

Accommodation and Catering:

Understanding the Employee-centric Organization

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Table of Contents

Summary	3
Thesis Statement	3
What Defines an Employee-centric Organization in Accommodation and Catering	4
How Can HR Assist in Developing an Employee-centric Organization	5
Discussion	7
Conclusion	8
Citations	10

Summary

This article delves into the growing focus on employee-centric policies within the accommodation and catering industry, highlighting the essential link between operational efficiency and employee well-being in this field. It aims to detail the critical elements of embracing an employee-focused approach amidst the unique challenges and intricacies characteristic of the accommodation and catering sector, with a special focus on the central role of Human Resources (HR) in championing these initiatives. Considering the industry's broad spectrum, which covers everything from hotel management and event catering to food service and guest services, the article strives to present its findings in a way that is relevant across different areas of the accommodation and catering sector. This strategy ensures that the insights remain applicable to a wide audience of professionals, managers, and stakeholders within the industry. Through its examination, the article seeks to offer enlightening perspectives that could profoundly influence the formulation and execution of forward-thinking policies in the accommodation and catering industry, thus fostering a workplace that greatly values the engagement and welfare of its employees, a crucial factor in this vital sector.

Thesis Statement

In the dynamic arena of the accommodation and catering industry, there's an increasing acknowledgment of the significance of an employee-centric approach as a crucial facet of organizational management. This paradigm shift, transitioning from traditional efficiency and budget-centric models, advocates for a framework that places paramount importance on the well-being, engagement, and satisfaction of employees within the sector. Recognizing this evolution is vital for improving operational performance, spurring innovation, and maintaining a competitive advantage in an industry highly reliant on the commitment, skills, and talents of its workforce.

The unique challenges inherent in the accommodation and catering sector highlight the necessity of embracing an employee-focused perspective. These challenges include the demand for highly skilled professionals capable of navigating the complexities of service excellence and customer satisfaction, the imperative to meet the growing expectations of guests in a sustainable and responsible manner, and managing a workforce that desires not just jobs but meaningful and fulfilling roles. Cultivating an environment that prioritizes the needs and well-being of employees is viewed not only as an ethical duty but also as a strategic necessity. Such an environment is expected to lead to increased job satisfaction, lower turnover rates, and a workforce that is more engaged, loyal, and resilient.

In this context, the role of Human Resources (HR) is crucial. HR professionals are charged with the task of turning the principles of employee-centricity into actionable strategies and policies. Their responsibilities extend across a broad spectrum, from developing effective talent management and professional development programs to fostering a work culture that emphasizes inclusivity, respect, and a balanced approach to work-life integration. HR's role shifts from traditional administrative functions to becoming strategic partners essential in

driving organizational change. They serve as the link between the aspirations of employees and the strategic objectives of accommodation and catering businesses, creating an atmosphere where individuals feel appreciated and motivated to contribute to the success of the industry.

Despite the apparent advantages of adopting employee-centric practices and the critical role of HR in this transformation, a significant research gap persists, particularly within the context of accommodation and catering. This article aims to fill this gap by examining what it means to be an employee-centric organization in the accommodation and catering industry and how HR can lead the way in developing and maintaining such a culture. Through this examination, the article adds to the wider conversation on effective organizational management in the accommodation and catering sector, offering insights that could assist companies in creating workplaces where employees are central to achieving business goals.

What Defines an Employee-centric Organization in Accommodation and Catering

Adapting the principles of employee-centric organizations to the accommodation and catering industry underscores the development of a workplace culture that prioritizes the well-being, engagement, and satisfaction of employees within this sector. This culture is based on an organizational philosophy that promotes open communication, inclusivity, and the empowerment of staff members. Essential practices include the implementation of feedback mechanisms to understand and address employee needs and preferences, fostering an environment that encourages active participation, and facilitating the sharing of knowledge and expertise (Schein, 1992).

The shift towards an employee-centric approach in the accommodation and catering industry is characterized by the introduction of flexible work arrangements, such as remote work, flexible scheduling, and part-time opportunities, to accommodate the diverse needs of employees. These practices aim to enhance work-life balance and increase job satisfaction (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

A fundamental aspect of employee-centric organizations in this sector is the emphasis on continuous training and development. This encompasses not only traditional training methods but also mentorship, career development programs, and cross-functional learning opportunities to improve employee skills and offer broader career paths (Argyris & Schön, 1978).

Implementing effective feedback and recognition systems is crucial for nurturing a culture of continuous improvement and appreciation. Utilizing 360-degree feedback, employee recognition programs, and regular performance evaluations is essential for identifying growth opportunities and acknowledging achievements (London & Smither, 1995).

Promoting the formation of collaborative teams that utilize diverse talents and perspectives is critical for enhancing problem-solving abilities, driving innovation, and fostering a sense of community and belonging among employees (Edmondson, 1999).

An employee-centric philosophy in the accommodation and catering industry also includes a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion, ensuring fair hiring practices, and establishing a workplace where diverse viewpoints are integral to organizational success (Sitkin, 1992).

Engagement with external networks and platforms to facilitate organizational learning is significant. Participation in industry associations, policy forums, and online learning platforms offers valuable opportunities for employee growth and innovation (Bench, 1998).

The commitment of leadership to employee-centric values is pivotal in creating a supportive and empowering work environment. Leaders are tasked with actively promoting and implementing policies that prioritize the well-being and professional development of employees (Senge, 1990).

Transitioning to an employee-centric model in the accommodation and catering industry requires effective change management strategies, such as communicating the benefits of such practices and involving employees in the transition process to ensure a smooth and successful transformation (Kotter, 1996).

Evaluating the effectiveness of employee-centric practices through clear objectives for employee engagement and satisfaction, assessing outcomes through surveys and feedback, and refining strategies based on these insights is vital for ongoing improvement (Kirkpatrick, 1994).

In conclusion, evolving into an employee-centric organization within the accommodation and catering sector involves a comprehensive strategy that values employee well-being and engagement. By cultivating a supportive culture, offering flexible working conditions, and committing to continuous training and development, organizations in the accommodation and catering industry can improve their adaptability, innovation, and overall performance, securing long-term success in the competitive and fast-paced hospitality environment.

How Can HR Assist in Developing an Employee-centric Organization

In transitioning focus to the accommodation and catering industry, the role of Human Resources (HR) in fostering and maintaining an employee-centric organization becomes critically important. Drawing on Schein's (2010) insights, organizational culture in the accommodation and catering sector is perceived as a complex system of shared beliefs and values that dictate behavior within organizations. In this sector, where service excellence, customer satisfaction, and innovation are paramount, HR's role in shaping these cultures extends beyond mere policy enforcement to nurturing a work environment that prioritizes employee well-being and engagement.

The strategic partnership between HR and management is crucial in aligning employee-centric values with the organization's objectives. Ulrich, Brockbank, and Ulrich (2019) underscore the significance of HR professionals as strategic partners, ensuring workforce alignment with the organization's strategic goals. This alignment is particularly vital in the accommodation and catering industry, where the effectiveness and satisfaction of the workforce are directly linked to operational success and competitive advantage.

In the highly competitive landscape of the accommodation and catering industry, faced with the challenges of attracting and retaining skilled professionals amidst evolving consumer preferences and sustainability concerns, recruitment, and retention emerge as significant challenges. Breaugh (2008) emphasizes the critical role of strategic HR management in attracting and retaining a skilled and engaged workforce, essential for operational effectiveness and the successful delivery of services.

Moreover, the focus on skilled professionals highlights the necessity for ongoing training and development. Noe (2017) discusses the importance of continuous training programs in maintaining a competitive edge, ensuring employees are adequately equipped for their roles and the challenges ahead in the rapidly changing accommodation and catering sector.

Employee well-being and engagement are pivotal in building an employee-centric organization. Hallowell and Gambatese (2010) stress the significance of comprehensive safety and wellness programs, which in the accommodation and catering industry, extend to physical safety, mental health, and stress management, reflecting HR's role in developing policies that promote a healthy and engaging work culture. Khan (1990) underlines the psychological conditions conducive to employee engagement, highlighting HR initiatives that motivate the workforce and contribute to operational success.

Implementing work-life balance policies is also crucial, especially given the demanding environments of the accommodation and catering industry. Kossek & Hammer (2014) argue that such policies not only enhance employee satisfaction but also productivity, which is crucial in a sector where balancing professional demands with personal well-being is essential.

In summary, HR's role in promoting an employee-centric culture within the accommodation and catering industry is comprehensive and indispensable. Through strategic alignment, culture development, talent management, and the promotion of employee well-being and engagement, HR practices play a pivotal role in creating a workplace where employees feel valued and supported. These efforts benefit not only the employees but also contribute to the industry's operational efficiency, service excellence, and adaptability, addressing the unique challenges of the accommodation and catering sector.

This narrative, supported by scholarly research, offers a robust framework for understanding the critical role of HR in advancing employee-centric organizational cultures within the accommodation and catering industry, highlighting the sector's unique context and the significance of HR practices in achieving operational excellence and competitive advantage.

Discussion

The shift toward an employee-centric model within the accommodation and catering industry, while offering substantial benefits, reveals a complex terrain of challenges and opportunities. The need to enhance service quality, ensure guest satisfaction, and innovate within the framework of sustainability emphasizes the importance of focusing on health and well-being. However, the journey to an employee-centric environment in the accommodation and catering sector involves overcoming obstacles such as financial instability, operational intricacies, and potential resistance to changing long-standing industry norms.

Enhanced Employee Satisfaction and Retention: By implementing practices that recognize and value the contributions of employees, companies can improve job satisfaction. This is crucial in an industry vying for highly skilled professionals, potentially leading to lower turnover rates and reduced costs associated with recruitment and training (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002).

Increased Productivity and Quality of Work: Catering to employees' needs and providing adequate support can enhance productivity and the quality of work. For the accommodation and catering sector, this means more efficient operations and outcomes that boost company reputation and stakeholder trust, nurturing a culture of excellence (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Enhanced Well-being and Mental Health: Making mental health and overall well-being a priority is essential in creating a healthier work environment. Given the stressful nature of hospitality operations, such a focus not only directly benefits employees but also helps in reducing costs associated with absenteeism and decreased productivity (Zohar, 2010).

Boosted Innovation and Problem-Solving: Fostering a culture of participative decision-making encourages innovation. In an industry facing constant changes in consumer preferences and environmental challenges, an engaged and motivated workforce eager to explore innovative solutions is invaluable (Amabile & Kramer, 2011).

Increased Costs: Implementing employee-centric practices requires investments in competitive compensation, comprehensive training programs, and initiatives aimed at improving health and well-being. These costs may pose challenges for companies operating within the volatile hospitality market (Pfeffer, 1998).

Complexity in Implementation: Transitioning to an employee-centric culture necessitates significant changes in HR policies and management practices, potentially complicated by the diverse operational areas within the accommodation and catering industry (Kotter, 1996).

Risk of Decreased Immediate Operational Efficiency: Focusing on long-term benefits such as employee well-being and engagement might temporarily affect operational efficiency. For businesses facing competitive pressures or smaller operations, prioritizing these practices could seem unsustainable (Cascio, 2003).

Potential Misalignment with Industry Norms: The traditional emphasis on hierarchical, process-driven approaches within the accommodation and catering industry may clash with the move toward an employee-centric model, requiring considerable cultural adaptation within companies and potentially impacting operational dynamics (Egan, 1998).

Successfully adopting an employee-centric approach within the accommodation and catering industry demands strategic foresight and careful consideration of the sector's distinct challenges and realities. Balancing the benefits against the difficulties necessitates a concerted effort to redefine organizational priorities, ensuring that the introduction of employee-centric practices aligns with the overarching goals and operational demands of the accommodation and catering sector.

Conclusion

The journey towards becoming an employee-centric organization within the accommodation and catering industry represents a strategic and profound shift that places employee well-being, engagement, and satisfaction at the heart of organizational goals. This transformation necessitates a fundamental cultural evolution, rooted in values of open communication, inclusivity, and empowerment. By implementing measures such as flexible work arrangements, continuous learning opportunities, effective feedback mechanisms, and promoting diversity and teamwork, companies in the accommodation and catering sector lay the foundation for a dynamic, innovative, and cohesive work environment.

Embracing an employee-centric model initiates a positive domino effect throughout the organization, not only improving job satisfaction but also boosting productivity, sparking creativity, and securing a competitive edge in service quality and delivery. However, navigating this transformational journey presents challenges, demanding strong leadership, effective change management, and a continuous cycle of assessment and refinement to ensure that practices align with both employee needs and organizational objectives.

In the distinct environments of the accommodation and catering industry, entities that successfully implement and maintain employee-centric practices stand to gain considerable benefits. They foster a motivated, highly skilled, and unified workforce, establishing themselves as sought-after employers in a competitive landscape, adept at attracting and retaining top talent. Thus, transitioning to an employee-centric approach is more than a strategic choice—it's a critical evolution for companies aiming for excellence in the fast-paced world of hospitality.

The pivotal role of Human Resources (HR) in fostering an employee-centric culture within the accommodation and catering industry cannot be overstated. Through strategic alignment, cultural development, talent management, and the promotion of well-being and engagement, HR spearheads the creation of an organizational environment that truly values and supports its employees. This commitment extends beyond the implementation of policies to a deeper investment in the holistic well-being and development of employees, recognizing them as key to operational success and sustainability.

Scholarly insights from leaders such as Schein (2010), Ulrich, Brockbank, and Ulrich (2019), Breaugh (2008), Noe (2017), Hallowell and Gambatese (2010), Khan (1990), and Kossek & Hammer (2014) highlight the complexity and importance of HR's role in this effort. From enhancing mental health and lifelong learning to improving recruitment and retention and advocating work-life balance, HR's responsibilities are critical in navigating the unique challenges of the accommodation and catering industry. These initiatives not only drive the immediate success of operations but also enhance the long-term adaptability and resilience of companies.

As the accommodation and catering industry evolves amidst changing consumer preferences and sustainability concerns, the importance of HR in nurturing and maintaining an employee-centric culture becomes increasingly critical. Companies that prioritize and skillfully execute these HR practices are likely to see improvements in productivity, innovation, and operational quality, positioning themselves as leaders in the hospitality sector. Thus, pursuing an employee-centric culture represents a strategic investment in the workforce that leads to both organizational prosperity and employee fulfillment, underscoring the invaluable role of HR in shaping the future of the accommodation and catering industry.

The benefits of transitioning to an employee-centric model in the accommodation and catering industry are evident, including improved employee satisfaction and retention, enhanced quality of work and productivity, and increased innovation and problem-solving capabilities. These advantages underscore the profound impact of valuing and investing in employees on the overall success and sustainability of companies within the sector.

However, this transition is accompanied by challenges, such as the costs of implementing comprehensive employee-centric practices, the complexity of adapting HR policies to a diverse and dynamic workforce, and potential impacts on short-term operational efficiency. Moreover, the need for a significant cultural shift within companies, which may conflict with established industry norms, requires a deliberate and strategic change management approach.

Despite these hurdles, the long-term benefits of fostering an employee-centric culture in the accommodation and catering industry—from reducing turnover costs to achieving superior operational outcomes and a strengthened competitive edge—offer a compelling case for its adoption. Companies willing to navigate the complexities of this transformation and the necessary cultural realignment are not just poised to enhance employee well-being and engagement but are also on track for sustained growth and success.

As the industry advances, companies that prioritize the needs and well-being of their workforce are set to emerge as industry leaders, redefining standards of excellence and innovation in the hospitality sector. Balancing the immediate challenges with the long-term rewards of employee-centric practices will be key in securing enduring success and resilience in an increasingly competitive and dynamic accommodation and catering industry landscape.

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