Rahul Rai

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NEW WORLD, NEW SKILLS

The global health crisis is proving to be an opportune time for hotel staff to upgrade skills while waiting for the hospitality industry to relaunch. Upskilling is more common these days, and the new world need new skills. For us and other boutique and mid-segment hotels, upskilling the staff became more than a necessity. After unlocking, staff movement was severely constrained because they had to multitask. Hence, businesses that had engaged in staff upskilling prior to COVID-19 were able to run their operations smoothly, and we were one of them. Hotel employees must now be multifaceted and more present throughout the hotel. During the pandemic, leadership meant acting swiftly, planning for the long run, developing creative solutions, taking social distancing seriously, caring for employees, being socially responsible, and communicating empathetically with staff and guests. Critical thinking, creative problem solving, flexibility and adaptability, communication and emotional intelligence, negotiation, and relationship management are all part of the soft skills spectrum. Furthermore, social media will become increasingly important for the hospitality business, not just for branding, messaging, and marketing, but also for reassuring of safe practices, data gathering, and engaging with new audiences.

Setting the time period available to upskill our staff was and continues to be a challenge, as a new hotel and resort firm that was hit by the pandemic just five months after opening and then another wave just a year later, and with eight operational hotels and a few more on the way, conducting training sessions or on-the-job training for a large number of people is difficult. Further, with the market opening up in the latter half of this year and a high demand for workers across hotels, it is challenging to keep well-trained and skilled personnel. At the same time, there is an opportunity for firms like ours to position themselves as a place where people's skills are valued and developed. People who work for us look to the company for prospects to grow because they are already responsible for more than their given roles. Employees now understand that if the firm supports them with programmes and plans for upskilling them, they will have better opportunities to learn and will be more keen to engage in such plans, making L&D an even more integral part in the hospitality sector. When employees feel uninvolved, they will make every effort to move to an environment where they will be more engaged. Hence, the L&D vertical must be prepared to serve such a large number of people all across, while the hospitality industry must be ready to absorb this highly trained and skilled staff in the future.

> **For hotels like ours, upskilling has become more than a necessity**