

Business Difference Making a

People with Disabilities Securing Employment

November, 2006

INTERCONTINENTAL HOTELS GROUP

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) is in the business of taking care of people – our guests, our franchisees, our employees and our communities. As a global hospitality leader, we are focused on providing an impeccable experience for those who stay with us, and on earning our reputation as the hotel franchisor and employer of choice.

To accomplish this, IHG must recruit, hire and develop the very best and brightest individuals, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, physical abilities or limitations. IHG has an inclusive culture where different approaches to thinking and problem solving are welcomed and fairness and respect are highly regarded aspects of our people and leadership strategies.

We welcome the opportunity to partner with respected organizations such as the VCU Rehabilitation Research & Training Center on Workplace Supports & Job Retention. Working together we can make a positive difference in the lives of many while furthering IHG's business objectives.

Steve Porter
President, The Americas



Considering the Hospitality Industry as a Career

The hospitality industry has traditionally included businesses that provide lodging, meals, beverages, and travel services. This industry has expanded to include new areas such as resort clubs, casinos, cruise lines, theme parks, RV camps and much more. Times have changed, today hospitality is a growth industry that generates nearly 90 billion dollars annually and employs nearly 18.5 million individuals nationwide. This industry is anticipating a 10% growth rate between 2006 and 2012. The industry is seeking to employ a wide variety of people including such individuals as reluctant to retire baby boomers, mid-career professionals, twenty-somethings and people with disabilities. (Adams, 2006)

What is the Hospitality Industry

The hospitality industry is defined as the activity of providing lodging, food and beverage, and recreational services. It is a multi-billion dollar industry making it our country's third largest industry. Generally speaking, this industry can't be outsourced and relies on a variety of skill sets.

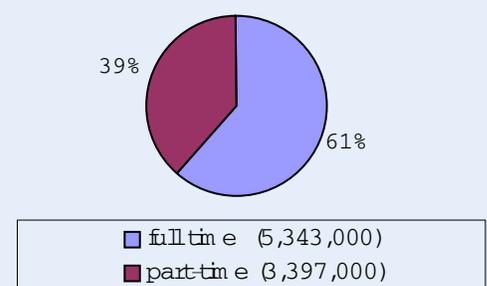
Hospitality Overview:

The Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (DOL/ETA) has targeted the Hospitality Industry as one of its high growth industries. As a result of the President's High Growth Job Training Initiative, DOL/ETA has conducted forums with various high growth industries to better understand the needs of the 21st century workforce. The initiative is designed to ensure that training and career development resources in the public workforce system are targeted to helping workers gain skills and competencies they will need to obtain jobs and build careers in these industries.

ETA is addressing the workforce issues of the hospitality industry from a national perspective by conducting Executive Forums with different sectors of the hospitality industry to gather relevant information from informed groups in a disciplined manner. These forums will provide valuable information and help gain additional understanding of the overall critical workforce needs of this industry.

- Overnight accommodations and food services make up about 8.1% of all employment (U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004).
- Employment in the accommodations and food services industries is predicted to grow 18% between 2002 & 2012, adding more than 1.6 million new jobs. (U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004).
- Of the 8,740,000 total workers employed in the accommodation and food service industry in 2003, 5,343,000 worked full-time (61%) and 3,397,000 were employed part-time (39%). (U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics and Census Bureau, 2004).

Workers Employed in the Accommodation and Food Service Industry in 2003



(U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor, 2004)

Public Private Partnership ... it works!!

Jamie Dienstbier, Director of Human Resources for the Holiday Inn in Central Omaha and Cindy Wagner, Employment Specialist for Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) describe their partnership as one built on trust, honesty, accessibility and the commitment to a team approach in problem solving. Jamie states that "Cindy listens to your needs and works to make a good match with the needs of the employer." Cindy is impressed with Jamie's proactive approach to hiring based on the person's abilities and not the disability. Jamie provides and supports staff training on the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the provision of accommodations for both employees and guests of the Omaha Holiday Inn. Together, Jamie and Cindy work to hire qualified staff and keep valuable employees in the workplace.

The Holiday Inn Central Omaha is a convention hotel with 383 rooms and 65,000 sq. ft. of convention space. There are 180 employees in jobs including: dishwashers, cooks, room attendants, front desk staff, drivers, bell staff, food and beverage staff, cashiers, middle management and supervision.

In the initial stages of the relationship, Nebraska VR had six employment specialists tour the Holiday Inn property, watch people doing their jobs, and become familiar with what employees need to be successful at the hotel. Jamie provided VR staff with job descriptions and took the time to clearly describe the responsibilities of each job area. Jamie sends VR job openings on a weekly basis. VR staff look for good matches to the employer's needs and if needed, assists people with the application and with the interview process. The Holiday Inn is accessible by the local bus. VR can assist the new employee with transportation training, arranging for alternatives for Sunday transportation when the bus service is not available, and providing regular follow-up with the employees and their supervisors.

Though many staff are familiar with the Holiday Inn employment opportunities, Nebraska has assigned two VR partners as the primary points of contact to ensure Jamie's needs are being met without the confusion of having to contact multiple people. The two designated points of contact were selected based on Jamie's preference and comfort level with the individual VR staff. Jamie helps train new VR employment staff regarding the needs of business and communication strategies for developing effective partnerships.

Jamie recommends that other companies connect with state VR partners and work to recruit qualified applicants with disabilities. She suggests that business train staff and managers to help them become more comfortable with applicants and employees who have disabilities. Further, Jamie recommends that employers challenge their own attitudes and look for the abilities needed in a business to be successful. Jamie has seen a variety of people with disabilities be very successful in their employment with the Holiday Inn and become more independent in their lives. Due to the working partnership with VR, these individuals are now valuable Holiday Inn employees.

(CSAVR News Update for Friday, June 23, 2006)

VCU Research : Making the Business Case

Preliminary findings from the Virginia Commonwealth University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Workplace Supports and Job Retention reveal that the provision of worksite accommodations for both new hires with disabilities as well as employees who are returning to work after sustaining a disability are rarely a single one-time event. Rather, accommodations and other workplace supports reflect a long term effort and commitment that requires a changing mixture of accommodations over time. Changes in an individual's health status, job duties, or supervisor/coworker relationships may necessitate intensive interventions and accommodations to ensure long-term productivity and job retention.

- The ongoing demands on work place personnel to identify and respond to these needs and the level of skilled coaching and technical assistance needed to support their efforts should not be underestimated.
- Among progressive employers studied by VCU-RRTC, long-term employment retention results from the ongoing commitment of specialized, highly skilled staff members, as well as a management team that values efforts to promote continued employee productivity and job retention.

(Habeck, Kregel, Head, & Yasuda, 2006)

Careers Available in the Hospitality Industry

Hospitality Workforce Issues



Casino Change Attendant

Tammy is 39 years old and has autism. She works as a change attendant in a hotel casino. In this position, Tammy pushes a cart housing a small change bank and sells change to players in the casino slot area. She also serves as the cashier for some of the larger slot machine wins. For example, if a player wins a \$1,000 jackpot, the machine's normal payoff would be \$100, or 400 quarters. The remaining \$900 would be paid in large bills by the change attendant. Tammy earns an hourly wage and receives tips from her customers.

Hyatt Chef:

Darnell is 34 years old and has a psychiatric disability. He works as a Hyatt Hotel pastry chef. Darnell prepares and bakes cakes, cookies, pies, puddings, and desserts, according to a set recipe. In addition, he blends colors for icings and for shaped sugar ornaments and statuary. Darnell's favorite part of his job is to use his creative talent to decorate the cakes and pastries he has baked.

Busch Gardens Photographer

Judith is 26 years old with a cognitive disability. She is employed by Busch Gardens as a photographer. As guests enter the park, Judith asks if she can take their picture as a way to remember their trip to the park. If the guests agree, she positions them together around a Busch Gardens sign, snaps their picture and hands them a ticket. Guests can view and purchase their photo as they exit the park. Judith is responsible for working with the photo booth to upload the pictures she takes so that they are available to guests later in the day.

Travel Agency

Sean is 47 years old and has a spinal cord injury. He works as a travel agent assessing individual's and business people's needs to help them make the best possible travel arrangements. Sean provides advice on destinations and makes arrangements for transportation, hotel accommodations, car rentals, tours, and recreation. He also provides advice on weather conditions, restaurants, and tourist attractions. Sean specializes in accessible vacation locations for individuals who use a wheelchair.

Image and Outreach

There is a need to change the negative stereotypes regarding people who work in the hospitality industry. Many people still don't understand the magnitude of the service industry and the number and variety of positions it provides the job seekers. The industry is seeking to educate all individuals interested in working the range of job opportunities and career ladders available in the hospitality world.

Recruitment and Retention

In order to stay competitive with other markets, the hospitality industry is seeking to expand its recruitment to youth. In addition the industry will be targeting the untapped labor source including people with disabilities, ex-offenders, dislocated workers, older workers and veterans. Retention is a big issue with the industry and managers are constantly looking to identify ways to keep good people.

Training and Skills Needed

- Developing consistent training models and skill certifications
- Addressing language skills in the workplace
- Improving "soft skills" of entry level workers
- Ongoing training to better assist travelers with disabilities

Skill Sets

- The diverse range of activities offered by the industry provides excellent job opportunities for people with varied skills and educational background. Jobs will be plentiful for first time job seekers, senior citizens and those seeking part time or alternative work schedules.
- Training for food service managers is available through industry-sponsored seminars, short term subject specific certification programs or Associate/Bachelor degree programs in management.
- A certification in hospitality management can be obtained through an 18 month training course or a 4 year specialized Bachelor's programs.
- Soft skills can be taught online by national trainers.
- Disability awareness and how to interact with workers and customers is available online as well as through local and national disability oriented programs.

Corporate Training Initiatives

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) works with a number of entities to provide appropriate, job-specific training for people with disabilities. This is true whether the individual is seeking employment in a hotel, a call center, or in a corporate office.

It is important for recruiters, general managers, and HR managers to understand that job-training support is available in many forms, and IHG strives to ensure that all hiring managers are informed on this topic. In many instances, during the hiring process IHG will work through special agencies serving people with disabilities in order to access on-site job training for new employees with disabilities.

In Atlanta, IHG partners with Resources and Residential Alternatives (RRA), an agency serving people with developmental disabilities. IHG and RRA have worked together for many years to identify career opportunities for people served by RRA. These career tracks include room attendant and laundry positions within the housekeeping department, food service positions, as well as maintenance and guest service positions. The job coach's initial intensive assistance fades over time but is available throughout the employee's tenure with the company in the event additional assistance is required. The job coach fades initial intensive assistance but is available throughout the employee's tenure with the company in the event additional assistance is required.

In IHG's call center located in Salt Lake City, a number of employees with vision impairments have worked successfully in various roles. Trainers at the center work with local agencies that provide services for the blind and visually impaired to provide the necessary job aids to ensure on-the-job success.

Additionally, IHG has a relationship with The Statler Center for Careers In Hospitality Service in Buffalo, NY. The Statler Center offers an intense 13-week course of study to prepare students, mostly with vision impairments, for careers in hospitality. The students are trained on various systems and programs that will prepare them for jobs in reservations, guest relations, housekeeping, and more. IHG works with The Statler Center to facilitate career placement for graduates as positions become available within IHG hotels.

There are many career opportunities for people with disabilities available at IHG Hotel's. Large hotel companies are like any other big company -- they have technology, human resources, marketing, finance, and other departments that might have very attractive careers for people with disabilities. IHG Hotels wants to create a welcoming environment to recruit, train, and advance people with disabilities in their corporate careers.

VCU Research: Making the Business Case

In many organizations, a "disconnect" frequently exists between diversity efforts, that generally relate or lead to the hiring of people with disabilities, and health and productivity efforts (also called absence management, disability management, disease management, or return to work), that relate to preventing health conditions and disabilities and managing them successfully for productive work retention when they do occur.

- In most large corporations, organizational efforts to hire people with disabilities and efforts to retain employees who become disabled are distinct departmental functions. In many instances, organizational structures provide little opportunity for ongoing communication or sharing of strategies, resources and/or expertise.
- The disconnect between hiring and disability management practices found in many businesses mirrors the lack of integration in public policy across efforts to impact the incidence and outcome of work disability and employment of people with disabilities.

(Habeck, Kregel, Head, & Yasuda, 2006)

Hospitality Industry Case Studies

Case Study #1 -- Eleni Harris and Dan Reid

Dan Reid and Eleni Harris both work at the IHG call center in Salt Lake City, Utah. Dan, who is a reservation agent for the upscale hotel division, has been with the company since 1997, while Eleni, who is a reservation agent for the midscale hotel group, has been with the company since 2004. They are two of twelve reservation agents with a visual disability at the center.



Both Dan and Eleni like their jobs and feel that they have career opportunities with IHG. Interestingly, both found their jobs on their own, without referral or assistance from any entity providing employment placement services for people with disabilities. Dan interviewed for his initial position over the phone from California, and at the time he was hired he was the first blind employee at the Salt Lake City call center. Eleni heard about the call center from a friend, and she attended a job fair where she was offered an opportunity to come to the center for an interview. She did – and was offered the job on the spot!

As reservation agents in a call center that handles millions of calls a year, both Dan and Eleni stay extremely busy and must be able to serve many guests every day. They both use a Braille display to read their computer screens, and Eleni says that she sometimes uses the speech software JAWS as a safety net when inputting credit card information to doubly ensure accuracy.

Training is on-going as it is with all IHG reservation agents; learning about new marketing programs, special rate codes, and new hotels that have joined the system. Both Dan and Eleni received their initial Braille display training outside the company, but Eleni benefited from Dan's on-the-job expertise when she came on-board as Dan provided special training assistance for her. Neither individual reports having any specific integration difficulties, yet; both experienced delays in securing their job-critical adaptive equipment from the local agency providing the equipment.

Frustrations with equipment in this technology-driven age are not uncommon, and Dan and Eleni are not exempt. Dan cites lack of direct e-mail access at work as a bother from time-to-time but nothing he can't deal with. Eleni also reports that she occasionally has equipment challenges, but all-in-all things run pretty smoothly.

The hospitality industry is about people taking care of people, so it is especially gratifying to hear what Dan and Eleni view as the most satisfying aspect of their jobs. Dan says he feels good when he knows he's getting people where they want to be and that they are happy with the product and services available at their desired location. Eleni says she loves it when callers tell her that she's been very helpful and that they will choose IHG brands in the future because of their positive experience with her. From an employer's perspective, these are two employees who exemplify the kind of guest service attitude that is highly desired within the service industry.

Thinking about the future, Dan and Eleni are both optimistic about their careers at IHG. In fact, Dan says, "I'd tell anybody that life is just so full of opportunities that if you have a positive attitude you'll succeed."



Case Study #2 -- Darrell McGhee

Darrell McGhee has worked at the Americas regional headquarters for IHG for four years, and for any of the visitors who come to the company's Atlanta office he is often the first employee they encounter. As voiced by many visitors, he makes a great impression!

When Darrell moved to Atlanta back in 2002 he contacted the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation agency for assistance in finding employment. Through that office he was put in touch with a staffing agency, Abilities In Action, which specializes in finding employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Through that organization he subsequently landed his current position with IHG.

Due to the nature of his disability (mobility), Darrell did not require any special training for this position. Since joining IHG, he says he has received tremendous support, especially from his supervisor, Shane Lomax. Darrell states that he has had the opportunity to learn Excell, PowerPoint, and other software programs that will enable him to take on additional responsibilities in the future.

Darrell is also considering furthering his education to become a paralegal. If he decides to do this, he will be able to take advantage of IHG's tuition reimbursement employee benefit program to help fund his education.

From Darrell's perspective, opportunities are there for those who seek them out. He is definitely a person who will make his own opportunities.

Case Study #3 -- Dontae Royster and Mark Garrett

Dontae Royster and Mark Garrett work in the kitchens of the InterContinental Hotels in Cleveland, Ohio. Dontae and Mark have been employed at the hotel for three and six years respectively. Both men experience a hearing disability.



Dontae is a cook, and when he first came on board at the hotel he worked with a job coach from the Leap Program through a local rehabilitation agency. He and his job coach received training from the hotel's department trainers. He loves his job and feels that he is respected and well liked by co-workers. While he says there are no real barriers associated with doing his job, he does sometimes feel uncomfortable at hotel meetings because of his inability to hear speakers. Accommodation are being investigated to remedy this issue.

Mark is a steward in the hotel kitchen, who also loves his job. He is treated well by his co-workers and managers, which to him, makes the InterContinental Hotel a good place to work. He wants to continue in his current position because the best part of his job is being the dishwasher.

Neither Dontae nor Mark need any kind of adaptive equipment to do their jobs. Dontae does have TTY equipment at home so he is able to stay abreast of schedule changes. Mark uses a home computer to communicate when he is away from the workplace.

Top Ten Things the Hospitality Industry is Doing to Better Serve People with Disabilities

1. Train hotel staff in disability etiquette such as describing people with disabilities using "person-first language" (e.g., a person with epilepsy, not an epileptic).
2. Have a pad of paper handy in case a guest is deaf or unable to speak.
3. Welcome service animals into each establishment. Service animals assist people with all types of disabilities, including individuals who are blind, deaf, have epilepsy, use wheelchairs, and many others.
4. Make sure that all staff members can adequately respond to questions about your hotel's accessibility. Some hotels keep accessibility information on a typed list by each reception desk, concierge station, and bell captain's station, enabling a prompt response to inquiries.
5. Before saying no to a disability-related inquiry, consider reasonable creative solutions, which may include borrowing or renting accessibility equipment from other hotels or service providers. Remember people with disabilities are customers, and the customer is (almost) always right!
6. Make sure that the hotel staff knows whom to contact for immediate assistance when a piece of accessibility equipment breaks.
7. Make sure guests with disabilities are included in your emergency evacuation plan.
8. Make sure that your hotel's website is accessible and includes an alt tags (text describing graphics) and/or a link to a text-only version of your site.
9. Utilize available federal tax incentives to make your hotel more accessible and to hire employees with disabilities. Many states also offer state tax credits.
10. Get training from a knowledgeable resource, such as the DBTACs -- ADA Centers! Call (800) 949-4232 VOICE/TTY or visit www.adata.org for more information.

Contributors for this issue:

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- Va. Commonwealth University, Rehabilitation Research & Training Center on Workplace Supports and Job Retention (VCU-RRTC)
- Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR)
- Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center, Mid-Atlantic Region (DBTAC)

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Resources

DBTACs-ADA Centers

These regional centers provide free telephone consultations to answer questions, explain the ADA's practical application, and provide trainings and distribute ADA publications.

(800) 949-4232 VOICE/TTY

www.adata.org or www.adaportal.org

U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ)--Disability Rights Section

The Dept. of Justice (DOJ) hosts a toll-free line to answer callers' non-employment ADA questions. All DOJ publications are available via the Internet or by calling either DOJ or the ADA & IT Technical Assistance Centers.

(800) 514-0301 VOICE or (800) 514-0383 TTY

www.ada.gov

A sample list of DOJ publications

- Communicating with Guests who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing in Hotels, Motels, and Other Places of Transient Lodging
- ADA Guide for Places of Lodging: Serving Guests Who Are Blind or Who Have Low Vision
- ADA Guide for Small Businesses
- ADA Checklist for New Lodging Facilities
- Five Steps to Make New Lodging Facilities Comply with the ADA
- Commonly Asked Questions about Service Animals

Reaching Out to Customers with Disabilities

This *online course*, explains in ten short lessons how the ADA applies to businesses. These lessons will allow businesses to comply with the ADA and welcome customers with disabilities.

www.ada.gov/reachingout/intro1.htm

U.S. Access Board

The Access Board answers questions about physical access and can help interpret the ADA accessibility guidelines.

(800) 872-2253 Voice or (800) 993-2822 TTY

www.access-board.gov

Virginia Commonwealth University, Rehabilitation Research & Training Ctr. on Workplace Supports & Job Retention (VCU-RRTC)

VCU continually provides *online courses* regarding disability awareness and employing individuals with disabilities.

www.worksupport.com/training/courses.cfm

References

CSAVR News Update for Friday, June 23, 2006

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U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics -- www.bls.gov/