



Jennifer Lee, group HR director of Jurys Inn, says informal interviews can put candidates at ease  
Picture: Maura Hickey

# Room to improve hotel recruitment process

The hospitality sector faces a challenge in recruitment, with 73 per cent of hotels reporting problems in finding qualified entry staff. Companies need to adapt their recruitment process and behaviours to encourage more young people to enter the industry, according to Jennifer Lee, group HR director of Jurys Inn, which employs 2,000 people across Europe including 360 in Ireland. "Young people are changing and they are very different to previous generations. They are learning, communicating and interacting in very, very different ways. We have had to review our recruitment and selection processes to try to bear that in mind," she said. "They often have that challenge of coming from a background where they have no work experience, and perhaps no qualifications, so how do they get their foot in the door to start on the career ladder? I

think that is where hospitality can come in and certainly from Jurys' perspective we have been very proactive." Hotels are a people business, so in Jurys recruitment isn't about qualifications or even experience, added Lee; it is about attitude. "If you have the right attitude, we can train you to do everything else. That is our core theme in HR, it is about providing opportunities," she said. Simple initiatives like removing the interview process from a formal one-to-one environment by meeting the candidate in the restaurant or bar where there is activity going on helps by putting them at ease. Group interviews are also used. "We find that they will open up a bit more when they are interacting with groups," Lee said. The company is also making greater use of Facebook and Twitter. A completely

revamped induction programme now includes blended e-learning, and the firm is looking at gamifying customer relations training. "We have had to adapt our whole HR approach toward the changing expectations of young people and we see that as a very positive thing," Lee said. Last year, a new recruitment process was launched and any manager in the business involved in recruiting was educated about the changing expectations of young people. "Young people are looking for different things. They are looking for a dynamic environment, which hospitality certainly offers. They are looking for variety and we offer multi-skilling. Some hotels are very department-focused, but in Jurys Inn you get an opportunity to work in a number of different departments and that appeals to young people and it is something we sell," Lee said.

**“The beauty about hospitality is that you can start anywhere**

Jurys uses two streams of progression to management – its graduate recruitment programme Grow, and Insights, an internal programme developed in Dublin and rolled out to the UK to provide a pathway to promotion for people who join the business without qualifications. "The beauty about hospitality is that you can start on the shop floor and over half

of our general managers have started there and ended up in senior roles. It is a sector that gives huge opportunity for people to travel and to move into areas like sales, revenue management, IT and finance, and we have programmes that can facilitate that," Lee said. The Irish Hotels Federation is actively lobbying for an apprenticeship model to be introduced to Ireland and Lee said this would be a "great step forward" for the industry. Its chief executive Tim Fenn said that a formalised structure was needed and that it was working with Fáilte Ireland and training authority Solas to put that in place. "There is a great opportunity for us to restore and resurrect the craft apprenticeships and traineeships which will allow people to earn and learn, not just for a qualification but in a manner that would be linked to a career path for those with the initiative and capabilities to move forward," he said.



Tim Fenn



Dolores O'Connor



Kieran Moore

## Hotel industry recovery gathers momentum

The hospitality industry is set to grow, and well-paid jobs at the top are practically guaranteed for those willing to work hard, writes Gareth Naughton

The tourism and hospitality sector is recovering, with growing numbers of overseas visitors underpinning a revival in fortunes that started in 2011, but is now really gathering steam. More than 23,000 jobs were created in the hospitality sector between 2011 and 2013. The potential to create many more over the next six years is high as long as Ireland retains its competitiveness, according to Irish Hotels Federation chief executive Tim Fenn.

Generally people who like the hospitality industry are 'people' persons. . . When you are dealing with people up close and personal, you need a personality which has a service mentality," he said.

It is also about opportunity. It is one of those industries where it is still possible to start off at the lowest rung of the ladder and make it to the top; the most far-fetched thing about the Jennifer Lopez film Maid In Manhattan was not that a domestic operative in a top-class New York hotel might be plucked from her position and fast-tracked on to a management programme. Candidates with third-level qualifications are, obviously, highly desired, but not to the exclusion of those without.

"There are no real barriers to moving up the line in hotels," said Fenn, "People can come in at entry level. They can work their way through the system, develop the skills that are required and work into se-

nior management roles." Equally, the hotel industry draws from other sectors, with a huge variety of roles available across a range of disciplines. Hotels are no longer the fiefdoms of Basil Fawlty-type general managers.

"You have to look at a hotel as being a complex industrial building with all functions of business, from sales to HR to finance to revenue management through to food preparation. There is a massive number of jobs, and quite a lot of them are senior in complexity and responsibility," said Fenn.

### Apprenticeship for management

The industry does suffer from the perception that the work is unskilled and low-paid. There is truth in that at the operative level, but Dolores O'Connor, director of Ambassador Recruitment, said that people need to re-orientate their thinking on those jobs.

"Really when you come in at the lower end, that is your apprenticeship for management. What we are finding is that colleges are preparing them for the basics, but it is really when you get into industry that your apprenticeship begins. There are some fantastic hotels there that will give a great career path for people. Never work in a bad job. If it is not a good job, just move."

Opportunities at management level are increasing, with an expanding number of roles available. And the rewards are lucrative, according to Moore, but you must be prepared to work hard and ensure that you formalise your qualifications and constantly upskill.

**“There are some fantastic hotels there that will give a great career path for people**

## People Problems Relationship breakdown

# Stobart made to pay the price for breaking employment law

Shift rosters can be tricky to arrange, especially with unforeseen events that may mean someone has to stay on longer or someone else is delayed or fails to show up due to illness or family issues. This is especially so in the transport sector, where deliveries and collections often have to be pre-arranged. Well-managed companies often plan their rosters well in advance and make sure that everyone knows their start and finish times. Rosters are arranged at least two weeks in advance and employees are usually sent their roster and shift hours by text or e-mail. This does not happen in every workplace, unfortunately, and rosters can become a repeated cause for concern and a festering grievance for employees unsure of their working patterns, which they may have to co-ordinate with a partner to manage childcare or other responsibilities. This became a running problem for drivers with Stobart (Ireland) Ltd – a trucking and transport company that has expanded in Britain and Ireland in recent years – especially after it took over distribution work for the Tesco supermarket chain.



Gerald Flynn

Eleven drivers took a collective complaint to a Rights Commissioner last year, claiming that the trucking firm was in breach of the Organisation of Working Time Act and, in particular, the European Union Road Transport Regulations, which are designed to enhance safety with specified rest periods and restrictions on long driving shifts. The Rights Commissioner upheld many of their complaints earlier this year, and awarded each of the Stobart drivers €5,000 in compensation. Stobart appealed this decision to the Labour Court. Its lawyers made two specific complaints. It argued that the Rights Commissioner should not have granted the drivers an extension in making their original complaints and, secondly, that any breaches should only be considered within a six-week window between December 2011 and January 2012.

The drivers did not object to these arguments and so the Labour Court decided to overturn the original findings insofar as they related to alleged breaches outside the New Year period. Drivers' union representative Karan O'Loughlin said the drivers' rest periods were broken by having to phone Stobart's offices, sometimes repeatedly, to find out when their next shift would begin. This, she claimed, broke their 11-hour consecutive rest period, which under section 13 of the working time act, should be followed by 24 hours. There has been a history of disputes between Stobart (Ireland) Ltd and its drivers in the Siptu union over rosters and working time with other Labour Court hearings earlier this year. Stobart's lawyer argued that the rest periods exceed those required under the regulations and having to contact their employer to find out their next start-time did not interfere with their rest. He added that "rest time" is defined as any time that is not working time. "Working time" usually means when somebody is at their place of work or at the disposal of their employer. The Labour Court differ-

entiated between someone making a phone call enquiry and having to make a call under pain of disciplinary action. Presumably, had the drivers not phoned to check their start time and had not turned up at that time, they would have risked their employer imposing a sanction, so all of their rest time was not their own. Stobart confirmed that it would take disciplinary sanctions against any driver who failed to make these calls on their weekly rest periods and so it was part of their contracted duties and effectively broke their con-

**“Stobart, through its lawyer, admitted these night-time shift breaches**

The drivers further complained that their employment contracts did not set out specific start and finish times for their shifts so they were entitled, under the working time regulations, to 24-hours clear notice of their shift starting times. This, they said, meant driver finishing at 7pm on a Tuesday and starting a new shift at 11am on Wednesday, should be informed of their Wednesday start-time no later than 11am on Tuesday morning.

Stobart argued that it could not be more specific about shift times as it depended on customers' delivery requirements, drivers' absences or other unforeseen events and it expected drivers to operate on a "task to finish" basis if there are delivery or traffic delays. These arguments had been considered in two other Labour Court hearings involving Stobart work practices and, in the absence of any collective agreements or contractual terms allowing for opened-shifts depending on workloads and delivery volumes, Stobart was also in breach of the regulations. For the lack of 24 hours advance notice, each driver was awarded a further €1,000 bringing a total of €3,750. With the awards costing more than €41,000, on top of earlier cases and the associated legal costs, it might be a good idea to develop a computerised shift-allocation system with automated notification to employees. This does not just apply to delivery truck drivers, but also to shifts in other employments.

Gerald Flynn is an employment specialist with Align Management Solutions, gfflynn@alignmanagement.net

## Movers & Shakers

Brought to you by Michael Page  
Worldwide leaders in specialist recruitment

### Michael Page



Phil McGee has been appointed vice-president of commercial and industrial sales at the Nualight Group. He comes to the firm from NXP Semiconductors where he was also vice-president.



Dublin footballer Alan Brogan joins Custodian Consultancy as a commercial manager. He joins the firm from TPI where he was an account manager for four years.



Data management solutions provider Asystec has hired Brendan Crossey as director of business analytics at its new Belfast office. He had previously been an account manager with EMC Computer Systems.



Sam Doundoulakis has been promoted to the role of marketing manager at Clonmel Healthcare, having spent seven years as a brand manager with the firm. She joined Clonmel Healthcare from Mitsubishi Fuso.

Looking for the top talent? Ready for your next opportunity?  
With 156 offices across 34 countries we have an unrivalled network of talented professionals and world-class job opportunities. Get in touch with our Dublin office now to find out how we can help you.  
Tel: +(353) 01 653 9800 www.michaelpage.ie