees is never-ending ().

The large number of part-time employees in the hospitality industry adds to management's reluctance to invest in training because there is a widely held belief among hospitality managers that part-time workers have less commitment, competence, and willingness to work hard (Inman and Enz, 1995). Two out of five workers in the hospitality industry are part-time; this is more than twice the proportion of all other industries (Employment and Training Administration and U.S.

Department of Labor, 2010). According to a survey conducted by Harris Poll on behalf of CareerBuilder, 23% of employers expected to recruit part-time employees in 2015; this number is up 6% from 2014 (CareerBuilder, 2015). Positions held by part-time hotel employees include everything from front desk, housekeeping, cooks, servers, and maintenance, and even some management and accounting positions, making it essential to develop training programs for each of these positions.

Most part-time employees receive lower wages than their full-time colleagues and do not receive benefits (Inman and Enz, 1995) even though benefits and incentives could reduce part-time employee turnover rates (). This is despite the fact that employee turnover is a well-established problem in the hospitality industry resulting in a vicious cycle of recruitment, selection, and training. DiPietro and McLeod (2012) found that part-time hospitality employees showed significantly lower organizational commitment than those who perceived their work status as full-time. The short-term costs of part-time employee turnover involves spending time and money to constantly hire and train new employees; and in the long-term, inconsistent quality of service could result in lost revenue (La Lopa et al., 2000). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013), employees in the hospitality industry had the lowest tenure with their current employer. According to the American Hotel & Lodging Association, estimates of average annual employee turnover range from around 60–300 percent (Gautam, 2005).

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Research related to training and benefits of part-time employees in the hospitality industry and specifically the lodging segment is limited (Johnson and Cho, 2009). Enz (2001) found that motivation and care of hourly employees was a critical problem facing the hospitality industry in the U.S. Sobaih (2011) called for more research in this under-published area because part-time employees continue to be managed inappropriately by their employers. Given the large number of part-time employees in the accommodations sector, the projected increase (Employment and Training Administration and U.S. Department of Labor, 2010), and the persistent issue of high turnover (“Hospitality employee turnover rose,” 2015) among part-time lodging employees, it is imperative to research ways to increase this group’s job commitment. Hence, the purpose of this study was to explore the effects of benefits and incentives received by part-time lodging employees and their perceptions of satisfaction with training received, on job commitment.

Although the advantages of offering structured training and benefits and incentives to part-time hospitality employees have been touted, the lack of empirical evidence prompted the following research objectives specific to part-time lodging industry employees: (a) to determine the impact of training method, length of training, and follow-up training received by part-time employees on training satisfaction, and (b) to determine the impact of benefits and incentives received, and training satisfaction on job commitment.

2. Literature review

2.1. Theoretical underpinning

Frederick Herzberg created the motivator-hygiene theory in 1959 to study job attitudes. Herzberg et al. (1959) concluded that fourteen factors can be associated with how an employee feels about their job. These factors include: recognition, achievement, possibility of growth, advancement, salary, interpersonal relations, supervision, responsibility, company policy and administration, working conditions, the work itself, factors in personal life, status, and job security (Herzberg et al., 1959). Research related to training and job benefits and its potential relationship with select attitudes toward the job falls square within the scope of this study.

As suggested by Sobaih (2011), the human capital theory is also central to this study. The theory states that organizations are less likely to invest if they perceive a low return (Becker, 1964). It is clear that hospitality managers offer fewer training programs for part-time employees because they perceive a low return on investment (Sobaih et al., 2008). Learning the relationship between investing in part-time employees’ training and benefits and its impact on job commitment may alter management practices.

2.2. Part-time workforce in the hospitality industry

There is no universal definition for a part-time employee; however, for the purpose of this paper and research, a part-time employee is an individual who works less than 35 h per week (Johnson and Cho, 2009). The reasons that people choose, or do not choose, to work part-time are varied. According to Doeringhaus and Feldman (1993), many part-time employees are students, have spouses that work full-time, or some even have another full-time job themselves. Some also work part-time for health reasons or because they have childcare responsibilities. These are considered voluntary part-time employees.

Involuntary part-time employees are those who wish to move up and work full-time, but are not given that opportunity. The number of involuntary part-time employees due to slack or unfavorable business conditions continues to be very high in the services industry; particularly in the leisure and hospitality sector (Cajner et al., 2014). The increase in the number of part-time employees has been attributed to factors such as the Affordable Care Act (Davidson, 2014) and post-recession economic conditions (Timiraos, 2014). It is arguable as to

whether the reason for the continued large number of part-time employees in the hospitality industry is cyclical or structural; there could very well be a structural component as employers rely more on a contingent workforce and avoid converting part-time to full-time positions (Timiraos, 2014).

Many employers feel that part-time employees are substandard to the rest of the workforce, are usually less concerned with quality of work and cleanliness, tend to have higher rates of absenteeism, and are likely to quit because they feel unappreciated (Inman and Enz, 1995). However, Johnson and Cho (2009) found in a study involving four upscale hotels that part-time employees actually have a higher level of organizational commitment, perform more action behaviors (such as going above and beyond what is asked of them), and tend to engage in more quality work performance compared to full-time employees. Part-time employees are essential for hospitality businesses to gain a competitive advantage as they are a flexible labor source during periods of fluctuating demand (Enz and Inman, 1992) and also play a key role in customer service and retention while resulting in labor cost savings (Stamper and Van Dyne, 2003).

Johnson and Cho (2009) stated that hospitality organizations should treat part-time employees the same as their full-time counterparts when it comes to training, benefits, and recognition. However, a review of the limited literature on the topic indicates that part-time employees do not have access to the same training opportunities as their full-time counterparts (Monk and Ryding, 2007; Sobaih et al., 2008; Sobaih et al., 2011) and do not receive the pay or benefits received by full-time employees even though they possess similar skills (Inman and Enz, 1995).

2.3. Part-time employee training in the hospitality industry

The hospitality industry lacks consistency and portability as far as training models are concerned (Employment and Training Administration and U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). Focusing on the hotel industry, Lai et al. (2008) concluded that management is very reluctant to invest in training of part-time employees because they feel that they are just constantly being replaced. There are also doubts about whether part-time employees are productive because of high levels of absenteeism, lack of commitment, and lower quality of performance (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2000). This perceived lack of productivity may be attributable to lack of training. Sobaih (2011) found seven obstacles when training part-time employees: (a) high cost of training and lower return on investment; (b) lack of training time; (c) working of irregular shifts; (d); working background of part-time employees; (e) low enthusiasm of part-time employees; (f) high turnover of part-time employees; and (g) lack of resources, knowledge and suitable training program. These obstacles are linked together and are associated with both the employees and employers (Sobaih, 2011).

If the company would put money into the training programs that they create, they can actually save more money over time (Poulston, 2008). Based on interviews with housekeeping managers, employment agency managers, and temporary hotel staff in the United Kingdom, Lai et al. (2008) added that if hotels provided training and allocated monetary rewards for temporary staff, they are more likely to act more like the hotel’s core staff.

The ability to provide effective training does relate positively to organizational commitment of the employee (Chew and Chan, 2008; Choi and Dickson, 2010). Poulston (2008) agreed that training programs can have a significant impact on reducing employee turnover in the hotel industry. Lundberg (1994) said businesses should consider the cost of not providing training or providing limited training for part-time employees. The result can be high turnover and other forms of resistance among part-time employees, thus increasing the cost of hiring and training per employee. According to Faulkner and Patiar (1997), training and development programs can also reduce stress that employees feel when they are not trained properly, and affect the

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