

Hilton is introducing its first Workplace Culture Report – “*The Hospitality Mindset: A New Blueprint for Culture and Performance for Any Industry*” – which uncovers how happiness and hospitality are critical to workplace success. The report’s “Hospitality Hacks” highlight practical, human-centered actions leaders can take to build stronger cultures, showing how investing time in people can strengthen belonging, build confidence and drive performance.



Task Force-style Learning

Successfully developing mutually beneficial mentorship starts at the top. As a business leader, there are simple actions you can take to help inspire your team to evolve and strengthen its bonds through experiential learning together:

- Institute a practice of cross-training:**
Look for ways to take teams out of their comfort zones and learn from one another. It doesn't have to be a formal process like a task force; instead, it can be something done for short-term sprints. Establish one day a month where teams shadow one another, or test out job-swapping. Are there reports or tasks that teams can exchange for a period of time? Can you create micro job swaps for a few days or weeks? This not only creates operational security, but also enables empathy as people walk in each other's shoes.
- Experiment with new mentorship models:**
Test out a new mentorship model where you pair workers of different perspectives, experiences or career stages together for a short mentoring sprint. Give it a beginning, middle and end and come together at its conclusion to have everyone share what they learned.
- Escape your office:**
Top hotel leaders will tell you the most valuable time they spend is not in front of a computer checking email messages, but rather on the hotel floor being visible to guests and talking to team members. They intentionally plan to spend significant portions of their days walking the property, not only to monitor what's happening in real time but also as a way of mentoring in the moment, providing opportunities for real-time feedback as they spot it. As a manager or leader, the more you can walk alongside your team and ask questions as they're learning, the more informed you'll be on what's happening. Intentionally set time in your schedule to walk your own version of the "floor" and view it as a non-negotiable investment into building your culture.
- Try co-creating instead of delegating:**
Workers crave growth and relish learning opportunities. Proactively look for instances where more junior colleagues can co-create a project with you, asking questions along the way. And don't hesitate to give someone a vote of support before they're fully ready – those are often the best opportunities for growth.



Connect as a Community

You don't need to be a hotel to create your own “heart of house.” There are many ways to build community both literally and figuratively that will empower your team to create real-life, human connections and strengthen their overall bonds. Some ways to go about it include:






- Create consistent touchpoints with your team:**
Establish and consistently hold moments where team members can share what's working and what's not. This could take the form of formal office hours, or more casual monthly or quarterly meals. Many hotels do “Coffee with the General Manager,” simple bi-weekly coffee sessions with the top leader (and no other line managers), where teams can openly discuss career interests and goals. This approach creates a personalized channel for upward feedback for leaders and helps them better understand team member experiences, identify themes and respond as appropriate, while reinforcing a sense of accessibility, trust and recognition.
- Plan ongoing moments where team members get to know one another personally:**
This could be as simple as everyone commenting on a fun, non-work-related topic at the beginning of routine meetings, allowing people to show their personalities and interests.
- Look for patterns in your people:**
Thom Caska, complex general manager, Casa Marina Key West, Curio Collection by Hilton & The Reach Key West, Curio Collection by Hilton in Florida, looks for patterns in where people sit in his daily meetings. If he sees somebody sitting farther away or who is more reserved than normal, he'll ask his leadership team to check in. “People find stability in their jobs,” Caska said, so offering safe, supportive spaces to have both good and bad days provides a sense of security.
- Develop a system for follow-through:**
Be clear in what you can or can't do and when you will take action. Then deliver on that promise and make sure it is communicated. Chintan Dadhich, general manager, Conrad New York Downtown and Tempo by Hilton New York Times Square, hosts quarterly breakfasts where he cooks for team members and connects with them. He also commits to providing answers to questions within 48 hours – and then follows through.
- Embrace the power of shared storytelling:**
Hotels often share monthly newsletters that highlight team member stories, achievements and moments that matter. This strengthens communication, increases visibility and reinforces a sense of shared identity across a large and diverse workforce.



Make AI Learning Intriguing, Not Frightening

AI adoption is a big task, one that's daunting when taking it on alone. Hotel leaders have long developed ways of helping teams manage through change and adapt to new tools throughout times of disruption. Those tried-and-true techniques to help non-technical teams adapt can be applied to the AI evolution as well.

Hotel leaders know how to break down complex processes into small, incremental, frequent steps, providing support and reminders along the way. Some techniques that can be applied to AI adaptation include:




-  **Look for "bite-sized" ways of testing a new AI tool or feature together as a group:**
AI is a new world for everyone and no one is an expert yet. Learning – and sometimes failing without fear provides a source of camaraderie and shows vulnerability as a leader.
-  **Create a learning forum:**
Designate an upcoming team meeting to a homegrown AI "hackathon." Ask teams to present their best AI workflow in three minutes or less, which can serve as an inspirational survey of how colleagues are working and provide learning moments together.
-  **Ask teams to find one AI element to teach during the briefing:**
This both helps the group learn together and empowers an individual to show leadership and be viewed as an expert
-  **Recognize and celebrate experimentation:**
Challenge teams with goals of trying new workflows and consistently celebrate successes, both big and small.
-  **Look for ongoing opportunities for emotional check-in points:**
Set aside a segment of an ongoing meeting series to check in on your AI learning journey to see how people are feeling. Are they enthusiastic? Frustrated? Inspired? Ask questions, and listen actively for both what's said and unsaid.



The Art of Reading Human Cues

When people click as a team, work gets easier and results get better. That's easy to say. As a manager, it's much harder to do in reality.

The best-performing hotel teams have leaders with a high emotional quotient, who have learned how to read, assess and rapidly act on human cues. This is a skill that's built into hospitality, where hotel workers are skilled in quickly assessing guest needs and solving problems in real time. That's also a skill that serves managers well – and it can be learned, such as in the following ways:

-  **View investing time in people the same way you value investing money:**
Even in times of budget constraints, there's one resource we all have equally: time. As a leader, plan your investment of time with your team members the same way you would go about planning your budget – and actively listen. Look for ways to challenge them to think bigger.
-  **Don't underestimate the power of the stop-and-chat:**
Hotel general managers are constantly on the move, not only to check on the property, but also to assess how their people are doing. Connecting with teams requires both formal and informal touchpoints, and those quick stop-and-chats often provide incredible intelligence and pay long-ranging dividends.
-  **Look for opportunities to build trust:**
Think of the best managers you've ever had, and trust is likely a key attribute that comes to mind. Actively seek ways to build trust one person at a time. "At its core, my role is to remove obstacles so my team can succeed," said General Manager Misoon Kong. "When I can't, I believe in being transparent – explaining the 'why' and moving forward together. Trust is built in those everyday moments of consistency."



How Leaders Can Put Purpose into Action

Workers are craving meaning on the job – they want to know their work makes a difference, to customers, to colleagues and to the success of the business. One way to drive that feeling is providing them with a sense of empowered autonomy. Some ways to do that include:

-  **Start with autonomy:**
Inspiring leaders don't micromanage. They empower their teams to solve problems quickly and without seeking permission. This inspires trust and a sense of satisfaction.
-  **Employ the power of recognition early and often:**
Use recognition to encourage more of the behavior. To help your team learn how to "find the yes," publicly communicate and celebrate examples when team members take control and solve a problem.
-  **Consistently communicate your shared purpose:**
Work with your team to articulate your specific purpose, then communicate it often – in meetings, in one-on-ones and everything in-between. Use your purpose as a rallying cry, with frequent reminders of why you do what you do, and why it matters.
-  **Think small to go big:**
For General Manager Misoon Kong, the biggest steps often arrive in the smallest packages. "Culture is built in small, consistent actions – not large initiatives. That includes being visible, engaging in real conversations and recognizing individuals in meaningful ways," Kong said. Simply put, "Small moments matter."