

Is talent management a strategic priority in the hospitality sector?

As *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes (WHATT)* enters its 10th year, I am delighted to welcome back theme editor Norma D'Annunzio-Green who co-edited our third issue in 2008. Norma and her colleagues considered the question: What are the contemporary human resource issues for talent management in hospitality and tourism?, and in her opening article, Norma reflects on the outcomes of that issue, progress made since then and the rationale for her follow-up theme issue question: Is talent management a strategic priority in the hospitality sector? I would also like to thank Norma's team of contributors and reviewers for their wide-ranging review and engagement with practitioners who are themselves struggling with talent management issues. Here is what Norma said about the process: "I was struck by how challenging all of the writing team found the different writing style with its focus on practice-based and relevant action-oriented outcomes. Almost all of the practitioner reviewers recommended that the action-orientated outputs of the articles needed to be enhanced. In this way, they were pushing the academics to come up with better evidence-based solutions to their problems. There is still a gap between what academics and practitioners view as useful and relevant and unless that gap is reduced, valuable opportunities to learn from each other will be lost". Norma's reflection is exactly why *WHATT* was launched 10 years ago and I would also like to thank Emerald and all the publishing professionals who have helped us to establish a successful journal.

WHATT aims to make a practical and theoretical contribution to hospitality and tourism development, and we seek to do this by using a key question to focus attention on an industry issue. If you would like to contribute to our work by serving as a *WHATT* theme editor, do please contact me.

Richard Teare
Managing Editor, WHATT

Is talent management a strategic priority in the hospitality sector?

The rapid growth and ever-changing environment in the hospitality sector (WTTC, 2015) creates demands for stakeholders to be strategic, agile and flexible with responses to a range of leadership and, in particular, talent management challenges. In such environments, the ability to identify and retain and develop current potential and future talent can play a pivotal role in business transformation. Everyone is uniquely talented but not all of that talent is fully enabled in the world of work. Imagine a hospitality organisation where all employees' talents are on display, aligned with business needs and employee aspirations. Or where employees' talents are recognised, rewarded and developed rather than being stifled or sidelined. While these scenarios may seem far removed from some workplace experiences, there are many employees, line managers and senior leaders who spend time and effort thinking about how we can best enable the development of employees' unique talents, aligned with the business needs, as well as considering employee well-being and high levels of hospitableness for our guests. This is what I mean by a *strategic approach to talent management* and nowhere is this more significant than in the hospitality sector where the interface between the guest and the employee guides and shapes the service experience that defines business success. This theme issue does not aim to solve the issues raised above but broadens the knowledge base and debate around the question *Is talent management a strategic priority in the hospitality sector* by presenting a collection of conceptual case study-



based and practitioner viewpoint articles that examine action-focused research, policy and practice from different stakeholders' perspectives.

Since I co-edited a previous issue of *WHATT* more than 10 years ago, talent management has come a long way in both academic and practitioner fields. Yet within the hospitality sector now, many of the challenges and tensions uncovered then are still relevant, and new challenges have emerged. It felt timely to re-visit the area and provide an update. On a professional level, this theme issue demonstrates the depth of knowledge within Edinburgh Napier University on the subject of talent management and illustrates a strong critical mass of academic expertise within our institution. In the design process, I drew upon wide-ranging expertise, and have assembled a team of Edinburgh Napier academic staff, alongside Associate and Emeritus Professorial staff. In some cases, lead authors worked with esteemed academic staff of Edinburgh Napier. The diversity of the hospitality industry is illustrated by contributions from the following sub-sectors: luxury five star hotels, medium-sized family run hotels, chain and independent restaurants and bars, conference centres, multinational and independent coffee shops. These represent the scope and width of the sector from micro businesses to SME's, from social enterprises to multinational corporations. We have spoken to entrepreneurs, owner-managers, HR managers, line managers, employees and senior policymakers in both private and public spheres. We have also included our alumni as respondents and reviewers and of course other internal and external academic staff. All articles have been reviewed by at least one academic and one practitioner reviewer, helping to ensure that the articles are accessible and relevant to practice.

While some of the articles are conceptual and have a strong research base, the guiding principles of the *WHATT* journal philosophy have shaped the strong practice-based and "action" focus of all the articles. I hope that this theme issue will help to bridge the gap between research and practice in the area of strategic talent management and result in equal measures of professional reflection and development, practice-based action and academic debate around the field.

I would like to express genuine appreciation to my academic colleagues, the authors of the articles that appear within this issue, especially given its unique practice and professionally relevant focus, which required a different style of writing and close engagement with hospitality industry respondents. Many of the experienced writers have growing pressures to publish in certain journals, so I am indebted to them for agreeing to support an academic journal whose aim is to produce thought-provoking and relevant articles, accessible to a wide range of readers with a strong action orientation. I would also like to thank Managing Editor Richard Teare for his support and expert guidance.

We could not have produced this issue without generous help and support from nearly 50 respondents representing diverse companies in the hospitality sector who gave us access to their views and perceptions and participated in focus groups, one-to-one interviews, surveys and round table conversations, either face to face or by using skype and other online methods.

Finally, I would like to thank all the academics, industry practitioners and alumni of Edinburgh Napier, who helped me with the peer review process. It was particularly refreshing to obtain feedback from industry representatives about how useful and relevant the articles were to professional practice. All of your comments were invaluable and resulted in the authors making useful changes and improvements.

Norma D'Annunzio-Green
Theme editor

Reference

WTTC (2015), *Travel and Tourism World Economic Impact*, World Travel and Tourism Council, London.

About the theme editor

Norma D'Annunzio-Green is a Senior Lecturer in Human Resource Management (HRM) in the School of International Business at Edinburgh Napier University. Up until recently, she was the Subject Lead in the area of HRM where she was responsible for a team of academic staff and was able to shape and lead the team's strategic direction and talent management processes. Her role is diverse, engaging in teaching, programme leadership, research and professional practice. Having held senior roles in HRM within the hospitality sector, Norma has always been fascinated by how HRM is experienced by stakeholders in the hospitality sector and she has co-written a book and a number of journal articles on this area. Her scholarly interests and publications cover the areas of talent management and performance management, as well as pedagogic research on teaching and learning. Her work has been published in *Employee Relations*, *Personnel Review*, *The International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* and *Studies in Higher Education* among others. She works with academics, students and professional bodies in both the UK and Singapore to develop academic programmes that develop students' knowledge and self-confidence so that they can effectively transfer that learning to make a positive impact in their professional roles. Norma obtained her Masters in HRM from Stirling University and has recently gained Senior Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy.