

The Importance of Culture in Growing Hotel Organizations

Diversity and Inclusivity Are the Essence of Dynamic Society

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For many of us, the pandemic has certainly been a shock to the system. It accelerated or concentrated many existing issues in hospitality. These have included how to control expenses as we scale room availability up or down, supply chain complexities, rethinking areas such as housekeeping and food and beverage, and even greater labor pressures.

Competition for labor remains intense, especially for the front-line workers needed to run our hotels, as many organizations now look to jump-start portfolio growth. This challenge is deeply entwined with basic principles of supply and demand, as well as the human relations that bind our organizations together. The world is changing in profound ways. We must accept these realities and make a positive of them, strengthening our organizations in ways that will foster mutual trust, promote outstanding operations as we serve people and build meaningful, profitable growth.

For starters, demographics beckon. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 2030 will be a demographic turning point — as of that year, all baby boomers will be older than 65 years of age. The Bureau projects four years later, by 2034, that older adults will outnumber children for the first time in our history. Moreover, in 2030, "because of population aging, immigration is projected to overtake natural increase (the excess of births over deaths) as the primary driver of population growth for the country," the Bureau reports. "Beyond 2030, the U.S. population is projected to grow slowly, age considerably, and become more racially and ethnically diverse."

Our population is projected to cross 400 million in 2058.

Accepting the Challenge

The year 2030 is only eight years off. Other aging populations like that of Japan have already faced workforce challenges, but not the same mix of racial and ethnic diversity.

Perhaps more profoundly, we face a complex, potentially rich diversity of thoughts, values and motivations. We need good people. We also should welcome and appreciate team members for who and what they are, their unique talents and viewpoints, regardless of race, age, sex, ethnic background, national origin or cultural experience.

We must be beyond looking for an "economic correction" to winnow down employment demands. Thankfully, that ship has sailed; the demographic reality and social sentiment will not support that view of life. No one wins in that scenario, least of all our organizations.

Fortunately, we can be proud that hospitality has traditionally been a great industry for newcomers from many walks of life; great people whereby a 30-year career in hospitality may have begun as a part-time night auditor and grown to occupy a key position in corporate headquarters. Now, we must build on this heritage by embracing diversity and inclusivity, which reflects the same diversity of our guests and brings more voices to our table.

Obviously, it takes purpose and effort to make this work. It begins with clear policies and procedures that promote equal opportunity and are non-discriminatory in law and spirit. We are not talking about a "woke" world, but the real one of commerce. We reinforce diversity and inclusivity through daily messages and regular programs that recognize and celebrate diversity, which can include independent councils with their own leadership and budget allocations.

To grow our organizations at this pivotal time in our industry, everyone must be rowing strongly and in the same direction. This will happen when we respect and understand each other better and welcome and help grow each person's capabilities. This organizational culture becomes our brand, not based on a logo but a shared, living purpose.

Our industry has a strong, competitive future if we genuinely embrace diversity and inclusivity. It's there for the taking.

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