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EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT AT HOTEL INDUSTRY: CASE STUDY OF AIRPORT HOTEL

Author: Olga Shevchenko

Thesis supervisor: doc. Ing. Zuzana Křečková Kroupová, M.A., Ph.D.

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<u>Declaration:</u>

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of the thesis titled "Employee development at hotel industry: Case study of airport hotel." I dutifully marked out all of the quotations. The used literature and sources are stated in the attached list of references.

In Prague on ....

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Olga Shevchenko

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<u>Acknowledgements:</u>

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Introduction

Today, every enterprise faces serious competition in each aspect of business. In the age, where technology is widely available, and competitive advantages in research and development last for a shorter periods of time, having an outstanding team of workers that are able to push the company forward in the time of constant competition is more important than ever. Skilled and intelligent staff that are productive, satisfied, motivated and more importantly loyal to the company are the most crucial and scarce resource that a firm could obtain. Although recruitment processes are in no doubt essential for attracting talents into the company, it is the employee training and development processes that can create a team out of the individual workers. It is through employee development that employees learn how to respond to the specific needs of a company, how to cooperate with other employees, and begin to truly identify themselves with the company. Therefore, in my opinion, employee development practices have a direct effect on the company's continuity, profitability and success.

Human capital possesses an even higher value in the service-intensive firms. While manufacturing companies can win the customers over with the unique products that have competitive price or quality, service firms' financial performance is strongly affected by the delivery of the service, which is a direct result of the employees' competency and attitude. That is the reason why managers in the service industry are committed to place a bigger emphasis on investment in employee development. Therefore, the training and development practices are required to be more effective and to bring higher benefits for the company in the service sector.

Hence, the aim of my bachelor thesis is formulated as follows: to assess the employee development strategy of a specific company operating in a hospitality industry (more specifically, a hotel) in comparison with the overall trends in human resource practices.

My thesis will begin with a literature review of theoretical approaches towards the employee development strategies. It will contain research on the importance of employee development in the hospitality industry, a comparison of employee training and development techniques used in general, accompanied with the examples of how these techniques were incorporated by various well-known hotel chains, an overview of the employee development planning process and last but not least, research on different techniques that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of employee development. The literature review will be based on the practices that are currently used by the hospitality industry and which solve the problems

related to the industry.

To assist myself with the study, I have developed several research questions that I will answer in my thesis:

1. Is employee development crucial to the continuity of businesses in the hospitality industry and why?

2. What are the prevailing trends in employee development strategies currently used in the hospitality business?

3. How do companies decide when employee development is needed and how do they plan their strategies?

4. How to assess the effectiveness of employee training and development practices?

Regarding the practical part of my thesis, I will introduce a specific company (an airport hotel) and explain the training and development processes of that company in comparison with the common trends in the hotel industry. To simplify the research, I will choose two prevailing development techniques that are provided for the employees at the same level, and I will evaluate how the used techniques correspond to the hotel's specific needs and requirements. Additionally, I will assess the techniques using the employee development evaluation methods that are commonly used in the hospitality industry. At the end, I will recommend several measures that the company could implement in order to make their training and development processes more effective in terms of financial performance and employee and customer satisfaction.

1. Literature Review

The following part of my bachelor thesis is a summary of the theoretical background regarding the importance of training and development, different strategies and approaches, employee development planning and assessment of employee development practices. The aim of these chapter is to introduce different approaches according to the literature and prevailing trends in the hotel industry.

1.1. Definitions of training and development

Frequently, the terms training and development are used interchangeably. However, using these terms synonymously can cause confusion. In order to be able to analyse the human resource development process, it is important to distinguish between the two terms, as they often implicate different activities and desired outcomes within an organisation (Masadeh, 2012). Therefore, I believe it is necessary to begin the literature review with the clear definitions of the terms training and development, as well as a short comparison of the two.

Training is described as "a planned effort by a company to facilitate employees' learning of job related competencies" (Noe, 2010, ch. 1). The goal of any training program is simple - to help the employees to acquire new skills, knowledge, or behaviour patterns, that they could use on their current day-to-day job. Kitson, 2003 (in Masadeh, 2012) differentiates training as "a learning activity that is designed for immediate impact, for a job or role that one does at present". Often, is it meant to be a direct way of enhancing job performance (Truelove, 1992). Moreover, training is usually accompanied by a practical, learning-by-doing experience, in contrast with formal education that is expected to have been provided before the employee was appointed to a job (Hughey & Mussnug, 1997). That learning-by-doing feature of training is expected to bring intended and specific results to the company (Masadeh, 2012).

On the other hand, development is defined as "a long-term process designed to enhance potential and effectiveness. It is also defined as the growth or realisation of a person's ability, through learning, often from planned study and experience" (Gansberghe, 2003 in Masadeh, 2012). Development may include various types of learning, including but not limited to formal educational commitments, job training and experiences, and assessments of personality and abilities (Noe, 2010, ch. 9). Unlike employee training, development is not only focused on improving the employee's current job practices. It may also prepare the staff for their future positions, increase their readiness to potential changes in their jobs, and is

"designed for a future impact" (Kitson, 2003 in Masadeh, 2012). Moreover, while attendance at training programs is often obligatory, most employees need to take the initiative to participate in development programs. However, it may also be required for employees interested in managerial positions (Noe, 2010, ch. 9).

1.2. The role of training in the hospitality industry

As said by Armstrong and Taylor (2014), "one of the features of working life today is that whatever training is obtained at the start will almost certainly become redundant or obsolete during the same working life". Therefore, the need for training is nowadays recognised by all businesses, and it has become one of the most common practices in almost any working environment. If the need for training is not seen, and it is not provided as a part of the management function, many employees of the firm may end up lacking the needed skills and the quality of the products or services provided by the company may decrease significantly (Acquaful, Dedume & Appiah, 2016). In this subchapter, I will describe the role that training plays in the hospitality industry.

First of all, I believe it is very useful to mention the Service Profit Chain developed by Heskett et. al. (1994). The authors proposed a chain of how the profit is made by service industries, and more importantly, establishes relationships between the financial performance of service-driven firms, customer satisfaction and loyalty, and employee satisfaction and productivity. These relationships create a chain because they are the direct effects of each other: profit of the service-intensive firms is created from the loyal customers, customer loyalty depends on whether the customers were satisfied with their experience, customer satisfaction is influenced by the value of service they received, and the value is created by the employees of the firm, who need to be kept satisfied in order to be productive. In the end, employee satisfaction derives from the employee support (Heskett et. al., 1994). The service profit chain is demonstrated in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: The Links in the Service-Profit Chain
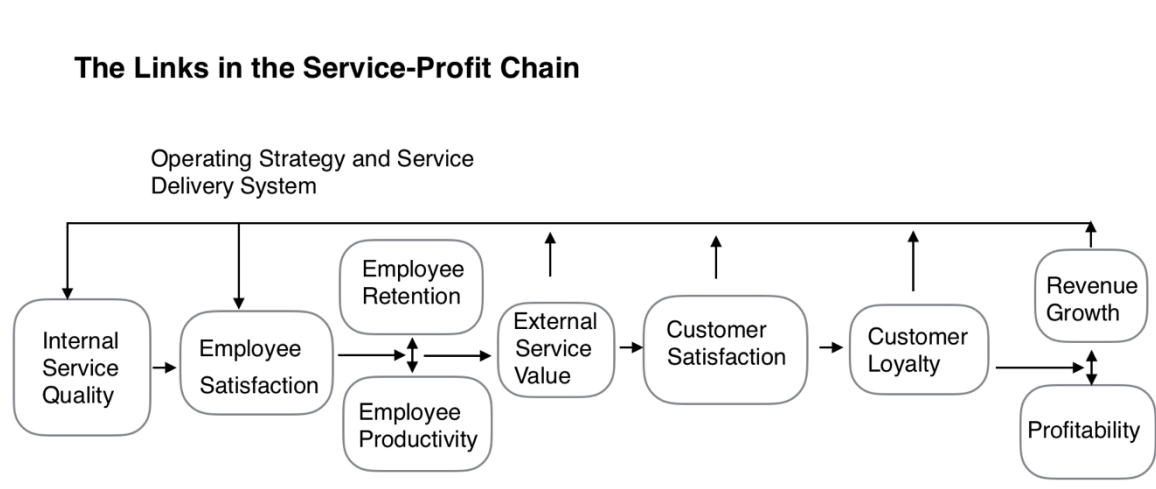
Source: Author's own creation based on the data from Heskett et al., 1994

According to the model developed by Heskett et al., service quality and financial

performance depend on employee satisfaction among other factors. The positive relationship between employee satisfaction and the service company's profitability where customer satisfaction acts as a mediator has been supported by other researchers such as Koys in 2003 or Chi & Gursoy in 2009 (in Laskarin, 2017). Managing employee development is one of the crucial parts of improving employee productivity and building employee satisfaction, which is particularly important in the high-contact service environments (Goldstein, 2003). It is not surprising, since the customer's perception of the organisation can be strongly affected by the customer's impression of the employee, and in a service-intensive firms there is no product to stand in between the employees' attitude and the customer (Anderson, 2006). Nowadays, unsatisfied customers can be a major threat to the firm's continuity, as opinions are easily shared and having a few unsatisfied reviews can prevent other potential customers from ever going to a hotel. Therefore, the quality of employees can directly affect the long-term profitability of a business in the hospitality industry, and the quality of human capital is improved through training and development.

Additionally, investing in employee training and development can bring other benefits to the firm. First of all, training can improve the employees' skills that are specifically needed by the firm, while university educations often cover only general topics. Secondly, good training that results in increased employee satisfaction also has a benefit of the decreased turnover ratios. Well-trained employees experience less stress at their jobs, and therefore are less likely to wish to change workplaces (Buick & Muthu, 1997). Additionally, investing in training has been shown to have a positive correlation with the shareholders' wealth through the improved financial performance (Dwomoh, Boachie & Kwarteng, 2017).

1.3. Types of employee training and development techniques

In the following chapter, multiple employee training techniques commonly used by hotel managers will be described in different terms, such as at which circumstances this specific technique should be used, its benefits and challenges and its effectiveness.

1.3.1. Internal and external training

The first major differentiation of training programs is between external and in-house training. In-house training means that the sources of training are the employers or other members of the workforce, such as the Human Resources department, or resident expert on the matter. On the contrary, external training is any training that is not done in-house, and it frequently involves hiring external providers, for instance private training companies, universities, or government-supported providers. However, employing external providers does not necessarily mean that the training is taking place at a location remote from the workplace, external providers are often invited to teach on the premises of the organisation (Kitching & Blackburn, 2002).

Both internal and external trainings have their benefits and downsides, that need to be taken into consideration when choosing a method for training.

In-house training is preferred by most employers because it can be modified according to the specific needs of the company. Managers often use in-house training to teach newly hired employees, and the employee who does or used to do the same job can teach them all of the specifics needed to perform the tasks the same way. Besides, sometimes employers have no other alternative in case no relevant training is available outside the company. Moreover, it is usually perceived as a cost-advantageous and more convenient substitute to external training: employees do not need to travel to and from the training event, and the planning aspect of training is simpler as it does not need to fit the schedule of the external provider. Also, in-house training often means on-the-job training, that allows the trainees to learn and perform their work at the same time, resulting in only marginally lower efficiency levels (Kitching & Blackburn, 2002). Although, many companies also use in-house training methods for multiple lecture topics on Human Resources, such as ethics training, sexual harassment seminars, customer service training, etc. Then, general managers or the management team of the Human Resources department delivers the training (Dias, 2011). Additionally, if in-house trainers are used, the direct financial costs of training are relatively lower than it would be for an external trainer to provide the same level of service. Finally,

in-house training is typically delivered in a more informal manner. According to the research made by Kitching and Blackburn in 2002, the 'default position' for most employers is to use internal training whenever knowledge and skills can be transferred in-house.

The most common reason for choosing external training is that managers or employees often lack the needed skills or knowledge to provide the training in-house, or the company lacks the needed equipment to do so. Additionally, external training may be pursued to fulfil legal requirements or to meet certain external standards, for instance, for health and safety. However, external training is regularly done in the company, in order to combine the benefits of both internal and external training (Kitching & Blackburn, 2002).

On the other hand, the crucial part of employee training programs is to receive a predictable response over time, such as change in behaviour, increase in efficiency, etc. The main point in choosing between the two methods is which can bring the most benefits to the organisation's acquired knowledge, skills and abilities. Therefore, if the external training would be more effective, cutting investments by doing in-house training is counterproductive. Although, if it is well organised, internal training can bring significant benefits to the firm (Buick and Muthu, 1997).

In the hotel industry, both external and internal training techniques are common and widely used, however, the preference stays on the side of internal training. Buick and Muthu (1997) in their research between the hotels discovered, that while all of the respondents use in-house training methods (usually on-the-job training, demonstrations or role plays), external trainers were used by only approximately 70% of hotels, out of which barely half considered external training of the same importance as internal training practices. However, external training is a part of the training curriculum for a number of world famous hotel chains, such as Marriott, who uses facilitator lead programs for the executives training on such topics as leadership, building relationships, or generating talent (HM staff, 2010), Devonshire Hotels & Restaurants, who support employee development by providing funding for external degree courses (Devonshire Hotels, 2018), or Accor Hotels, who make use of external training provided by a corporate university (Accor Hotels, 2018).

1.3.2. Presentation (passive) methods of training

Presentation training methods imply that the employees are the passive recipients of training, and are commonly used when the information needs to be presented to a large group of people, and when the trainees participation is not expected or group discussion is not

feasible. Presentation methods of training represent a typical classroom learning environment. Training instructors deliver data to learners, who have access to certain learning materials to assist their studies (Noe, 2010, ch. 8). The following figure shows the structure of the classroom learning environment:

Figure 2: Classroom Learning Environment

Classroom Learning Environment
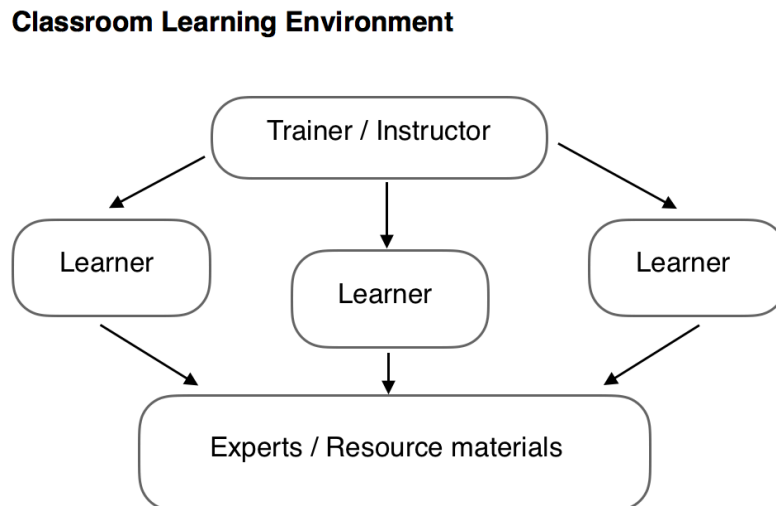
Source: Author's own creation based on the data from Noe, 2010, ch. 8.

Lectures are the most common presentation method of training, and imply a one-way communication flow from the trainer to the audience, which is often organised as an instructor-led classroom presentation. It enables delivering an extensive amount of data to a large group of people efficiently and for little cost. Standard lectures involve a single trainer presenting information to a group of students, but they can also include multiple speakers, guest speakers, or student-led presentations. It is done in order to present differentiating opinions or deeper exploration of the topic (Noe, 2010, ch. 7).

However, lectures as a method of training have a few important disadvantages. First of all, the connection to the work environment is weak, and usually lectures are not as relevant to the workplace as active methods of training. Moreover, lectures often do not allow participants to get involved in the process or to deliver feedback, which consequently makes it harder for the instructor to evaluate the trainees' level of understanding. For these reasons, lectures are often used as an addition to other more active methods of training, or as a support for them, such as the introduction section that efficiently distributes information regarding the purpose, goals, desired outcomes of upcoming training (Noe, 2010, ch. 7).

While passive training methods have their downsides, they are widely used to train employees in the hospitality industry. According to the research conducted by Tracey et. al.

(2015), it is the primary method of training in the majority of hotels. It is mainly seen in the strategic content of training (where more than 70% of hotels use lectures), and similar trends are followed for training technical (61% passive methods) and interpersonal skills (passive methods are used by barely a half of the respondents) (Tracey et. al., 2015).

1.3.3. Hands-on (active) methods of training

Hands-on, or active methods of training require some level of active participation from the trainee. Active methods have a certain advantage over the passive methods, because they allow the employees to experience all aspects of skill training, which will help them transfer the new knowledge to the job. In this subchapter, I will describe several active methods of training as well as their use in the hotel industry.

1.3.3.1. On-the-job training

On-the-job training, or OJT, is the most commonly used type of informal training, and it refers to inexperienced employees being trained in the work setting by other more skilled employees or managers. During the on-the-job training, employees learn by observing their mentors or imitating their behaviour. It is often used for training employees after mobility (orientations after recruitment, promotions, cross-training). On-the-job training is an internal training practice, and therefore it holds all of the advantages of the in-house training, such as the ability to be modified to suit the firm's specific needs, convenience and cost-efficiency. More importantly, it can be directly applicable to the job, since the training happens in the actual workplace, uses all the tools and equipment necessary, and uses actual job tasks that occur at that workplace. However, there are several disadvantages to the on-the-job training method. First of all, employees are not practiced instructors, and therefore communication issues can occur, or bad habits can be passed on. Moreover, they might overlook some necessary information regarding events that do not happen on the day-to-day basis, or might pay little attention to feedback. This can result in employees using ineffective or even dangerous methods to provide a service, and said service may vary in quality (Noe, 2010, ch. 7).

There are several different techniques used to implement on-the-job training, such as self-directed learning programs, apprenticeships, and mentoring. Self-directed learning implies that employees take full control over their own training. They study the training content without an instructor, although the instructors are available for questions and assistance. Examples of self-directed learning are consultations with experts, review of the

relevant literature from various books, publications or databases, and training courses and seminars, provided by the company. It is very cost-effective as it requires fewer trainers, and it allows the trainees to study without any disruptions and at their own pace. However, it is very dependent on the employees' willingness and motivation to learn (Noe, 2010, ch. 7). Four Seasons hotels used the method of self-directed learning while opening a new hotel in Bali, Indonesia in 1992. Because the official language of the hotel chain is English, they faced a challenge of teaching English to new employees filling 580 job positions. To do so, they developed the library-like Self Accessed Learning Centre that featured training modules, books and magazines, as well as video recorders, tapes, and computers. Besides English, they provided courses in Japanese language (which is the language of approximately 20% of Bali hotel's visitors), and training for foreign managers. As a motivation boost, Four Seasons provided monetary incentives for the employees who reach the highest levels of English skills (Solomon, 1997).

Another technique of on-the-job training is called apprenticeship. It is a work-study system of training new practitioners that combines features of both classroom and workplace training. Typically apprentices have to fulfil a certain amount of hours of classroom study and work experience to be registered as an apprentice under state or federal laws (Noe, 2010, ch. 7). In Czech Republic there is no formal apprenticeship program, although a vocational certificate from the secondary vocational schools (SOU - střední odborná učiliště) is traditionally recognised as "apprenticeship", since its graduates are prepared for jobs in the labour market (Kaňáková, 2014). Often apprenticeship programmes are financed by companies or groups of companies in cooperation with the workers' union. On-the-job experience as part of the apprenticeship programs allows the trainees to earn money while learning, and it often results in full-time employment. However, preparation of apprenticeship programs can be very cost- and time-consuming, and the expertise of apprentices is often limited to only one craft or a narrow set of skills (Noe, 2010, ch. 7). While traditionally, apprenticeship programs are used to train skilled manual workers, such as for the careers in plumbing, electrical work, or carpentry, there are examples of apprenticeship programs in the hotel industry. For instance, Hilton Apprenticeship Academy was launched in 2012 in the UK (Hilton Worldwide, 2018). It provides six different year-long apprenticeships that allow their participants to focus on professions in cookery, front desk services, food and beverage services, multi-skilled hospitality service, exercise and fitness, and sales. After completing the apprenticeship program at Hilton hotels, graduates

become registered apprentices and receive a certificate, which is recognised across the hospitality industry (Roepe, 2017).

The last common method of on-the-job training is called mentoring, or coaching. A mentor is a "trusted, experienced advisor who has direct investment in the development of an employee" (Dias, 2011). It can be a manager, a supervisor, or a more experienced colleague. Mentors are expected to explain the job specifics to their mentees, help them with procedures and with any other day-to-day challenges. This training method resembles an apprenticeship, but it is initiated by the company, and it does not end in certification. Therefore, it is more informal, it does not require any lecture hours and often does not have strict requirements. Also, mentoring training takes place after recruitment to the company and not prior to it. Therefore, it is a more informal way of on-the-job training. Sometimes, a mentorship is also a part of the orientation program for newly recruited or promoted employees. Mentoring is one of the preferred methods of training as it can be more relevant to the actual job the employee was hired to do. The main issue that can arise during mentoring is personalities conflict. Managers should pay close attention on whom they assign to be coaches, because they need to possess certain communication and people skills to be able to teach a younger generation of workers (Dias, 2011).

Mentoring can be delivered in a number of ways. Common mentoring deliveries include Brown Bag Lunch and Job Shadowing. Brown Bag Lunch training delivery focuses on creating an informal learning atmosphere by providing training during breaks (lunchtime). The main advantage of this delivery method is that it occurs in a relaxed, stress-free environment and often employees are present as teams. However, the informality of this method leads to several downsides, such as varying attendance, or the employees simply might not be interested in learning during their breaks. Job Shadowing training delivery places an unexperienced employee with a more experienced worker, so that the former can observe the work processes to, eventually, gain enough knowledge to do the job. In service companies, job shadowing is used for more sensitive activities before the trainers are allowed to perform the task themselves, for example, activities involving dealing with customers (Dias, 2011).

1.3.3.2. Case studies

Case studies describe how other organisations have dealt with troublesome situations. Case studies allow the employees to learn from other company's experiences: they are asked to analyse the actions taken and to evaluate them. They can point out the correct approaches

or suggest modifications to the mistakes that were made. Case studies are often analysed in a classroom-like setting, however, the participation of the trainees is crucial for this method. There is an abundance of preexisting cases available on various topics and problems in business management, and they can be accessed from most universities. The important thing that should be taken into account by the employer and the instructor is how relevant the case study is to the given organisation. However, examples of handling different crises by other companies in the same industry are proving to be very useful. Additionally, it is beneficial if communication between the trainees is arranged. Case studies are advantageous to be solved in teams, and often the instructors ask the teams to present their point of view on the case. That way, the exchange of ideas and diverse opinions is made, and it results in a wider learning experience (Noe, 2010, ch. 7).

Case studies are also extremely useful for training for the unusual and unlikely situations, which could be, however, detrimental to business. Such situations include various crises, which do not have a manual to deal with, but can cause gruesome consequences if handled incorrectly. One of the examples is the case study on crisis management and communication of Taj Hotel Mumbai during the terrorist attacks in 2008 (Deshpande & Raina, 2008). Evaluating similar case studies can give the employees an idea of how to deal with the unexpected events and possibly minimise the losses for customers as well as for the business.

1.3.3.3. Role plays

A role play is an experimental training method that has employees act like the characters that are assigned to them. Trainees are given certain information about the situation where they have a problem to solve. Role plays strongly depend on interpersonal responses among the trainees and need to resemble the work activity which is normally encountered by the employees in order to be relevant and applicable. It is also commonly used as an addition to the lecture method, as it allows the trainees to test their newly acquired knowledge. The lectures often explain the theory and introduce the purpose of the role play, as well as explain the details about the characters, their roles, and other features. The crucial part of the role play is debriefing. In the debriefing part, the instructor explains the results of the play as well as the evaluation. Role plays are often recorded in order to let the participants see their mistakes and learn from them (Noe, 2010, ch.7).

According to Tracey et al. (2015) experimental methods of training are gaining popularity among the hotels, and many of the "Most Admired" companies such as Four

Seasons or Marriott regularly use them to demonstrate behaviours that reflect their service standards. Role plays used for developing hotel employees typically include imitating such activities as check-ins and check-outs, room reservations, and handling complaints (Tracey et.al., 2015).

1.3.4. Technology-based learning

New technology has significantly facilitated the training process in terms of delivery, administration and support. Training programs can now be accessed on demand, and employers have more control over the timelines of the training. Administration of training no longer requires a lot of paperwork, as it can be handled electronically, and it is easier to monitor and evaluate the progress of the trainees. More importantly, traditional classroom methods of training can be transferred to the employees without the need to travel (Noe, 2010, ch. 8). These are the most important benefits that technology has brought to the training process.

Technology has also allowed the development of another form of the learning environment. It is often called a computer-assisted instruction method of training, as training delivery and administration is done on a computer through technology delivery mechanisms, such as websites, online courses, applications, etc. Unlike in the classroom learning environment, instructors act as facilitators or collaborators, who are now less involved in the training delivery. Learning is transferred by given resource materials but also often through the collaboration with other learners, such as working on the projects in teams, discussion groups, participating in games, and others (Noe, 2010, ch. 8). Technological learning environment is presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Technological Learning Environment

Technological Learning Environment
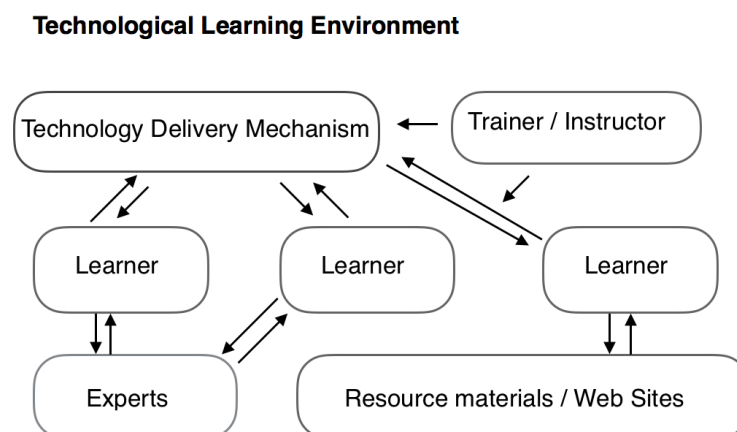
Source: Author's own creation based on the data from Noe, 2010, ch. 8

Technology-based training is typically divided into two groups by the mode of communication with the instructor - using synchronous communication, or asynchronous communication (Dias, 2011). Synchronous communication is the instructor-led training that uses the live interaction between the instructor and the trainees, by using technology-based facilitation. It includes live video and phone conferences, and live courses (virtual classrooms). Asynchronous communication implies the self-directed, technology based learning, where learners can access the materials when they wish. It is facilitated by non-live interactions with the instructor, such as emails, discussion groups, and virtual libraries (Dias, 2011).

There are several computer-assisted instruction methods that will be analysed in this chapter.

1.3.4.1. Audiovisual instruction and Multimedia training

Audiovisual instruction is the first developed method of instruction that uses technological innovations. It is typically used as an addition to the lecture method of training, and therefore represents a passive training method as well. It incorporates slides, overheads, and video. It is used for improving different skills by providing examples or real-life experiences, or by illustrating procedures. Also, it is beneficial to use because of its ability to appeal to multiple senses of the leaner (auditory and visual), which can lead to better training outcomes. Video is the most commonly used audiovisual technique, as it is one of the few that can be used without support (Noe, 2010, ch. 7,8). There is an abundance of educational videos available online for any topic available, and it is often used as an assistance to self-learning techniques. For example, the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute offers subscriptions for their video library, called CyberCinema (American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute, 2018). Their library offers many educational videos for new employees in the hotel industry, or for anyone interested in improving their skills.

Another training method is multimedia training, which combines different audiovisual techniques (texts, audios, graphics, videos, animations) with Internet-based training. Often it allows the learners to interact with given content, therefore requiring their direct participation in the learning process. Even though multimedia training is usually difficult and costly to develop, sometimes these costs are recovered by reductions in travel costs and instructor fees, as it often does not require a facilitator and constant updating. Moreover, it is flexible, can be used privately by each trainee, and provides immediate assistance and

feedback to the learner (Noe, 2010, ch. 8).

1.3.4.2. Online learning

Online learning (or e-learning) is a learning method that delivers the training using the Internet. By using online learning, it enables the trainees to learn at their own pace, interact with the content of training, and communicate with other learners and the training instructors. Online learning has become very popular with the employers because it is richer in content compared to other methods of training delivery. It may include multimedia training, and it can link to additional resources or other related training programs if a deeper understanding of a certain subject is needed. It allows the students to keep track on their objectives, practice their skills and receive quick feedback from the exercises. It may also take care of various training administration procedures, such as enrollment, monitoring or progress assessments. The ability to incorporate multiple different features for a relatively low cost gives it a significant advantage over other training delivery methods. Moreover, e-learning is accessible on demand, can support a wide audience and includes a vast variety of skill training. It is also not limited in geographical locations or languages of instruction, and it is easily updated. However, there are few aspects that can limit the usage of online learning. First of all, it is heavily reliant on the constant access to Internet and electricity, so a small issue with Internet connection or power outage can disturb the learning process. Some internet-based training programs can be quite costly, and it is difficult to predict their effectiveness in advance. Also, the abundance of online based training programs makes it difficult to find quality content, and therefore to ensure return on investment from a given program (Noe, 2010, ch. 8).

E-learning typically includes Web- or Intranet-based training. Web-based, or Internet-based, training is the type of training that is delivered through a web-page. They are accessible to the general public, however, in most cases gaining access to a program requires to pay a fee. There is a specialised type of web-based training, which is called the Intranet-based training. Intranet-based training can only be available if a company has its own computer network. Then, the training program can only be reached by the employees of the company. However, the technology of the two is very similar (Noe, 2010, ch, 8).

1.3.5. Blended learning

Blended learning is a learning method that combines advantages of both online learning and personal instruction. It is a so-called hybrid approach, which was created due

to the technological limitations of computer-assisted instruction and preference for human contact while learning. This method of learning happens both in the classroom and online; therefore, the trainees are allowed to be to a certain extent self-directed and responsible for their own training, but have the opportunity to receive some instructions from the teacher in a classroom and are able to have discussions and share opinions with other students (Noe, 2010, ch. 8). The structure of a blended learning environment is presented in the Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Blended Learning Environment

Blended Learning Environment
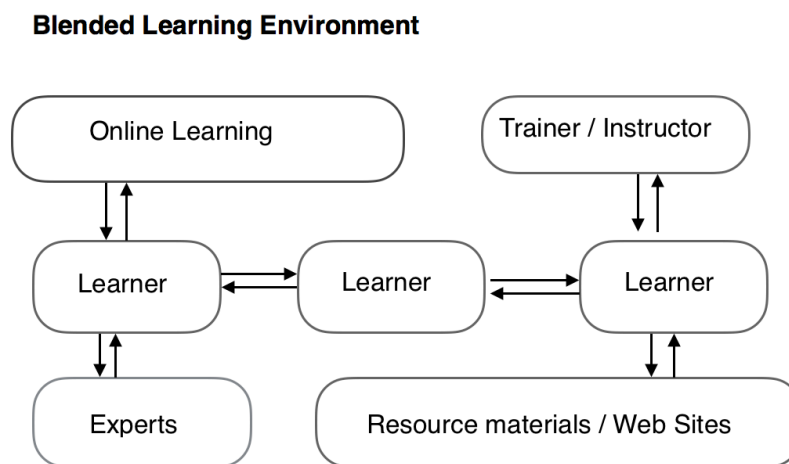
Source: Author's own creation based on the data from Noe, 2010, ch. 8.

There are two most common methods of blended learning: simulations and distance learning.

1.3.5.1. Simulations

One of the types of blended learning is simulations. While simulations do not necessarily require technological assistance, modern day simulation training programs typically do. After employees receive training from lectures, simulations are used to represent a real-life situation for them to practice the newly acquired skills, however it is done on a computer or other safe technology-assisted environment. There, the trainees are asked to take actions (usually, to solve a problem), are shown the results of their actions, and receive feedback. Simulations can be a very effective training method, as it does not require travel, and they can allow the employees to practice safely for the situations that would be risky to do in real life. Additionally, simulations are proven to be more emotionally engaging that other training methods, which results in a more positive learning outcome for the trainees (Noe, 2010, ch. 8).

The main downside of this method of training is that simulations need constant updating in order to keep their relevance. They need to create the environment that is the closest substitute to real work experience: equipment needs to act in the same way as it would in the workplace, and the tasks should represent the activities that employees may encounter in real life. Therefore, simulations are expensive and time consuming to develop and keep up to date (Noe, 2010, ch. 8). In the hospitality industry, simulations are often used for training hotel managers. According to Tracey et. al. (2015), simulations became rather popular between the "Most Admired" hotels such as Four Seasons and Mariott. There are various simulations which already exist on the market for training hotel managers, such as Hotel Business Management Training Simulation by Dr. Dogan Gursoy (Dr. Gursoy, 2018), and various simulations designed by Red Global Group (Red Global Group, 2018), such as the Hotel Revenue Maximisation Training Simulation, the Hotel Food & Beverage Management, or the Hospitality Finance and Accounting simulation.

1.3.5.2. Distance learning

Distance learning is a different type of blended learning, which allows the trainees to learn through lectures regardless of their geographical location. They can include tele- and videoconferencing, as well as virtual classrooms. In the distance learning method, trainees "attend" lectures by using their telephones or computers, and they get their learning materials from the Internet. It may involve different methods of computer-assisted delivery, such as multimedia techniques, Web- or Intranet-based training, etc. This type of learning can be more cost-efficient than the regular lecture method, since it saves costs and time for travel, and it allows the employees to receive training from recognised professionals in the field, who would not be available otherwise at every location. Distance learning also includes more advanced methods such as Interactive distance learning (IDL) and webcasting that allow for more trainee involvement in the learning process. Webcasting is a method that broadcasts a lecture live to the learners and allows anyone with access to join in. Interactive distance learning is very similar to webcasting, but it uses satellite technology, which broadcasts lectures to certain locations and allows learners to interact with the instructors to ask and answer question or share opinions using a keyboard (Noe, 2010, ch. 8).

The major downsides of the distance learning method are similar to the lecture method of training delivery, such as limited interaction among the trainees or with the training instructor, and a weak connection to the actual working environment. Moreover, it relies heavily on the technology, and as often the lectures are broadcasted live, a technology

malfunction can result in trainees not attending the lecture and missing a part of the training. However, it is a good training method if a good lecturer or guest speaker is not available at any close location (Noe, 2010, ch. 8).

1.4. Types of employee development techniques

As already described in the definitions, employee development is a broader term that includes employee training, but is not limited to it. Often, employers value the intellectual resources of the company, and therefore include employee development in the corporate culture, which is connected to the company's mission and core values. And while traditionally, development was a term used mainly for the management of the firms while employees only received training to improve the needed skills, nowadays development is often considered as important for employees of all levels.

Commonly, studies distinguish four developmental approaches - formal education, assessment, job experiences, and interpersonal relationships. However, very rarely do companies focus their attention on only one of the approaches. Typically, a combination of several methods is used.

In this chapter, I will summarise different developmental approaches other than employee training, highlight the types of skills that can be improved by each of the approaches, and provide examples of their use in the hotel industry.

1.4.1. Assessment (performance appraisal)

Assessment, or performance appraisal, programs provide feedback to the employees regarding their behaviour, skill sets, communication style and others, based on the information collected on them. It is mostly used either for evaluating the executives, or to identify the employees with possible managerial skills (Noe, 2010, ch. 9). Based on the assessment, employees can be promoted, or offered additional training if they lack certain skills. Research done by Buick & Muthu (1997) discovered, that 63% of hotels use assessments as a way to identify training needs. Assessments are considered a part of employee development program and not just as an employee evaluation, because the employees are provided with the result of the assessment and therefore become aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, it often serves as a first step to employee development, as it can identify the future training's goals and objectives based on which skills of a particular employee need an improvement. Assessments can be designed for the individual employees as well as for the teams, in order to evaluate the working dynamic or decision processes in the department. Based on team evaluations, changes in team structure can be made in order to improve the working environment (Noe, 2010, ch. 9).

Some companies are using psychological tests as a form of assessment for their

employees. The most popular psychological test used for assessment and development purposes is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). It is a psychological test introduced in the 1920s, which divides people into 16 personality types, according to their level of extraversion or introversion, decision making tendencies, information interpretation and openness to new ideas and concepts (The Myers & Briggs Foundation, 2018). This test has been used for career planning and for team management. It allows people to find out more about their strengths and weaknesses, which facilitates the training process for both the employee and the company.

Occasionally, firms turn to assessment centres for employees' performance evaluation. In an assessment centre, multiple evaluators rate the employees on a number of characteristics. Assessment centres are typically held on external locations, where the employees are given some exercises (such as group discussions, role plays, problem solving, personal interviews, etc.) which are designed to evaluate the participants' interpersonal and administrative skills, such as the ability to work in teams, sense of judgement, leadership, communication skills, and the ability to work in a different or stressful environment. Different research suggests that the employee's performance in such activities can serve as an indication to the employee's work ethic (Noe, 2010, ch. 9).

1.4.2. Formal education

Formal education can take various forms, such as educational programs developed specifically for the firm's employees, short courses provided by universities or consulting firms, or formal degrees offered for the employees such as MBA programs for developing the skills of the management team (Noe, 2010, ch. 9). For example, there are corporate universities that offer specialised business training for employees that can be directly applicable to their field of work, instead of generalised education, such as AccorHotels Académie for Accor Hotels (Accor Hotels, 2018). That way, separate programs can be offered to different levels or departments of employees.

An important part of employee development practices in any company is executive education. Executive education is usually received from universities, and programs include such topics as leadership, entrepreneurship, e-business, global business issues, and managing change. However, it does not necessarily mean that executives need to sit though lectures in the university buildings. More and more companies are beginning to use distance learning methods to teach the executives, and many business schools now offer in-house programs that are designed according to the firm's needs. Also, a lot of universities

nowadays offer either shortened degrees (for example, 1-year MBA programs instead of the typical 2 years), or a form of combined curriculum (such as, when executives need to attend lectures for a few weeks once in several months and then take exams). These methods were developed in order to offer a formal education for the executives without interrupting their work processes. Tuition fees and other costs for external training are often reimbursed by the companies. However, in order to ensure return on investment, some companies reimburse the full costs provided that a certain level of ECTS credits or grades was obtained by the student (Noe, 2010, ch. 9).

1.4.3. Job experiences

Job experiences refer to any issues that employees face in their jobs. That can refer to actual tasks and demands, or to relationships with management, other employees, or customers that the workers develop during their job. The important assumption behind this method of employee development is that employees are inclined to learn more when they feel that they are not skilful enough to perform the assigned job. Therefore, when placed in a new environment or faced with new tasks or responsibilities, employees will acquire new skills or develop the existing ones on the job. Job experiences typically imply that job enlargement (adding more assignments to the employee's current workload) needs to occur. That is the reason why the job experiences strategy for employee development is often tied to employee mobility, such as employee transfers, promotions, downward movements, or temporary assignments (Noe, 2010, ch. 9).

One of the methods that managers use to ensure job experiences development is job rotation (or job swapping). Job rotation usually takes the form of an employee receiving a series of job assignments in different functional areas or among different jobs in one department. There are several benefits to this employee development method. First of all, it helps the employees to better understand their own abilities, and it helps managers to discover more potential in their subordinates. In certain cases, job rotation can result in a promotion or a reallocation of an employee. Secondly, after receiving such training, employees are usually able and more willing to take on additional responsibility. Also, this type of training is very suitable for workers with potential managerial abilities, since they will be more qualified to act as a manager if they are familiar with the tasks that their team needs to perform. Effective executives sometimes go through job rotation as well, in order to better understand the job processes that take place within the company. Additionally, job rotation provides an employee a deeper insight into the company's overall mission and goals,

and helps them develop a deeper connection with it (Noe, 2010, ch. 9).

A temporary switch of job responsibilities does not need to be strictly connected to the company's business. A lot of companies allow their employees to take temporary voluntary assignments that can develop their skills unrelated to their jobs and also make a positive contribution to society. Such assignments show the company's social responsibility, and therefore improves morale of the employees and may help them develop a more positive association with their workplace.

1.4.4. Interpersonal relationships

Employees can also benefit a lot from the relationships with their colleagues, managers, customers, and other people connected to an organisation. This is a much more informal method of employee development that is used voluntarily. Organisations stress the importance of managers communicating with their employees, as it strengthens their identification with the company (Noe, 2010, ch.9). It does not include only task coordination and control. Besides the formal training, employees can receive career advice and psychological support from their supervisors, colleagues, and managers. Having an influential leader figure in a company can significantly affect employees' morale and work ethic. If employees perceive the organisation that they are working for as reliable and with a strong reputation, as well as if employees feel valued by the organization, they will identify strongly with a company, and therefore will be more satisfied with their jobs (Cornelissen, 2017). Job satisfaction often results in higher productivity levels, as well as enhanced financial results, as already discussed in the chapter "reasons to train".

Another way of developing employees through interpersonal relationships is to develop a two-way communication within the company – downward and upward. Letting employees be more involved in decision-making by allowing them to share ideas with their supervisors or by creating forms of participative decision-making (such as task forces or committees) can be beneficial for both employees and management. It increases employees' morale as well as provides them an opportunity to learn by discussing their ideas with members of other departments and managers, and the executives can have a more detailed overlook on the corporate climate and can receive a more detailed information regarding the issues in each department (Cornelissen, 2017).

1.5. Designing training and development programs

Preparation of a training program is a crucial part of the development process, as it is the most important step that affects the way training is going to be received, and therefore will directly influence the return on investment gained from the training. According to Dias (2011) there are several steps that need to be taken when designing a training program, which will be summarised in this section.

1. Needs assessment and setting learning objectives

Needs assessment is the process of identifying the company needs to improve as a result of training. This is the most important step as it helps distinguish, whether the training is required at all, and what behaviour change needs to occur as a result of the training. There are three kinds of needs assessments in a company - organisational assessment, occupational, or task, assessment, and individual assessment. In organisational needs assessment, the main objective is to identify the knowledge and skill set that a company as a whole needs to have in order to achieve its strategic goals and gain or retain its competitive advantage. Occupational assessment determines which skills, knowledge, and abilities need to be mastered in order to perform a specific job in an expected manner in the organization. Finally, individual assessment determines which skills of a specific employee need improvement for him to do his specific job (Dias, 2011). Performance appraisals are very useful for this step of training planning. The vast majority (80%) of hotels systematically analyse employee training needs (Buick & Muthu, 1997).

After conducting needs assessment, collected information needs to be organised in order of importance, and it is directly applicable for setting the learning objectives. These are the number of skills or new behaviours that the company needs its employees to master by the end of the training. The more important needs of the company are, obviously, taken care of first. Learning objectives can be divided by primary and secondary, and after setting objectives for training, the overall goal is formulated (Dias, 2011).

2. Setting the budget and the timeline

Naturally, different companies are able and willing to invest different amounts into employee development. Therefore, it is important to set a budget that the company's management and shareholders are willing to spend on the training, as the choice of the training method relies on the spending opportunities of the company as well. Besides the direct costs for training, managers need to decide, how much time they can afford to set aside

for training. As employees are not able to perform their jobs at the same level of productivity at the time of the training, it brings additional indirect costs to the company (Dias, 2011).

3. Learning style, training method and delivery

After setting objectives and goals for training and determining the available budget, the management team can decide on the learning style, training method and training delivery. Depending on the expectation the management and employees have from the training, the learning style can be both formal and resulting in a certification, or informal. Managers are required to select the best available form of training delivery, which will fulfill all the training objectives as efficiently as possible within a certain budget (Dias, 2011).

4. Choosing the audience

Depending on the training method, different group sizes can attend the training. Therefore, it is important to decide, which employees will benefit the most from the training, and which group sizes will complement the learning process. For example, for the lecture delivery method, it makes sense to offer training to a bigger number of people, whereas some hands-on methods such as on-the-job training require a more individual approach. Moreover, some training methods, such as case studies or business games, are best delivered when the trainees work in groups (Dias, 2011).

5. Developing content.

Developing content for training is the most time-consuming part of the planning stage. It is also perhaps the most important part of the planning process, as it should respond to all the objectives of training, often in a limited time or within a limited budget. Moreover, the training needs to be interactive and engaging enough to keep the trainees motivated to learn. Content should consist of a detailed outline of the program with the major topics of information, including all of the supporting materials that the instructor is planning to use, schedule for the activities, decisions on the extent of the technology used, etc. Additionally, it is important to decide, how the instructor is going to communicate the knowledge to the trainees. However, the extensive development of the training programs in required to be done by the company only if the in-house delivery method is preferred. External training professionals often have pre-planned material, that they adapt for the company's specific needs. Therefore, for some types of training it makes more sense to hire an external assistance (Dias, 2011).

6. <u>Communication of training</u>

This is the step where actual transfer of knowledge occurs. During the training programs, minor adjustments to the plan can be made depending on how the learners respond to the pace and content of the learning, which skills require additional attention, which activities appear to be more engaging, etc. In this step, it is crucial for the instructor to be open to feedback from the trainees, as it is the most reliable source of the training program effectiveness that the instructor can get at the moment. Therefore, for the training to be successful, the instructor needs to be able to adapt it in order to appeal to a different group of people (Dias, 2011).

7. <u>Evaluation of the training program</u>

After completing the training, the last step is measuring its effectiveness. This needs to be done so that the managers have the information about which of the objectives were achieved, and which changes in employees' behaviours followed the training. After the evaluation, managers are able to judge the program by its effectiveness for future reference, and decide, whether further training is needed. According to the evaluations, changes in the next training development will be made (Dias, 2011).

1.6. Evaluating training and development programs

According to Dwomoh, Boachie and Kwarteng (2017), "training should not be seen as cost but rather as an investment provided". In their opinion, since training results in the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities, the managers or shareholders get returns from the money spent on training and development. Often, the benefits received by the company after training outweigh the costs (Dwomoh, Boachie & Kwarteng, 2017). There are multiple arguments suggested by other researchers that support their position. Training often results in a competitive advantage gained by the company in terms of a skilled workforce (Aqcuaful, Dedume & Appiah, 2016). Training and development has a direct effect on employee outcomes, which in term have an influence on turnover rates, productivity levels, and employee satisfaction. As mentioned in subchapter 1 (reasons to train), poor employee satisfaction can have negative influence on customer satisfaction, and, therefore, on a firm's financial performance. That is the reason why investment in employee training and development is one of the critical elements of the strategy of the high intensity service firms (Goldstein, 2003). Additionally, research done by Dwoboh, Boachie & Kwarteng (2017) discovered that training investments have direct influence on the shareholders wealth. Therefore, in is in interest of the shareholders to allow the executives to invest in employee development.

As with any other investment, employee development needs a well-planned, systematic evaluation in order to ensure that it is bringing benefits to both the company and the employees (Acquaful, Dedume & Appiah, 2016). Without a proper assessment, it is impossible to monitor, whether the objectives of training are met, or whether there are any issues with training methods. After all, employee performance below expectations after the training can be the result of multiple factors, such as incomplete or lacking training, incompetent instructors, or factors unrelated to the training program at all (Buick & Muthu, 1997). According to the research made by Buick and Muthu (1997), more than 90% of hotels consistently monitor the effectiveness of training; however, around 75% of them only use informal feedback from the supervisors. In other research, conducted by Tracey et. al. (2015), the most common method of training evaluation between hotels was guest feedback (used by all the respondents). Other methods of evaluation discovered were formal competency testing (used by 25% of hotels), assessments based on observations (20% of hotels), and financial consequences of training (less than 15% of hotels).

However, one of the main downsides with such evaluation techniques as guest

feedback, observations, or feedback from supervisors is that they may be vague and unspecific. Moreover, it may be difficult to justify the expenses on training to the shareholders using only these evaluation methods. For these purposes, the more specific methods of evaluation are used, such as Cost-Benefit and Return on Investment ratios, Kirkpatrick's Four Level Evaluation model, or Total Quality Management techniques.

1.6.1. Cost-Benefit Analysis and Return on Investment

Cost-Benefit Analysis and Return on Investment are the standard methods of evaluating any investments, so they are used to evaluate training as well (Rowden, 2001 in King, 2009). However, in evaluating training and development, these ratios may be rather limited. In order to calculate the Cost-Benefit or Return on Investment ratios, direct and indirect costs as well as direct and indirect benefits of training need to be calculated in monetary terms. Therefore, it is commonly used when evaluating the results of training such as increased productivity (calculated in monetary value for additional goods produced or service delivered), profit from an increased number of customers, or decreased costs for recruitment as a result of lower turnover levels (King, 2009).

To calculate the Cost-Benefit Ratio and ROI, these formulas are used (Kaminski & Lopes, 2009):

$$\text{CBR} = \frac{Total\ Benefits}{Total\ Costs}$$

If CBR >1, the benefits outweigh the costs, therefore the company has benefited from the training.

$$\text{ROI (\%)} = \frac{Total\ Benefits - Total\ Costs}{Total\ Costs} \times 100\%$$

If ROI is greater than 100%, it means that the net benefits of the training program are positive. However, in order to determine the success of the training, these ratios also need to be compared with the objectives set prior to training (Kaminski & Lopes, 2009).

1.6.2. Kirkpatricks's Four Level Evaluation Model

However, one of the main issues with evaluating training programs is that an investment in training does not always result in monetary "dividends" (Alan, 2009 in Dwomoh, Boachie & Kwarteng, 2017). Employee development outcomes such as improved communication and participation, increase in customer satisfaction, etc. are difficult to compare with the costs of training. A most common method of calculating gains from non-monetary results of training is Kirkpatrick's Four Levels Evaluation model.

Kirkpatrick's model is one of the most used training evaluation methods used to this day, although he published it over 50 years ago. It is suitable for any formal or informal training program. The four levels of evaluation according to Kirkpatrick are Reaction, Learning, Behaviour, and Results. First level (Reaction) judges how favourably the employees reacted to the training. So, in other words, it is an evaluation of training done by the participants themselves. Level 2 (Learning) assesses the amount of knowledge or the skill that the trainees have acquired during the program. This level evaluates to what extent the learning objectives of training were reached. Level 3 (Behaviour) is a measure of how much the employees apply the newly acquired knowledge. So this level assesses, whether the training has resulted in a desired change of behaviour. Lastly, Level 4 (Results) evaluates the outcomes of the training and reinforcement, such as whether the training resulted in a desired increase in productivity, employee or customer satisfaction, etc. Results are compared with the set objectives (targets) in order to determine training effectiveness (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2009).

In his model, Kirkpatrick uses the term Return on Expectations (ROE) instead of Return on Investment (ROI) to determine the value of training. In order for the training to be successful, it is important to set the focus on the bottom-line expectations (or training objectives) and use training to reach and reinforce them. Since a lot of results of training cannot be, or are difficult to measure in monetary terms in order to compare them with the investment, whether the training outcomes reached or exceeded the expectations is a suitable measure of training effectiveness (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2009).

1.6.3. Total Quality Management (TQM)

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a management philosophy that focuses on continuously improving the quality of the goods produced or services provided by the company (King, 2009). According to TQM, competence is one of the most important factors of business performance, and competency is determined by education and training. The continuous strive for perfection leads the management to provide multiple training opportunities for their employees, in order to reinforce the highest level of performance (Baldacchino, 1995 in King, 2009). Moreover, TQM's primary focus is on customer satisfaction. Therefore, the main evaluation criteria for the hotels that adopted TQM's principles within their practice is customer satisfaction, and the training is considered successful if the customers become more satisfied with the service provided, than prior to training. Assessment methods include customer surveys, evaluating customer feedback after

their stay at the hotel in person and online, and open-ended interviews (King, 2009).

While Total Quality Management techniques are typical for the manufacturing sector, they have gained in popularity among the hotels after Ritz-Carlton adopted the main principles of TQM into their brand. When it comes to customers, Ritz-Carlton believes in zero defects service delivery (Galagan, 1993 in King, 2009*),* and therefore it strives for perfection in every step of their hotel experience. Employees in Ritz-Carlton are allowed to disregard their other activities if the hotel has a problem of some sort - fixing the issue always comes first. Therefore, training at Ritz-Carlton is measured mostly by the TQM quality principles, by performance evaluation of the employees, and most importantly - by the levels of customer satisfaction (Partlow, 1994 in King, 2009). For the innovation of bringing TQM to the service industries, Ritz-Carlton were given the Malcolm Baldridge National Quality Award twice, in years 1992 and 1999 (The Ritz-Carlton, 2017).

2. Practical part

2.1. Methodology of the research

The research was based on information gathered through semi-structured interviews with the managers and the employees of the airport hotel. The semi-structured form of interviews was chosen in order to give the respondents the opportunity to add their insights, and in order to provide room for follow up questions. Questions were sent to the respondents in advance to let them prepare for the interviews. One interview was conducted with the head of the Human Resources department, two interviews with the general manager of the hotel and three interviews with different groups of employees (two groups of receptionists, one group of cleaning ladies). For the interviewing the staff, group interviews were chosen, in order to make it clear which opinions of individuals are supported by the rest of the staff. All of the respondents as well as the company itself were promised complete anonymity in order to ensure the truthfulness of the responses.

In regards to the interviews with the manager, the main focus was on understanding the specifics of the hotels operations and the special needs that are created for the hotel. Additionally, the emphasis was put on the satisfaction of the managers with current training techniques, that is to say, whether they are confident that the employees gain all the necessary skills during training. Results of training were discussed to provide the basis for training evaluation. The second interview was conducted after all the other research was conducted, so that the results of the research could be examined by the manager in order to confirm their accuracy, and add some details if needed.

When it comes to the research focused on the Human Resources department, the main emphasis was to understand and be able to evaluate the current training and development techniques. The intention was to apprehend, how the Human Resources department responds to the needs of the management through the training activities, the reasoning behind selecting the training techniques, as well as the results of the training.

When it comes to interviewing the staff, the main focus was on their perspective of the training. Questions were based on the information about the training techniques used provided by the Human Resource department, and the employees were asked to share their personal experiences with the training, provide their opinions and any other valuable insights regarding both the training processes and how it has affected their work life after the training.

As the hotel has a strict policy to never share the personal information of the hotel's guests, the research on customer satisfaction levels was based on the information provided by the Human Resources and general managers. Additionally, the customer reviews left online on an impartial platform (Trip Advisor) were evaluated.

However, this research has a number of limitations that need to be taken into account. While the emphasis of the research was to provide different perspectives on the current training and development processes, it was based on the personal opinions of the respondents which are not perfectly impartial and therefore might not reflect the actual quality of the training. Additionally, as the hotel has a strict policy not to share the information regarding the former employees of the hotel, it was impossible to evaluate the point of view of the workers who did not pass the examination after the training and the reasons behind the unsatisfactory results. Moreover, while the customer reviews left online represent the opinions of the travellers who stay in the hotel, they do not represent the views of the main customer base of the hotel – the flight crews of the airlines who conduct their flights in the airport. As both the hotel and the airlines do not share personal information about hotel guests, their point of view was impossible to include in the research.

2.2.Introduction to the company

As the hotel decided to remain anonymous, it will be referred to as Hotel X within the research. Hotel X is located in a medium-sized Russian city, which has a population of approximately 360 000 people. The hotel is a subsidiary of the only airport in the city and is located 300 meters away from it, or 12 km away from the city centre. It is an economy-class hotel and holds a Two Star hotel rating since June 2007. It has 68 rooms available.

Hotel X's main clients are airlines which regularly use the airport within the city and are interested in accommodating their pilots and the flight crew between flights. The airlines book the rooms on a contractual basis for one year at a time with the possibility of prolonging the contract. Every airline has its own specific standards, needs and desires, therefore each contract contains a very detailed description of what is expected from the hotel by each airline. Specific rooms are booked by each airline – the flight crews replace one another, but the rooms stay available at all times. Moreover, the rooms are expected to be continuously maintained and prepared for guests, in case flights change their destinations due to weather reasons or other unexpected occurrences. Different standards regarding the conditions of the rooms include the level of noise, availability of the blackout blind and air conditioning, the size of the beds, the material of the bed sheets, on which floor are the rooms located, the distance from the closest emergency exit, whether they prefer to have all the members of the flight crew on the same floor, or the opposite, requirements regarding the food served in the cafeteria, etc. All of the requirements mentioned above have to be clearly stated in the contract.

Additionally, the hotel accomodates all of the passengers of the delayed or cancelled flights, as well as the passengers of the redirected flights to the airport due to weather conditions, maintenance issues, as well as other unexpected problems. If the passengers have not reached their final destination yet (when the airplane was redirected to another airport mid flight), they are considered to still be 'in flight', and therefore are treated with the same level of safety measures.

Finally, in case the hotel has any extra capacity, they also accomodate regular business or travel visitors to the city. They have more then 10 different contracts with various booking services such as Booking.com, 101hotels.com, Bronevik.com, etc. Moreover, they have special contracts with businesses that require their employees to go on business trips to the city. They agree to accommodate their employees at Hotel X whenever they have the capacity in exchange for the discounts.

2.3. Needs assessment and objectives of training

For the sake of the simplicity of the research, this thesis will be focused on the evaluation and comparison of the training practices of the employees, who are directly in contact with the customers – front desk receptionists, cafeteria staff and cleaning services. Hotel X also provides significant training and development opportunities for its executive staff. However, as the hotel is a subsidiary of the airport, the training of the top-level employees is being managed and financed by the airport's Human Resources department, and unfortunately it was not possible for me to get information regarding the planning and evaluation of the managerial development of Hotel X. On the other hand, the training of the lower-level employees is managed by the hotel itself.

The first step of designing a training program is to recognise the specific needs of the company, and through that, to evaluate, which skills should be mastered by the employees as a result of the training. In this subsection, the description of how the hotel adapted their operations in order to successfully accommodate a wide variety of clients, most of whom are staying for a short time will be provided, and the objectives that the general manager and Human Resources department set for the training activities will be listed in order of their relative importance.

As the biggest part of their client base are flight crews, passengers of delayed or cancelled flights and passengers of the redirected flights, the hotel has implemented flexible check-in and check-out times for each of the clients. The minimum stay at the hotel is only 12 hours, and clients are able to check-in and check-out at any time which is convenient for them. Therefore, to respond to the distinctive work conditions, the hotel has to be fully operational 24 hours a day. This includes all of the lower level staff of the hotel, such as front-desk receptionists, cleaning services, cafeteria staff, security personnel, and workers in luggage locker rooms. The timetable of shifts needs to be decided and approved by the management a month in advance. The shifts are distributed among the workers themselves, and the possibilities are to have two 12-hours shifts a day or three 8-hour shifts. The choice is also made by the staff themselves.

The hotel also needs to be in contact with the airport at any given time. If flights are being delayed or cancelled, or if other airplanes are using the airport for emergency landings, Hotel X needs to inform the airport about the exact number of rooms available and prepare them for check-ins within 15 minutes, regardless of the time. In case of serious emergencies, the hotel's management has to be in touch with the airport and, if needed, have to arrive at

the hotel within an hour maximum. If the hotel's management is unavailable (on business trips, on training in other cities, on vacation), they need to assign a responsible person for the time of their absence in advance, and they need to inform the airport about that.

Therefore, these are the main skills that the employees are expected to acquire after the training, in the order of importance of the hotel:

1. Safety standards

Each employee should be able to take the necessary precautions to ensure the safety of their guests and to know which actions need to be taken in case of emergency. They should be informed about everything regarding the occupational safety and health requirements and be able to apply the knowledge to their jobs, therefore keeping themselves and the hotel guests safe. Additionally, the receptionists, the security guards and the cleaning staff are required to know all of the measures they will need to take in case of fire emergencies, natural disasters, conflict situations and terrorist acts. Moreover, the staff needs to have the skills required to provide the necessary first aid in case a worker or a guest experience a medical emergency.

2. Work-related standards

Every type of worker in the lower level is provided with a list of formal standards that they need to follow while doing their jobs. It includes instructions on the dress code, timetables and the procedures of exchanging shifts, detailed descriptions of the job processes, desired behaviour patterns, desired reactions to different behaviours from the guests, the instructions for all of the necessary equipment, etc. Additionally, all employees get a common list of requirements regarding general rules of behaviour and dress code in the hotel. Workers are not expected to know all the regulations by heart, but they need to understand each of the requirements and be able to follow them in day-to-day procedures. So, for instance, the workers are provided with a list of possible responses for the actions of the guests, but they do not need to respond exactly in the same words, they just need to understand what kind of behaviour and choice of words and intonations is expected from them.

3. Job-related tasks

Obviously, every worker is expected to understand how to conduct their day-to-day tasks quickly and with no complications. For the receptionists, these are the check-in and check-out procedures, handling reservations and cancellations, and using the machinery for card or

cash payments. For the cleaning staff, these include the order of the room cleaning, and the rules regarding the use of cleaning supplies, vacuum cleaners and other machinery. For the cafeteria personnel, these are the procedures of preparing and serving dishes for the buffet breakfasts and for lunches and dinners that are served based on individual orders, and cleaning the dishes and the tables. These are the basic skills needed to perform the daily activities for each job.

4. Low turnover

The hotel puts a big emphasis on creating an environment, where their workers are satisfied with the workplace and do not wish to switch jobs. The Hotel X's management believes, that through training, its employees can become more confident in their abilities and do their jobs with no errors, as well as to start to identify themselves with other employees and with the company itself. By investing in quality training, the managers hope to reduce turnover and therefore to reduce recruitment and new workers' costs of training.

5. Etiquette and attitude towards guests

A hotel, as any other service-intensive business, is heavily dependent on service delivery. Every one of the hotel staff that deals with the guests directly should be taught on how to behave around hotel clients, and how to properly respond to questions, comments, concerns or complains. Even though every worker typically follows the standards or established procedures, the customer is always right. So the employees are also trained to respond to any specific needs of the guests even if they need to go around some procedures, as long as it is within the scope of the law and it does not threaten the safety and well-being of other guests.

6. Constant preparedness, continuous updating of information, and communication with the airport

As an airport hotel, Hotel X is expected to accommodate any passengers that had their flights redirected, delayed, or cancelled. In order to be able to do so, the staff needs to prepare the rooms for new visitors as soon as the previous guests leave, and they need to keep a constant overview about the availability of the rooms. In case of any delays or cancellations, the airlines need to accommodate their guests very quickly, and therefore the hotel needs to be able to respond to the airport with an exact number of rooms available and prepare them for new guests within 15 minutes.

7. <u>The specifics of each airline that has its flight crews staying at the hotel</u>

As mentioned earlier, Hotel X has a very specific contract that lists all the necessary requirements for every airline that has its crew staying in the hotel. These requirements are a result of negotiations between the hotel and the airlines, and the hotel has to fulfil them if it wishes to keep its main customers and to prolong the contracts. Therefore, the hotel's staff are also expected to know the standards of each airline to be able to prepare everything accordingly prior to the arrival of the flight crews.

8. <u>Team work</u>

Managers of the hotel do not want its staff to work as separate units. It would benefit both the management and the employees themselves, if they are able to look after each other and cooperate. Managers wish to promote team cooperation and collaboration through training. It means that the members of the same team of workers should be able to properly distribute work, assist each other and fix and explain the mistakes of others, so that the work is done as effectively as possible. Additionally, a certain level of cooperation is expected from the separate teams of workers. For instance, the cleaning staff should continuously be in touch with the front-desk receptionists, so that they get an information regarding the number of people checking out during the shift and therefore can plan accordingly to the expected workload. On the other hand, the front desks receptionists receive an update regarding the availability of rooms for new guests.

2.4. Training techniques used at Hotel X

There are two types of techniques that are typically used by Hotel X in order to train their lower level staff: legally required lectures and on-the-job mentorship training.

1. <u>Lectures</u>

Every employee is legally obligated to take lectures on safety related topics and job related standards. Hotel X is a subsidiary of the airport, and therefore has the same required safety training as the airport staff. For the most important safety questions the employees have to take a seminar once every 6 months, for other topics – once a year. Also, the hotel organises additional lectures if new equipment, software, or work-related standards are introduced. In case of changes in legislation the lectures are organised in between the regular training periods. Every period of lectures is concluded by the written or oral exam. The workers have to pass this examination, and in case they "fail" they are allowed to take the exam one more time in a week. In case the worker fails the examination twice, they will no longer be able to continue to work at the airport.

Additionally, to renew the certification of the airport, once every three years an external specialist is invited for three days to read the lectures at the hotel and to conduct the examinations. This comes together with the total inspection of the hotel. Hotel X will not be able to continue its operations if they do not get their certification renewed.

However, the lectures at the Hotel X do not represent a one-way flow of information. Besides the lectures provided by the external professionals once every three years, the lectures are held in a less formal atmosphere. Human Resources department puts an emphasis on creating a dialogue with their workers, and they encourage them to participate in discussions. The lectures are supported by PowerPoint slides, educational videos and printed materials (instructions, manuals). Moreover, the Human Resources department is aware, that since most of the employees have worked in the hotel for several years, they already know most of the information. In order to save time, the lectures usually start with questions to the trainees, so that the trainer can analyse, which areas of knowledge needs more explanation, and which skills the employees already have. Although, the trainers put more emphasis on working with the newly recruited personnel. While planning the training, they try to put the newly recruited staff in one group and prepare more specific lectures for them. For the employees that have been with the company for some time, the lectures are conducted in a form of revision.

The objectives of lecture training are:

- To inform the workers about the necessary safety requirements (precautions and action plans in case of emergency);
- To provide the information regarding the general work-related standards (dress code, timetables, deadlines, etc.);
- To test the employees' knowledge on the topics – the employees are expected to be able to gain at least 80% of the correct answers on the test in order not to fail the examination.

2. <u>On-the-job training (mentorship)</u>

The second, more informal type of training used for the lower level staff is an on-the-job mentorship. There are two types of mentorships: the training of newly recruited personnel, and general continuous training and supervision.

Training of new recruiters happens during the first month after their selection for the job by the Human Resources department, and after they have passed the safety standards examination. Moreover, the employment of the new worker is dependent on how they perform during this first month. Before the training, the new employees receive a written description of the job related tasks and requirements, that they need to read through and familiarize themselves with. During the first day on the job, the new employee is taken on a tour around the building and is introduced to the supervisors, other workers, administrative staff, etc. Then, for the first few shifts (usually around a week), they allow the new worker to "shadow" the mentors – as the mentors are performing the tasks, and the new employee follows them and gets acquainted with the job. If the tasks do not involve communicating with the guests, the mentor also describes his tasks as he goes along. In the case of serving customers, the new employee simply observes the way their mentor communicates with them. After the first period of observation, the mentors allow the trainees to perform the tasks themselves under constant supervision. The job of the mentor is to fix and explain any mistakes, and to suggest a more efficient way of performing the job. After the first month of work, the mentor reports to the Human Resources department, and, if the trainees performed well, they get employed full time.

Additionally, mentors act as the assistants and supervisors for the regular workers. Every team of workers for every shift needs to have a mentor in it. Mentors act as the leaders of the team, they have the titles of "main receptionist, "main maid" and so on, and do not

perform the simple day-to-day tasks unless they are required to explain them to others. Their job is to distribute the tasks and to supervise them, fixing and explaining their errors, assisting with more difficult situations, and solving problems between the team. They are also in direct communication with the general management and the Human Resources department, and they provide the performance evaluations on the members of their teams.

Human Resources department employs mentors from the already existing team of workers. Becoming a mentor is a type of promotion – the mentors are given more responsibilities to overlook the work of others in exchange for a pay raise. The main criteria for the selection of mentors is their overall performance at the hotel, their examinations results, and sometimes the length of their work at the hotel (although, the employees who have worked in the hotel the longest do not necessarily get promoted next). The Human Resources managers also consult with the current mentors and ask for their recommendations.

"We ask only the best of our employees to become mentors – it represents our trust in them and it is an honour for them."

- *Human Resources Department manager*

The objectives of on-the-job training are:

- To introduce the new workers to the company and other employees;
- To explain and demonstrate the specific job-related tasks;
- To train them on how to operate the electronic systems and other equipment;
- To teach them about the specific requirements of each airline that has contracts with the hotel and to test their knowledge;
- To promote team work and communication between the workers of the same team, the workers at different jobs and between the workers and the airport;
- To demonstrate and teach them the necessary etiquette when dealing with guests;
- To provide feedback on each employee to the Human Resources department.

2.5. Evaluation of the training programs

To evaluate the training programs, the author planned on using the evaluating techniques I have researched in the chapter 1.6 (Evaluating Training or Development Programs). However, as the information was collected, it became apparent that the hotel is not able to monitor how the training affects the financial performance of the company. While they monitor the trends in sales, it is very difficult to understand whether an increase or decrease in profits happened due to recent training activities, or due to other reasons such as seasonal trends, increase of flights going to and from the airport, weather conditions, etc. Moreover, the hotel's strategy is to provide lectures on important topics once a year, to offer extensive on-the-job training for newly recruited personnel and to have an ongoing mentorship training available. They do not separate trainings in periods, and therefore the effects of the training on the financial performance are assumed to be the same throughout the year. Also, an increase in financial performance was not included in the objectives set by the Human Resource department either. For these reasons, it was impossible to calculate the Return on Investment ratio from training or to conduct a Cost-Benefit Analysis, and therefore the research was based on the remaining two methods of training evaluation.

2.5.1. Kirkpatrick's Four Level Evaluation Model

The first model used to evaluate the two training techniques is the Kirkpatrick's Four Level Model, as it is one of the most commonly used training evaluations techniques that are used for both formal and informal training.

Level 1: Reaction

In this level, the reaction of the employees to the training is evaluated. This assessment is based on the responses of the workers during the interviews.

In regards to lectures, employees typically perceive them as necessary. Employees comprehend, that the renewal of Hotel X's certification depends on their performance during examinations. They understand the importance of revision about the safety procedures once in a while, and gladly participate in lectures. Additionally, they appreciate the two-way information flow and the fact, that the instructors adapt the lectures accordingly to the knowledge of the staff.

"The lectures always start with a short oral test of our knowledge. If the instructor understands, that we are already familiar with some topic, we skip it during the lecture. It is our responsibility to point out the areas that we want to revise more." - a receptionist.

Another positive aspect of lectures was that they are normally taught by the Human Resources personnel. As it is a very small hotel with a rather low turnover, all of the workers are familiar with each other and have developed a friendlier relationship among themselves, and therefore the lectures are typically held in an informal atmosphere.

"Yes, they are called lectures, but they are nothing like the lectures we had in schools. There is no pressure, and they feel more like a discussion than the formal lesson that we are used to" – a cleaning lady.

However, the most common complaint among the workers regarding the lectures was that even though they are quite short, and resemble a discussion rather than the typical classroom lectures, they are still obligatory to attend. Sometimes they feel like the lectures get boring because the safety training rarely changes.

"Even if I am confident that I know the material, I know that unless I am on a sick leave, I have to attend." – a receptionist.

Although, surprisingly there were no complaints regarding the examinations. The examinations are held by the head of the Human Resources department, or occasionally by the general management of the hotel. The employees claim that they do not feel stressed about the examinations because they are confident in their knowledge, and they feel comfortable having a discussion with the managers.

On the other hand, all of the employees are rather content with the way the on-the-job training is conducted. Most of the employees expected the first month of work to act as a test of their abilities, especially since their future employment depended on their performance during the probation period. However, according to them, the initial training went very well and was sufficient for them to be able to do their job properly after completion.

"I was a lot more nervous than I should have been. They were not testing my knowledge and skills straight away, but rather my response to the training. And my mentor was very helpful, if you just pay attention you will be able to learn everything you need." – a receptionist.

Moreover, the personnel seemed satisfied with the level of training they receive on a continuous basis from their mentors. They have established a friendly relationship, but they are not dependent on their trainers. The trainers are there if the employees need help or if

some more difficult situation occurred, and they are glad to receive training if new equipment is introduced so that they do not need to learn it themselves.

"It is good that we have the main maids with us on every shift. They know the procedures better than anyone and if we have any questions or need some help we can always ask them. Although we almost never need to, it is a good support" – a cleaning lady.

Level 2: Learning

The second level of the Kirkpatrick's model focuses on the evaluation of skills gained during the training. For both lecture and on-the-job training methods, the hotel's managers pay close attention to the acquired skills. After each round of lectures the employees pass an examination organised by the Human Resources manager, and each month performance evaluations are being filled out by the mentors. If the result of the examination is unsatisfactory, the employees have one chance to retake it, but in case they do not pass it the second time they will need to terminate their employment. If the performance evaluations show a lack of some skill by the employee, they might be asked to "job shadow" for one shift where the task will be explained again, or in worse cases they might be required to go on a probationary period once again.

Overall, both the head of the Human Resources department and the manager are very satisfied with the results of the training. Approximately 90% of new workers pass the training evaluations after their first month, and it is very unlikely that anyone from the experienced workers does not pass the yearly tests. Additionally, they mentioned that the feedback that they receive at the end of the training from the tests as well as performance evaluations conducted by mentors are very thorough, so they can understand which skills do the employees lack.

"Even if the employee does not pass an exam or has shown poor performance, it does not necessarily mean that they cannot continue to work here. We receive very detailed feedback, so we are able to find a more suitable position for their skills in case we have an opening in the other departments. Most of the times employees are satisfied with their new position and do not attempt to switch back" – Human Resources department manager.

Level 3: Behaviour

The third level of the Kirkpatrick's model evaluates, whether the training resulted in a long-term change in behaviour. According to the Human Resources department, as long as

employees do not take lengthy breaks from their jobs (suck as sick leave or maternity leave), they show steady knowledge of the material and long-term positive changes in behaviour. Most of them keep their notes from the training in their desks all year, so that they can refer to them at any time during the shifts. Even after vacation periods employees remember all the processes within one or two work shifts.

In regards to the lectures, it is difficult to observe any change in behaviour as most of the knowledge is theoretical, and fortunately the employees do not need to use most of the knowledge. Human Resources department is certain, that the employees do not make any mistakes regarding everyday work safety standards, but it is impossible to monitor the change in their responses to the emergency situations, as there have been very few of them. Only emergencies that occurred at Hotel X over the last five years were related to the health conditions of the guests, and in these cases the staff confidently provided first aid and called for emergency services. Fortunately the use of their skills regarding the responses to other emergencies was not needed.

Additionally, Human Resources department observes a regular change in the work attitude of the employees after the initial on-the-job training. Typically, after the training employees are more confident in their work and perform the tasks faster. Moreover, their attitude towards hotel guests changes as well. The workers are always acting politely towards the visitors, however after the training they are able to serve the customers quicker and with more confidence.

Level 4: Results

In the fourth level of Kirkpatrick's model, the results, or returns on expectations, are analysed. As the managers do not set any SMART goals on their training activities, the only expectations they have from the training activities are that the employees are familiar with all the safety and work-related standards that are examined by tests (with an 80% minimum passing grade), that the employees are able to perform all the job-related tasks (which are checked by the performance evaluations), and that they are able to work together as a team and communicate with their colleagues at the airport. Overall, both the managers and the Human Resources department are satisfied with the level of knowledge and skills that employees gain as a result of the training. The examinations conducted at the hotel are very thorough and include both questions on the theoretical standards and demonstrations of job-related skills, so the Human Resources department is able to keep a detailed track of the skills of the employees.

"With every exam, we are making sure, that our workers know everything they need to know to do their job. About 10% of people do not pass the examinations on the first try; however, the experienced workers have no problem with the examinations. There are always going to be people who do not pass, but we believe that the 90% success rate is rather good." – the top manager.

### 2.5.2. Total Quality Management (TQM)

Total Quality Management philosophy focuses on the continuous improvement of the quality of the product or service, and the goal of that is to increase customer satisfaction. Therefore, the most common training evaluation techniques for the companies that have adopted TQM are customer surveys and the evaluation of customer feedback online or through open-ended interviews. In the case of Hotel X, they use multiple options to receive feedback. The guests are able to write the manager an anonymous letter through the website of the hotel, guests are able to fill in the questionnaires in their rooms, and there is a box in the hall where both visitors and employees can leave anonymous messages for the management. According to the manager, there has been no negative feedback regarding the service level provided by the hotel staff over the last year.

Obviously, the hotel policy is to never share the personal information of their guests, therefore conducting a customer survey personally was unfeasible for the author of the thesis. However, customer loyalty and returning guests are often considered the most important result of customer satisfaction. Since the main customers of the hotel are flight crews of the airlines, the main goal of the hotel is to renew the existing contracts with the airlines and to create the new ones. Currently, every airline that has flights to and from the city airport besides Azur Air (who have a requirement to stay at 4 star hotels at a minimum) have contracts with Hotel X, which makes it 16 airlines total, and the contracts are being renewed regularly. Additionally, there was an instance last year when NordStar Airlines terminated their contract with Hotel X and created a new contract with another hotel, that was twice as cheap. However, they only stayed at the new hotel for six days, and then switched back and developed a new contract with Hotel X, even though they did not change the prices. Overall, the hotel values such strong customer loyalty and tries their best to provide the best service for flight crews.

Another possible indicator of the quality of service could be the evaluation of the reviews that hotel guests leave online after their visit. To have a deeper understanding of the quality of service, the reviews left by the hotel's guests on tripadvisor.com were analysed. This

particular website was selected because unlike other platforms, such as booking.com, 101hotel.ru, etc., Trip Advisor does not have a contract with Hotel X and customer reviews on this service will not affect the sales through the website, and therefore will not affect its profits. Also, it seemed to have much more honest and impartial reviews compared to other platforms. Customer's evaluation of the service in the hotel was compared with the overall evaluation of their stay, and the results are presented in the graph below:

Figure 5: Hotel X's Trip Advisor Ratings over the last 5 years: Total rating and Service Rating
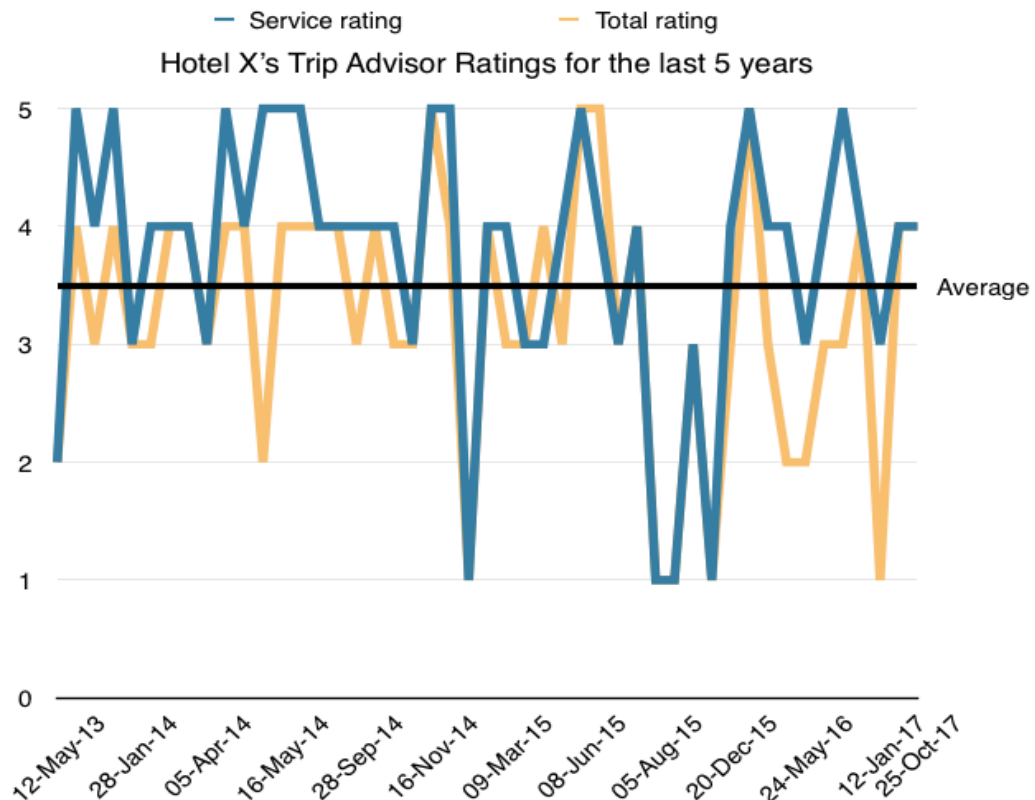
Source: Author's own creation based on the data from Trip Advisor, 2018.

As portrayed on the graph, the service rating is typically the same or higher than the overall 3.5 / 5 rating of the hotel. While examining the reviews, it is easy to notice the trend that even the guests who had an overall unsatisfactory experience would mention the hospitality and helpfulness of the staff. The overall rating of service stays around 4 / 5, even though there were also three 1 star reviews. However, one of them does nor explain the reason of the low rating, and the second one has rated everything with 1 star because the wi-fi in his room was not operational, which the staff could not fix. So, only one of the 1 star ratings was based on a bad experience with the hotel staff (the guest filed a complaint, but was told that since he is the first one to complain about the matter, he must be making it up). This was a single occasion that did not happen again.

Overall, the reviews are positive and it is noticeable that the hotel attempts to keep their level of service at the top level. Twenty three reviews out of the total 64 have mentioned the gratitude towards the welcoming, attentive and helpful staff.

"To the staff – well done, you managed to make a quite good, well-maintained hotel for "between flights" from such cheap material" – Trip Advisor user VitalyS, Dubna, Russia

However, there is always room for improvement, and the hotel should monitor the instances where the staff behaves inappropriately (there were 6 comments that had complaints towards the staff) and make sure that those do not happen again. Two of the bad comments were aimed at the receptionists who could not fix the issue, and two of them were aimed at slowly working or unfriendly cafeteria personnel. Besides that, it seems that as the service is generally rated better than overall experience in the hotel, the managers would prefer to fix other issues first.

2.6. Suggestions for Hotel X

Although the hotel generally shows good results from the training from managerial, employee and customer perspectives, there is some room for improvement in both lecture and on-the-job methods of training. It is certain, that with some adjustment, both the employees and the managers could receive more benefits from the training.

One of the main points of criticism shared by the workers was that every employee is obligated to attend the lectures once a year, even if they are certain that they know the material and will not benefit from the training. The hotel has already implemented some measures to save time spent on lectures, for instance, by dividing new and experienced workers into different groups, allowing for the latter to go through the lectures faster. However, it is still time consuming and is also costly for the company, as the employees attend lectures during their work time. It is understandable, that once every three years it is a legal requirement for all of the workers to attend lectures and pass an examination to renew the hotel's certification, and there is nothing the management of the hotel can do about it. However, during the other years, it could be useful to conduct a preliminary examination for those workers, who believe that they know the material well enough. Therefore, the amount of workers who need to attend lectures decreases, and the hotel can save both time and its resources.

Secondly, it was mentioned that after a while, lectures can become boring and repetitive, as the standards of safety and work related standards rarely change. To improve this, the hotel could use additional methods of training besides lectures with audiovisual techniques. As the hotel wishes to save money, the most cost-effective option could be to include case studies in the program. The workers memorise action plans for various emergencies, but these provide little insight on the complexity of such situations. Various case studies of hotels are available online for no charge, the descriptions of real-life situations would make lectures less repetitive, and it would be useful for the workers to see, how other hotels had dealt with difficult situations, and to analyse their mistakes. That way, if something was to happen, the employees would feel more prepared.

Additionally, the hotel could use its own mistakes as an opportunity for improvement. Negative reviews left by the customers online are not a common thing, and it seems as if the hotel pays attention to them and tries to minimise those instances. However, the previous mistakes of the staff could be included in the continuous on-the-job training as bad examples for the current employees, and they could be taught how to handle the situation better if it

were to happen again. This will ensure, that the employees' staff do not repeat the mistakes of others.

Last but not least, two out of three 1 star reviews posted online were based on the experience of the guests, where some other issue occurred and the front-desk staff was not able to fix it (for example, Wi-Fi connection not working). In some cases, the malfunction was caused by some external factors, which the workers could not possibly influence. Therefore, additional training on how to respond to situation, where there is a problem that an employee cannot fix, could be added to the mentorship training. If the personnel was able to kindly and politely explain to the guest, that the issue is out of their hands but they are willing to provide any help they have, it is certain that people would be understanding and this would be positively reflected in the ratings.

Conclusion

As the conclusion for my bachelor thesis, the topic of which was a case study of employee development at a specific company, I believe it is important to say, that even though the hotel uses only two training techniques for the lower-level employees, they are doing an excellent job in responding to the hotel's needs. As an airport hotel that serves mostly flight crews, they have rather differing needs from most hotels that are typically focused on attracting tourists, but they have developed a competitive advantage through the use of extensive safety standards, training, and flexibility in operations that attract their target audience. Although some adjustment might be needed to make the training more appealing for the employees themselves, currently both the managers and the Human Resources department are satisfied with the skill level that the employees obtain during training and with the level of feedback they receive regularly. The hotel generally takes employee development very seriously, is open to criticism and new ideas, and manage to do a lot on a limited budget.

While the literature review covered a lot of different techniques for the employee training and development, it is important to be able to pick the ones which are the most suitable to provide for the company's needs and can be covered by the budget. In this sense, in my opinion, the hotel does an exceptional job by choosing the two most cost-efficient training possibilities (lecture method and on-the-job training), and adapting them to bring as much benefit as possible. The continuous mentorship strategy was also received very positively by the hotel's staff as it provides additional support for every employee and ensures a high level of service.

This thesis may be useful for the selected hotel as an impartial evaluation of the training techniques that are currently used. It can also act as a suggestion for the future employee training evaluations (such as Kirkpatrick's Four Level model), since currently the trainings are only being evaluated by examinations and performance assessments. Additionally, the hotel might benefit from receiving the evaluation of the training from multiple perspectives, and that can be a source of inspiration for future adjustments. Overall, I believe that the training techniques that are currently used for the lower level staff at Hotel X bring very positive results for the employees, managers and the main customers.

This thesis might also be useful for anyone studying employee development or anyone interested in the Human Resources activities in the hospitality sector, as it provides an extensive literature review on the need for training and development, their planning and

evaluation, supported by industry specific examples. It could also be of assistance to any students, who wish to understand how the general training methods can be adapted to each individual company, taking into account its specific operations and needs. A case study of this specific hotel can also serve as an example for other hotels that wish to conduct a more extensive evaluation of their training and development processes.

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