



CASE STUDY: TORONTO DON VALLEY HOTEL & SUITES

A Career with no Reservations

The six-story Toronto Don Valley Hotel & Suites (TDV), just northeast of downtown Toronto, is an example of the classic 1960s urban resort hotels. Backing onto a ravine, the hotel is positioned as a hideaway to escape the hustle of the downtown core. The hotel has 385 guest rooms, more than 16,000 square feet of meeting space, and employs more than 135 associates.

Why Do Youth Matter to Toronto Don Valley Hotel & Suites

TDV has been committed to youth for years, as demonstrated by their partnership with the Hospitality Workers Training Centre (HWTC). HWTC aims to make employment more accessible for people who face barriers to opportunities and align their work-life needs with the needs of the hospitality industry. HWTC accomplishes this through coaching and curriculum that is informed and delivered in part by industry professionals and through work-integrated learning. As a partner of HWTC, TDV takes on youth participants as trainees to give them on-the-ground experience and help fulfill course requirements.

In 2017, Toronto saw historic demand for hotel accommodation. This, combined with a retiring workforce, makes it challenging to find enough staff to meet demand. For TDV, sourcing more opportunity youth is a way to expand and diversify its talent pool to better meet hiring needs while helping start young people on a path to a long-term career in hospitality. As with hotels generally, TDV has a high volume of entry-level roles that can be filled by young people looking for work. By being a leader in youth-inclusive hiring, TDV can influence others in the sector to meet their needs while addressing youth unemployment.

Toronto Don Valley Hotel & Suites' Challenge: Successful Onboarding & Retaining Trainees

The first 30 to 60 days are critical to successfully integrating new hires. Yet the onboarding process can be overwhelming for opportunity youth trainees or new hires, for whom this may be a first job. Managers' and trainees' expectations may be different, and trainees may not feel comfortable asking questions about their role or about any needed accommodations. New hires struggling to navigate the many moving parts and competing job requirements may slip under the radar during onboarding, which can compromise their performance and retention.

DID YOU KNOW...



The accommodation and food services sectors employ 76,000 people in Toronto alone, with 12,000 jobs in accommodation and 65,000 in food and beverage services.



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What Toronto Don Valley Hotel & Suites Did

TDV, in partnership with the HWTC, saw an opportunity to test whether a greater emphasis on mentoring would personalize and strengthen its training of youth.

The two organizations have worked closely together since 2013, with HWTC working on the premises to conduct six-week in-class and on-the-floor training courses. TDV and HWTC enhanced the training program with a 45-day pilot, where three Room Attendant trainees were matched with seasoned staff as mentors.

DID YOU KNOW...



42% of back-house employees in hospitality leave within their first 90 days of employment.

Mentorship can help young people feel more confident and ready for their roles.

Source: **Council of Hotel and Restaurant Trainers**

The Difference a Mentor Can Make

A mentor supports youth in their introduction to the workplace and in their development, helping to build confidence and position them for success. The mentoring relationship is an opportunity to:

- > Engage in an open, honest, and continuous dialogue
- > Contribute to the youth's understanding of the job, their team members, themselves, and how they can succeed at work
- > Help the manager gain leadership experience and build empathy, which is shown to increase employee engagement

Generally, mentoring works on three levels: day-to-day work, personal and professional development, and career management. Mentorship programs also have significant business value. They help organizations increase retention, reduce absenteeism, and save money.



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HWTC Training Program	Before the Training	During the Training	Impact Measurement
<p>The HWTC training program was adjusted so that Room Attendant trainees were given one week of in-class instruction and then matched with seasoned housekeeping staff to job shadow for the remaining 5 weeks of the training program.</p>	<p>The Executive Housekeeper met with HWTC to learn more about the trainees' personalities, style of work, strengths, and areas of improvement, then discussed and confirmed which housekeepers to match with trainees.</p> <p>The housekeeper mentors were briefed on the pilot, the objectives and desired outcomes, and tips on mentoring.</p> <p>They were encouraged to discuss their role with trainees, tell them about their career journey, give feedback on technical skills, and provide guidance on how to ask for help and receive feedback. They were asked to help the trainees integrate within the staff community and address any challenges or conflicts.</p>	<p>Trainees shadowed the housekeepers, working alongside them as they completed daily tasks. Trainees took their lunch at the same time as their mentors so that they could meet other staff.</p> <p>The HWTC Journey Coach and Executive Housekeeper established open lines of communication by scheduling check-ins at week two, week 4, and the end of the pilot to monitor the trainees' experience.</p>	<p>To measure the effectiveness of these changes, TDV and HWTC identified two qualitative metrics to track:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased confidence and excitement about the job by youth, and knowledge of longer-term career opportunities• Increased engagement and leadership development of existing TDV staff



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Toronto Don Valley Hotel & Suites' Advice

“Mentoring has the potential to give staff a meaningful way to contribute to the greater good. It builds rapport with a trainee, opens channels for feedback, and can lead to greater engagement and reward.”

– Kevin Porter, General Manager,
Toronto Don Valley Hotel & Suites

“The first 30 days are critical in successfully training and retaining new hires. By matching trainees with a seasoned co-worker, they’ve got a champion in their corner to help them navigate their new responsibilities, share valuable tips and experience, and anticipate and help address any speed bumps along the way.”

– Mandie Abrams, Executive Director,
Hospitality Workers Training Centre

Toronto Don Valley Hotel & Suites' Lessons for Success

➤ “Right-matching” trainees and mentors is key.

To find the best mentor to match a trainee with, have a manager meet with trainees to understand their personality, likes, dislikes, expectations, and past work experience. Sharing these insights with mentors increases their understanding of the trainees, allowing them to establish common ground and better support the trainees. Factors to consider in selecting a mentor are how well aligned they are in ethnic background, age, and years of experience.

➤ Setting mentors up for success.

Mentors will be best positioned to support trainees with up-front guidance and clear expectations on what the role entails, how often and in what ways to check in, and what to talk about during check-ins. Anticipate barriers or concerns a potential mentor may have, such as how this role will affect their ability to deliver on day-to-day responsibilities, and what if any accommodations or adjustments are needed (keeping in mind union agreement stipulations).