

Starwood – LeMeridien Hotel

What was the brief?

Emotional intelligence for leadership.

Although Starwood normally run in most L&D programmes in-house, MCW were invited by the head of L&D to ‘come and think differently’ about the situation. A need had been identified by the organisation that their 12 Heads of Departments would benefit from some development and support in improving their communication effectiveness. There were a mixture of internal and external driver to this situation.

- 1) there were some newly promoted HOD having to work effectively with existing teams,
- 2) some more established managers needed some stimulus to think differently and out of their comfort zone
- 3) All HOD had pressure to meet some new challenges around getting more out of their teams performance in a difficult economic climate, with a reduction in guest spend.
- 4) There was a new hotel GM, who after his first few months, wanted the SLT internal communication and ‘general emotional intelligence’ to be improved
- 5) The Hotel had already an existing relationship with a coaching provider, however apparently the style of coaching was quite mentorial with the coaches having a hospitality background , and therefore a fresh more pure coaching style was requested

What did we do?

Initially we conducted our Discovery phase where we observed the hotel operating for 3 days and interviewed key individuals. We attended team briefing at all levels (from GM down to supervisory) and observe in situ the operational behaviour and communications of the key HOD. Our findings comprised of 9 themes each with their implications and recommend solutions. We presented these results formally back to the Head of HR and L&D, and informally to the GM. We used these learning’s to help us developed the content of our training and coaching programmes. Whereas the Hotel was not in a position to embark on all our recommendations we did focus on three key initiatives

- 1) We then ran an intensive one day emotional intelligence and leadership workshop for the 12 HOD. The critical success factors of this workshop were
 - a. It would build not confused or conflict with other Starwood L&D initiatives
 - b. The content would be elicited context relevant and therefore owned by the attendees
 - c. It would involve an element of individual goal setting around leadership and communication
 - d. It would specifically cover the topic areas of emotional intelligence, flexible communication styles and motivating others

- 2) Executive coaching – we matched up the 12 HOD a relevant MCW coach so they could continue to work individually on their leadership and communication goals for the next 3 months. We used 4 different MCW coaches who worked with 3 HOD each, our coaches where working across functions (e.g. Finance, F&B, housekeeping) and experience levels (new managers to 20 years in role)
- 3) Coaching skills training (and ILM accreditation) plus mentoring for embedded coaching skills transfer for the HR team – we wanted to start to build the internal capacity for the Hotel to start to coach themselves - our recommendation in phase I had been that the all HOD should be given coaching skills training, however the HR team wanted to pilot this themselves first.

The results:

- Out of the 12 HOD, several move on to promotions. The others improved to varying degrees depending
- One HOD commented that this was possibly the most important thing he had done during his career at Starwood.
- Despite not being able to formally train the HOD on coaching skills, we did enable some of the key HOD managers to change their attitudes from *'I don't have time to do this'* attitude to *'this is actually very useful, I might try it on my guys'* attitude...!
- The L&D manager was keen for MCW to return the following year to conduct another Discovery phase to understand further opportunities.
- Unfortunately the coaching skills training programme got pulled for budget and time limitations