Accor Hospitality and Hotels: 
A Compelling Pledge for Employees

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Abstract
Accor Hospitality and Hotels, spanning the business of hospitality and hotels, through luxury segments and budget hotels, has been consistently ranked since three years, as a Great Place To Work For. More significantly, its design of rewards and recognition programmes have been acknowledged and awarded. Accor India, systematically follows some of the systems and processes of its parent, France, headquartered, Accor. There have been adaptations in India to cater to local culture and practices. Accor is known to focus on and treat its employees as its engaging partner in its growth and sustenance. This philosophy is reflected in its superior and superlative learning and development initiatives, talent management programmes, sustainable initiatives and commitments, rewards and recognition systems and components, career pathing approach and corporate social responsibility in spirit and action. The following Case Study details its underlying philosophy of employee centricism and its aspirational destination for employees.

Keywords:

Introduction
Accor Hospitality chain of Hotels spread across more than 92 countries, has been known worldwide for reinventing hospitality, sustainability to nurture smart, responsible and sustainable growth. For example, in India, this growth through the Planet 21 initiative is translated in its seven pillars related to sustainability which include carbon, local, development, employment, environment conservation and health. These are further translated into 21 commitments, some of which include, in the arena of health, purchase and acquisition of eco labeled products in all its hotels, responsible food and beverages offering in terms of nutrition, disease prevention through hygiene maintenance and so on. The chief distinguishing characteristic of Accor Hotels, running the gamut of hotels in India since the year 2006, from the luxury to the budget, is the adoption of an active strategy by its parent headquarters, to develop the model of a franchised/joint venture hotel network. Jean Michel Chasse, Senior VP, Operations, India had quoted, the adoption of diversity and fair employee centric practices as the chief elements constituting its workplace culture in all its hotels spread across the world.

Accor holds the distinction of being the only hotel in the hospitality sector to be ranked as a great place to work for, by the Great Place To Work For institute, in the US, UK, China, Argentina and India. This France headquartered hospitality enterprise is known to give its staff the same attention as its guests, in spirit and action. Chasse, in India, was quoted as saying, “This award demonstrates Accor’s commitment to continually enhancing the professional growth of its employees by setting innovative new standards in the work place. This recognition would not have been possible without the active support, cooperation and dedication of our employees and I take this opportunity to thank them for the role they have all played in helping Accor to earn this accolade.” It plans to open 38 hotels across India by 2014. Some of its brands spanning from the luxury segments to the budget segments include Sofitel, Novotel, Mercure, Ibis, Hotel Formule1 and Pullman.

Accor India is known to deeply value its employees and motivate them for a superior interaction with the guests. In order to enhance the talent and skills of employees, Accor India has created very systematic and well structured policies and practices. Their values of innovation, trust, conquest in terms of growth and risk taking combined with a team spirit of camaraderie is focused very strongly. These initiatives and practices, closely related with each other, have worked towards establishing the place of Accor India as a highly employee centric organization. The following are elaborated below:

Learning and Development Activities
The Academie Accor India offer a variety of learning experiences to assist its employees meet their professional development needs, promote the acquisition and development of skills to improve the quality of service offered to its customers and spread and strengthen the values and culture of Accor. The range of activities promoted by the Academie include classroom training, flexible self paced online e-learning, informal learning through having new experiences such as being part of project teams or discussion forums and cross exposure missions in another department or hotel within or outside India.
The following are some of the certifications offered by the Academie:

1. **Train the trainer:** This certification is aimed to train the Team Leaders in order to facilitate the improvement in performance and competency of the members and adopt the various tools to enhance the same.

2. **Leadership Development Programme:** Accor India, like its parent company, strongly adheres to the policy of internal promotions of its managers who exhibit the competencies of leaders and reflect the spirit of passion. The design of the leadership development programme is aimed to teach the skills of leadership through a structured mentoring programme. The mentee after a theoretical exposure of nuances of skills and performance competencies is expected to prepare a Performance Development Plan. These are to be manifested in the execution of his Project closely monitored by his mentor. The competency of cross incorporation of perspectives and ideas are also measured, known to be important for development of leaders. After the observation and measurement of the project execution by the mentee, a formal evaluation is made by the committee. The certificate is awarded only after a thorough examination and monitoring of the above components. As Atul Goyal, Senior Human Resource Manager, elaborates, “We have a painstakingly and meticulously developed learning and development modules catering to different segments. Apart from the regular behavioural training programmes, we have designed different learning programmes for different departments, functions, like a revenue management model in different levels. It covers the basics like inventory management for the role of gatekeeper or the sales personnel and graduates up to the strategic revenue issues required at the top levels. “The leadership development programme designed for its various levels of potential leaders is robust. As Goyal explains,” After a detailed 360 degree feedback and performance review of the potential leader, a mentor is identified for him. He exposes the mentee to areas of cross exposure learning and special projects that would serve as a learning platform to the mentee. For example, the specialist is deputed on an assignment related to any new opening of a hotel, in order to gain a diverse exposure related to processes, handling of uncertainties, .Subsequently, the project of the mentee and his progress is reviewed periodically and feedback is shred as a follow up. Supplementing this exercise, the potential leader is expected to clear tests related to levels of revenue management. All this is tailored to suit the profile of the identified candidate at Accor.

3. **Communication Certification:** The belief of Accor in the significance of interpersonal communication and relationship building among its guests and employees is very strong. It is also embedded in its core values. There is a specially designed programme to facilitate and forge smooth interpersonal communication. Team members and managers are exposed to and taught the various forms of communication. The impact of the various forms of communication adopted are measured and shared with the members in order to help them to continuously improve. This is deeply aligned with the philosophy of Accor, where guest and staff centricism is paramount in all their dealings and values. The design of their Training Roadmap is unique. It covers duration of 2/3 months for entry level jobs and increases up to 36 months as one grows up in the hierarchy. Elaborates Goyal,” Every employee at all levels needs to mandatorily undergo some allocated hours of training depending upon the position and role of the personnel. Our thrust on training for enhanced performance is paramount.”

At Accor India, aligned with the learning interventions at Accor headquarters, the performance management systems are designed to imbibe the parent work culture and standards of behavior, tried and tested to produce exemplary results. The culture of deputing a Functional Champion in every Accor hotel spread in the world is to impart standard working practices and sharing best practices adopted word wide. Another initiative to forge a closer collaboration and internal bonding among employees of Accor across all over the world, is the competition titled “Accor Professional Challenge” where young employees in the age group of 19-25 years take part in the contests related to kitchen, reception, F & B, and bars. The winners are felicitated and are rotated among the different international destinations where Accor has a presence.

**Talent Management Programmes**

Accor India, like its parent organization, has designed special programmes to manage its top talent in various functions. Mentions Atul Goyal, “In its talent initiative called STARS, there is a systematic, process of identifying, developing and deploying talent across all functions and rotating them among operations all over the world in order to gain a global exposure and cross cultural sensitivity.” This has been known to work well for Accor India. As Goyal elaborates, “The STAR talent programme has a special focus on talent. It covers critical talent measured as high performance and high potential and then there is high potential and low performance talent identified for whom a separate track is designed. These programmes are tailor made for individuals according to the measured level of talent. The objective is
to retain both these critical segments.” A similar initiative is extended to the General Managerial positions among all functions of Accor. The Performance Development Review process is an attempt to facilitate the development of the general managers and make them eligible for promotions within Accor. The Mobility programmes initiated at Accor India are aimed to facilitate the continuing talent management design. As suggested by the name of this programme, employees across all levels and functions are selected on the basis of their performance measures or ad hoc career planning meetings. These who become eligible, are deputed to the various Accor hotels across the world, trained in those cultures and practices and thus stand to gain multicultural exposure. Such competencies are known to foster innovation and creativity.

Career Development
The belief in the significance of the career development of its employees is strong. In order to achieve this objective, Accor has designed a well structured career path for its various levels of employees. One of the initiatives is a job rotation model. In this design, employees are rotated in different related positions and countries. The basis of selection is the discussion with the ad hoc committees or the performance review process. The objective of this exercise is to make a more mobile and flexible workforce in order to enable the best use of knowledge, skills and abilities. Moreover, with the Accor hotels spread all over the globe, employees get an opportunity to learn the sensibilities of different cultures in culture and learn best shared practices in the different hotels. The exercise of career development is taken very seriously at Accor India. Goyal reflects on the beneficiaries of these programmes.” For talented employees aspiring to grow at Accor, the prospects through our policies and programmes is immense. We, as HR personnel, through our philosophy and practices, wish to facilitate promotion and growth of talented personnel at Accor.”

Diversity At Accor
Accor proactively has an inclusive diversity practice. Being spread across all over the world, they strongly believe in respecting and encouraging local culture manifestations in each of the country where its hotels are situated. In India, cultural festivals like Diwali, Holi, Raksha bandhan are celebrated with fervor. As a part of its diversity memorandum, employees drawn from the under privileged, are given preference for employment and promotions/ career development. The working environment of the organization is characterized with valuing differences among employees, proactively pursuing the spirit of diversity, imparting fair and equal practices, taking stringent action against anti bullying and discriminatory practices. The following diversity related programmes are being implemented across all hotels in all over the world including India: disabled employment programme; management ethics guide training; cross cultural training; community programme; equal opportunity programme; non discriminatory internal policy and so on.

Rewards and Recognition Programme
Accor India has received several meritorious acknowledgements from organizations like Best Companies To Work For and Great Places To Work For. It has been catapulted in a higher scale, being the only hotel from the hospitality sector, to be chosen, from a total of 25,000 employees spanning various industries. The innovation in the design of its rewards and recognition schemes, designing a competitive compensation structure, is included in the area of long service, performance, creative inputs and innovation in practices. Examples of the same include Accor excellence award, Accor seniority award, Carte Bienvenue which honours creativity through discount cards for hotel stay and food at the Accor hotels spread in the world. Its innovatively structured rewards and recognition programmes have been designed by globally recognized experts in the field of employee engagement. The Rewards and Recognition schemes, as Goyal discusses, are strategically designed after taking into account the parameters and measures of competitive salaries, direct and linear relationship with the superior, career pathing, talent and on the job performance, and exclusive training and development interventions completed. These schemes cover the parameters of potential of personnel, roles, and grades and the translation of the vision and imbibing of values at Accor. The design of a Competitive salary and Compensation Framework is applicable worldwide; the implementation of this framework is adapted locally in order to suit the culture and requirements of the locally situated hotels of Accor in each country. Ashwin Shirali, Regional Director, Accor, had stated regarding this adaptability.” Accor India deeply values its 4,500 employees and their outstanding commitment to providing a superior guest experience. We are proud to reward and recognise our staff, who epitomise the Group’s spirit and values. Accor India has laid the foundations to being the employer of choice in the hospitality industry and we will continue to innovate in this area to ensure we can attract, train and retain the best.” For instance, some of the honours of Accor India announced regularly include those related to the following honours: Trainee of the Month, Associate of the Month, Associate of the Quarter, Manager of the Month, Manager of the Quarter, team of the Month and Team of the Quarter. It must also be mentioned that these initiatives are not final and Accor India has been constantly striving to diversify ad create more interesting designs as a part of their rewards and recognition schemes.
Employee Engagement Practices
The values of the spirit of conquest, respect and trust among the employees are pursued very sincerely and seriously at Accor India. It is firmly established in their credo that positive interrelationships at work will translate into better relationships with customers. The value of employee centricism is manifested in their multitude of employee engagement practices. For instance, on joining, the employee is treated to a round of introductions with the personnel in the setting of breakfast or lunch. A special welcome buffet awaits him/her. The celebrations include the festoons and the balloons. On birthdays, celebrated as one day of the month which also coincides with a staff meeting, there is a cake cutting ceremony followed by snacks and savouries. Accor truly believes in forging a hospitality bond among its employees too. The employee, it believes, is a member of its family and so, is acknowledged when he/she gets married, has children, or if there is a death or illness in the family, all possible assistance and support is extended. Reflects Goyal, “We believe in extending our whole hearted support and learning for our employees.” Endorses an employee, Accor India’s belief in the “whole person” from an employees’ perspective is validated by these empathetic actions and these further reinforce the value of a holistic development of an employee at all levels.”

Corporate Social Responsibility
The belief in the welfare of potential employees and members of the society from where the employees are drawn, is translated in the form of extensions activities of Accor Foundation, India, a CSR arm of Accor India. Recently along with a partnership with HOPE, an NGO Foundation, Accor Foundation announced the enrolment of 35 underprivileged, 10th pass students, exhibiting an aptitude to learn, in their kitchen and housekeeping courses under the umbrella of Vocational Hospitality Management Courses. The students passing out would be absorbed at the entry level, in various departments related to the kitchen and housekeeping. Reflected Shirali in his statement to the media,” Ours in an inclusive organization, which does not discriminate on any grounds. We believe in enabling a fair chance to all.”

Concerns and Challenges and Future
Accor India, like the parent company and all its other franchisees, has a far from complacent attitude. Despite the accolades and the awards, there are deep challenges that it continues to address in today’s volatile and uncertain economic times. For instance, the attrition rate at Accor India, continues to be a double digit figure at 30 per cent. The total strength of 4,500 employee workforce is predicted to increase in large measure with the ambitious future plans of opening at least 30/35 hotels across the country in the forthcoming year. In order to stem the attrition rate, Accor India has a structured plan designed. The employee satisfaction survey results demonstrate a high focus and interest in honing talent and developing a gamut of skills. The success of the rewards and recognition design has been acknowledged by Great Places to Work for Organization. It also embodies their philosophy for managing and retention of critical talent at all levels. The 30 per cent attrition figure is seemingly a misnomer. Apart from in house hotel rotations, the entry level employees do leave, as the scheme of promotions is not designed to be open to all. A Goyal concludes,” at our talent and critical skill levels, our attrition rates are negligible.” The example of Accor India stands as a creative role model to be pursued and followed by several organizations, striving to make their organizations, more productive and happy.

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