

HarriX - Redefining Staff Retention - Hotel

HarriX – Redefining Staff Retention: A Discovery Of The Employee Experience In The New Normal

Welcome once again to HarriX! In this online session, Redefining Staff Retention, we take a closer look at how hotel and leisure operators are retaining their staff in 2021, and discuss their thoughts around the importance of people in their businesses.

Following on from the [Hospitality Recruitment Summit](#), Jane Pendlebury, CEO at **HOSPA**, met with Robert Richardson, CEO at **Institute of Hospitality**, Craig Cunningham, F&B Director at **The Student Hotel**, Andrew Coney, General Manager at **The Hari**, Paul Spencer, Operations Director at **edyn**, and Dave Daniels-Ekarte, Group Head of F&B at **The Club Company**, to discuss the importance of retaining staff from both an operational and financial perspective.

In this follow-up blog, we share not-to-be missed moments from the summit. Read on to discover what was discussed.

The hospitality industry is short staffed

During our Hospitality Recruitment Summit, Kate Nicholls, CEO of **UKHospitality**, pointed out that the industry is now a third of the size it was pre-pandemic, with a massive 28% drop in headcount. It's therefore not surprising that 50% of hospitality operators are experiencing both labour *and* skills shortages, but that isn't the only threat they're facing.

Louise Gallant, Community & Events Director at **Harri**, introduced the webinar by pointing out that 500,000 people were pinged by the COVID-19 app in a single week. Kate Nicholls recently responded to the news, stating that a third of hospitality workers could soon be forced to self-isolate, resulting in devastating consequences for the industry.

With lockdown restrictions finally easing and staycations on the rise in the UK, hotel and leisure operators need to change the way they approach their retention strategy, *fast*. If they don't, they may not be able to handle the significant increase in bookings.

Operators are experiencing challenges

It's safe to say that hotel and leisure businesses have been severely impacted by the events of the last 18 months. In our virtual session, Andrew Coney from The Hari explained how

he had no choice but to let some people go during the course of the pandemic. And he isn't alone in this.

"Our long-term forecast didn't sustain the headcount that we originally had," said Andrew. "We were all screaming to open, and when the day came when we could open, we were really bereft of a number of people, which made it very tough."

Even now, Andrew can't open his restaurant every day of the week, which begs the question: how do operators retain their staff during these uncertain times? Our panel provided a few solutions...

Communication is key

Jane Pendlebury asked the panelists what they're currently doing to engage their teams during these difficult times. The Club Company's Dave Daniels-Ekarte was the first to share his views on the matter.

"During the first lockdown, the business held a big staff survey to look at how they were feeling prior to lockdown and coming out of lockdown," said Dave. "The survey has changed over a period of time."

He explained that while staff surveys are certainly beneficial, talking to the team and understanding how they're feeling is essential. Andrew Coney agreed, noting that in order to keep staff engaged, happy, and loyal, communication is critical.

"They [the team] weren't left hanging. They weren't feeling insecure. They always knew where we stood, and I think that's really key," said Andrew. "Some of the bigger organisations should have picked up on that because I think a lot of people were left hanging."

Culture is everything

After spending several months in lockdown, it's fair to say that many people miss human interaction. Paul Spencer pointed out that edyn is seeing a real crave for culture, and to retain their staff, they're looking to re-engage with that culture.

"edyn and Locke certainly put culture and culture fit as number one priority," he said. "Making sure that we really re-establish our wellbeing, making sure we really re-establish

that community that we've built within the business, and making sure that we allow our team that time to bring themselves back out of lockdown."

A human approach is vital

Since the pandemic hit the UK, many operators have turned to technology not only to cope with COVID-19, but to maintain their operations and relevance. Paul Spencer said that while edyn aims to use technology to give their team 24/7 access, should they feel worried or concerned, the majority of their investment is in people.

"Our brand is about being human," said Paul. "While technology is good, we absolutely double down on in-person interactions. We encourage our team to evolve with us and we invest in them massively, which is something that, as an industry, we should have been doing 20 years ago."

Making hospitality a career of choice

In our last session, [Redefining Staff Retention \(Restaurant\)](#), Louise Gallant stated that the 28% drop in headcount accentuates the need to make hospitality a career of choice, and she's not alone in thinking this. Robert Richardson from Institute of Hospitality mentioned that we need to start looking at the PR of the sector.

Paul Spencer immediately agreed. He highlighted that "as an industry, we're sat around scratching our heads, but the reality is, we're 15 years late to the table." Andrew Coney backed up that point, explaining how it's a perception problem that's been going on for years. This needs to change.

Is revenue a priority?

Jane Pendlebury followed up this conversation with an interesting question from a listener, who asked: how do you balance updating the benefits and image of our industry with shareholders' expectations?

"It's about short-termism," responded Paul Spencer. "Do you want profitability flowing through to the bottom line today, or are you in it for the long haul? To give a shareholder 1% less to give your team 1% more, the value add that will give is huge."

If you'd like to hear what else was discussed in the webinar, click here [\[LINK\]](#) to watch the session in full.

How Harri can help you retain your staff

Struggling to retain your staff during these hectic times? You're in the right place! Our [team communication tool](#) allows you to stay connected with your people at all times.

How, you ask? By streamlining communications, keeping everyone up to date on the latest and greatest news, and ultimately strengthening the employee experience.

Harri can also help you manage your operational costs. By taking advantage of our [smart scheduling platform](#), you can make sure you have the right people in the right place at the right time, while giving your team the hours they genuinely need. Combined with our communications tools, employee shift swaps can be initiated to create employee-generated workplace flexibility without hurting day-to-day operations.

[Request a demo](#) to learn more.