

Hilton Colombo: Attitude And Passion



Hilton Colombo is all prepared to commence its refurbishment to upgrade and enhance the hotel's facilities to keep pace with the rapidly changing and developing tourism industry of Sri Lanka. The intended renovation is to address all aspects of the hotel including tangible as well as intangible factors such as the services rendered by the staff. As such Achala Soyza, Manager, Human Resources at Hilton Colombo underscored the aspects related to human resource development of Hilton Colombo where the staff plays a key role in furthering the aspirations of ushering in a new era of hospitality to the hotel.

By Udeshi Amarasinghe & Krishani Peiris

Hilton is a brand that has gained much distinction throughout the world for its uncompromising standards in hospitality. Hilton Colombo being the Sri Lankan counterpart has delivered this impeccable service standards to the country for 27 years. With renovations to begin soon, in order to realise the new transformation the staff of Hilton Colombo will undoubtedly play a key role.

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As such recruiting the right people, based on the available vacancies, is of utmost importance to the hotel. Following a standardised set of recruitment policies defined by the Hilton Group, the hotel encourages newcomers to join the industry where they will be trained on the required skills. In the event of recruiting for senior level positions more attention is paid to individuals with the relevant set of experience and qualifications. “In any recruitment, we look for three important aspects,” said Achala Soyza explaining about the recruitment process at Hilton. “That is a positive attitude and their compatibility with our values and also our culture.”

Once an individual joins Hilton as an employee, they will undergo a specially tailored orientation programme after which they will be paired with a ‘buddy’ for the first three to six months to ease in the transition to a new environment. “Under the buddy system, ‘buddies’ are trained on how to assist new comers,” she elaborated. “But apart from that we have certain check lists that need to be completed to ensure that a person learns the technical details in relation to the job, as well as engaging with the team and getting involved with the system in place in the hotel.”

The most strategic component of Hilton’s human resource management is the training of new as well as currently employed staff. Here the training is conducted based on the identified need of each section or individual where technical aspects as well as communication, negotiation, customer service and other necessary skills are cultivated and honed. Furthermore, under the special training initiatives of the hotel, the management training programme, which is operative throughout the South East Asia region, and the elevator programme available worldwide inculcate and prompt valuable skills in the future leaders of the hotel. “Through the Management Training programme we hope to improve the talent for the leadership pipeline in the region, not only in Sri Lanka. As such when somebody joins Hilton, sky is the limit as one is exposed to the whole world through our extensive network.”

Speaking about staff seeking opportunities abroad Achala Soyza revealed, “we look positively at employer mobility and that is something we encourage as the hotel industry is an international arena. And employees need the necessary exposure, as such when one goes abroad it opens their eyes to the different cultures and how people operate while facing challenges.” As such employees at Hilton are constantly encouraged to go into the online recruitment portal of the hotel to seek new positions available under the many brands of the Hilton Group. Another benefit available for the employees is the Hilton University, which is also an online learning portal with access to various courses to help develop necessary skills and gain knowledge to further their career aspirations.

Hilton also strives to give more opportunities to the youth of Sri Lanka while attempting to address the static employment market in the hospitality industry. “We work closely with hotel schools as well as governmental institutes such as NAITA to ensure that we are uplifting the right type of talent,” she said.

Alleviating any insecurities that the staff may have of losing their jobs during the period of renovation Achala Soyza affirmed, “we will operate the hotel while we renovate it and our strategy is to constantly keep our team informed on what is happening.”

Looking for people who will go the extra mile and have that extra level of commitment in their respective jobs and fields, Hilton will focus on recruiting individuals who have the passion and who will respect the hotel’s values and beliefs that comes under their global culture named ‘blue energy’. “Why should anyone join us?” She asked. “It is because of who we are, how we treat people, and how we take care of them. Our culture is a very open one and we are like a family. We pride ourselves in practising the vison of our Founder, Conrad Hilton, which is to fill the earth with the light and warmth of hospitality. As such we endeavour to spread the light and warmth of hospitality among our team members and our guests,” she concluded.