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Dallas Business Journal

Friday, September 18, 2009

1 Sheraton Dallas

Dallas Business Journal

SCORE: 93.78

TYPE OF BUSINESS: Convention Hotel with food and beverage outlets

YEAR FOUNDED: 2008

OWNERSHIP: Private

EMPLOYEES: 565

2008 REVENUE: More than \$100 million

HR DIRECTOR: Kristen Palagano

HEADQUARTERS: 400 N. Olive St., Dallas 75201

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EXECUTIVE Q&A

Ray Hammer, General Manager

POPULAR PERKS: We offer several popular perks appealing to a wide range of associates, including deeply discounted travel for yourself and your family members, a complimentary daily meal, and discounted DART passes.

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION: Guest Service Index bonus program revolves around the success of work groups and achieving their goals together. If guests are satisfied and we surpass company benchmarks associates receive a portion of our profits. Guests who return are our best advertising! Our Associate, Supervisor and Manager recognition programs are very well received as peers nominate peers. The selection process is very thoughtful and involves a great deal of input from all levels.

In addition entry to our Associate Development Program is considered an honor. Letters of recommendation are required and there is a substantial time commitment on the part of the associate and management. Three months are spent in a classroom setting with training conducted by Executive Committee members, Leadership Committee members and a variety of managers. The final three months is spent with a mentor who guides the individual's learning process as they tackle an area of potential career growth. In order to participate in the program you have been recognized as a potential future leader. Many of our recognition programs involve family. We encourage our associates to share their work experiences with their family as so much time is spent at The Sheraton Dallas, we never wish to lose sight of the important balancing act every associate must play.

EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK: We let employees know their opinions matter through various means of communication. Newsletters, posters, suggestion boxes, letters of appreciation mailed to the associates' homes. In addition our Six Sigma Black Belt will pilot projects and suggestions. Anything suggested to improve our guest service, and improve efficiency is always reviewed. We are firm believers Harry Truman was correct when he said, "It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit." It takes the entire Sheraton Dallas team to insure we are running toward success.

COMPANY CULTURE: Family built on a strong foundation of teamwork. Unfortunately we have associates who have experienced life altering losses or devastating illness. Everyone on the team moves forward to insure the individual's responsibilities are covered until such time as they are prepared to return. During the course of their absence we reach out with food from our culinary department, flowers, visits and offers of assistance. No matter how long the absence family is not forgotten. One of our loading dock clerks has been serving the United States in Afghanistan for fourteen months. Upon his return in October he will be celebrated as he returns to his Sheraton Dallas position.

BOOSTING MORALE: Often it is the small things, whether it be a personalized card sent to an associate's home, a conversation in the hall, or baked goods brought in from home. Small personalized approaches tend to leave a more lasting impression than the large scale events. We also concentrate our efforts on those who have less than we do through charitable fundraisers, a great way to lend perspective. Communication is a key attribute to success during off peak periods. We keep the team informed about what we are doing to navigate the challenging times, when relief may be realized and stress the important role the associates play in our sales effort.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES: We create and print "The Daily Connection" for all associates to review. The Daily Connection contains information pertinent to what is happening in our hotel that given day. In addition we hold department stand up meetings at the beginning of all shifts so associates will be prepared before assisting the paying guests. Every month departments hold a very thorough meeting that often involves training. In addition our Safety Committee communicates on a regular basis. There are frequent meetings to attend, but we believe whenever possible agendas should be created in advance and the format should be efficient so we may resume working with the team and taking care of our guests needs, our number one priority.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: Associates are engaged through both big and small events. It may be the manager working side by side with the associate and gathering suggestions from the associate. Meal breaks are taken in a family style dining environment. We also have a weekly General Manager's round table, Quarterly Moonlight Breakfasts for the overnight team to sit and speak with the Executive Committee members, Front of the House Associate of the Month, Heart of the House Associate of the Month, Supervisor of the Quarter, Manager of the Quarter, an annual picnic for all families to attend, movie nights for families, Star Student Breakfast awarding associates' children savings bonds for academic achievement, Breakfast with Santa, Gingerbread House Contests, Halloween Costume Contests, Associate Rallies, Supervisor Lunch Box Leadership programs, Associate Development Program for those wishing to become supervisors, daily acknowledgement of birthdays and anniversaries. The list could continue as we are always growing and evolving to meet the needs of our associates. We are very proud of our Associate Engagement Committee, a group of associates and managers from all departments. Individuals interview for a seat on the committee. The Committee represents the Voice of our internal guests and helps guide and plan many of the large rallies, picnics and fundraisers. Our hotel has proudly raised money to benefit health related organizations (i.e. Epilepsy Foundation), schools and those in need every month thus far this year. At the Sheraton Dallas our pride is showing and it reaches beyond our doors.

HIRING AND RETAINING EMPLOYEES: Active listening is critical. When recruiting and interviewing you must listen to not only what the candidate says, but how the candidate states their interest. Their level of passion and future engagement is critically important. Likewise we must listen and engage with our current associates to understand their needs and exercise the human truths.

RECRUITING STRATEGIES: The Sheraton Dallas involves many team members in the interview process. We conduct behavioral interviews and thorough background checks before anyone is extended an offer.

WHY YOUR COMPANY RANKS: The warm environment, care and thoughtfulness among our team members. Our goals are aligned and we strive forward together. We provide a tremendous amount of training and positive reinforcement to support our team members. When asked our staff responds we are a family and our teamwork outshines all others. Our Sales team is fortunate not to sell a physical facility. Even in light of our \$93 million dollar renovation, our sales team sells a feeling created by our Sheraton family.

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