Tourism Human Resource Management Challenges, Trends and Opportunities

FINAL REPORT
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CLOSM
1. Recruiting Talent – Challenges and Trends ................................................................. 4
  1.1 Recurring Challenges ............................................................................................... 4
    1.1.1 Being bilingual ................................................................................................. 4
  1.2 Recruiting Trends ..................................................................................................... 5
    1.2.1 Recruiting 3.0 .................................................................................................... 5
    1.2.2 Developing a high-tech recruiting environment ................................................. 5
    1.2.3 Focusing on general and interpersonal skills .................................................... 6
  1.3 New Recruiting Strategies ....................................................................................... 6
    1.3.1 Recruiting overseas .......................................................................................... 6
    1.3.2 Making recruitment videos .............................................................................. 8
    1.3.3 Using AI and digital platforms ......................................................................... 9
    1.3.4 Auditioning applicants .................................................................................... 10
    1.3.5 Focusing on recruitment fairs ......................................................................... 11
    1.3.6 Hiring from pools of older or retired workers .................................................. 12
  1.4 Employee Retention ............................................................................................... 13
    1.4.1 Stabilizing seasonal employment ..................................................................... 13
    1.4.2 Banding together to provide more stable employment ..................................... 14
    1.4.3 Increasing employee recognition ..................................................................... 15
    1.4.4 Hiring from within ............................................................................................ 18
    1.4.5 Improving integration of new hires ................................................................... 18
    1.4.6 Promoting a multi-skilled workforce ............................................................... 18
    1.4.7 Developing mentorship programs .................................................................... 20
  2. Tourism Industry Job Status Enhancement ................................................................. 21
    2.1 Promote Employment Diversity ............................................................................ 21
      2.1.1 Creating a web portal ..................................................................................... 21
      2.1.2 Conducting marketing campaigns .................................................................. 22
      2.1.3 Shining a spotlight on employees .................................................................. 25
    2.2 Employer Brands and Industry Brands ................................................................. 26
  Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 28
Introduction

According to a recent report by Tourism HR Canada on labour supply and demand in the Canadian tourism sector, the demand could rise from 1.6 million jobs in 2010 to 2.29 million in 2035, an increase of 41%. For the same period, the supply is expected to grow by only 25%, leading to a potential 240,000 unfilled jobs due to a lack of workers – and this shortfall is already being felt across Canada. While organizations are struggling to fill vacancies now, this task promises to be even more challenging in the years to come.

The issue of human capital is crucially important to the long-term development of the tourism sector in general and OLMCs in particular. Tourism provides employment to individuals of all ages and skill levels. And, it depends on quality, available human resources to develop and deliver a competitive tourism product that meets consumers’ changing needs. However, given the highly seasonal nature of tourism employment, its reliance on student workers and irregular hours, the industry has to contend with many human resource challenges. The industry has been struggling with recruitment issues for several years, and the sector’s expected growth will certainly not make its task any easier. Strategies focusing on different aspects of tourism employment must be put in place to make tourism a more attractive job choice. The following report aims to provide an overview of tourism recruitment challenges, and possible ways to attract and retain the best employees in the industry.
1. Recruiting Talent – Challenges and Trends

Attracting, training, developing and retaining talent is a major challenge for managers. Investing in training and keeping talented employees is a key component of success for businesses and for the entire industry – all the more so since the Quebec tourism industry is anticipating an increase of 50,000 jobs by 2020.\(^1\) This promises to be a challenging task for both OLMCs and the Canadian tourism industry as a whole.

1.1 Recurring Challenges

According to Tourism HR Canada,\(^2\) there are many different issues with tourism labour in OMLCs: shortage of personnel, under-qualified employees (at least in some work environments) and non-competitive wages compared to other sectors – all of these combine to reduce the profit margin of tourism businesses. Also, the irregular working conditions (such as variable hours) and the seasonality of this industry make jobs in tourism a less attractive option for potential applicants. All of this poses a challenge for employers, with repercussions not just for hiring but also for employee retention.

Other issues with this work environment include:\(^3\)

- A high proportion of SMEs and micro-enterprises
- High turnover rate and many vacant positions
- Poor training culture

1.1.1 Being bilingual

In terms of marketable skills, the ability to speak another language is increasingly sought-after by companies. Between 2006 and 2011, the number of persons who reported being able to conduct a conversation in both of Canada's official languages increased by nearly 350,000 to 5.8 million. In the same five-year period, the bilingualism rate edged up from 17.4% in 2006 to 17.5% in 2011

This growth in English-French bilingualism in Canada is mainly due to the increased number of Quebecers who report being able to conduct a conversation in English and French.\(^4\) While this bilingualism rate is clearly a competitive advantage for the tourism industry in OLMCs and in Canada as a whole, it is often difficult to find applicants for bilingual tourism jobs. The lack of French services and expertise in some Canadian regions, and of English services in some parts of Quebec, presents an additional obstacle to the success of OLMC tourism projects and initiatives.


Will an influx of Francophone tourists force companies to hire bilingual young people? The president of the Saint Andrews Chamber of Commerce believes so, and he should know: fully one third of the visitors to that region – New Brunswick’s Charlotte County – are Francophone. But, where can such a workforce be found? In order to create a pool of employees who speak both the country’s official languages, Parks Canada receives help from French-language and immersion schools, as well as from Francophone community organizations that pass on bilingual job opportunities in their network.

Val-Jalbert Historic Village, in Quebec’s Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean region, decided to take the bull of bilingualism by the horns. Since 2010, it has been offering English classes every winter to all full-time employees; in 2012, a Spanish course was added to the schedule. The language classes cover serving an international clientele, communications, sales, and knowledge transfer. This final topic is especially important as, each summer, a number of students join the roster of 35 full-time employees. Classes are held several days a week in the off-season, and participants who receive at least 24 hours of instruction per week receive full Employment Insurance benefits.

1.2 Recruiting Trends

Digital technology is having a profound impact on society as a whole and, more specifically, on the workforce and recruitment. It is forcing organizations to reinvent themselves in order to stay competitive and successful. According to human resources experts, here are the latest recruiting trends.

Researchers at Oxford University say that over 40 current occupations will disappear within the next 15 to 20 years.

1.2.1 Recruiting 3.0

Recruiting 2.0, which targeted active job seekers by posting offers on special job search sites, has been replaced by 3.0, which considers everyone a potential applicant. Finding and talking to people, even those who have yet to apply but who have the required profile or meet the requisite criteria – that is the goal of tomorrow’s recruiters. They need to be top-notch salespeople, not just to persuade people to join their organization, but also to create a pool of potential applicants.

1.2.2 Developing a high-tech recruiting environment

Recruiting is rapidly evolving, thanks to the growing use of mobile apps, social networks and collaborative software. Henceforth, companies eager to gain an edge over the competition must add social and collaborative components to their recruiting process, not just to attract new employees but also to retain existing talent.

Generation Z (i.e., 16- to 26-year olds) expects the entire hiring process to be agile, digital and mobile, yet an actual person is still required, to administer the subsequent steps. Their hiring expectations involve simple, direct and multi-channel contact through social media, e-mails and chat.
1.2.3 Focusing on general and interpersonal skills

In a period of increasingly rapid change, technical skills quickly become obsolete. For this reason, an applicant's ability to adapt to the change and learn new skills is becoming a key hiring criterion. Future employees are also increasingly being chosen for their soft skills, i.e., their personal and interpersonal competencies; the hard skills can always be taught later.

1.3 New Recruiting Strategies

Some tourism companies are devising imaginative ways to overcome difficulties and attract the best possible applicants, such as launching original recruitment campaigns and implementing tools that make hiring easier. Here are a few examples.

1.3.1 Recruiting overseas

Recruiting internationally trained workers (ITWs) is one possible way tourism employers can maintain a stable workforce. These workers from overseas may encourage tourists from the same culture and country of origin to come to Canada and to OLMCs.

A few years ago, Canada’s federal, provincial and territorial governments began implementing strategies to attract skilled workers to the country. For example, Destination Canada puts on a mobility forum for Europeans who want to live and work in Canada, more specifically in Francophone minority communities. Organizations representing the Canadian Francophonie are very active at the forum’s Paris and Brussels meetings.

On January 1, 2015, Citizenship and Immigration Canada\(^5\) introduced a new system called Express Entry that manages applications for permanent residence under the following federal economic immigration programs:
- the Federal Skilled Worker (FSW) Program;
- the Federal Skilled Trades Program;
- the Canadian Experience Class.

The goal of Express Entry is to make the economic immigration system faster and more flexible by improving the way applications are processed. Provinces and territories can also use Express Entry to recruit applicants through their Provincial Nominee Program. Provinces like Quebec have their own recruiting programs. The Journées Québec events preselect potential applicants, so Quebec employers can make the most of their hiring trips to Europe. Since 2008, these events have resulted in the hiring of over 1,500 people from such countries as France, Belgium and Spain. On a smaller scale but with a

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similar aim, some Canadian provinces, including Prince Edward Island, host networking breakfasts for potential employers and new immigrants.

This recruiting approach is not exclusive to Canada. In 2015, the Swedish government launched Fast Track, an initiative to move newcomers to Sweden with training and experience in understaffed professions more quickly into the labour market. With head chef being one of the most difficult positions to fill, the Scandic hotel chain has undertaken to evaluate and validate the skills of newly arrived chefs and provide in-house training. A similar program exists in New Zealand, for such positions as chef and winter sports instructor.

The Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council (Tourism HR Canada) has compiled a three-volume Good Employer Practices Compendium showing how to recruit and retain internationally trained workers (ITWs) in the tourism sector.

Tourism HR Canada has also developed a toolbox for attracting and retaining internationally-trained workers in tourism.

Source: Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council

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7 eHotelier. “Scandic the first hotel chain to validate chef credentials through “Fast Track”, October 28 2015.
1.3.2 Making recruitment videos

These days, videos are a popular medium, both for presenting job opportunities and conducting interviews. Video interviewing has been used for over ten years in the United States and has proven its worth. These interviews generally consist of three simple steps:

- the recruiter creates a list of questions;
- the applicants answer the questions;
- the recruiter watches the clips and chooses the best applicants.

Recruitment experts believe this method has advantage for both parties.

- For the applicant:
  o no need to travel;
  o more time to answer questions, so better chance of presenting him/herself in the best possible light;
  o familiar surroundings reduce stress, hence improve his/her chances of doing well in the interview.

- For the recruiter:
  o saves time and money as the best applicants are selected based on the clips;
  o more applicants can be screened using this method;
  o boosts the employer’s image as an innovative company, thereby enhancing its employer brand;
  o leads to choosing the right candidate more quickly.

Pre-recorded video interviews can be created using one of several tools: EASYRECRUE, Visiotalent, InterviewApp or Visio4People, and Workopolis has launched a pre-recorded video interview. Distance recruiting also relies heavily on Skype and Google Hangout.

Distance recruiting for a remote destination
Inari-Saariselkä Tourism Ltd is a Destination Management Organization (DMO) jointly owned by companies in northern Lapland and the municipalities of Inari and Sodankylä. Its mandate includes developing and marketing tourism services. The DMO is also responsible for maintaining and developing the web portal, inarisaariselka.fi.

In the summer of 2013, the DMO needed to hire a new Marketing Manager. Finding the right person for a management position is never an easy task, but the job gets ten times harder when the job is in a place as remote as Lapland. Using the Recright video interviewing tool, the organization was able to find the right person from among thirty candidates, and save time and money, too!8

In addition to pre-recorded video interviews, companies such as RDÉE Prince Edward Island Inc. are making promotional videos with inspiring stories from previously-recruited candidates to help recruit talented applicants (see link to YouTube video, below).

1.3.3 Using AI and digital platforms

The recruiting process also gets a boost from artificial intelligence. In this context, AI simulates human interaction, creating a relationship with the job applicant. It conducts relatively unimportant conversations, thereby freeing up employees for more value-added tasks. Chatbots, for example, can tell applicants about the status of their applications (see example, below).
Some digital recruiting platforms specifically geared to the hospitality and restaurant industry (such as Industry), enable future employees to create profiles listing only their sector-relevant skills. Applicants can also upload content, such as photos of meals they have prepared, and even videos of themselves performing their daily tasks, in the kitchen, dining room or behind the bar.

1.3.4 Auditioning applicants

The hospitality industry often talks about the guest experience in terms of personalization and authenticity. Some hotel chains have taken this a step further, and are integrating these same concepts into their recruiting process. Some Hyatt and AccorHotels facilities have started getting their job applicants to role play in real-life job situations, as though they were auditioning for a play. The idea is to get away from the usual CV and cover letter and give applicants the opportunity to showcase their unique talents and skills. This method also means employers hire only the most talented candidates. Similarly, rather than teaching them how to perform specific tasks, Hyatt has created a new line of 3-minute instructional videos for new hires that describe the hotel’s comprehensive, customer-oriented approach.

INK Hotel Amsterdam (AccorHotels) posted an original and highly targeted video on social media to get the word out that it was hiring (see link, below).

Source: YouTube

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Two weeks later, some 400 applicants had replied to the ad, using poems, videos and even newspaper articles. One hundred and twenty-five of them were invited to an audition that consisted of role-playing in a scenario that focused on customer experience. Other opportunities to present their skills included a group project, interviews and skits. As a result of that process, sixty people were hired. The following video summarizes the day.

Source: YouTube

1.3.5 Focusing on recruitment fairs

Tourism companies typically meet potential candidates by organizing recruitment fairs. The date and location of these events are advertised in advance on job sites or on the company website. Downhill ski centres both large and small (Vail Resorts, Big White Ski Resort, and Ski Saint-Bruno) often do this in order to recruit staff for their ski school. Parc Safari, a zoo in Hemmingford, Quebec and a major regional tourist attraction, also holds a day-long recruitment fair each spring in order to prepare for the summer season.
1.3.6 Hiring from pools of older or retired workers

With many baby boomers increasingly embracing an active lifestyle after they retire, their growing number represents a good pool of potential employees – all the more so since they are available when students return to school en masse. In spite of this, few companies have done anything to attract or retain workers who are 55 and over.

In 2010, the CQRHT (Conseil québécois des ressources humaines en tourisme) advised tourism companies to consider hiring retirees as a way of addressing the challenges of satisfactorily filling many jobs in the industry.

A growing number of people are returning to work after retirement. Some do so for personal growth, others out of financial need. A survey done by ING Direct in January 2014 showed that 31% of retired respondents returned to work because they had underestimated the cost of living in retirement and needed an additional income to make ends meet. Statistics Canada confirms that more than half of workers aged 55 to 64 who left a long-term job between 1994 and 2000 were rehired in the following 10 years. But retirees who return to work have certain expectations. In that respect, tourism companies have a lot to offer retirees eager to return to earning a pay cheque:

• A variety of mostly small- or medium-sized companies where people can grow, flourish and build lasting relationships;
• A range of job choices: more than 400 positions in five sub-sectors;
• A range of schedules that could meet the needs of retirees: part-time, full-time, days, nights, evenings, weekends, etc.;
• A friendly work environment, with co-workers of all ages and from every walk of life;
• The opportunity to meet and talk with local and international visitors.
In the early 2000s, the CQRHT developed a number of projects to encourage companies to hire workers aged 50 and up. These include:

- in collaboration with the RTA, a pilot project designed to hire workers aged 50 and up to work in the Eastern Townships visitor information centres;
- a project designed to give 50-year-olds jobs in the tourism industry;\(^{11}\)
- a manual for employers with tips on how to provide retirees with jobs in tourism.\(^{12}\)

**Ski Saint-Bruno: an illustration**

Ski Saint-Bruno’s recruitment campaign aimed at “seducing” seniors is a perfect illustration of this trend. For several months, the downhill ski facility’s Director of Human Resources and his team made connections with people who had recently retired from large South Shore companies to talk about the jobs they had to offer. They also got in touch with the local Seniors Federation (Fédération de l’âge d’or). Part of the Careers website was aimed at retirees, outlining the advantages of working at the facility, telling inspiring real-life stories and listing job offers. In fact, this campaign won an award at the Association of Quebec Ski Resorts’ annual convention.

**1.4 Employee Retention**

**1.4.1 Stabilizing seasonal employment**

The Mont Sutton ski resort in Quebec’s Eastern Townships has created a network of seasonal businesses eager to pool their labour resources in order to reliably find people for their combined 90 seasonal jobs. Potential employees are offered year-round work with two different seasonal businesses whose busy periods are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. Normally, seasonal employees are laid off at the end of the season; by helping them to find work in another business, the resort is increasing the likelihood its employees will return, year after year. Now in its third year, the network includes some thirty companies: vineyards, campgrounds, golf courses, nurseries/garden centres, day camps, even a food processing plant. Mont Sutton has the advantage of being the only company offering jobs in the winter months.

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\(^{12}\) CQRHT. “Offrir des emplois en tourisme aux retraités, un modèle gagnant-gagnant”.
\(^{13}\) Chantier sur la saisonnalité, Profils sectoriels, Tourisme, 2010.
1.4.2 Banding together to provide more stable employment

France currently has around thirty Employers’ Alliances (EAs), of which roughly twenty operate in the hospitality and restaurant sector. An EA is “a network of companies that share staff they would be unable to hire on their own because they cannot employ them either full-time or year-round. The combined EA member company needs constitute a full-time job. The staff hired on the basis of this alliance can have long-term jobs in the various partner companies.” This initiative is an innovative and efficient way to manage human resources, and benefits both the companies that need qualified staff, and the workers eager for job security. EA partner company employees can also achieve full-time employment by working in other sectors.

French restaurant and hotel owners and other tourism sector players have created an Employers’ Alliance based on the RESO model. The alliance allows them to meet the specific ad-hoc manpower needs of member companies through shared time and open-ended employment contracts. Jobs such as dishwasher, cook, waiter, chamber maid, maintenance manager and community manager fall into this category.

Source: Reso7374.fr

Similarly, the Groupement National des Indépendants, the French hospitality and restaurant workers’ union, has launched Optim Partage to provide member companies with access to shared-time staff.

Shared-time programs connect a company’s part-time and recurring needs with professionals working part-time for several different companies.

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Another Employers’ Alliance, Métiers Partagés in French department of Loir-et-Cher, actually assumes the role of employer for its members, taking on the responsibilities of recruiting, doing administrative tasks, defining job duties, handling salaries, drawing up contracts and providing training. Thanks to shared time, alliances such as this one foster loyalty among part-time employees by providing them with the position best suited to their employment needs, whether it be ad-hoc or permanent. Again, several part-time positions can be combined to create full-time jobs, which are managed by the alliance.

In Canada, Mobilize enables the tourism, accommodation, resort, golf course and food sectors to meet their labour needs on an ongoing basis. Employees, or Mobilizers, travel from place to place, changing jobs with the seasons. Since it was launched in 2014, the program has provided more than 350 young Canadians with the opportunity to work and gain experience across the country.

1.4.3 Increasing employee recognition

A key factor in employee retention is showing appreciation. Simply saying Hello, Thank you, or Good work can be surprisingly effective and go a long way towards fostering a positive work environment. Studies have shown that employees expect to have their efforts recognized at least once every seven days. By itself, money does not improve performance. Case studies of the hospitality and restaurant industry have demonstrated that effective recognition programs boost overall employee satisfaction and morale, reduce turnover, and increase profit and performance. The opportunity to work flex hours and take a sabbatical after a few years with the company also constitute a form of recognition.

According to the HR Council, “employee recognition is the acknowledgement of an individual or team’s behaviour, effort and accomplishments that support the organization's goals and values.”

The web and social media provide managers, colleagues and clients with a forum where they can share their success stories and provide positive feedback. This year’s National Travel and Tourism Week, held in May and organized by the U.S. Travel Association, will showcase the hardworking, high-energy, creative people who make Association member businesses a success. The theme of this year’s event is Faces of Travel, and the event itself is a great way to spread the word about the wide variety of jobs in tourism, and also to recognize the work of exceptional employees. The Association has created a video and is developing a toolkit to help companies develop more employee recognition initiatives.

15 Claudine Barry. “Être reconnaissant, c’est payant!”, veilletourisme.ca, October 2 2013.
Innovative employee recognition program at a regional inn

Le Baluchon, a small inn in Quebec’s Lanaudière region, has come up with an original way to provide long-term employee recognition based on the FISH! philosophy.\(^\text{16}\) Basically, the program involves striving to make work fun. It includes a peer-recognition component whereby employees are asked to be on the lookout for instances of excellence at work, and to write that action on the appropriate fish. The fish are colour-coded as follows:

- Green fish: green action;
- Spotted fish: creative action;
- Red fish: engaged action;
- Yellow fish: “made my day” action;
- Blue fish: “going above and beyond” action, for customers.

A second component involves meetings, five per year, that all service managers must have with their employees in order to discuss recognition and people who have excelled. At the end of each meeting, the actions for the previous months are recorded, an honourable mention is awarded for each fish colour, and employees who have done noteworthy actions are given a pin with a fish of the appropriate colour. The pins are supposed to be worn to work and “passed on” to the next deserving recipient at the next meeting. At the end of each year, there is a big recognition event. Employees who have done the most actions in a single category receive a thank-you letter signed by the president, the recognition of their peers throughout the evening, and a gift card worth $150. The Ambassador of the Year also receives a vacation package for two valued at $500, a reserved parking spot for 12 months, and a gold fish.

Hotel chains jump on the bandwagon
Each year, California’s Joie de Vivre chain of boutique hotels organizes an employee recognition week that includes a variety of fun, social activities.

In its “Star of the Month” program, each Fairmont property acknowledges three employees per month, one per service category, for outstanding service. Each property's Star program is run by a committee that meets monthly to put forward nominations. Committee members vote and submit a list of semi-finalists to management for final judging. While the committee includes managers and one executive, most of the group is made up of staff from the hotel's different operational departments. Winners are honoured monthly at a formal reception, where the property's General Manager and Director of HR present the awards, which include a watch and a gift with the Service Plus logo, further publicizing the recognition program among staff.

The Taj Group, which operates luxury hotels throughout Asia, has created the Special Thanks and Recognition System (STARS) that links customer delight to employee rewards. Employees accumulate points based on positive feedback from guests and their co-workers, and are honoured when they reach a certain number of points.17

Other inspiring examples
The HR round table of the Créneau d’excellence Tourisme de villégiature quatre saisons (or “well-established four-season resort tourism niche”) has launched a web portal devoted to tourism HR in Quebec’s Laurentians region. The portal has useful tools for both companies and workers. The following video shows how some of the region’s forward-thinking employers are helping retain their most valuable asset.

Employers can show daily appreciation in thousands of small ways. By way of example, this link takes you to a page with 52 employee recognition ideas.

17 Claudine Barry. “Être reconnaissant, c'est payant!”, veilletourisme.ca, October 2 2013.
1.4.4 Hiring from within

Hyatt: an illustration

On average, Hyatt’s housekeepers stay with the hotel chain for more than 12 years. In the United States alone, 14,000 of its 75,000 employees have been working there for 10 years or more. Clearly, Hyatt is doing something right when it comes to keeping valued personnel.

A few years ago, the company began implementing an internal hiring program as a means of obtaining the best possible candidates. In 2015, 47%, or almost half, of all vacant positions were filled by an existing Hyatt employee. The hotel company also launched a training program called Change the Conversation, based on empathic listening, and inspired by principles developed by the Stanford School of Design. Putting this new approach into action, employees are encouraged to find new and creative ways to go about their daily tasks and solve problems when they arise. This trust-based approach is working so well that many new hires come from the Employee Referral Program.

1.4.5 Improving integration of new hires

On average, one in four new employees will leave their job before the end of the first year. However, companies with onboarding programs for new employees see a different result: employees who take part in such programs are 58% more likely to remain with the company past the three-year mark.

In addition to providing them with job-related information, managers must ensure that new employees are welcomed by the team and understand the organization’s culture and values. Key components of such programs include:

- assigning the new employee a more experienced mentor;
- holding regular review meetings during the probation period;
- organizing a group lunch during the welcome period;
- providing the new employee with important information before he/she starts work.

1.4.6 Promoting a multi-skilled workforce

Training employees with multiple skill-sets, also known as multi-skilling, can help solve problems arising from labour shortages, seasonality issues, staff retention and employee motivation. A number of tourism companies are trying it out, and most of them report being satisfied with the results.

Multi-skilling enables companies to:

- cut back on the number of employees;
- make the best use of human resources;
- motivate employees and make them feel valued;
- increase employee retention;
- increase employee commitment to corporate values;
- have greater flexibility when managing teams;
- ensure greater productivity;
• provide better customer service, as all employees feel involved and are better equipped to meet customer needs;
• reduce human resource costs.

On the other hand, organizations that opt for this practice must be prepared to:
• spend a lot of time training their employees;
• manage more complex schedules;
• have employees with less specialized skills.

According to Adèle Girard, former Executive Director of the Quebec Tourism Human Resource Council (CQRHT), the main factors involved in successfully developing a multi-skilled workforce are as follows:

• It must be voluntary: multi-skilling cannot be imposed;
• The task must centre on one or two key competencies;
• If the second placement involves lower-level responsibilities, managers should see if they can make that task more stimulating;
• The employee must receive the wage associated with the higher-level job, in addition to retaining the same work hours and vacation time;
• Employers must be sure to listen to their employees;
• Maintain respect for human values;
• Employee attitudes should be monitored;
• Mediation is a must.

Let’s take a look at how some tourism companies are managing to develop a multi-skilled workforce.

**Inspiring examples from the tourism industry**

Instructors working at ski resorts receive training in first aid, and equipment rental staff members also act as on-call instructors. In the resort dining room, managers are trained to wait tables so they can lend a hand when large groups arrive.

When Le Baluchon, in Quebec’s Lanaudière region, is interviewing candidates to provide health and beauty treatments in their spa, they ask if they would perform other duties during off-peak periods. The idea is to prevent them from quitting due to insufficient work hours. Some spa workers receive the necessary training to man the reception desk, while others take guests out on bike or snowshoe tours. One employee even received special training from Hydro-Québec so he could maintain the inn’s small generating station. Another with recognized woodworking skills is responsible for performing small maintenance tasks during the off season.

At Quebec City’s Chic Alors, the positions of kitchen and serving staff – which make up most of the restaurant’s personnel – are rolled into one, so employees are equally able to work in the kitchen, the dining room or at the take-out counter. Multi-skilled employees can pitch in whenever an extra pair of hands is needed, and being able to perform a variety of tasks takes the monotony out of their daily routine. In addition to creating a positive work environment, this flexibility makes restaurant operations run more smoothly and production and delivery more regular, especially during busy periods.
At Val-David’s Village du Père Noël (Santa’s Village), in Quebec’s Laurentian region, multi-skilling has become second nature. Most of the company’s roughly 50 employees work only four months out of the year – three in the summer and one in the winter – but all of them do more than one job. Managers paint the sets, the parking lot attendant organizes games, the ticket office manager helps out at the snack bar and, at the end of the day, everyone pitches in to clean the village. Candidates applying for jobs at Santa’s Village know from the outset that they have to perform a variety of tasks. Often, new hires are not even assigned a specific job, enabling them to accumulate more hours of work and have more variety in their work day.

1.4 7 Developing mentorship programs

Mentoring involves supporting a person in his/her professional development. Generally speaking, a person who wants to share their extensive experience is matched with someone who is looking to acquire skills and achieve professional goals. It is a voluntary, unpaid relationship between two individuals outside the corporate hierarchy. It is very important to make the right mentor-mentee match: in addition to the importance of the mentor’s qualities, it is vital that the two personalities complement each other.

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<th>MENTORING GOALS</th>
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<td>• Career planning and development</td>
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<td>• Integration into the job market</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Support for entrepreneurs</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Employability development</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Assistance with career transition</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Training the next generation</td>
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<td>• Skills development</td>
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<td>• Support for young professionals</td>
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<td>• Job retention</td>
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Tourism Vancouver Island recognizes the importance and value of mentorship programs so it has developed one in order to enable students and/or industry professionals to pursue a career in tourism.

Mentoring is built on the genuine desire of more experienced employees to give back, and to pass on the company’s accumulated cultural heritage.

The mentoring program set up by the Queensland Tourism Industry Council in Australia provides opportunities for employees in the industry who are 35 years or younger to gain professional development, knowledge and skills by being matched with a senior industry professional who shares their information and experience with them. TIME’s mentoring program (TIME = Travel Industry Mentor Experience) provides aspiring executives in tourism and travel management with advice and support through mentoring sessions and peer collaboration.
Similar programs are also offered in the hotel industry, by such players as InterContinental Hotels Group, Rezidor Hotel Group, Hyatt and Best Western.

The Nova Scotia Tourism Human Resource Council (NSTHRC) matches professionals working in the same tourism sector through its Tourism 1 to 1 Business Mentorship Program.

More recently, the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA) created the MYASTA program (Mentoring Young ASTA) to support the career development of the next generation of travel agents. Starting in 2012, Quebec’s ITHQ (Institut de tourisme et d’hôtellerie du Québec) began offering a support program for entrepreneurs in the hospitality industry.

2. Tourism Industry Job Status Enhancement

Although tourism is a major economic sector, employment in this area tends to be seasonal, lack job security and is often seen as a stepping stone to another job. Attracting and retaining employees is a major challenge for tourism businesses, especially in a context of growing competition with other businesses to attract skilled and qualified people. Tourism industry players therefore need to work hard to promote and enhance the status of careers in tourism. In fact, some stakeholders are already doing so, by asserting the importance of these jobs for the overall economy, and especially for rural areas. Here are a few examples.

2.1 Promote Employment Diversity

2.1.1 Creating a web portal

The four-season resort tourism niche: an illustration
In 2010, the Créneau d’excellence Tourisme de villégiature quatre saisons (or “well-established four-season resort tourism niche”) began organizing the TCRHTL, a round table on tourism HR in Quebec’s Laurentians region. In 2012, this became the HR round table of this créneau d’excellence.

Round table members created a web portal to communicate with managers and employees of local tourism businesses. One of its functions is to tell job-seekers about the tourism industry and the job opportunities in the Laurentians. It also presents four video clips, with testimonials from employees and employers on human resource management and the tourism industry. Another section of the site outlines the reasons for choosing a career in tourism in the Laurentians.
The CQRHT and Tourism HR Canada: an illustration

The CQRHT and its Canadian counterpart, Tourism HR Canada, are well aware of how jobs in the industry are perceived and are therefore working to raise the status of these professions. In fact, the CQRHT has drawn up a list of the top ten reasons to choose a career in tourism. These reasons can be summarized as follows:\(^\text{18}\)

- Exciting jobs in five sub-sectors that employ nearly 400 trades and that provide a varied career path.
- A stimulating and challenging job experience, working with clients from a variety backgrounds; being versatile is an asset.
- The pleasure of team work, since delivering a quality tourism experience necessarily means everyone works together.
- Ample opportunity to be creative, from setting up menus and organizing events to planning guided tours.
- Meeting with travelers from around the world and from all walks of life, who are usually in a good mood and eager to discover the destination.
- A bright future with opportunities for career advancement and new responsibilities.
- A passport to the world, since the skills acquired in tourism can be applied in this industry around the globe.
- Strong interpersonal and customer service skills that can be transferred to other sectors.
- Opportunities for students with flexible schedules that can align with industry needs.
- Business and entrepreneurial opportunities, as this is a sector with rapidly evolving needs and expectations.

2.1.2 Conducting marketing campaigns

In recent years, a number of organizations have carried out marketing campaigns and made videos promoting jobs in the tourism industry. One of these is Tourism Australia, which posted this video in April 2016, in which several employees talk about their work and how much they enjoy it. Jersey Tourism, the DMO for this Channel Island, also created a videos series entitled Industry Insights: Careers in Hospitality, in which some of its employees describe a typical day working in the hospitality industry.

\(^{18}\) CQRHT. “10 bonnes raisons de travailler en tourisme”, July 2015.
Similarly, the DMO Travel Oregon is promoting tourism jobs, making specific reference to:

- the opportunities they provide for young people;
- flexible working hours for seniors, parents and students;
- the fact that they are often small, community-centred businesses, whose activities bring economic benefit to the region.

The marketing document, published in 2015, includes testimonials from industry workers in a variety of appealing sub-sectors.19

Québec Aboriginal Tourism created a compelling and inspiring video designed to promote tourism jobs to Aboriginal communities, as a way for their members to feel proud about their culture and pass it on to both visitors and the next generation. Their slogan? “Aboriginal Tourism: the right career choice for you!”

In January 2013, Tourisme Bas-Saint-Laurent and its partners in the Regional committee to promote the tourism industry, trades and training (Comité régional sur la valorisation de l’industrie, des métiers et des formations en tourisme) launched a campaign to promote tourism trades and training. Using the theme “I work in tourism, I’m part of the show!”, the website includes some information on the relative importance of tourism to the region, the reasons for working there, the requisite training and some testimonials. Here is the campaign’s first TV spot:

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With industry support, Go2HR (formerly known as British Columbia’s Hospitality Industry Education Advisory Committee, or HIEAC) has launched a campaign targeting several demographic groups, to convince people to take jobs and pursue careers in tourism. Campaign tactics include job fairs, public relations initiatives, presentations at study and career centres, a resource listing tourism jobs in British Columbia, the Career Explorer section of its website, an eNewsletter, and social networks like Facebook and Twitter.

2.1.3 Shining a spotlight on employees

Since 1982, Lapland Safaris has been organizing year-round “safaris” into Lapland, a wild and sparsely populated area in Finland’s northern region. Today, it is one of Scandinavia’s biggest tourism companies. The Faces of Lapland Safaris video presents 12 people, each of whom works in a different area of this company, which employs up to 550 people in high season. The video shows that the company has a human face, and that its employees care passionately about their work. Putting out this kind of message creates an emotional attachment to the brand as well as showing the variety of jobs that are created by a single tourism business.  

Source: YouTube

The home page of the Victoria Palace Hotel’s website is a full-screen rotating banner showing different moments in the daily rounds of each of this Paris hotel’s employees, thereby giving visitors a behind-the-scenes peek into the work involved in running this 60-room, luxury boutique hotel. It also helps them get to know these people and the different departments they work in. It’s a lovely way to show how much their employer values these people and the work that they do.

Source: Victoria Palace

2.2 Employer Brands and Industry Brands

During CQRHT’s human resources morning round table in 2016, members of a panel that included students and two placement specialists expressed the viewpoint that it is often a love of travel itself that brings people to a career in tourism. From this, the panel deduced the necessity of promoting the positive experience of working with happy customers who are on vacation. This is, by and large, the message of this Club Med video, in which it urges its employees to get into the Club Med Spirit and “Find the real you”, which is basically the promise it makes to potential employees. The film includes scenes of lasting friendship and profound emotion that bear witness to the exciting life that can be had by G.Os® and G.Es®. Club Med gives them the opportunity to develop their existing skills, learn new ones and discover hitherto unknown talents – all in a breathtaking setting.

The employer brand concept involves both HR and communications personnel, who work to create a strong and attractive corporate image, enabling the company to attract and retain high-quality human capital.

The employer brand uses marketing tools, not to promote its products, but rather to “sell” the company’s HR policy. Developing an employer brand involves identifying that organization's distinctive workplace characteristics. According to Natalie-Ann Shorteno, Consultant with Lafond Gestion and Employer Brand Specialist, an important step in this process is conducting a survey to gauge employee satisfaction with different aspects of their work and the business in general. The job satisfaction survey becomes a useful tool, enabling the company to convey positive information to potential employees. The
employer brand is expressed through a slogan, logo or visual signature that is used in videos and on social media.

The tourism industry must attract and retain quality candidates by creating a strong position for itself, building an enviable reputation and becoming a preferred employer. To accomplish this, it must develop an **industry brand**: a marketing tool that secures a strategic position for the industry with potential candidates and existing employees. The first step in this process is to conduct a survey of employees, managers and the general public, to find out how these groups feel about the industry. The next step is to break down the desired position into various components, and create an action plan to achieve them. It is a complex process that requires the involvement of many resources. Last fall, the CQRHT began approaching organizations to participate in a process designed to create an industry brand that will ultimately enhance the tourism industry in Quebec and attract the best people to that industry’s jobs.
Conclusion

A paper by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) states:

"Up-skilling people to become more proficient in their jobs, valuing and rewarding professional competence and supporting career development can improve the image of employment in the sector and create a more positive recruitment and retention cycle. It in turn promotes enterprise and destination competitiveness and leads to better outcomes for workers."  

Tourism is a reasonably accessible entry point into the world of work, specifically for young, non-traditional and older workers. It also provides jobs for people living in remote regions and OLMCs. It supports local populations and stimulates economic development. Tourism jobs have many benefits but, unless there is an adequate response to the current labour shortage, the productivity, competitiveness and growth of the entire industry will suffer. Employers who adopt the new recruitment and retention strategies will be able to address the many labour market challenges. But, those employers must be open, innovative and proactive if they want to attract and retain a quality workforce.

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