

# When Demand Returns, Will Your Hotel be Staffed Correctly?

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*By Stanton D Jacobs, CHA, President of Hospitality Performance Systems, Inc.*



Image from productivityteam.com

**Projecting when a hotel** should bring back its staff to handle increased demand, will be particularly challenging. The lack of business related to the COVID pandemic created curtailed travel, which resulted in an extended period of reduced staffing for many hotels. Getting team members to return,

and / or hire and train new individuals to service your guests, will require time. And if your hotel fails to adequately service these first-time and/or return guests, it could have catastrophic consequences. Relaunching your facility and services is similar to when you first opened a hotel or restaurant. The window of opportunity to create a positive first impression is v short. New guests as well as returning guests will be more discriminating as they evaluate your services. This article will review some of the key steps that should be taken to ensure your hotel is adequately staffed and prepared to create positive guest experiences. Consider the following actions:

**Focus on the short-term needs of the hotel.** When making the critical decision to bring back your past team members, the last thing you or your team members want is to be brought back for a short window of time and then laid off again. Consider the use of contract labor to handle your short term managerial needs. Hourly temp labor will help the hotel deal with the initial fluctuations in demand until more stabilized business is confirmed. Such decisions will



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allow the hotel to avoid the creation of further anxiety and false hope for these valued team members and set the proper stage for when the hotel is truly ready to commit to their permanent return.

**Make preemptive contact with key staff and management to determine if they intend to return to work.** If contact has not been maintained with your managers and staff during this separation period, now would be a good time to reach out and confirm their status. Are they employed in another Industry? Have they acquired new skills, which could benefit an area of the hotel that they were not directly involved in before? Knowing this as soon as possible will allow you to plan accordingly for when your hotel will ramp up its labor force to meet returning demand.

**Be proactive rather than reactive in your ramp up of staffing and training.** As the market returns, not being adequately staffed when it is needed, can be equally detrimental. The following actions are recommended:

- Do not select the target date for when the hotel needs to be fully staffed based upon the current level of business. Base your decisions on where you want to be over the next 8 months. When you first opened your hotel, you set production goals. You will need to make assumptions about an atypical market return, following the Pandemic.
- Identify the lead-time required for hiring, training, and budgeting for this process. If managers who provided input on these types of decisions are no longer within your staff, employ an outside consultant to support this effort.
- Don't make the assumption that the management and staff you were forced to lay off, 12 months earlier, are available or even willing to return. They may have selected an alternate career that they now find more fulfilling than the Hospitality Industry. Frankly, they may also lack trust in you as an employer for laying them off in the first place.
- If some of the hotel's most experienced managers are not returning, further time needs to be allotted to hire new, and potentially less experienced, individuals. Contract with a corporate task force or an outside consultant team to help these new associates hit the ground running. Remember, the first to respond to the returning business typically wins the business!

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- Consider the mental strength of the hotel staff that has been holding down the fort, these past 12 months. These employees have also been performing multiple jobs to compensate for the lack of management. As the General Manager or Owner of the hotel, consider what you can do to motivate and communicate appreciation to these loyal associates. Make sure that you have a returned level of confidence within your current staff, that their job is secure as the hotel moves forward.

**Value team members, who agree to return.** These individuals need to know and be confident that they are truly returning to work for the long term. Remember how emotional it was for you and each team member when they were informed that their position was either being furloughed or laid off. Although the reasons behind the decision were shared, it did not compensate for the added stress and financial insecurity these tenured team members have faced over the past 12 months. Returning associates will help build your future. Make sure that they know that you appreciate their commitment to the future success of the hotel.

**In summary,** we reviewed that the decision to ramp up your hotel staffing to meet returning demand requires a solid and organized plan. We summarized how a short fix utilizing outside support can be the right choice to carry your operation through to long-term gains. And we noted that hotels should be proactive and not reactive in how and when to bring back their staff. Planning for a relaunch of your operation is critical and assumptions will need to be made. Consider pulling in some strong outside support as you move forward.

### **About Hospitality Performance Systems, Inc. (HPS)**

*Hospitality Performance Systems (HPS) was created to provide operational and sales support to the hospitality industry globally. Founded in 2009 this enterprise takes advantage of its founder and President, Stanton D Jacobs, CHA, with over 30 years of proven success in the hospitality industry and strategic relationships globally, HPS is affiliated with a wide array of professionals specializing in their respective disciplines, enabling HPS to provide a wide range of services. <https://www.hps-strategic.com> <https://www.linkedin.com/in/stantonjacobs/>*