



Covid-19: Impact on skills

in tourism and hospitality

Recommendations for recovery



To assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the skills needs of the tourism and hospitality industry in Northern Ireland, the Hospitality and Tourism Skills (HATS) network in collaboration with People 1st International surveyed 376 employers across the sector. Results of the survey can be viewed here: www.people1st.co.uk/HATS-network

Resilience in the aftermath of COVID-19 is key to the recovery of these important economic sectors. Several short-term recommendations are emerging as critical factors to consider as employers plan to re-emerge and open their doors.

RECOMMENDATIONS 10 CRITICAL FACTORS TO CONSIDER

1

Follow the government guidance for safe operating practice and ensure staff are trained in social distancing measures, new workplace standards and infection prevention and hygiene control.



Staff need to be empowered to use their initiative and make decisions when faced with new situations and managing evolving needs of customers. To do this effectively, staff need to understand why certain things are different so they can best apply this knowledge with confidence.

2

Use the new Professional Standard for Service Operators to make sure training meets the industry-recognised standard.



The free-to-use guidance acts as a checklist and clearly outlines the skills, knowledge and behaviours required. Training to meet this standard is now available and WorldHost 2020 is an example of how a 60-minute online course with assessment can give employers the assurance and evidence that their staff are equipped with the skills required to deliver exceptional service while operating in a safe environment.

3

Invest in technology



It is important to work out how technology can be adapted to support the business. Websites, apps, bookings processes, protecting customer data, reporting and tracking physical customer contact if new cases of COVID-19 are reported, in order to alert other customers and colleagues are all important. Allocating space, ordering, paying, queuing for toilet facilities and providing feedback on service can also be facilitated through remote-based solutions.

4

Consider alternative shift patterns



Rotating Team A and Team B or more teams in order to be able to isolate employees who only work together on shifts if new cases arise means businesses can continue to keep operating.

5

Work closely with industry trade associations



To achieve a shared vision for the industry, which is led by standards, employers must work closely with their industry association for effective two-way communication with central/local government.

6

Recognise the importance of digital, green and social skills



Social skills will be even more important to the reputation of how well businesses meet changing customer needs. This, coupled with the adaptation of technology to support the business, means staff will need to hold related digital skills to help ensure a sustainable future for the business. Green skills will be even more crucial in the future as consumers are more aware about where and why they choose to spend their time and money.

7

Raise consumer confidence



When communities and destinations collaborate and work effectively at a local level to enforce national guidelines then public confidence will be restored. Giving customers assurance that front-facing teams are equipped to keep them safe will be critical beyond the pandemic. The WorldHost 2020 badge is an example of a symbol that investment in personal protection and social safety measures are in place.

8

Don't underestimate the importance of communication



The power of loyalty, emotional connection and appreciation from satisfied customers about the impact and importance of the changes made to sustain a safe environment for everyone needs to be captured. There is a new sense of belonging and a cultural shift in how important this is to people who might have experienced anxiety from isolation and have been unable to work or socialise with friends or family. This needs to be brought into the workplace, to keep colleagues and customers up to date, informed and included.

9

Empower managers



Managers need to be empowered to steer the business through disruption to normality and stay on course for survival. Managers are now responsible for monitoring and managing risks associated with keeping a business safe from new cases of COVID-19. Monitoring performance will be more critical now than ever. Ensuring managers are equipped with critical thinking, decision-making and problem-solving skills will be important in meeting changing customer needs and managing uncertainty.

10

Value the greatest asset



Regardless of business size, people are the greatest asset. Those who have chosen to work in tourism and hospitality at every level are the key to the economic recovery of this sector. People make the difference and employers who have treated and trained their people well during this time will recover quicker and stronger, with a brighter future. Key to this is to share best practice.

For more information visit, www.people1st.co.uk/HATS-network