

SECTION 7: STAFF DEVELOPMENT



November 2005

Introduction

In any occupation, perceptions change and knowledge accumulates.

Managers of tourism establishments need to be aware of the dynamic nature of their business and the fact that the expectations of visitors have, and will continue, to change in time.

Staff development helps to ensure that you and your staff are kept well

trained, knowledgeable and up to date with modern tourism expectations.

It will improve your service and play a vital role in keeping your employees stimulated and involved in their job.

In addition to encouraging your staff to improve their knowledge regarding their specific role in your business, it is important to have in place in-house training and appraisal systems that ensure that your employees keep mo-

tivated, know exactly what you expect from them, and what you consider good performance.

While formal training is recommended, do not forget that basic literacy might be required by some of your staff. Senior grade school children could be asked to give basic reading and writing lessons to older staff during the school holidays.

Why is formal training important?

Proving your staff (at all levels) with formal training is an excellent investment.

Although in house training is imperative for your establishment to run efficiently, it will be limited to your specific needs and expectations and will not be as valuable to your staff as the opportunity to upgrade their levels of competency through accredited courses.

Ideally you should be involved with developing a career-path for each staff member, and help them plan for specific training courses.

Formal training must always be goal orientated and the courses that are chosen must be offered by recognised educational institutions. See Section 8 for examples relating to guiding.

There are many other courses for other categories of staff – e.g. hotel schools for chefs, secretarial and computer courses for administrative and financial staff, plumbing and welding courses for factotums, etc.

Once a staff member has obtained a certificate from an institution, he/she should receive some form of recognition from his/her employer.



Tourists expect their guides to be professional in every respect—good training is essential to achieving the required levels of expertise and confidence

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Goal: Tourism establishments must commit their own resources to improve the knowledge and skills of their staff and to recognise and reward deserving employees.

What is a formal staff appraisal system?

A formal staff appraisal system is a written set of criteria against which your staff's performance can be measured.

This appraisal system should have several categories – depending on what staff you employ and what services you supply. These categories can include (but are not restricted to) the following:-

- **Management staff** – Your manager and his/her assistants;
- **Cleaners** - the people responsible for cleaning, washing up in the kitchen and laundry etc;
- **Kitchen Staff** – chefs, chef helpers, waiters;
- **Maintenance staff** – the people responsible for maintaining your vehicles, plumbing systems etc;
- **Guides and tour leaders**—who take guests on drives, walks, etc.

For each category a simple set of criteria based on competence, work ethic and loyalty, innovation and leadership can be created.

Performance indicators per criteria might include:

Competence

- The ability of the person to perform the tasks stipulated in their job description, to the expected standard (every staff member must be in possession of a written job description);
- How often the person asks advice from the supervisor;
- How often the supervisor requires the person to re-do a task

because it was done incorrectly in the beginning, and

- How often the person has been reprimanded for poor work.

Work ethic and loyalty

- Punctuality and willingness to work a full day or even extra hours;
- Willingness to take on extra tasks even though these may be slightly outside the parameters of the job description, and
- Always neat, clean, sober and well presented – someone who tries to enhance the reputation of the establishment.

Innovation

- Introducing new ideas that result in improved services, reduced waste/energy/water use, cost savings, etc.
- Being able to “make a plan” – there are not always the right tools for the job, ingredients for the desert, or the right weather for preferred activities. An innovative person finds a quick solution and overcomes a challenge without always asking for advice.

Leadership and ambition

- Making constructive proposals

instead of going on strike;

- Helping others;
- Taking on additional responsibilities;
- Self study (acquiring new skills);
- Showing an interest in other aspects of the operation than their own job, and
- Ability to defuse a potentially difficult situation – be it a staff problem or an unreasonable guest.

Whatever criteria you might have, these must be written down and the staff must be aware of them. If possible, you should involve your staff in their compilation.

Appraisal processes must be regular and consistently done. Usually, the staff member does a self-appraisal which is followed by an appraisal by the supervisor.

Differences in scoring must be motivated and both the staff member and the supervisor must have a copy of the final appraisal.

Be sure to always to balance any criticism with suggestions for improvement.



If you reward competence and dedication, your establishment will achieve high standards and a reputation for service and excellence

How can you reward your staff?

Management should adopt innovative ways in which to reward hardworking and dedicated staff. For example:

- A photo of the “employee of the month” could be pinned up on the staff notice board;
- Bonuses and certificates of appreciation could be given at the end of year;
- A person with potential and proven ability should be earmarked for promotion to a more senior position;
- A top achiever could be sent on a “study tour” to East Africa, Europe or Mauritius to learn new ideas or broaden their horizons ;
- Staff could be given a percent-

age of profits; or

- Staff could be given shares in your business after a certain number of years of good performance.

Advertising vacancies

Whenever you have vacancies, suitable staff members should be given the opportunity to apply before you advertise these posts.

A lack of promotional possibilities or being ‘glossed over’ can be debilitating and demotivating for employees.

The advert you place (whether on the staff notice board or in the newspaper) must be clear about the position to be filled and the competencies needed for the job.

Clarity is important otherwise people will think decisions are based on personal/racial/tribal preferences. On all staff matters, transparency and consistency must be maintained.

Use your appraisal reports to evaluate the staff you have. Consider additional formal training for someone who currently does not have the skills /experience, but who might then be ready for a more responsible or senior position.



Wherever possible, promote existing staff before bringing in outsiders. This will improve staff morale. © N.Maritz

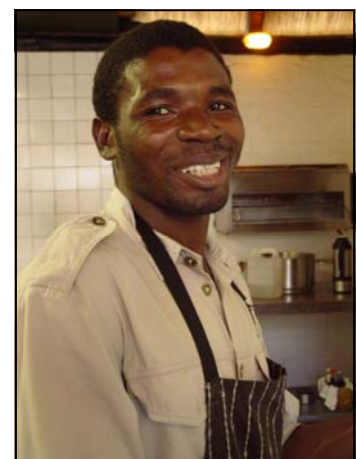
Internships and students

Formal training establishments for chefs, tour guides and nature conservationists usually expect their students to gain a certain amount of work experience before graduating.

It can be beneficial to your establishment to take on one or two of these students each year. Many lodges and / hotels have been able to ‘talent spot’ by using this service.

If you do decide to take on students it is important to treat them fairly:

- Do not look upon them as cheap labour;
- Meet with the students regularly to discuss their needs, aspirations and experience in the work place – as far as possible, get to know them;
- Allow them to have as many experiences within your operation as possible;
- Make them feel welcome and encourage your staff to see them as potential colleagues. Help to build their self esteem and bring out their natural talents - provide positive reinforcement and encouragement whenever possible, and
- Be fair and honest in your report to the training establishment and to the student.



Investing in human resources is a good example of “smart partnership” © P.Tarr