



# **CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH IN HOSPITALITY**

International Youth  
Foundation

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Hilton Worldwide commissioned "Creating Opportunities for Youth in Hospitality" to raise awareness about the youth unemployment crisis and highlight solutions the hospitality sector can provide. Through this paper, Hilton Worldwide identifies the challenges involved in creating opportunities for youth and shares insights that will help better integrate young people into the workforce. Hilton Worldwide is starting a dialogue on this topic and is committed to collaborating with businesses, NGOs and governments to help youth succeed in the global economy. The content of this paper is the responsibility of the International Youth Foundation and does not necessarily represent the views or opinions of Hilton Worldwide.

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# PREFACE

Every year, 120 million young people enter the workforce with enormous potential to lead productive and engaged lives and help drive real economic growth around the globe. Yet today, more than 75 million of them face significant barriers to finding decent work, locking them into a cycle of displacement and frustration. Today's shockingly high levels of youth unemployment are driven by many factors, including lack of resources, inadequate training opportunities, and unresponsive government systems and policies. The result: long term workforce challenges that can only lead to societal unrest, economic instability and lost generations.

Today's industries need to hire young people to grow and compete in the marketplace, and young people desperately need jobs. Yet there is a significant mismatch between what companies need in their new hires and the lack of in-demand skills among the pool of potential recruits.

The size, scale, and rapid growth of the travel and tourism sector requires impactful and scalable solutions to this youth employment crisis. The hospitality sector is uniquely positioned to help lead those efforts. There are few industries whose resources, expertise, and career pathways are as relevant to addressing the challenges facing young people today, and whose business and expansion relies as heavily on a trained workforce in every region

of the world. Turning a growing need into action, Hilton Worldwide has partnered with the International Youth Foundation to execute a global strategy to help equip youth with skills and prepare them for jobs in the hospitality industry. To help support our future work and encourage collaboration among industry, government, and civil society, we present this paper that explains the enormous opportunity we have to invest in young people and prepare them for careers in the hospitality industry and beyond. This investment is critical for the growth and sustainability of the hospitality industry and the communities in which young people live.

One of the immediate ways Hilton Worldwide is making an organizational commitment to youth development is through Bright Blue Futures, Hilton Hotels & Resorts' global community relations program focused on bringing hope and stability to youth in the communities in which we operate. Through Bright Blue Futures and other exciting initiatives, we are leveraging the vast resources and expertise that the hospitality industry has to offer to provide brighter futures for young people all around the world. Our goal is to work together—and with you—to unlock the tremendous potential for young people to grow, prosper, and lead.

So please, read on, and then let's get to work. We will be right there beside you.

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# HOSPITALITY SECTOR IS UNIQUELY POSITIONED TO IMPACT YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SOLUTIONS GLOBALLY

The hospitality industry is entering an exciting phase. As other industries struggle to recover from the global economic downturn, hospitality has proved resilient. The hotel sector, for example, bounced back quickly from its 2009 decline and is predicted to increase by more than 45 percent, from \$584 billion in 2010 to \$848 billion by the close of 2015.<sup>1</sup> The travel and tourism industry as a whole (of which the hospitality industry is a part) remains one of the world's most important drivers of economic growth, accounting for nearly 9 percent of global GDP. It is also the world's largest employer. More than 255 million people around the globe currently work in the sector, and by 2022, travel and tourism will employ 328 million people—creating 73 million new jobs.

The projected growth of the hospitality industry is good news not only for hotels and restaurants but also for the array of businesses in the hospitality supply chain. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that every new job created in the hospitality industry supports 1.5 jobs along the supply chain, with a proportionate economic boost to local communities.<sup>2</sup> The industry's projected growth will help spur economic gains that are critically needed around the world. Economic development means jobs, and jobs bring much more than a paycheck: they bring dignity to individuals, tax revenue to governments, new consumers to businesses, and invested citizens to communities. Thus, the industry outlook brings hope not only to hospitality sector businesses, but also to each community in which industry businesses thrive.



THE TRAVEL AND TOURISM SECTOR CURRENTLY EMPLOYS MORE THAN **255 MILLION** PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD

The hospitality industry's potential to realize growth and make significant contributions to the economic development of communities around the globe hangs on one condition: its ability to rapidly fill hundreds of thousands of new positions with qualified people. The industry is particularly dependent on its ability to hire young men and women ages 15–24, who make up the largest share of employees in the industry. As the number of jobs in the industry increases and as older employees retire, attracting young people who possess the technical skills, life skills, and passion to provide exceptional guest service will prove more important than ever.

At the same time the hospitality industry needs to recruit young people, 75 million youth around the world are unemployed, and countless more are underemployed. The ILO characterized the current state of youth unemployment as a "social and economic catastrophe" for nations across the globe.<sup>3</sup> As a result of the global financial crisis, youth unemployment rates skyrocketed in developed economies, reaching more than 18 percent in 2010.<sup>4</sup> The euro crisis exacerbated problems for youth in most parts of Europe. Unemployment for young people in Spain, for example, spiked from 17 percent in March 2007 to 51 percent in March 2012.<sup>5</sup>

For the most part, the job outlook for young people is getting worse. By 2017, youth unemployment rates are expected to rise, reaching 28.4 percent in the Middle East and 26.7 percent in North Africa, for example. The ILO predicts that youth unemployment rates will fall in developed economies from 17.5 percent in 2012 to 15.6 percent in 2017 as youth leave the labor market, having given up hope of finding a job.<sup>6</sup>

The industry needs to hire young people, and young people need jobs. The solution seems simple enough, but in fact, as industry employers know, cultivating, hiring, and

retaining young talent with the necessary skills can be a sizable challenge. This paper explains how the hospitality sector can begin to meet that challenge.

The paper is organized as follows:

- ◆ **Major Challenges to Youth Employment** presents an overview of issues that create a mismatch between the numerous good jobs available for young people throughout the hospitality sector, and young people's awareness of those jobs and their readiness for them. Skills shortages are especially pronounced among young people living in poverty, who confront an array of interlocking barriers that begin to shape their job prospects long before they reach working age. If that skills gap can be bridged by a serious industry commitment to supporting youth, the rewards will be immense for youth, their families, their communities, and for hospitality businesses.
  - ◆ **Expanding Opportunities for Youth** shows how the industry can better recruit, train, and retain qualified young people through investments in pre-employment activities, on-the-job initiatives, and partnerships.
  - ◆ **The Action Plan for the Hospitality Industry** identifies priorities for industry progress and accountability.
- Investing in youth is crucial not just for the growth and sustainability of the hospitality industry, but also for youth and the communities in which they live. Unless these investments occur, the negative consequences of persistent youth unemployment will reverberate through individual lives for decades. Societies too will suffer, should the vast productive potential of a generation remain untapped. The hospitality industry must seize this opportunity to train and employ youth to a degree that has not yet been achieved.

# MAJOR CHALLENGES TO YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

The barriers to employing young people at the rate required for industry growth can be summarized in three simple statements:

- ◆ Youth do not know about the nature and extent of meaningful careers the hospitality industry offers.
- ◆ Youth know about these opportunities but are not suitably qualified for them.
- ◆ The industry attracts qualified youth but does not retain an optimal number of them.

This section examines these issues in turn.

## The Information Barrier

The hospitality industry hires employees with a wide variety of educational levels and skill sets. For young people who have little academic preparation, the hospitality industry offers numerous entry-level jobs, safe working conditions, and dependable pay. But the industry also needs team members with college degrees and skills in areas such as operations, technology, and business management. Regardless of where a person starts in the industry, hospitality employment can help develop the skills and experiences that will help them advance in the sector, or they can transfer those skills to another sector.

But many young people (and their families and social networks) are not aware of the range and quality of hospitality jobs or the value of taking their first jobs with the industry. This lack of information about good jobs in the industry may be a large barrier in cultures where young people are beholden to their parents' beliefs and decisions about the kind of work youth

should undertake. In the Middle East, for example, the culture of shame discourages young people from working in the hospitality industry and limits the number of socially acceptable careers for women.

Also, young people may not know how to go about applying for these jobs. As governments slash school and community-based programs in response to economic constraints, activities that help young people assess their strengths and professional interests, understand work environments and career ladders, write a résumé, and practice interview skills may be cut. Under these circumstances, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds may not have the family connections or social networks to fill these knowledge gaps and build their employability or work-readiness skills. Young people may lack information about the work expectations that come with having a good job, or they may not have been encouraged to think about the kind of work they'd like to do in the first place. Without such information, young people will not be able to make informed decisions that affect their future, such as whether to complete secondary school, what classes would help them get the jobs they want, or whether they should continue their education or enter the job market.

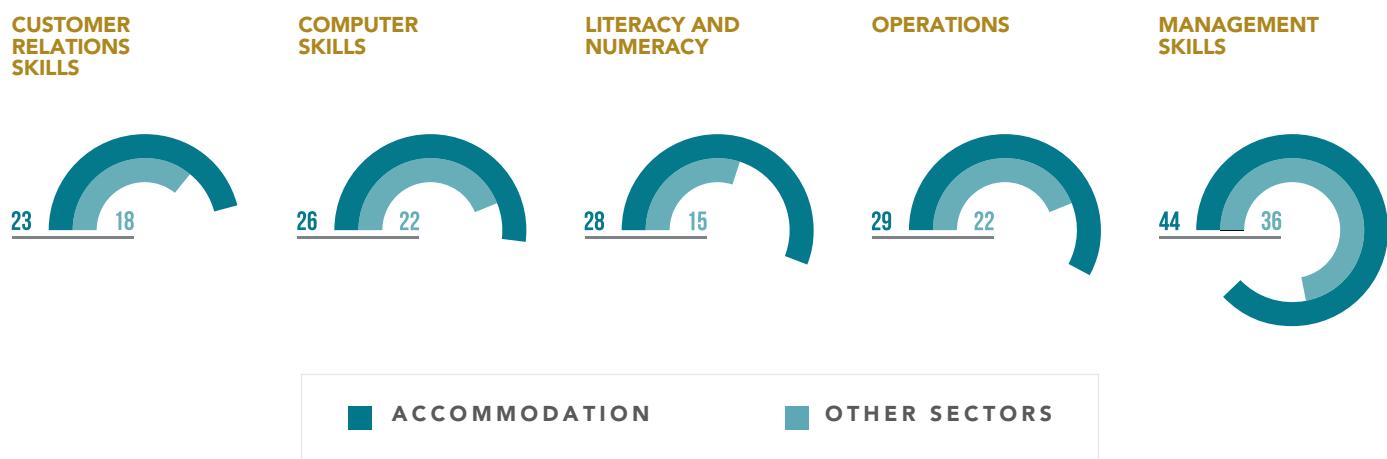
The industry is challenged to give young people the information they need to consider and apply for industry jobs, especially the various tracks to high-quality hospitality careers available to employees who are willing to work hard, whether or not they have a university degree.

## The Skills Mismatch

Another major barrier is that many youth enter the job market without the range of skills required for hospitality jobs, including literacy, numeracy, and basic information and communication technology (ICT) skills. A skills shortage—sometimes referred to as a mismatch between the skills youth possess and the skills employers need—is felt acutely by employers in all industries, and they are especially pronounced in the hospitality sector. In the United States, for instance, 38 percent of employers in the hospitality sector reported that the low skill levels of new employees posed a moderate or great business risk, compared with 25 percent of employers in other sectors.<sup>7</sup> The same study showed that, compared with other sectors, the hospitality industry reported skills shortages in management, operations, basic literacy and numeracy, and customer relations (see figure 1).

Upper secondary schooling is where young people are supposed to acquire communication skills, facility with ICT, and other “beyond the basics” skills that prepare them for tertiary education or the job market. Worldwide, however, only 56 percent of students enroll in upper secondary school, and some regions—South and West Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Arab states—have even lower rates.<sup>8</sup> Prejudice, harassment, corruption, tradition, and poverty often mean that young men and women, disabled youth, ethnic minorities, and others experience restricted access to education.

Figure 1. Skills in short supply to a moderate or great extent in the hospitality sector compared with other sectors in the United States (2009), percent



Source: Adapted from S. Sweet, M. Pitt-Catsouphes, E. Besen, S. Hovhannisyian, & F. Pasha, *Talent Pressures and the Aging Workforce: Responsive Action Steps for the Accommodation and Food Services Sector*, Industry report no. 4.1 (Chestnut Hill, MA: Sloan Center on Aging and Work at Boston College, 2010). Retrieved from [http://www.bc.edu/research/agingandwork/meta-elements/pdf/publications/TMISR04\\_Accomodation.pdf](http://www.bc.edu/research/agingandwork/meta-elements/pdf/publications/TMISR04_Accomodation.pdf). Used with permission.

## CORE LIFE SKILLS

Increasingly, educators and employers are finding that for young people to succeed in today's rapidly changing and globalized world, they need an educational foundation that includes more than just academic and technical skills. Youth critically need life and employability skills as a way to prepare them to be motivated and confident decision-makers who can overcome adversity and realize their potential. Across industries, employers indicate that the following core life skills are essential for all employees to possess, regardless of their responsibility level:

- ❖ Self-confidence
- ❖ Ability to manage emotions
- ❖ Personal responsibility
- ❖ Respecting self and others
- ❖ Cooperation & teamwork
- ❖ Communication & interpersonal skills
- ❖ Creative thinking
- ❖ Critical thinking & problem solving
- ❖ Decision-making
- ❖ Conflict management

To be competitive in the workforce, youth need more than a certain level of schooling; they need an adequate quality of education. Many developed economies see 100 percent enrollment in upper secondary schools, for instance, yet nearly one in five students do not acquire a minimum level of basic skills that enables them to function well in society.<sup>9</sup>

Frequently, "skills mismatch" refers not to a lack of technical skills, but to a lack of the life skills (i.e., "soft" skills) required to carry out their jobs and successfully interact with coworkers, supervisors, and guests.<sup>10</sup> The importance of life skills for the hospitality industry cannot be overstated. It is not unusual for entry-level staff in a global chain hotel to interact daily with hundreds of people with different cultural backgrounds, languages, service expectations, and needs.

Hospitality industry workers must be able to rapidly adapt to accommodate a degree of diversity unheard of in other lines of work. Not surprisingly, communication skills, cross-cultural competencies, adaptability, ability to manage guest problems with understanding and sensitivity, and maintaining a professional demeanor are crucial to staff at all levels of the industry.<sup>11</sup> Hence, the industry challenge is to find young people with such potential, assess their qualifications, and give them training to bridge any gaps in basic, technical, and life skills.

## The Turnover Challenge

The final major employment challenge is retaining talented young people. In advanced economies in particular, turnover for the industry remains high. For example, although there are no statistics on turnover specifically among youth, employee turnover in general averages 34 percent annually in the United States.<sup>12</sup> The cost of turnover is also high: costs associated with pre-departure, recruitment, selection, training, and loss of productivity can amount to 200 percent of an employee's annual remuneration, depending on the employee's productivity.<sup>13</sup>

No industry expects to retain employees for their entire working lives, and young people are especially prone to changing employers within a sector or moving to another sector entirely as they determine their strengths and long-term career interests. But when employees move on to different professions, ideally they leave the industry for jobs they prefer or for which they may be better suited, not because they felt underutilized by current employers or would have liked a career in the industry, but felt there was no future for them. Thus, the industry is challenged to retain, nurture, and promote more talented young employees.

## YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

In the near future, Europe and the Americas will continue to represent the largest value share of the hospitality market, but the largest growth will occur in emerging economies. By 2015, China and India should expect annual growth rates that match or exceed industry growth in France, Japan, or the UK. The industry's expanding footprint in China, India, and in some nations in the Middle East and Africa presents an enormous youth employability challenge for the industry—and an equally large opportunity.

**The challenge:** Of the world's 1.2 billion young people, 90 percent live in developing countries. Moderate to rapid growth of youth populations are projected for nearly 50 years in many of the world's poorest regions. Many young people in these regions have faced a lifetime of disadvantage, such as poor quality education, which restricts their readiness for work. Young people in developing countries who have work may have informal jobs that expose them to unsafe conditions or abuse,

or they may work in jobs that pay so little they will never be able to work their way out of poverty. In fact, young people today are more likely than adults to be among the working poor.

**The opportunity:** Creating jobs and training youth in developing countries can substantially improve the lives of young people, their families, and their communities. Research by the Overseas Development Institute shows that, among all segments of the travel and tourism sector, global hotels are the most likely to improve a worker's economic circumstance, directly accounting for a large portion of a worker's household earnings. In addition to providing direct economic effects, global hospitality chains bolster local economies by increasing the need for goods and services—hence, creating jobs—along the industry's supply chain. The training and work experience provided by industry employers increases the skill set of the workforce overall, thus benefiting employers in other sectors.

Sources: *The Youth Employment Crisis: A Time for Action*, report 5, International Labour Conference, 101st session (Geneva: ILO, 2012); *Hospitality 2015: Game Changers or Spectators?* (London: Deloitte, 2010); *Global Hotels and Motels Industry Profile* (New York: Datamonitor, 2011).

# EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH

The challenges are clear, so how do industry employers attract, employ, and retain the best workers? Companies that incorporate youth development into their business models can reap gains beyond filling staffing needs. This section identifies ways to meet the industry's key youth employment goals and gain other advantages through investments in pre-employment initiatives, on-the-job activities, and partnerships.

## Pre-Employment Initiatives for Youth

Pre-employment activities have two key goals: to attract service-minded young people to the array of industry jobs and career tracks, and to help them qualify for entry-level industry jobs through employability training. Strategies for achieving these goals include the following.

### Teach young people about the job market.

Depending on the skills of the local workforce, potential recruits may need to learn everything from how to find job opportunities to how to fill out a job application and conduct oneself during an interview. That does not mean they would not be outstanding hospitality employees, but industry employers are going to have to step in and help young people learn about the world of work, become employable, and obtain jobs.

Establish job-shadowing programs and internships to help young people learn about and prepare for careers in the industry. Job-shadowing opportunities should target young people in secondary school, vocational school, second-chance programs, and other venues and introduce them to the numerous types of employment the industry offers—housekeeping,



At Hilton Munich Park and Hilton Munich City (Germany), human resource managers and other team members are helping young people develop essential career preparation skills by hosting a three-hour training on how to complete a job application, write a résumé, and participate in an interview. Young people practice completing job applications without making spelling and punctuation errors, and

they begin to write a résumé. Participants also learn interviewing tips and practice responding to interview questions during mock interviews with team members. This activity is part of Hilton Hotels & Resorts' Bright Blue Futures, a global community relations program focused on bringing hope and stability to youth in the communities in which it operates.

At Hilton Columbus at Easton (USA), team members invite secondary school students to the hotel for a day of job shadowing. The day begins with students completing an employment application and reviewing basic expectations, such as dressing professionally, working in teams, and providing exceptional customer service. The students tour the hotel, rotate through departments to learn about the variety of jobs the industry offers, and perform basic duties in each department. The experience gives students hands-on experience in hotel operations and helps spur interest in a career in hospitality.

finance and accounting, marketing, food & beverage operations, guest relations, customer service, maintenance, management—and the education and skills required for each.

Pre-employment internships can be especially valuable because they enable young people to gain a realistic picture of the day-to-day operations while revealing possibilities for their future that they may not have imagined. Internships also give young people an opportunity for hands-on learning, which can help employers and youth determine which jobs individual youth are best suited for.

**Educate youth about the lasting value of acquiring experience in the hospitality industry.** The hospitality sector in many ways is a training ground for acquiring people skills because it requires ongoing communication, creative problem solving, flexibility, and professionalism from staff at all levels. These soft skills are invaluable and will serve youth well throughout their personal and professional lives. The industry is also an advantageous place to enter the workforce because unlike many other industries, hospitality businesses regularly promote from within, making upward mobility a realistic option for employees who start in entry-level jobs. Employers must do more to help youth understand how skills honed in the hospitality industry readily transfer to further career opportunities in the industry as well as to other sectors.

**Scale up.** Because a key concern for the industry is staffing for rapid growth, the strategies with the most impact will be scalable. ICT and some “blended learning” modalities will make training on a large scale easier and more affordable than ever. E-learning is less expensive than conventional classroom training, which means it can be offered to more young people. ICT also makes learning more convenient and flexible for young people, so more youth are able to avail themselves of these opportunities.

**Appeal to youth.** Pre-employment activities will be more successful when they are based on a solid understanding about what appeals to youth. Some studies of hospitality employees suggest that today’s youth are attracted to employers who reflect their values, not only as they are practiced in social responsibility programs, but especially when these values are core to a company’s business model.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, understanding young people’s hopes for themselves and their communities could be a fundamental advantage in recruiting and training activities.

Conveying corporate values during recruitment activities will help attract candidates who are service-minded and attuned to the needs of others in general and who would therefore make good additions to hospitality teams. Pre-employment activities could also be designed to allow youth to act on their values, such as by practicing service skills or developing teamwork skills through fun activities that respond to issues youth care about.

Training activities should also be designed to appeal to youth. In recent years, e-learning developers have recognized the need to design content that more effectively motivates and engages learners. Computer-aided learning now often features games, simulations, video, and chat functions that enrich the learning environment.<sup>15</sup>

## On-the-Job Youth Initiatives

The goals for on-the-job investments in youth are to gain a competitive advantage, retain talented employees, and nurture upward mobility in the workforce. Strategies for achieving these goals include the following.

**Offer convenient, flexible opportunities for training, mentoring, and apprenticeships.** In the hospitality sector, the quality of staff skills are what set businesses apart. Training increases staff capacity to deliver excellent service and provides the foundation for innovation.<sup>16</sup> Training can benefit all employees, no matter where they start. Currently, training

in the hospitality industry typically does not sufficiently target young, entry-level staff, who are the most likely to leave after short periods of employment. Instead, training is more often offered to those who enter the industry with the most education, such as managers.<sup>17</sup>

Young people's high comfort level with ICT means that skill-building initiatives need not be restricted to traditional classroom training. Virtual training modes are a cost-effective way to open training opportunities to staff at all levels. Mentorships and apprenticeships allow hands-on skills development and training to target individual needs to develop specific competencies or to offer a high level of training over a relatively short period of time. Employee mentoring, when facilitated by ICT, can enable experienced staff to contribute to youth development in a way that capitalizes on corporate expertise yet does not require management or other staff to set aside large periods of free time. These opportunities can increase loyalty to the company, create pride in work and career paths, and mitigate turnover.

Hilton Worldwide University opens its 2,500 courses on personal and professional development to any Team Member across the company and its 10 brands. Most of the courses are available through an array of formats, including webinars, e-books, social learning, and on-the-job experiences.

MORE THAN

35,000<sup>↑</sup>

COURSES ARE COMPLETED BY TEAM MEMBERS EVERY MONTH

Hilton Worldwide's General Manager Development Program is a highly competitive initiative to train hotel or business school graduates for the numerous general manager positions that are required to meet the company's growth plans. Candidates must speak at least two languages and have a three- to five-year history of excellent employment with the company. But Hilton Worldwide also opens its Management 101 courses to any Team Member, regardless of educational background, who has been on the job and performing successfully for at least six months.

#### Ensure that training opportunities account for a diversity of team member backgrounds.

Young people are not a homogeneous group, and global chains in particular must ensure that training is designed and delivered with an appreciation for differences in their language, cultural mores, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. Even when young people seem similar in these broad respects, they will bring individual perspectives and various learning-style preferences to on-the-job learning opportunities. Training that is most effective will take these differences into account and provide a variety of ways for youth to absorb and practice the learning material.

At the same time, industry trainers should stay abreast of research that could improve training for youth as a whole. For example, although research is limited, some studies point to distinct generational differences among hospitality employees in their expectations for training and their learning preferences.<sup>18</sup> Compared with their older colleagues, for example, young hospitality employees want training to be more collaborative than competitive. Youth want to see clearly how training will be valuable to them as individuals, apart from the value it provides to the employer. Young people also prefer having plenty of opportunities to voice their opinions, which will happen through social media, whether or not

it happens during training or on the job.<sup>19</sup> Such data could indicate that, where appropriate, employers may wish to experiment with training youth apart from older employees and to measure its effectiveness.

**Engage youth in their communities.** Employer-based community service activities provide young people with opportunities to practice a range of skills while acting on their values. Young people appreciate opportunities to develop skills they will not necessarily use in their current positions. Most community engagement activities, for example, require event planning, organizing, marketing, catering, budgeting, fundraising, networking, public speaking, assessment, and reporting skills. Employers can help youth acquire these skills without a heavy investment in formal training.

The nature of the hospitality business creates intimate links with communities: hospitality establishments tend to be located in some of a community's busiest or most culturally relevant areas; they host important conferences and meetings with business, government, and nonprofit organizations; the hospitality value chain engages numerous local stakeholders; and industry businesses have an impressive array of human and material capacity they are frequently asked to contribute to local causes. Such networks combined with hospitality resources position the industry to have a significant engagement with communities, and they create meaningful opportunities for

youth engagement in particular. Hospitality businesses can support young people's capacity to make a difference in their communities by

- ◆ investing in the capacity of young people to effectively engage in their communities, such as by helping them find opportunities to apply lessons from training and mentoring in other aspects of their lives;
- ◆ imparting skills that enhance young people's ability to serve their communities (for example, youth could receive assistance from marketing staff on how to promote a volunteer activity); and
- ◆ encouraging youth to multiply their impact by recruiting other staff to join their community engagement activities.

Employee engagement can help retain staff, and it is also valued by guests. Promoting opportunities for youth engagement may be particularly attractive to young employees when such events involve fun, peer-to-peer activities, and when youth receive recognition for their community service on and off the job. Recognizing youth in ways that inspire them facilitates participation and motivates behavioral change.

**Engage youth on the job.** Young people themselves can provide employers with crucial information about how to make sound investments in youth development. Among other things, youth may be able to advise employers about

- ◆ new ways to recruit and retain young personnel;
- ◆ knowledge and skills that would be especially useful on the job;
- ◆ innovative ways to deliver and scale learning opportunities;
- ◆ the effectiveness of training—explaining what worked and what could be improved;
- ◆ generational concerns that may predict future business trends, such as how to appeal to young adult guests;
- ◆ developing or applying technologies, such as social media, or other innovations;
- ◆ youth values and community needs that could be addressed through community engagement programming; and
- ◆ meaningful ways to acknowledge youth for their contributions on and off the job.

At Hilton Adelaide (Australia), a chef apprenticeship program is producing a committed and talented kitchen staff. This highly competitive four-year program is open to 10 young people ages 14–25 who have prior hotel experience. Apprentices learn far more than the basics of food preparation and service. They also acquire a range of culinary, business, and life skills that are reinforced through ongoing mentoring and job-placement support. Apprentices visit local suppliers to learn about the value of having local ingredients on the menu, and develop relationships with local business partners.

They also accompany the head chef to the farmer's market, where they lead cooking demonstrations to practice their public speaking and presentation skills and educate others about the importance of good nutrition. Each year the apprentices plan a five-course meal for 45 family members and friends, managing all aspects of the event from designing the floor plan and budgeting food costs, to preparing the meals. The central goal of the program is to equip young people with the range of skills required to prepare good food, including passion, commitment, and perseverance.

Ideally, eliciting perspectives from young people would occur formally, not just informally, so that youth trust that their ideas will be heard and can prepare thoughtful feedback. One way to engage youth in this way is by establishing youth councils or fellowship programs. Young people could be selected to participate in such councils or programs on the basis of clear criteria, such as nominations from youth or by other means. Creating regional councils that bring young employees from different hotels together with leaders from these same communities would help incorporate young people's perspectives into basic business operations.

This mix of young employees and community leaders gives hotels an opportunity to ensure that the needs of young employees are met. At the same time, it enables businesses to learn how to effectively cater to youth as a growing customer segment by designing offerings that resonate with them. A youth leadership program could also help the industry engage emerging leaders in the business and demonstrate to current and prospective young employees the industry's commitment to youth.

## Partnerships

A skilled youth workforce will benefit every industry, but the hospitality industry's high proportion of young employees gives it a heightened interest in facilitating partnerships for youth development. Partnering with schools and training institutions, for example, would help hospitality employers ensure that youth learn about industry careers and possess the ideal skill set for business needs. Growth projections, or the anticipated adoption of new technologies throughout a brand, are vital pieces of information that can help partners prepare a hospitality workforce for tomorrow's jobs.

## LEARNING CONVERSATIONS

With a multiregional group of trainers and an outside training design vendor, Hilton Worldwide's Hilton Hotels & Resorts brand developed Learning Conversations to create an opportunity for team members to share stories, learn from one another, and be inspired to engage in practices that accord with the company's values. These 15- to 20-minute facilitated conversations touch on numerous topics intended to improve service, such as working with other departments, multitasking, and listening. Learning Conversation modules were originally developed in the United States, but they have proved so popular that the 2013 modules were designed with input from team members around the world and have been translated into 12 languages.

Working in business clusters presents another opportunity for local and international firms with shared business interests to make investments that result in the enhanced competitiveness of all members. Clusters are formal organizations of entities in a community or city that share professional interests, such as businesses in the same industry, or those in an industry value chain. Businesses in the greater travel and tourism sector likely share many of the same interests regarding young people.

Working together on issues of mutual concern—such as joint investing in life skills training—can help bring training to scale, resulting in economic gains for individual businesses, the cluster, youth, and the community as a whole.

Clusters frequently form so that they can address market failures that impact their businesses, such as inadequate public investment in preparing youth for jobs. Where market failures are clearly identified, global firms that are members of local clusters can be in an especially strong position to approach governments for economic and policy support for cluster interests.

At the same time, as governments increasingly demand evidence-based solutions to social needs, the hospitality industry could find that its ability to develop sound, youth-friendly policy recommendations is hindered by a lack of information. Although the industry regularly collects data on customer preferences, rooms, rates, business trends, and the like, it lacks crucial information on a range of issues related to youth, including

- ◆ the impact of the global hospitality industry on youth economic development;
- ◆ how young people and their host communities view jobs in the sector, why young people enter the industry, and why they leave; and
- ◆ how hospitality clusters can be best utilized to realize sustainable gains for youth and employers.

To help fill knowledge gaps about the hospitality industry, enhance peer learning, and facilitate policy formation, the industry would benefit from establishing partnerships with academic and research institutions.

Hilton Worldwide and the International Youth Foundation recently entered a three-year partnership to address the challenge of creating training and work opportunities for youth around the world. The partnership was created to draw on the special capacities and unique resources of both partners to contribute to a shared goal: to provide opportunities for employment and life skills training to youth in developing regions. Hilton Worldwide and IYF share an approach that views young people, fundamentally, not as problems to be solved, but as assets to be valued and cultivated. The partnership is characterized by a deep commitment from both parties to do more than simply launch programs. By partnering with IYF, Hilton Worldwide is creating a strategic, long-term vision for making youth development inherent to the way the company does business.

# ACTION PLAN FOR THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Hospitality employers—global chains in particular—have a compelling, urgent interest in helping young people become employable and employed. Numerous actions are available to industry stakeholders to prepare a breathtaking number of youth for hospitality jobs. The following three actions are priorities.

1

**Design a companywide strategy for youth development.** An organizational commitment to youth development, such as Hilton Hotels & Resorts' Bright Blue Futures, will enable hospitality brands and companies to set ambitious targets, obtain socially significant results, tailor programs to address local needs, and stay focused over the long term. To keep pace with the industry's growth projections, youth development activities should be widely accessible and scalable. In addition to training a skilled workforce, a companywide response will foster brand allegiance, promote loyalty internally, enable the company to learn from young people about how to better reach their peers, and enhance the image of the hospitality sector as a whole.

2

**Build knowledge for the company, the industry, and other stakeholders in youth well-being.** At no time in the past has an industry looked to confront the challenge of youth unemployment at the scale that is required. Yet, a great deal of information that is essential to successful youth development efforts is unavailable. In addition to the potential benefits a bold youth initiative will bring to young people and the hospitality industry, it presents an enormous new learning opportunity. Whether designing innovative e-learning methodologies or assessing the effectiveness of apprenticeship programs for disadvantaged youth, the industry has a rare opportunity to fill knowledge gaps that span sectors. Through its efforts to prepare young people for employment, the hospitality industry can make a significant contribution not only to youth around the world, but to the broader business, research, and development communities, as well.

3

**Develop measures of accountability and progress.** The industry would benefit from a tool that helps it assess the condition of youth over time. In response to the crucial need for such an instrument, Hilton Worldwide and IYF are developing a Youth Well-being Index and a Hospitality Industry Impact Framework. The index will summarize data on youth well-being in key domains, such as education, employment, and youth outlook. Using a subset of the domains and indicators from the index, the Hospitality Industry Impact Framework will allow users to evaluate the extent to which the hospitality industry is mobilizing its resources and expertise to contribute to youth development. Such tools can stimulate interest and investment in youth well-being in countries around the globe and help track progress toward youth development goals that are relevant to the hospitality industry and society as a whole.

# CONCLUSION

The hospitality industry is poised for growth, but its success depends on its ability to develop the skills and talents of its greatest asset: young people. Every year, 120 million youth become the industry's potential recruits, yet the hospitality sector—like other employers—is challenged to hire people whose skills match its needs. If the hospitality sector can bring its scope and scale to bear on the youth employment challenge, it can fulfill its own needs for a trained workforce while empowering young people around the world to acquire the means and achieve the stability they need to enter adulthood with renewed hope for a bright future.



**For the well-being of youth  
and the hospitality industry,  
the time to act is now.**

# END NOTES

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The International Youth Foundation (IYF) invests in the extraordinary potential of young people. Founded in 1990, IYF builds and maintains a worldwide community of businesses, governments, and civil-society organizations committed to empowering youth to be healthy, productive, and engaged citizens. IYF programs are catalysts of change that help young people obtain a quality education, gain employability skills, make healthy choices, and improve their communities. To learn more, visit [www.iyfnet.org](http://www.iyfnet.org)

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