

Business Case for Promoting Diversity & Equality in the Hospitality Industry

Benefits of promoting equality and diversity in recruitment and selection:

- Staff are confident they work for a fair employer
- Reduced turnover of staff – savings in recruitment costs
- Complying with the legislation – saving on legal costs, avoiding bad publicity, saving time on preparing the ‘case’ and saving money
- The company’s image is enhanced in the wider community – contributing to making it an employer of choice

Benefits of promoting equality and diversity in employment practice:

- Low levels of absenteeism
- Low levels of grievance and disciplinary actions
- Low turnover of staff
- Promotion is on merit and ability
- An organisational culture where people know they will be treated with respect and dignity
- Sense of loyalty
- More creativity/new ideas from a diverse work force
- All staff know that their contribution is valued

Benefits of promoting equality in relationships with customers:

- Enhance corporate image with prospective customers
- Becomes the supplier/provider of choice
- Recognises the potentially diverse nature of the market place and an increased customer base

Source: Ashok Ohri, Equality and Diversity Specialist, Organisation and Social Development Consultants

Creating a Business Benefit from Accommodating Special Requirements: An Illustrative Example

A key aspect of taking steps to accommodate those with disabilities is to communicate clearly with potential and present customers the services available and the varying ways in which these can be availed. One examples includes offering symbols on menus, indicating if dishes are gluten free, vegetarian or even the level of spice in the dish. While providing vital information to those with special dietary requirements e.g. Coeliac, symbols on menus have an effect on all customers including those not requiring this information. It leads the customer to form a positive opinion, communicating the impression that the restaurant cares about its customers with a first rate kitchen and this engenders further positive word of mouth as customers bring friends and family. This example underscores the compelling reason for focusing on disability from a customer point of view.

Source: Maureen Gilbert, Independent Equality Consultant

Profiling Good Practice in Equality and Diversity

General Good Practice Equality and Diversity Initiatives in Irish Hospitality

During the initiative, a number of good practice initiatives which are actively being implemented within the Irish hospitality sector at present were identified. These include:

- **Proactively recruiting a diverse workforce** e.g. through international schools to ensure a diverse workforce and links with local organisations
- Promoting and implementing **formalised equality and diversity policies and procedures** – Equal Opportunities Policy, Dignity and Respect at Work Policy, Grievance Policy, Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Anti-Bullying Policies e.g. displaying policies on employee notice board, training employees and managers
- Equality and diversity is **incorporated into performance management**, with manager bonuses dependent on team members attending meetings and ensuring the Equality Action Plan is actively implemented.
- **Equality and diversity training** for operational, supervisory and managerial level, including induction training and training for interviewers e.g. recruitment techniques
- Provision of **language supports**, including English language classes and availability of training and development and policy and procedure materials in a variety of languages
- Employing a variety of **communication channels** e.g. daily/weekly/monthly meetings, notice boards, newsletters
- **Consultation with employees** in relation to equality and diversity issues e.g. suggestion boxes, employee survey, Employee Forum
- **Diversity pin** worn by all employees, as a fundamental statement of the organisations values
- Establishment of an **Equality and Diversity Committee**, with its own allocated budget (time/monetary) and review of objectives and activities
- **Benchmarking** against other organisations similarly committed to equality and diversity
- Proactive measures to ensure departments contain a cross section of different nationalities working together, to **promote integration**
- **Flexible rostering arrangements** e.g. enable single mother to work around child minding arrangements
- **Menus** catering for a diverse customer base, to suit religious, medical and therapeutic diets
- **Recognise and celebrate difference**, creatively and innovatively e.g. regular international theme days in employee canteen
- **Multi-cultural soccer team** participating in mini-league with hotels in area
- **Braille menus** in the restaurant
- **Working within the community** e.g. Traveller Community groups, charities and support bodies
- Participation in **awards schemes** e.g. Diversity Award, FÁS Excellence Through People
- Participate in **Cultural Audit** as part of the Top 60 Companies, to measure year on year developments

Specific Good Practice Equality and Diversity Initiatives in Irish Hospitality

Specific good practice initiatives which are currently in place include the following:

Clontarf Castle Hotel

Clontarf Castle's core organisation value is 'Our uniqueness is our difference', while the core goal is 'People are number one'. The key message from Clontarf Castle Hotel is that people with disability can and do make a valuable organisational impact and '*the rewards* [of embracing equality and diversity] *are many and quite indescribable*'. Among the benefits reported by the hotel are lower turnover, attributable to high staff morale and above average employee satisfaction and happiness, as benchmarked against the top 40 hotels in Ireland.

Specific initiatives in the area of disability include:

- Proactive Equality and Diversity Committee: on a monthly basis, the Committee selects a theme for the month and seeks to raise awareness in relation to the issue, through the monthly organisational magazine, the Equality and Diversity notice board and other activities. A past issue of the magazine focused on disability and contained information including facts, figures, current news stories, training events, charity fund raising events and practical information on specific disability including those which are common but not immediately obvious.
- Intensive, ongoing, disability awareness training to all staff, delivered inhouse
- Proactively recruiting people with disabilities
- Linkages with local organisations, providing work experience as part of outreach programmes
- 'Buddy policy', to provide support and training to individuals
- Flexibility in working with individuals with specific needs and requirements
- Other activities include supporting local charities, organising fundraising events, facilitating sign language classes.

Examples of how Clontarf Castle Hotel has accommodated and embraced equality and diversity include:

- In the case of one staff member with a learning disability, the hotel reviewed and adapted their training, developing a specific standard operating procedure for this staff member, using picture and visual aids. In doing so, the organisation found the best way of harnessing the abilities of this individual
- Another individual who suffers from depression came to the Castle as part of a similar outreach programme to assist in the kitchen, working on reduced hours and with a 'buddy' to assist him. He is now employed as a permanent part time staff member and is an integral part of the team
- By working with an employee with caring responsibilities to agree a reduced and flexible working schedule, the Castle has retained a valuable team player.

The Shelbourne Hotel

The Shelbourne Hotel re-introduced equality and diversity practices upon completion of the hotel refurbishment in 2007. Prior to the closure in March 2005, three quarters of employees were Irish. This has since been reversed with just a quarter of employees now Irish, while the remainder are drawn from over 40 nationalities worldwide. Among the initiatives in place at the Shelbourne are the following:

- **Proactively creating an integrated workplace and realising the benefits, starting with recruitment for a diverse workforce**
- **Celebrating diversity and creating a culture of respect**, demonstrated through a variety of initiatives, including taking part in national and international initiatives like Anti-Racist Workplace Week @ the Shelbourne to coincide with the national week long initiative
- **Promoting and implementing equality policies**
- **Diversity training and development at all levels**, from operational to supervisory and managerial level, including orienting new employees into the organisational culture, through an orientation programme and handbook of policies and procedures issued to all associates. Training and development materials are available in a variety of languages
- **Employee consultation and communication**, keeping track of the effectiveness of initiatives - employee consultation forms and suggestion box, annual online employee opinion survey, notice boards, departmental line up and meetings, daily newspaper

The Shelbourne Hotel case benefits from being part of an international organisation with a stated recognition and commitment to diversity from the very top, including J.W. Marriott, Jr., Chairman and CEO who states *'Marriott's commitment to global diversity is absolute. Our determination to provide opportunities for our associates and clientele is one of the main reasons people want to work and do business with us'*.

Among the benefits of the equality and diversity strategy reported are increased motivation, lower turnover and positive impact within the workforce, especially in the area of diversity, through training and development.

Dunboyne Castle Hotel and Spa

Dunboyne Castle Hotel and Spa's commitment to equality and diversity is summed up as follows: *'Diversity is at the heart of everything we do. We are committed to equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion in all areas of employment and business. Our employees are encouraged to reach their full potential, regardless of gender, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, age, disability, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religion, political affiliation or any other factor'*.

Dunboyne Castle Hotel and Spa employ a 'Train the Trainer' approach to training in the hotel. Following attendance at the IHI Equality and Diversity Awareness training, conducted as part of the Hospitality Management Skillnet programme, the Training Department developed and delivered a Diversity Training module appropriate to the specific requirements of Dunboyne Castle Hotel and Spa which is delivered to all employees.

In addition, as part of the induction process, all new employees participate in Diversity Awareness training which discusses the hotel's Diversity Policy and the various diversity activities in place in the hotel. The training also covers an introduction to Ireland, Irish culture and local services, activities, sites and places of interest for international workers, to support and encourage these workers in understanding and extending an 'Irish welcome' to guests.

In 2008, Chambers Ireland selected Dunboyne Castle Hotel and Spa to represent Ireland in the European Chamber Gender Diversity Project. As part of the project, the Training & Development Manager addressed the European Chambers Gender Diversity Conference in Brussels in November 2008 to present initiatives undertaken at Dunboyne Castle Hotel & Spa.

McDonald's Ireland

Through their campaign 'A Great Place to Work', McDonald's Ireland actively seeks to establish itself as an employer of choice within the hospitality sector. In doing so, McDonald's draws attention to the organisational culture of flexibility, opportunity, equality and diversity. This culture has resulted in McDonald's achieving a number of awards in recent years, including:

- Named Best Place to Work 2008 by the Great Places to Work Institute, making the Top 50 for the fourth year in a row, as voted by employees
- O2 Ability Awards 2007 - McDonald's Shannon was the winner of the Best Small Company Category
- IHI Diversity Award 2007 Restaurants Category
- Corporate Social Responsibility Awards 2007 – nominated by Chambers Ireland in workplace category Innovation in HR Award 2007, a CIPD Watson Wyatt bi-annual award.

Marriott International

Since its founding in 1927, Marriott has a tradition of valuing diversity and inclusion of all employees. Through the years, this legacy has become a fundamental operating principle and business imperative. From the global workforce, to owners, franchisees, customers, suppliers and communities, Marriott thrives on the differences that give the company its strength and competitive advantage, as expressed in Marriott International's 'Spirit to Serve Our Diverse World' commitment. The success of this commitment is evidenced by the awards which Marriott International has received.

In 2005, Marriott International established its own award, the JW Marriott Jr. Diversity Excellence Award, to recognise Marriott business units or departments that demonstrate excellence in promoting diversity and building an environment of inclusion for all. Since 2007, an individual who promotes these same ideals can also be nominated for the award – it is the highest form of recognition of diversity efforts. With this award, Marriott continues to set the standard for the entire hospitality industry.

Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc.

In 2009, for the third year in a row, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc. scored a 100% rating on the Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index and is a recipient of the HRC 'Best Places to Work' award. The Corporate Equality Index rates employers on a scale from 0–100 on their treatment of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) employees, customers and investors. Starwood is inspired by organisations like Human Rights Campaign that validate the importance of inclusion and respect as paramount to a 21st century business model, according to Shelley Freeman, Director Global Diversity & Inclusion, and plays a critical role in crafting work environments and guest experiences which demonstrate this commitment. More businesses than ever before have recognised the value of a diverse and dedicated workforce.