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INDUSTRY WEEKLY DIGEST

School of Hospitality & Tourism Management

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PEOPLE PROBLEMS

The Hospitality industry has had a tough ride during successive government-imposed lockdowns of the Coronavirus pandemic with much of the sector shuttered or reduced to catering for take-away and home delivery markets. As outlets begin to re-open as part of the government's roadmap, and despite the support of the furlough scheme, recruitment challenges have re-emerged and are taking **centre stage**. In this digest, **Mark Ashton** examines the evolving employment market, and asks if it is now time to consider a step change in how we position hospitality careers?

Have a great weekend!

AS RECRUITMENT RAMPS UP AND STAFF SHORTAGES BITE, NOW IS THE TIME FOR A PARADIGM SHIFT IN HOW WE MARKET HOSPITALITY CAREERS

MARK ASHTON

The positive news stories of strong demand and returning consumer confidence in the first stage of hospitality reopening outdoors in England, were soon overshadowed by concerns relating to staffing and particularly recruiting sufficient staff and skills to service the forecast pent-up demand and buoyant staycation market expected this Summer. Indeed, news sources from the **BBC** to **broadsheet newspapers** and the **industry press** have all run pieces on this issue over the last few weeks.

Despite the Pandemic driven layoffs in the sector and **official statistics** showing a vastly reduced hospitality workforce, the employment landscape has shifted significantly over the last year with large numbers of vacancies and operators finding it hard to recruit, causing surprise to **some**, but not most, who predicted this. Whilst there may be a nervousness to switch employers due to the furlough scheme qualifications in case of further restrictions, there is little doubt that Brexit and a shift of our employees to other sectors are also exacerbating the challenges.



FURTHER READING:

'Quite a challenge': UK restaurants and pubs face staffing crisis after Brexit - The Guardian
Restaurants struggle to find staff ahead of reopening - BBC News

Despite employers' efforts to keep teams on board, since early 2020 many have drifted away from their employment or have **left the country**. Indeed, it is well recognised that swathes of our **European colleagues** have returned home, and others may well have found congenial employment in other sectors too. So, what can be done?

Whilst there are **calls** for a **review** of the (new) immigration system, a plethora of worthy initiatives exist to attract talent through **apprenticeships** and **other means**, further **upskill staff** and **professionalise the sector**. Perhaps the disparate nature of these programmes means a step change is needed in the sector's approach to this recurring issue. With a sense of **optimism in the air**, a rebirth and reopening of the sector with greater co-operation fostered through the Pandemic, maybe now is time for a fully co-ordinated effort to lead a shift change in how hospitality careers are positioned in the UK, to properly address age-old challenges and perceptions? This will involve not only addressing the long hours culture and poor employment practice that still linger in pockets of the sector, but also shifting the opinions of young people, their parents, and the mass media too. For now, and for our students, despite the uncertainties of the past year, there may be no better time to find a first graduate role!