

EHL, Sommet Education, Vatel Group: They train the hoteliers of tomorrow. Interviews with their presidents

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The hotel industry is undergoing a major transformation and future employees in the sector must be trained accordingly. Here is the point of view of three schools specializing in the hotel sector that have been training the professionals of tomorrow for many years.

MICHEL ROCHAT, CEO, Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne

What are the most important elements for training a hotel professional in 2018?

In a changing economic environment and a technological panorama that never ceases to surprise us, it is essential to instill adaptability in the burgeoning managers who wander the corridors at EHL. Understand today's tools, but learn not to become dependent on them. Identify tomorrow's trends.

What approach(s) has EHL chosen to train its students? What are the specificities of your schools? ?

We want to integrate technology wherever it has added value for the student experience; from enrolment to the alumni network, but especially through the educational content offered. In addition, there is a necessary proximity to the market. We must be close to the commercial players who are leading the way in the hospitality industry. We also need to understand the changing needs and expectations of an international clientele. This strategy takes the form of numerous partnerships, applied research by our professors, and active participation in the work world by our students. They do two internships during their studies and at the end of their studies they have the opportunity to do a "student business project", a case study from a client company, to which a group of student consultants must respond in a concrete and commercially viable way.

What are the strong points of a career in the hotel business for you?

It is a difficult job, but few vocations open the doors to the whole world to us the way the hotel business does. After graduation, our students have a wide range of choices when it comes to choosing where to live. For more than a century, the industry has served as a real laboratory for understanding consumer interests, priorities and subtleties. It is a profession that offers great laterality; a hotel manager can easily integrate a luxury, consulting or finance company as a customer experience expert. It therefore offers valuable and relatively rare job security. Finally, it is a profession of values; sharing, respect and kindness lie at the heart of the hotel tradition.

How to attract new talent and keep them in the sector?

The business itself is changing. The skills required are multiplying and their nature is increasingly varied. In addition to human skills (or soft-skills), it is necessary to have a very good understanding of new technologies, new marketing and asset management techniques. A good hotelier must be a real Swiss army knife! It is this change that enhances the value of the profession. As the profession develops and the appropriate profiles become scarcer, supply and demand will be responsible for providing talent retention. This will not only require financial remuneration, but also a global supply that responds to the need for meaning, balance and utility of the new generations.

BENOÎT-ETIENNE DOMENGET, CEO Sommet Education

What are the most important elements for the training of a hotel professional in 2018?

Business acumen, operational know-how and soft skills - the backbone of hospitality management education - are just as relevant today as ever. At the same time, awareness of emerging trends in luxury, technology, wellness and sustainability is key to thriving in an industry that increasingly overlaps with other sectors. Technology and the rise of Millennial consumers have transformed today's hospitality landscape, pushing demand for personalised service and experiences. In an age of artificial intelligence, hospitality professionals need to develop their emotional intelligence in order to retain the human touch and exceed guest expectations. Hospitality management education should prepare graduates with the skills to deliver the memorable experiences that clients crave. Learning how to manage a hotel is just the beginning of that journey, and is in fact only one of many contexts in which graduates may use their skills.

What approach(es) has Sommet Education chosen to take to train its students? What are the specificities of your schools?

Our educational approach is rooted in the Swiss tradition of blended theory and practice. A successful hospitality manager needs to understand the intricacies of the business from the ground up. This is why we require all students to complete a practical arts curriculum featuring immersion in key hospitality divisions, such as kitchen, service and housekeeping. At the same time, our range of dining outlets exposes students to industry trends, including farm-to-table dining and gastronomic cuisine. These experiences enable students to develop essential soft skills, such as communication, teamwork and leadership, as well as hospitality operations know-how. Professional internships also play a vital role in the learning experience, enabling students to apply their practical skills and academic knowledge. Meanwhile, our close industry ties have led us to identify the skills that are most needed and develop new programmes accordingly, such as the Luxury Brand Management specialisation at Glion or the Digital Marketing Strategies specialisation at Les Roches. Finally, small class sizes and a student-centred approach allow us to provide a personalised learning experience, whether in the classroom or the kitchen.

What are the strong points of a career in the hotel business for you?

Hospitality is a vibrant industry, offering many different career paths and global opportunities. In the next ten years, the WTTC predicts that the industry will support 100 million new jobs. In today's experience-driven market, the skills of hospitality graduates, including excellent customer relations management combined with business acumen, are in demand across a wide range of sectors. Besides hotel management, our alumni have gone on to lead successful careers in fields such as luxury, finance and wellness.

How to attract new talent and keep them in the sector?

Just as hotels need to adapt to the changing preferences of a new generation of clients, the industry also needs to think ahead in order to attract and retain a new generation of talent. The Millennial quest for authentic travel experiences, for example, runs parallel to this generation's search for meaning in the workplace. Businesses should thus focus on providing staff with opportunities for growth and development, such as mentoring and entrusting employees with new responsibilities. Fortunately, the hospitality industry is in a great position to do just that. As a global industry, hospitality offers professionals the chance to develop their career across cultures and borders. The sheer diversity of opportunities available within this experience-driven market also means that professionals can



move between a greater variety of roles, while businesses can benefit from the sharing of skills and knowledge across sectors.

ALAIN SEBBAN, President and fondateur, Vatel Group

What are the most important elements for training a hotel professional in 2018?

Social skills. More than ever!

With new technologies, everyone has access to "knowledge" and "know-how". Today, it is common to go on the Internet to check information, to follow a "tutorial"... And the schools that train managers in the international hotel industry today all provide very good training in the major fields of management such as administration, human resources, marketing, finance, etc. So in terms of knowledge and know-how, the graduates who enter the job market are all on a par. On the other hand, social skills are the result of a long, slow learning process. Students entering training must be very sensitive to others and open-minded, and the school must encourage them to develop these two very great qualities, in the service of the art of receiving.

And a strong predisposition to interculturality.

The hotel professional can no longer reason with his own cultural codes. Today, welcoming a client well means making them feel "at home", anticipating their desires and therefore knowing their cultural codes. To do this, you must have travelled, learned several languages, let yourself be surprised, gone to meet the unknown, not let yourself be locked away by your own certainties... It is also a long learning process.

What approach(es) has Vatel Group taken to train its students? What are the specificities of your schools?

Social skills and interculturality being the supporting pillars of Vatel training, our 43 schools, even if they are spread all over the world, all practice the same pedagogy based on:

The alternation of theory and professional experience

This explains why all schools have a training restaurant and/or hotel. Everything that is learned in theory can be verified very quickly in practice. Compulsory internships, including international internships in the 2nd year of the Bachelor's degree. The school organizes them for each student and knows exactly which student to send to which hotel and to which position.

Marco Polo, the Vatel international student mobility program

Spending their 2nd year of Bachelor's degree at another Vatel school allows students to master an additional language, to acquire intellectual and intercultural agility, to confront other management techniques and to develop their listening and integration skills.

Specializations in the final year of the MBA

The students' career path at Vatel is punctuated by many opportunities to live an international experience and the last one is the opportunity to do a specialization in the final year of an MBA: Luxury Management at Vatel Paris, Revenue Management at Vatel Lyon, Events Management at Vatel Nîmes, International Wine & Spirit Management at Vatel Bordeaux, Sales & E-Marketing Management at Vatel Brussels, Entrepreneurial Management at Vatel Marrakech, American Hospitality Management & International Business at Vatel Los Angeles, Resorts Management at Vatel Mauritius, Finance & Project Development at Vatel Switzerland, Ecotourism Management at Vatel Madagascar.

The multi-cultural nature of campuses

Their vocation is to welcome very diverse nationalities. Vatel Switzerland has 56 nationalities for a total of 300 students, who live abroad.

What do you think are the strong points of a career in the hotel business?

First of all, the variety and richness of the professions offered by the hotel industry. It gives everyone, those passionate about the arts, fond of gastronomy or travel, the opportunity to achieve their full potential. They are also professions providing personal services, which give meaning to those who perform them. "Do you want to be happy? Gives happiness," wrote Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. On this subject, we invite you to read in the latest Vatel Planet, the contribution of Jérôme de Fombelle, General Manager of the very beautiful LUX Le Morne***** hotel.

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In his article entitled "What if we were all manufacturers of happiness", he describes very well the very special pleasure experienced in giving happiness to customers. The hotel business is also fabulous for social mobility. This is one of the few remaining sectors where those who work well and are mobile have the opportunity to move up the ladder quickly and achieve a very successful career.

How to attract new talent and keep them in the sector?

We do not hear much from professionals on this issue. And schools have much less legitimacy to respond. However, compared to other sectors, the low pay, especially at the beginning of a career and with respect to the volume of hours, is becoming a barrier for young people. Business schools have worked hard over the past ten years to raise the level of admission requirements and the level of skills acquired by future managers in the international hotel industry. They have provided the industry with young, creative and hard-working talents. But beware, these young people who hear all day long in the media that they will have several careers in one lifetime have no scruples. Faced with an opportunity to be better paid and to have more recognition elsewhere, they will not hesitate to leave for a second. Ultimately, it's quite simple to attract new talents and keep them!