

Why practice makes perfect in hospitality training

The methodology of learning has changed over the years and in order to meet the demands of the industry, as well as those of the learners, hospitality training needs to continuously progress. So believes Capital Hotel School's (CHS's) new business developer, Hein Grobler, who heads up the newly formed edu-tech team at CHS's Hospitalit-e division.



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Grobler, a trained hospitality professional himself who has worked for a collection of local and international hospitality and tourism brands such as Ocean Basket International and Etihad Airways, completed his training using methods where tests and exams were used to test a taught application, yet very little practical experience was used aside from the final assessment. Grobler's training focused around teaching tasks and not necessarily about the importance of the task being taught – thus was very much a subjective type of teaching environment.

Soon after Grobler graduated, South African education methods moved towards a more Outcomes-Based Education system where vocational methods of instruction that focused less on theory, and more on practical application were just becoming important.

About five years ago, the hospitality industry saw a move towards e-learning with online courses rising in popularity. Although the intention was to offer cost-effective programmes that were able to teach concepts, there was no way these could not be monitored or evaluated albeit credited with a certificate of completion or attendance. "Naturally, this created a significant gap between skills and knowledge gained, especially in vocational education as learners could explain a concept effectively yet lacked the practical skill to carry it through," said Hein. "And so, the next evolution of hospitality learning methods took place where CHS began realising the need for coursework to include both practical and theoretical learning bases."

During the last decade, there has been a significant shift of importance in placing the guest at the epi-centre of all hospitality management training.

Businesses are choosing to partner with respected training providers to facilitate in-situ training programmes where online, blended-learning channels are used to teach theoretical concepts, which are transferred and evaluated in real-life, customer-facing scenarios. “We’re finding that a combined theoretical and practical learning environment is where our students are really thriving – being able to learn the *why* and apply the *how* is where we’re seeing a significant increase in student engagement and assessment results,” said Hein.

Although the traditional methods of teaching will always have a place in the way theoretical understanding is tested, Hein said the industry has moved away from teaching content and moved towards teaching context.

“CHS has built a really integrated blended learning model where we’re able to track and monitor our learner’s performance using our bespoke reporting system. This allows us to identify if learners are struggling or falling behind and initialise corrective action. We then use the ‘classroom’ environment to contextualise real-life work environments which can be assessed via tests, exams, assignments, roleplays and case study examples,” said Hein. “The truly awesome thing about our blended learning method is that not only are learners receiving in-situ training but they’re obtaining accredited and certified skills and furthering their education whilst in full, or part time employment.”

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