

Chapter 11

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN
SERVING LADIES AND GENTLEMEN**

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ABSTRACT

The famous motto from Ritz-Carlton is one of the most powerful statements about the alignment of company values, employer branding and customer care. In their employee promise Ritz-Carlton state that, ‘our Ladies and Gentlemen are the most important resource in our service commitment to our guests.’ This chapter investigates the extent to which hotels are hospitable towards their staff. Taking Ritz-Carlton as the benchmark, the chapter then looks at how a number of European and American hotel chains present themselves to their employees through their values and mission statements, and then compares these to the way they try to attract potential employees in job advertisements. Given the difficulty many hotels have in finding good staff, it could become crucial

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for hotels to extend hospitality to employees as well as to their guest, in other words to treat them as ladies and gentlemen.

Keywords: attracting employees, hospitable to employees, recruitment, mission statements

INTRODUCTION

Employees or workers in hotels, hospitality in the commercial domain (Lashley, 2000), are on the one hand often in direct contact with the guest and thus represent the organization they work for; on the other hand they are no direct beneficiaries of the guests. They receive their rewards from the company, and often these rewards are not overly generous. That raises the question: how hospitable are hotels to their staff? The hospitality industry is not known to be the best place to work (Guerrier and Adib, 2000; Poulston, 2009), or even a safe place to work (Poulston, this volume). Yet, there are hotels that emphatically put their employees first. Ritz-Carlton may be the prime example; they won the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in 1992 as the first hotel and won it again 1999, making it the only company in the world to win the award twice. Ritz-Carlton is therefore the benchmark for all hotels regarding their human resource policies.

The main question in this chapter is how other hotel chains view their prospective employees. Do hotels at different classification levels address their future staff as ladies and gentlemen, and does this apply in all levels of the organization? In other words: do the hotels in their job announcements look for ladies in the housekeeping and gentlemen for the dishes? Or are these terms reserved for a selected group of employees? To rephrase the famous quote from *Animal Farm*, “are all employees ladies and gentlemen, but some more so than others?”

The chapter explores a sample of European and American hotel chains. The study builds on a number of research projects that hospitality students

conducted on these hotel organizations. The reports that the students wrote have not been published, but are listed in the reference list. We examined a large number of job advertisements and compared these with the values that the hotels publish in their external communication, specifically in their mission statements and their mottos or slogans. Questions that we asked were: how do hotels present themselves in job advertisements to prospective staff? Do these advertisements reflect the values that they express elsewhere? Is there a difference in the way they approach new staff at different levels? Also, is there a difference between hotels that mainly operate on a national level and hotels that act more internationally? And does the star classification make a difference?

MISSIONS, VISIONS, MOTTOS AND VALUES

The Standard: Ritz-Carlton

Most successful organizations have a clear mission or vision statement that clarifies their values to their employees and customers. Collins and Porras (1994) note that the vision creates shared understanding and coherent effort about where the company is heading. If the vision is not clear for the employees; this will decrease the coherence and coordination of the company. Mission statements communicate the values within the organization and serve to motivate staff (Sufi, Tahir, and Howard Lyons, 2003). This is nowhere more clear than in Ritz-Carlton Hotels. The basis of the Ritz-Carlton is its credo:

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel is a place where the genuine care and comfort of our guests is our highest mission.

We pledge to provide the finest personal service and facilities for our guests who will always enjoy a warm, relaxed, yet refined ambience.

The Ritz-Carlton experience enlivens the senses, instills well-being, and fulfils even the unexpressed wishes and needs of our guests.

The hotel also works with an employee promise:

At The Ritz-Carlton, our Ladies and Gentlemen are the most important resource in our service commitment to our guests.

By applying the principles of trust, honesty, respect, integrity and commitment, we nurture and maximize talent to the benefit of each individual and the company.

The Ritz-Carlton fosters a work environment where diversity is valued, quality of life is enhanced, individual aspirations are fulfilled, and The Ritz-Carlton mystique is strengthened.

The second promise show the values that Ritz-Carlton adheres to: trust, honesty, respect, integrity and commitment. They are instilled and nurtured in their employees by a set of 20 basics. Some of these are:

1. The Credo is the principal belief of our Company. It must be known, owned and energized by all.
2. Our Motto is “We are Ladies and Gentlemen serving Ladies and Gentlemen.” As service professionals, we treat our guests and each other with respect and dignity.
4. The Employee Promise is the basis for our Ritz-Carlton work environment. It will be honored by all employees.
7. To create pride and joy in the workplace, all employees have the right to be involved in the planning of the work that affects them.
10. Each employee is empowered. For example, when a guest has a problem or needs something special you should break away from your regular duties, address and resolve the issue.

The basics show the alignment in the way Ritz-Carlton serves and supports their external guests and internal customers. Staff members are ‘selected, not hired’ (Michelli, 2008) and are encouraged to live the corporate brand constantly.

Other Hotel Chains

Where most international hotel chains have well-articulated mission and/or vision statements, we will present a few chains that do very well, in some cases have concise expressions of their values, but do not claim the term mission or vision statement. In the following section we will present the American hotel chains Marriott and Hilton, the Dutch chains Bastion and Van der Valk, the Austrian chain Falkensteiner, and Kempinski, Europe's oldest luxury hotel group.

Marriott Hotels have majority ownership of the Ritz-Carlton Hotels. It is no small wonder that the values of Marriott are very close to those of Ritz-Carlton. Interestingly, on their website, Marriott speaks of 'Core Values and Heritage' (Marriott Core Values and Heritage, 2018).

They state that,

Our core values make us who we are. As we change and grow, the beliefs that are most important to us stay the same—putting people first, pursuing excellence, embracing change, acting with integrity and serving our world. Being part of Marriott International means being part of a proud history and a thriving culture.

Their core value "We Put People First" is translated into their motto, "Take care of associates and they will take care of the customers." The website continues:

This is our founder's philosophy and it has made Marriott International a great place to work for more than 85 years. Our people first culture has consistently earned us awards and recognition around the globe. Giving associates opportunities to grow and succeed is part of the company's DNA.

In an address delivered to the Economic Club of Detroit Marriott (2001) speaks of

a total value proposition, one that begins with a competitive wage, but extends to the intangible factors – like outstanding leadership, career opportunities, a caring environment – these are among the key drivers of employee behaviour (165).

He continues,

‘a caring workplace is a bottom-line issue. . . Marriott’s value proposition is genuine care, dependability and a sense of community’ (166).

Hilton Hotels have as their mission:

To fill the earth with the light and warmth of hospitality by delivering exceptional experiences – every hotel, every guest, every time.

The vision of Hilton is:

To be the most hospitable company in the world by creating heartfelt experiences for Guests, meaningful opportunities for Team Members, high value for Owners and a positive impact in our communities.

The values of Hilton are expressed in an acronym:

Hospitality	We are passionate about delivering exceptional guest experiences.
Integrity	We do the right thing, all the time.
Leadership	We’re leaders in our industry and in our communities.
Teamwork	We’re team players in everything we do.
Ownership	We’re the owners of our actions and decisions
Now	We operate with a sense of urgency and discipline.

Clearly the guest is central, but different from Ritz-Carlton and Marriott, the employees have a less prominent place.

The European hotels present themselves differently compared to the American chains. None of them have an explicit mission. All of them, however, work from a set of values that guide the way they do business.

Bastion Hotels is a Dutch hotel chain that owns 32 three-star hotels in the Netherlands and one in Germany. Bastion state on their website that they aim to create ‘a home away from home’. As their values they list ‘comfortable, good priced, efficient and flexible’. Under the heading ‘Personal attention and service’ they give the personal mission of the owner:

Expand the concept of Bastion Hotels and even better meet the needs of today's guest.

The website does not show any employee-related values. Most information is about the guests, the expansion of the company, and about the Dakar rally that Bastion sponsors.

Falkensteiner Hotels possess 32 Four-Star and Five-Star Hotels and Residences in 6 European countries. They have their roots in Austria and claim that is the secret of their success:

At Falkensteiner, we believe there are two key ingredients: heartfelt hospitality combined with the unique charm of South Tyrol! Thanks to this, guests have felt at home in Falkensteiner Hotels since 1957. Welcome Home!

Falkensteiner presents itself as a business hotel, but even more so as a family hotel. They maintain that,

To us, family is more than just a word: it's a value.

A value everyone can relate to. Something deep. Something close. Something formative and important. Something warm and genuine. Something without which we wouldn't be who we are. Something without which we wouldn't exist. Family is what we make out of this value. It is what we live by and how we live – and how we shape life with our loved ones.

That's why commitment to family as a value is a wonderful challenge for a hotel group, but also a significant one. We – Falkensteiner Hotels – are happy to take up this challenge, when we invite you to spend the most

beautiful and important time of the year with us: your family holiday in a family hotel – with your family, the most important people in the world.

They do not have an explicit mission statement. The word “Family” rings through the website. For example, the page on employment starts with the question, ‘Why should you become a member of the Falkensteiner Family?’ They continue,

We do not only care about our guest. Our Falkensteiner Welcome Home Culture is brought closer to our employees by our Home Spirits. We want to create a feeling of belonging and ensure our employees are working in an environment that motivates them. These lay the foundation for how we treat each other as colleagues thus creating a motivating and family-like atmosphere.

Kempinski Hotels presents itself in a completely opposite way. Kempinski Hotels currently operates 76 five-star hotels in 31 countries, mainly in Europe, China, the Middle East and Africa. They pride themselves on being Europe's Oldest Luxury Hotel Group. Rather than a mission statement they present a strategy:

We aim to be renowned as hoteliers who offer luxurious hospitality in the grand European style. We serve the kind of people who expect excellence and value individuality. The strategy guiding us throughout is long-term and focused on our enterprise value.

Every aspect of Kempinski is geared towards serving guests who expect excellence and value individuality.

The employees have a special role in creating these unique experiences:

Bringing these properties to life and delivering our brand promise to guests are the staff in each hotel. Our strategy of investing heavily in talent selection, training and education of our staff means we can guarantee the continuity of our management expertise and create a strong culture.

Potential employees are attracted with the promise to be part of this adventure:

Every day, we pride ourselves on crafting a beautiful performance of our guests.

The values that Kempinski propagates to staff members are harmonic, straight forward and agreement.

Van der Valk Hotels are a Dutch family business that started in 1929 with a café and since then expanded to 98 hotels. 68 of these are located in the Netherlands, 13 in Germany, 9 in Belgium and the others in France, Spain and the Dutch Caribbean. The hotels are at four-star level. It was the ambition of the founder, Martien van der Valk to give each of his eleven children their own hotel. Since then, the family has expanded, and so has the hotel chain.

The core values of the concern are “family, hard work and lots of fun”. A story from the family history illustrates this:

All children in the Van der Valk family started working at a young age because of the family business. Riet Luiten: “We spent our Sundays folding tablecloths, so that they could fit in the planters between the tables, shelling beans, polishing silverware... There was always work to be done and my mother made sure we had something to do”. El: “She made it a delight. Everything was a competition, for example who shelled the most beans, or folded the most tablecloths, and there was always a reward”. Riet: “Like white bread with cheese, or we could go sailing.

The whole family helped: “If the children can walk, they can wash glasses”, grandfather Martinus once said.

Working for a song applies to many jobs in the hospitality industry, but at van der Valk people actually appear to be singing.

ANALYSIS OF VACANCIES

Together with groups of hospitality students we analyzed a large sample of job advertisements published by the six hotel chains that were introduced in the previous section. The purpose of these analyses was three-fold. The first was to see if different hotel chains would send the same message in their job advertisements as they post on their websites. The second was to see star rating of the hotels would make any difference and the third if the level of the vacant position would make a difference.

Three projects will be reported in the following section.

Bastion, Marriott and Van der Valk

The first empirical study was a comparison of the two Dutch chains, three- star Bastion and four-star Van der Valk with Marriott. Meijst et al. (2016) developed a first categorization and used the following framework to score a set of job advertisements.

The instrument uses four categories: *company image, qualities of applicants, familiarity in use of language, job benefits and attractions*. The categories were taken from Backhaus (2004) and definitions were formulated based on literature. Key words that illustrate the categories and provide examples that may be found in the advertisements are provided in the third column. The definition for company image was based on Back (2005, 462) who states that ‘customer’s perception of a similar image between his or her social self-concept and the hotel brand image positively influences the satisfaction level towards the hotel’. This is in line with Marriott (2001, 168) who contends that ‘In the service sector, we know that consumers today are buying not only products, they’re buying experiences. And that’s what workers are buying when they shop for a job... Communicating the promise of a great work experience is what branding employment is about’.

Qualities of applicants are basically the requirements, competencies and skills that are needed and expected from the applicant (Eringa et al.,

2000). Familiarity in use of language refers to several aspects: on the one hand the formal or less formal tone that is used to address the potential applicant; on the other language that is inclusive or inviting versus exclusive. And finally the language in a job advertisement can also influence the gender a company tries to attract for the job. For example, job advertisements with words like opportunity to grow, working in a team, good work environment, challenging job, the opportunity to work with variable job responsibilities, attract more female applicants whereas words like leader, competitive and dominate attract more male applicants (Gaucher, Friesen and Kay, 2011). A nice example of job benefits and attractions is provided in the introduction to job advertisements of Marriott hotel Amsterdam:

Our luxury Amsterdam Hotel, located across from Leidseplein's fine dining, shopping and entertainment, is a 5-minute walk to many attractions including the Rijksmuseum and Van Gogh Museum. In the morning, after a great rest on luxurious Revive bedding, visit the Vondelpark for a relaxing walk or our on-site 24-hour health club for a great workout. Spacious guest rooms have everything you need for business or leisure travel: air conditioning, high-speed Internet, in-room safe, mini-bar and work desk. Upscale and casual dining awaits in our two restaurants where you can grab a burger and beer or Amsterdam's finest steak in town.

The framework shows how the hotel sells its organizational identity (Dutton et al.1994), what the hotel looks for in a potential employee, how they address the employee and the benefits that the hotel offers.

Meijst et al. (2016) used this framework to analyse job advertisements from Marriott and two Dutch hotel chains, Bastion and Van der Valk. Their findings show first of all that Marriott has formalized their values much more than the other hotels. The language Marriott uses is more uniform for all positions, the benefits for all vacancies start with the description of the location quoted above. Also a waiter is expected to have an interest in Van Gogh. That creates a professional impression. The Dutch

hotels use a different tone in the way they address applicants for operational of management positions

Falkensteiner and Kempinski

The second study by Furstner et al. (2017) used an adapted version of the scoring rubric to analyze Falkensteiner and Kempinski Hotels. Based on the outcomes of the first project they decided to focus more specifically on values and employer branding. Ambler and Barrow (1996) introduced the concept of employer branding. They define it as ‘the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company’ (187). According to Backhaus (2004), employer branding deals with promoting the culture of a company internally and externally in order to demonstrate the distinct values and policies, which differentiate the firm from competitors. Next to *values* and *employer branding* Furstner et al. (2017) used the categories familiarity in use of language, *employee benefits*, and *attributes* or qualities of employees. They analyzed a sample of 40 job advertisements, 20 for each hotel chain.

The main differences are:

Kempinski Hotels S.A. used category two (employer branding) more in the job advertisements. Namely, 39% of the total amount of the quotes in the job advertisements of Kempinski Hotels S.A. locates in category two, employer branding. In the job advertisements of Falkensteiner Hotels and Residences, only 29% of the quotes relate to employer branding.

Category three (familiarity of language) appears more often in Falkensteiner Hotels and Residences compared to Kempinski Hotels S.A., which depicts the family and people orientation and image of Falkensteiner Hotels and Residences. As a result, the authors can state that Falkensteiner Hotels and Residences are more welcoming to new employees as they see them already as part of their team. Kempinski Hotels S.A. appears to be more distant towards applicants when advertising the job positions.

There are differences between the job advertisements for higher and lower level positions. That difference lays in the number of responsibilities, the familiarity of language and the amount of information that the companies provide. The job advertisements that show higher level positions require a lot of responsibilities within the hotel, namely responsibilities for the hotel and the employees. The lower positioned job positions have less responsibilities, which also makes the job advertisement of the lower level job position shorter concerning the layout which in returns, may give the impression of a less qualified and challenging job position.

Secondly, the language that the companies use for higher positions is more formal than for lower positions. The company wants to show that the function offered in the job advertisements is serious by using formal language. Furthermore, the job advertisement of a higher position explains the amount of hours and the wages of the function. The job advertisement of the 'lower' does not mention the working hours and the wages. Thirdly, the category employer branding occurs the most in the job advertisements for middle management functions, reasoning that managers should show engagement to the company because they need to motivate the lower level functions and make decisions only in the interest of the company.

Both companies do not explicitly state their values on their official public websites. However, due to investigations the authors were able to determine which company highlights which values and to what extent they integrate them in their job advertisements. Kempinski Hotels S.A. values relate to passion for hospitality, quality regarding the level of service, individuality and uniqueness regarding their staff and properties. The job advertisements communicate these values directly. More than 50% of the job advertisements of Kempinski Hotels S.A. include a value of the company within the first sentence, which is usually 'passionate'. Following that, the reader often firstly gets an insight into the unique selling points of the properties in form of employer branding. This is interrelated with values, as it communicates the corporate identity.

Additionally, Kempinski Hotels S.A. express their uniqueness related to their staff and their properties, which are values of the company. By

mentioning the facilities and the surrounding environment, the reader gets an overview about what to expect. It appeals that Kempinski Hotels S.A. strategically implement their values into the job advertisements to target for interested candidates that share the same values.

Bastion and Hilton

The third study compared two very different chains: the relatively small Dutch Bastion Hotels with 33 properties with Hilton Hotels. For the latter mainly vacancies for the Dutch properties were used. Anbergen et al. (2018) analyzed 50 job advertisements, 25 for each company. Again, based on the earlier projects they chose a slightly different instrument and focused on brand image, brand reputation, employee engagement, employer branding, familiarity of language, and job descriptions. Robinson, Perryman and Hayday (2004) define employee engagement as ‘a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its value’. It is the ability to be highly involved in an organization and is characterized with passion and energy. Furthermore, it is about going above and beyond the contractual agreement (Cook, 2008).

Hilton uses the word “passion” quite frequently in their advertisements, together with “teamwork”, “working with fun”, and “Hilton club”. All of these terms suggest involvement and connection with the organization. Bastion Hotels describes its atmosphere as “very pleasant”, where every team has its own charm and delivers personal service by hospitable and enthusiastic employees who “go the extra mile”.

Employer branding focuses on building up and maintaining a preferred position as an employer/organization in order to influence the potential employees, with as goal to attract and retain the right talent (Gehrels and Altan, 2015). Hilton scores higher than Bastion in this category. Hilton uses employer branding to present itself. They are very explicit about what the potential employee can expect at Hilton. Bastion uses terms that are more general, and thus do not market themselves in the same way as Hilton.

A final difference is in the language that is used in the advertisements. Bastion is a national chain and the language in the advertisements is usually Dutch, sometimes German. Hilton caters to an international market. One would expect the language used to be English throughout. But the language for operational functions is only English in the Amsterdam region and for Waldorf Astoria. For vacancies in the other cities in the Netherlands Hilton advertises in Dutch. The seven vacancies for trainees, however, were all in English.

Summary of the Three Studies

The studies show that there are different ways in how hotels communicate with future employees. All companies have a way to communicate their values, but the larger hotel chains have formalized this more in mission a vision statements. They also make less differences between various groups of employees.

CONCLUSION

How hospitable are these hotel organizations to their (potential) staff? How valued will they feel by their new employers? And how engaged by, and committed to their new employers will that make them? Numerous studies show the relationship between employee commitment and customer satisfaction. Backhaus and Tikoo (2005, 503) observe that ‘by systematically exposing workers to the value proposition of the employer brand, the workplace culture is molded around the corporate goals, enabling the firm to achieve a unique culture focused on doing business the firm’s way.’ And in the end, as Kandampully and Hu (2007, 436)) put it, ‘quality of service is “defined” by the customer, but “created” by the employees, it is the “human factor” that holds the ultimate balance of quality in service industries.’ So if hotels are serious about treating their

guests as ladies and gentlemen, they should start to treat all their staff as the ladies and gentlemen that they truly are.

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