

**Cross-training for front-line employees in hotel industry.  
Case study: Holiday Inn Helsinki City Centre.**

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<p>Training is widely recognized as one of the core management concerns in hotel industry. Researchers have proved the importance of training in service quality, work productivity, and employee's career development. New training methods are continuously designed to adapt to the ever-changing environment in hospitality industry. One of the methods is called cross-training, in which employees are trained to work in more than one department.</p> <p>The aim of the thesis is to research the advantages and challenges of this training for front-line employees in hotel industry. The thesis is conducted in a research-based type with the use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The thesis commissioner is Holiday Inn Helsinki Centre hotel (HIHCC) located in Helsinki, Finland. A set of preliminary suggestions for a cross-training program in HIHCC is presented in the thesis. It serves as a reference for further development for managers of the hotel.</p> <p>In literature, cross-training is shown to be highly beneficial in hotel industry because it is an effective solution to seasonality, demand variability, and labor shortage. It increases share knowledge and transparency in all departments, which subsequently leads to better service quality and productivity. Multi-skilled employees who have received cross-training are considered great assets to service organizations.</p> <p>On the other hand, cross-training is not for every employee because some people prefer to work solely in their fields of expertise and it is costly to cross-train all staffs. Therefore the question of how many employees and who are chosen to cross-train should be revised carefully by hotel managers.</p> <p>In order to collect opinions on a cross-training program, the thesis writer interviewed the management board of HIHCC including General Manager, Duty Manager and Managers of Front office, Food and Beverage (F&amp;B) and Housekeeping department. For employees, questionnaires were created and distributed.</p> <p>The results revealed the necessity in HIHCC to organize a cross-training for Reception staff at the Lobby bar and for F&amp;B employees at Meeting and conference. Managers at HIHCC acknowledged the importance of multi-skilled employees and they are willing to develop a cross-department working environment. Cross-training is more preferred in Front office and F&amp;B department; and not all employees chose to work at other departments.</p> <p>A simple cost calculation is also set up to demonstrate the possible financial effect of cross-training in employee's hourly cost in HIHCC.</p> <p>The thesis is conducted based on personal experience, books, published articles, reports and academic journals.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Cross-training, front-line employees, multi-skilled, polychronicity	

## Table of contents

1	Introduction .....	1
1.1	Holiday Inn Helsinki City Centre: The introduction.....	2
1.2	Open Lobby concept.....	2
1.3	Objectives .....	3
2	Theoretical framework.....	4
2.1	Key concepts .....	4
2.2	Basics of training.....	5
2.3	Front-line employees in hospitality industry .....	5
2.4	Cross-training definition and categories .....	6
2.4.1	Benefits of cross-training.....	7
2.4.2	Challenges facing cross-training .....	9
2.5	Polychronicity.....	10
2.6	Implementation of cross-training .....	12
2.6.1	Polychronicity encouragement practices .....	14
2.7	Literature summary .....	15
3	Holiday Inn Helsinki City Centre: front-line employees' current situation .....	16
3.1	Front office department.....	16
3.2	F&B Department .....	17
3.3	Housekeeping department .....	18
3.4	Trainees.....	18
3.5	Implications.....	18
4	Research questions .....	19
5	Methodology .....	22
5.1	Research method.....	22
5.2	Data collection methods.....	23
5.3	Data collection procedures.....	24
5.4	Limitations.....	24
6	Research results .....	26
6.1	Interviews' results .....	26
6.2	Questionnaires' results.....	29
6.2.1	Current training situations .....	29
6.2.2	Cross-department tasks .....	31
6.2.3	Employee motivation.....	34
6.2.4	Department comparison .....	35
6.3	Interviews and questionnaires comparison.....	36
7	Discussion.....	38
7.1	Conclusion .....	41

8 Implication for further research and personal learning .....	43
8.1 Further research topics .....	43
8.2 Personal learning .....	43
Reference .....	45
Appendices .....	48
Appendix 1: General Manager’s Interview questions .....	48
Appendix 2: Duty Manager and Front office Manager’s Interview questions .....	49
Appendix 3: F&B Manager’s Interview questions .....	50
Appendix 4: Housekeeping Manager’s Interview questions .....	51
Appendix 5: Housekeeping Questionnaire questions (Finnish version) .....	52
Appendix 6: Housekeeping Questionnaire questions (English version) .....	57
Appendix 7: Front office Questionnaire questions .....	60
Appendix 8: F&B Questionnaire questions .....	64

# 1 Introduction

Hospitality has been recognized as labor-intensive in almost all industry-related researches for decades. This follows by a high turnover rate, posing significant challenges for service quality management in hospitality organizations. As in today's environment, customers are more and more demanding, delivering excellent services is "no longer an option, but a necessity" (Chikwe 2010, 43). Even though there has been significant technology innovation in hospitality for the past years, the scenario that technology will totally replace human labor in the near future is still distanced from reality. Therefore, training and retaining employees require more attention from hospitality managers than ever before. Employees prefer more than monotonous tasks in their jobs nowadays. They long for job fulfillment and meanings in the tasks they do. As a result, managers who provide employees with clear career development and encourage them to take more responsibilities will be able to maintain staff loyalty.

The thesis will focus on a specific training method, which is shown to add more flexibility to hospitality organization, as well as accomplish employee's increasing needs and preferences. The training is called cross-training, in which employees are instructed to perform tasks of more than one specific department. Advantages and disadvantages of this method will be discussed in the literature review chapter of the thesis, together with suggestions of how to implement cross-training pragmatically and cost-effectively.

The thesis is commissioned by Holiday Inn Helsinki City Centre Hotel (HIHCC) - where the writer did her practical training. The writer gained interest in this topic during her work in Front office department. The topic was afterward approved and supported by the General Manager of the hotel. Background information of the hotel will, therefore, be introduced. The literature review will be applied to the context of HIHCC to generate research questions. After that, the writer will use both qualitative and quantitative research methods to find answers to the research questions. Lastly, based on the theoretical review and the results gathered, the writer will provide a set of recommendation for HIHCC of how to implement a beneficial cross-training program.

The writer's intention of this research is to provide HIHCC with an initial approach to cross-training within a scope of a bachelor thesis research. The management board of the hotel can further develop the concept to match the hotel's working culture and accordingly design a comprehensive cross-training program.

## **1.1 Holiday Inn Helsinki City Centre: The introduction**

The commissioning company is Holiday Inn Helsinki City Centre hotel, which is located in the heart of Helsinki next to the central railway station. The brand Holiday Inn belongs to InterContinental Hotel Group (IHG). The hotel is founded in 2003 and has been operated by Restel Oy since the opening; however, in the end of June 2017, Scandic Hotels Group has signed an agreement to operate Restel's hotels in Finland. The agreement is being processed by Finnish authority and the transaction is subjected to the regulatory approval. A renovation was carried out in winter 2015 renewing the hotel's interior design and furniture. The new design (furniture, color, setup, etc.) followed Open Lobby concept by IHG and HIHCC is the first hotel in Finland to introduce this concept.

Hotel's facilities include 174 hotel rooms, 2 saunas, 1 mini gym, 1 restaurant, 1 open lobby bar and 3 meeting rooms. The meeting rooms with a maximum capacity of 100 people are newly opened since March 2017. Because of the central and convenient location, HIHCC attracts not only travel guests but also locals coming to use the restaurant and lobby bar services. The main guest segment of the hotel is business travelers. In the summertime, there are more leisure groups from travel agencies. On weekends, the hotel achieves good occupancy rates due to its location. In overall operation, the hotel is top-managed by General Manager, followed by Duty Manager. For each department, there is one manager responsible for daily activities: Front Office Manager, F&B manager, and Housekeeping Manager. Moreover, HIHCC is willing to arrange internships for students or people who want to practically learn about the hospitality industry.

The mission of the Holiday Inn chain and HIHCC particularly is to make guests satisfied with their stay and employees satisfied with their work.

## **1.2 Open Lobby concept**

Open Lobby concept is exclusively developed in Holiday Inn across Europe, with the purpose of combining traditional hotel lobby, bar, lounge and restaurant into one open, united space. It enables flexibility and relaxation for all of the hotel guests in which they can blend work and leisure, hold informal meetings, socialize or dine without any difficulties and barriers. Open Lobby concept needs to be implemented in all European Holiday Inn hotels by 2019; therefore HIHCC was renovated in order to adopt the concept.

Open Lobby area must be equipped with free Wi-Fi, a 24/7 To Go Café, a living room-like designed Media Lounge and an E-Bar suitable for working. The main objective of Open

Lobby is to provide a comfortable but functional space for every guest regardless of their travel purposes.

In HIHCC, Open Lobby area is placed near reception desks, which allows reception team to have an overall view of occurrence inside the hotel. The adjacent position also requires reception staff to know how to handle at the bar when needed. There is one restaurant staff at the lobby bar from 8.00-23.30; therefore, front office team needs to take responsibility at other time.

### **1.3 Objectives**

The main objective of the thesis is to research on how cross-training affects the hotels' and employees' performance. If cross-training is beneficial for the industry, how hotels can implement it effectively and cost-wisely? The obtained knowledge is, afterward, applied to HIHCC context.

For the scope of the thesis, the writer will mainly focus on front-line staffs that directly provide services. Opinions of managers will be used as guidelines for information gathering and recommendation formation.

#### **Goals of the writer**

The goal of the thesis writer is to gain an understanding of cross-training in the hotel industry and apply the knowledge to the operation of HIHCC. Eventually, the writer is able to make relevant recommendations which the hotel can consider.

Specifically, the goal of the writer is to research on:

- Cross training definition and its related aspects
- Possible effects of cross-training in hotel operation and front-line employee performance
- Effective and cost-efficient implementation of cross-training in hotel industry and in HIHCC

#### **Goals of the commissioner**

The goal of the management team in HIHCC is to receive more industry-related analysis on the topic. The General Manager (GM) of the hotel prefers to have a cost calculation demo of how cross-training can benefit the hotel financially. Furthermore, the GM wants to know the opinion and motivation of the employees on cross-training.

#### **Main research questions**

How can HIHCC effectively and cost-wisely implement a cross-training program?



## 2 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework presents literature research on basics of training, cross-training and front-line employees. Key concepts are introduced first in order to clarify and explain the terms discussed in the thesis.

### 2.1 Key concepts

**Training:** Definition from Jaszay and Dunk (2003, 2): “Training is the process used for the development of knowledge and skills needed to perform the jobs, duties, and tasks found in an organization.” In the hospitality industry, training is considered as one of the core activities because employees are the people who directly deliver services to customers (Audhesh, Lou & Sheb L. 2005, 3.) There are normally two types of training: formal training (training with written instruction) and informal training (training without written instruction) (Jaszay & Dunk 2003, 4).

**Cross-training:** According to United Nations HR Portal web page (2015), cross-training is the activity of training employees to do the tasks of more than one specific job. Through cross-training, staff members are able to gain more know-how and responsibilities of different departments in an organization, which allows them to be more flexible and versatile in the workplace (United Nations 2015.) Cross-training is defined as a “workforce development strategy” (Carmen & Zane 2010, 522) and it is becoming more and more important in organizations (Bokhorst 2011, 3171) although the concept is not relatively new.

**Multi-skilling:** As mentioned above, cross-training enables employees to be adaptable at work because they are trained to be multi-skilled. Multi-skilling or skill flexibility includes working in other departments, accepting work with lower or higher skills or working in the same department but doing different tasks which require multiple skills (Martin, 2010.) It is important to note that multi-skilling is not multitasking; multi-skilled workers know different skills (Chen & Tseng 2012, 1) while multi-tasking is when employees do more than one thing at the same time.

**Front-line employee(s):** Staff members who directly work with customers and produce services. Because their responsibilities are boundary-spanning, front-line employees represent the image of the organization. Moreover, they are able to collect customers’ information such as profiles, complaints or expectations (Osman 2006, 174.) As a result, in service organizations, the relationship between front-line employees and customers gains a considerable amount of attention from managers (Audhesh & Lou 2005, 3).

## **2.2 Basics of training**

Training is the process to establish and advance skills, knowledge, and attitude needed to execute duties in an organization (Jaszay & Dunk 2003, 2.) Training is proved in literature to reduce stress, increase commitment and in turn improve staff retention (Poulston 2008, 414; Song, Yaping & Cass 2011, 813.) Normally in most cases, training involves supervising new employees and after that releasing and shadowing them. Generally, there are two types of training: formal and informal. Formal training is structured with a written plan of instruction (Jaszay & Dunk 2003, 4), and research has shown that it could boost productivity and job satisfaction (Poulston 2008, 421). Because of its systematic approach, formal in-house training program requires experienced personnel with training know-hows, sufficient time and budget. On the other hand, informal training usually is unstructured and has no predetermined plan. It commonly presents as where new employees watch, follow or shadow other employees performing the tasks.

In hospitality context, training is among one of the most important priorities for managers. This is due to the fact that hospitality is a service industry. Service and product are so jointly interrelated that they become one (Jaszay & Dunk 2003, 2.) Song & al. (2011, 812) have also found that training in hospitality industry underlines innovation success and further predicts service capacities of employees. Consequently, employees' skills and attitude play an importance role in this industry. Service organizations must ensure that all customers consistently get what they are paying for in order to keep up with business. If service is lacking because of poor-trained employees, customers will seek for other places which provide the same product. Nevertheless, as service is labor-intensive, training and development can consume a lot of management's time (Poulston 2008, 412.) Therefore, it is often observed in the hospitality industry that training is delivered by shadowing: new employees follow other experienced workers during the job (Jaszay & Dunk 2003, 4.) This method is less expensive and it can be effective under some circumstances. However, it might not be the most productive way to train employees a new skill (Jaszay & Dunk 2003, 4-5.) To design an effective training program, managers should be able to combine the technology of teaching with the characteristics of the hospitality industry.

## **2.3 Front-line employees in hospitality industry**

Front-line employees are the "face persons" in providing hospitality service to customers. They have direct contacts and conversations with customers, which could conclusively shape customers' perception of service quality (Audhesh, Lou & Sheb L. 2005, 3; Walters & Raybould 2007, 146.) The fact that front-line employees notably influence customer experience has been emphasized in almost all conceptual models of service organizations

in the past years (Varca 2009, 51). Slåtten and Mehmetoglu (2011, 88) alluded to this notion by defining the role of the hosts as a core activity in the hospitality industry. In addition, many innovative ideas in the industry are developed by customer-contact employees, and those are also the first to test and evaluate new ideas in real situations (Song & al. 2011, 813). As a result, the success of service organizations relies upon the performance of front-line employees. To generate superior services, managers must encourage and motivate front-line staff to be service-minded and customer-oriented.

On the contrary, the front-line staff has little or no involvement in decision-making processes or operating procedures in organizations (Audhesh, Lou & Sheb L. 2005, 5; Walters and Raybould 2007, 148.) Walters and Raybould (2007, 146) have found that front-line employees are more prone to burnout than supervisory and administrative employees. Role conflict, work overload, role ambiguity, role stress, lack of autonomy are common job-related issues among first level employees (Walters & Raybould 2007, 146; Slåtten & Mehmetoglu 2011, 91.) This finding echoes the researchers' conclusion for decades that stress is an "inescapable" factor of customer service work (Varca 2009, 55.) A deeper analysis will be further presented in the following chapters of the thesis.

To shortly summarize, training is of critical importance in hospitality industry due to the inseparability of service and product. A cheaper way of training - informal training is widely used in service organizations, though it may not be the most optimal method. As previously mentioned, service and product are interrelated in this industry, therefore front-line employees – who are at the forefront of service delivery, deserve necessary attention and motivation. In the next chapters, a training type – cross-training is introduced and analyzed. Benefits and challenges of cross-training are discussed and applied to the hospitality context. Finally, how this training affects front-line employees is reviewed.

## **2.4 Cross-training definition and categories**

According to Carmen Abrams and Zane Berge (2010, 522), cross-training is a development strategy in which employees are trained to perform the tasks of more than one role in a company. Cross-training, also usually called multi-skill training is relatively not a new method in human resource management. Mann (2010) has stated that "business yo-yo back and forth with the idea of cross-training" (Carmen & Berge 2010, 522). However, various conditions such as economic recession, expeditious technology development, changes in job requirements and tight global business competition have started the re-emergence of this approach in organizations.

In cross-training, team members are instructed and introduced to each other's tasks and responsibilities. The ultimate purpose of cross-training is to develop a shared knowledge between departments (Gorman, Nancy & Polemnia 2010, 295). This overall interposition knowledge allows cross training to create certain advantages to companies, which will be discussed in the following chapters of the thesis.

#### **2.4.1 Benefits of cross-training**

In a global and fast-changing economy, cross training is an effective approach to secure company's competitiveness. Multiple-skilling employees are able to minimize the effect of sudden, short-term staff needs because they have the ability to smoothly take over different roles in a company (Carmen & Berge 2010, 523.) Numerous reports and literature in different industries have supported the argument. Dutkowsky (2010) viewed multiskilling as a solution for quick adaption to employee needs. Chen and Tseng (2012, 1-2) have shown that organizations such as hotels and restaurants can manage seasonal or peak time labor shortage well with cross training. For example, during rush hours like lunch time, restaurants are able to maintain productivity without hiring new staff by allocating employees from other departments (housekeeping, front office, etc.).

In difficult business time, cross-trained organizations are better prepared for emergencies. A research from Schertz (2009 in Carmen & Berge 2010, 523) features a small company called Tailored Label Products, in where all staffs are trained to execute three different tasks within the production process. This training method had helped the company cope with H1N1 flu outbreak and stay productive in spite of a large number of sick leaves.

Cross-functional employees are flexible and efficient on a day-to-day basis. Furthermore, they are an important contributor to employability in hotels and skill mismatch reduction (Chen & Tseng 2012, 1-2). Sharing the same objective, Jordan, Inman, and Blumenfeld (2002, 953) claimed that cross training could improve workforce adaptability and help control workload variability. In hospitality context where understaffing is broadly acknowledged (Poulston 2008, 413), employees with flexible skills can be a temporary, real-time solution. For example, one breakfast worker has a sudden sick leave and the breakfast is most busy from 7 am to 8 am. Instead of hiring a 4-hour extra from staffing companies, restaurant manager could ask for one person from housekeeping or front office department who has worked in restaurants for only one hour. This "quick fix" not only maintains normal operation of the breakfast but also saves costs for the hotel in the end. Generally, cross-training provides companies with the possibility and capability to balance the labor supply and demand, which can improve efficiency in staff management (Kelliher & Riley 2002 in Chen & Tseng 2012, 2).

As mentioned above, shared knowledge is the core of cross-training. With the common knowledge, employees can improve service quality by minimizing existing boundaries between departments (Chen & Tseng 2012, 2.) This is made due to the fact that team members communicate more efficiently and coordinate better under stressful situations. They are also able to identify problems and quickly adapt to the situations based on the shared knowledge of each other's roles and responsibilities (Gorman & al. 2010, 296; Chen and Tseng 2012, 1).

Some research results approved the benefits of cross-training regarding personal job achievement. In the modern working environment, employees are seeking for personal fulfillment in their job (Jaszay & Dunk, 2003, 7) and less likely to accept monotonous tasks. They feel more engaged when working situations offer them greater meaning (Slåtten & Mehmetoglu 2011, 91.) Moreover, they relentlessly prefer respect, recognition, and contribution to company's management process. In one research Carmen and Zane (2010, 523-524) found out that multi-skilled employees are happier and less likely to have job boredom. They have better mobility with the organization as they have more working experiences in different departments. Therefore, there is a lesser chance of searching for other working places, which improves employee's retention rate. A similar result was found by Slåtten and Mehmetoglu (2011, 91) that employee engagement could anticipate employee's turnover intention. Multi-skilled workers are also more valuable to the companies, thus they have higher chance to be promoted. They are more "recession and down-size-proof" than specialized workers (Carmen & Berge 2010, 523).

However, it is necessary to note that the benefits are not compatible with all industries. Chen and Tseng (2012, 5-6) have made a research on cross-training in three departments: front office, restaurant, and housekeeping in Taiwanese hotel industries. The result shows that while there is a positive relationship between multiskilling and staff retention and job satisfaction in Front office and restaurant departments, there is no relationship in Housekeeping department. Housekeeping workers usually dissatisfied with their job because of physical intensive workloads, low salary, and low social status. This results in high turnover rate in housekeeping departments regardless of training they receive (Baron 2008; Hoque 2000; Pizam 1982 in Chen & Tseng 2012, 6).

Song & al. (2011, 816) showed a new dimension of cross-training towards hospitality innovation. They found out that both hiring multi-skilled front-line employees and training front-line employees for multiple skills could improve innovation in hospitality organizations.

#### **2.4.2 Challenges facing cross-training**

In spite of many advantages of cross training, there are some challenges that employers should pay attention to when deciding to put this training method into practice.

As Chen and Tseng (2012, 6) have discovered in their research, not all departments in a company will receive the same benefit from cross training. Carmen and Berge (2010, 524) expressed the same idea that cross-training is not advisable for all tasks. Therefore, questions such as how many employees to assign to cross-training, who to train in which roles, how to manage staff mobility should be tightly in conjunction with the company's environment, purpose, and objectives (Bokhorst 2011, 3171.) Gorman & al. (2010, 296) advised multiskilling for small and homogeneously skilled teams rather than big and diverse teams. Carmen and Berge (2010, 524) emphasized the importance of proper-managed staff mobility because the flexibility of cross training does not automatically bring increased productivity. Cost and time is another factor against multiskilling.

Some tasks take a lot of time to master, for example bartending can take years to be professional. As a result, service productivity and quality are not likely to be immediately improved when employees from with different roles are trained to bartend. In this case, the added training cost may not result in the expectation of improvement (Carmen & Berge 2010, 524). With the same approach, Carmen and Zane (2010, 524) pointed out that investing in multiskilling may sacrifice the investment of depth expertise. Therefore if the tasks need years of expertise, cross-training is not highly recommended.

Carmen & Zane (2010, 525) and Bokhorst (2011, 3172) agreed that employees usually have a tendency to stay in their comfort zone. They prefer to work in their personal area of expertise and could resist changes. This could result in added stress and burn out for employees when they are assigned to perform unfamiliar tasks. For example, a waiter may be best performed in customer services but not comfortable dealing with cash. Furthermore, the fundamental purpose of recruitment is still to find the "right fit": the right people for the right position (Jaszay & Dunk 2003, 10.) With that mindset, initially, managers will choose the candidates that are suitable for a specific job. Hence, expecting a good performance and an improved productivity when employees have to do the tasks they do not feel confident in could bring adverse results (Carmen & Berge 2010, 525).

Varca (2009, 51) emphasized that front-line employees usually experienced job-related stress like role conflict in their work. Literature supported Varca's argument and added role ambiguity, burnout, and work overload as factors existing in the hospitality environ-

ment. Front-line employees are described as “serving multiple masters” because they need often to balance contradictory demands from customers and management, which leads to role conflict (Walters & Raybould 2007, 146; Slåtten & Mehmetoglu 2011, 91.) Due to that reason, cross-training may place more stress on employees because they need to serve customers with responsibilities of other departments. They may even have to switch to different positions within one working shift (as an example, one receptionist help at the breakfast in the morning, work at the reception during the day and attend the bar when needed). The transition could sound interesting and positively challenging for some employees, however, it could cause role ambiguity for others. It is because multi-skilled workers are normally employed in only one fixed department (front-office, restaurant or housekeeping). If they work in other departments, both the employees and managers would consider it as helping, therefore most probably they are not the first to receive updates and changes. That is when role ambiguity arises and it causes problems for employees who want clarification and task delegation, especially during busy hours (Walter & Raybould 2007, 146).

Hospitality is for long considered as one of the most stressful jobs. It faces “unsociable working hours and high-pressure working conditions” and the appearance of burnout is higher in front-line employees (Walters & Raybould 2007, 144.) Not only employees need to meet the demand of customer and manager, they also need to deliver service in “real time” with high quality. Their daily job is already stressful, not mentioning the added responsibilities if cross-functional tasks are executed. Take the previous example into consideration: a receptionist who works at breakfast hall in the morning and helps at the bar during a working shift. The person needs to hold the responsibilities of three positions, each has different requirements but he/she always has to provide services with full knowledge of the job and a positive attitude, otherwise guest satisfaction is affected and in turn, managers are unsatisfied. In the long run, stress gradually accumulates and the person would confront work burnout.

As cross-training in hospitality often requires task-switching during shifts (considering the above example of a receptionist working in three departments during one shift), in the following chapter, more literature related to task-switching, interruption, and distraction will be discussed and reviewed.

## **2.5 Polychronicity**

Polychronicity is a personality trait, referring to the extent to which people prefer to involve in different tasks in the same time block (Jang & Thomas 2012, 588-589.) People with polychronicity have more tendencies to perform multiple tasks within one time period than

monochronic people. Hospitality environment is frequently proved to require polychronicity because time in the industry is considered crucially valuable (Jang & Thomas 2012, 589; Daskin 2016, 163); Thompson (2004, 27) indicated in one research that 10 minutes waiting time could make a hotel lose one guest. Therefore, hospitality staffs, especially front-line employees are expected to deliver not only excellent but also in-time, simultaneously services (Daskin 2016, 162), which leads to the requirement of task-switching. Due to that reason, polychronicity could be a potential trait that improves organizational outcomes (Daskin 2016, 173.). Similar results were found in Conte and Gintoft's research (2005, in Daskin 2016, 174) suggesting that polychronic employees perform high job quality. A better creative performance and a high work-involvement were also found by Madjar and Oldham (2006, in Daskin 2016, 164) and Conte & al. (1999, in Daskin 2016, 164.). Regarding work absenteeism, polychronicity was found to have a negative correlation with lateness and absence (Conte and Gintoft 2005, in Daskin 2016, 164). Furthermore, it is suggested that polychronic employees might have less stress about work overload compared to monochronic workers (Frei et al., 1999 in Daskin 2016, 165).

Hospitality is known for its fast-changing environment, which would lead to the necessity to do more than one task at a time. Accordingly, individuals with high preference to multi-task (i.e. polychronic) would have fewer burdens and better management towards urgent situations (Daskin 2016, 166.) Daskin (2016, 164,172) in a research about polychronicity in hotel front-line employees had concluded that polychronic employees play a vital role in service delivery (including handling complaints) and stress management. The researcher also suggested hotel managers to employ and retain a good number of polychronic employees because they are most suitable to work in demanding jobs like in frontline areas. In addition, Namin (2016, 45) indicated that having polychronic front-line employees is advantageous for hotel and they are "assets most hotels want in the industry". The results of his research also showed positive job performance in polychronic hotel employees.

Aforementioned literature proved the benefits of hiring and having polychronic front-line employees in the hotel industry. They have more tendency and preference to multitask, switch behaviors and they are more stress-resilient. However, constant switching between tasks and responsibility does not always bring positive job quality.

Existing research showed that interruption decreases productivity because getting back to finish interfered tasks is challenging (Leroy 2009, 3). In addition, putting aside one task to do another task would affect the quality of subsequent tasks. This is due to the focus transition when people need to change from one work to another, which is proved to be difficult and effortful (Baumeister, Heatherton, & Tice 1994; Muraven & Baumeister 2000;



Wrosch et al. 2003 in Leroy 2009, 4). Switching attention when changing tasks causes attention residue (which happens when people's mind is still focused on the prior task instead of concentrating on the current task (Leroy 2009, 6)). Particularly, when the prior task is incomplete, it still lingers and challenge people to be totally free from it. Additionally, attention is highly induced by motivation; when people are not mindfully present for a task, it is hard to get full concentration. According to Leroy (2009, 8), people who do not finish their first task, experience more attention residue and lower following task performance because they are less motivated to do it well.

In short, prior task and the way it was experienced greatly affect people's attention on the subsequent activities. Take the former example of a receptionist working at breakfast and bar areas. If the receptionist faces an unhappy experience at reception (such as guest complaints or exceptionally busy shift), it is very likely that his/her performance at the bar/breakfast will be affected because the person still thinks about that experience and can hardly involve in the following tasks with full attention.

Polychronicity is closely linked to cross-training, notably in the hospitality industry. There is a high possibility that task-switching and multitasking are necessary in a cross-trained working environment because cross-training is to train employees to do tasks in different departments. Since polychronicity is a personality trait, implications for hotel managers is to identify, encourage and maintain this trait in front-line employees. This will be discussed in the following chapter of this thesis.

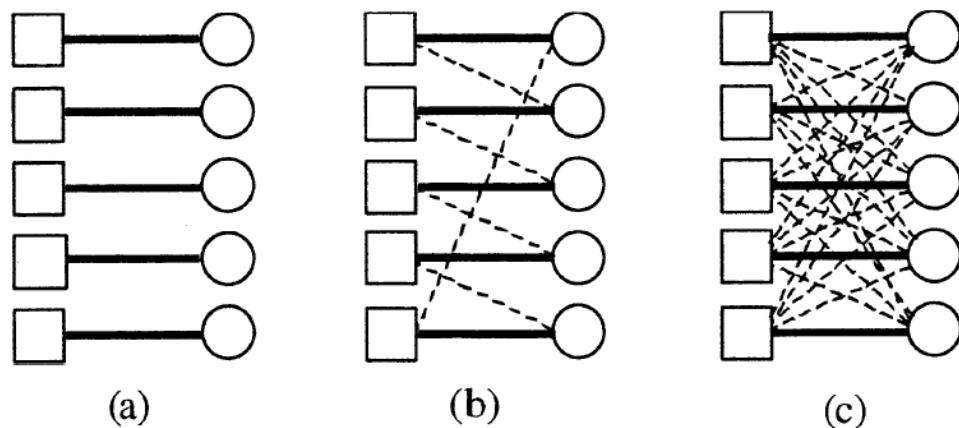
## **2.6 Implementation of cross-training**

Literatures in the former chapters have shown a deeper insight of cross-training in business organizations and hospitality firms in particular; how it helps companies compensate sudden staff shortage, remain flexible and increase job performance. Besides the positive outcomes, cross-training has drawbacks that require manager's concerns such as added stress, role ambiguity, work overload and burnout. Cross-training directs the writer to research further on polychronicity - people's preference to multitask and switch task. The outcome is polychronicity, similar to cross-training, is beneficial for hospitality companies. Hotel management board, as a result, should place more recognition and action on these concepts. This chapter is dedicated to cross-training implementation and polychronicity encouragement practices.

In the previous chapters, it is discussed that polychronicity is a personal trait and not everyone prefers to engage in different tasks in a given time. It is tense for monochronic people to work in fast-changing, polychronic environment (Jang & Thomas 2012, 593). This

fact raises a question of whether or not all employees get cross-training. Polychronic employees are more suitable to be cross-trained because of their natural preference to move between tasks, while monochronic employees are the best suit in a minimal customer interaction environment and multitask is less demanded (Daskin 2016, 166). Moreover, cross-train all employees could be expensive and time-consuming.

Taking into consideration of all drawbacks, Jordan & al. (2002, 954) introduced chained cross-training, in which only some workers are cross-trained to perform the second task. For example, among front office department with ten receptionists, only two or three are cross-trained to do restaurant shifts instead of all ten people. It differs to total cross-training which requires all employees to be cross-trained. The comparison is shown in the figure below (Jordan & al., 2002, 954).



**Fig. 2.** Comparison of cross-training strategies: (a) no cross-training; (b) chaining; and (c) total cross-training.

Figure 1. Comparison of cross-training strategies

Chained cross-training is much simpler to implement, leading to fewer costs, yet provides adequate flexibility. In addition, it eliminates the ambiguity in other departments of who will do the job (Jordan & al. 2002, 965.). For example, in a hotel context, if some receptionists are trained to do restaurant shifts, restaurant staffs know exactly who will help them and how they normally work, which saves time and reduce confusion. It is also clearer and easier for managers to design work shifts. Moreover, employees have specific preferences: some people prefer restaurant department over housekeeping and vice versa; therefore employees' wishes and capability should be acknowledged.

Designing work shifts in a cross-trained environment requires careful consideration. To optimize the flexibility of cross-training, the work shifts also need to be adjustable; there

should be a possibility to cross-schedule within and across shifts (Thompson 2004, 12.). Thompson (2004, 39) highlighted the value of cross-training in hospitality context by comparing the hourly cost with and without cross-training. The results showed that cross-trained operations could reduce employees need by 15% and reduce hourly cost by more than 9%.

Considering the erratic working rhythm in hospitality, particularly in hotels, cross-training provides flexibility which eventually leads to cost saving. For instance, in an 8-hour reception shift in a medium size hotel, there is not always in need of full staff capacity (say, 3 people). So the manager can allocate two fixed employees and deploy one person from restaurant department only when it is busy (for example at early morning when guests check out). Cross-trained staff allocations should be done at the same time with the development of a work schedule; however, it could also be arranged in real time when sudden needs occur (Thompson 2004, 39). In order to achieve the flexibility that cross-training provides, managers should clearly identify when each department gets busiest and constantly cross communicate with other departments.

With the implementation of cross-training, team spirit between departments must be recognized by managers. Teamwork training programs must be promoted in order to create harmony among employees. This creates a transparent working environment in which everyone supports each other and works towards a similar goal.

### **2.6.1 Polychronicity encouragement practices**

Having a pool of polychronic employees is highly beneficial for a successful cross-training program, thus managers should put extra effort to employ and maintain such employees.

In order to retain cross-trained employees, managerial rewards of both monetary and non-monetary encouragement are useful. Polychronic people are often ambitious and prefer to do more than required original tasks, therefore attractive career development opportunities should be used by hotel management board. Another helpful way is to have a good feedback program within the organizations (Namin 2016, 49.). Hon, Chan, and Lu (2013, 1) found similar results that supervisory feedback can make challenging tasks to be “good”, thus promotes creativity in employees and reduces work stress. Department managers could arrange regular feedback sessions in which employees are not only given feedback from supervisors but also able to give feedback to other colleagues. In addition, polychronic workers are motivated by job enrichment and job enlargement (Namin 2016, 50). Therefore hotel managers could provide them more challenging tasks and responsibilities and encourage them to create new ideas, however, additional tasks should not

lead to more work burden for employees. Combining a feedback session with an idea brainstorming session is a good example.

As discussed throughout this thesis, hospitality suffers high turnover rate, so the urge to hire the right people for this industry is crucially necessary, and polychronic candidates are the one that managers should focus on. During the interviews, interviewers could ask questions that can highlight the interviewees' ability to handle multiple tasks, manage stress and cope with constant changes (Namin 2016, 49-50; Daskin 2016, 174.). For example, the question of describing some situations where they engage in more than two tasks at the same time in their previous jobs is useful to use in interviews (Barclay, 2001 in Daskin 2016, 174).

## **2.7 Literature summary**

Hospitality is a special industry as service is the real product (Jaszay & Dunk 2003, 2). For that reason, training employee's skills and attitude should be one of the utmost concerns for hotel managers. Formal training, which is a more optimal method because of its structured instruction, should be widely used in hotels. Furthermore, front-line employees, who deliver services by a direct interaction with guests, need more attention from managers. Guests will define service quality based on their experiences with front-line employees, so it is important that managers offer proper training, retain and motivate them.

Among training methods in hospitality, cross-training is increasing its reputation recently. An employee is cross-trained when the person is instructed to perform the tasks of more than one department (Carmen & Berge 2010, 522.). For example, a receptionist is trained to serve tables at F&B department. The literature showed that cross-training can compensate for staff shortage, seasonal time and peak hours (Carmen & Berge 2010, 522-523; Chen & Tseng 2012, 1) and help organizations cope with emergencies and unexpected incidents. It provides flexibility to organization operations and employees (Jordan & al. 2002, 965; Poulston 2008, 421; Chen & Tseng 2012, 1). Transparency in all departments is also improved. Regards to employee's development, cross-training brings job fulfillment, promising career opportunities and career development path (Jaszay & Dunk 2003, 7; Slåtten & Mehmetoglu 2011, 101). In hotels, multi-skilled staffs are more likely to stay (Slåtten & Mehmetoglu 2011, 100) and they greatly contribute to hospitality innovation (Song & al. 2011, 816). Notably, cross-training implementation could save hotel's hourly cost by 9% according to Thompson's document (2004, 93).

Despite all advantages of cross-training to companies, there are certain difficulties that should be considered. First, productivity would be decreased in the beginning because

employees need time to practice the work they have learned. Second, not all departments have the same benefits that cross-training provides. In hotels, retention rate and employee's satisfaction rate are not influenced by the implementation of multi-skilling (Chen & Tseng 2012, 5-6). Cross-training is not valuable for all tasks and all employees; some tasks take a long time to master and not everyone is willing to step out of their comfort zone (Carmen & Berge 2010, 525; Bokhorst 2011, 3172). Added stress could occur to cross-trained employees because of constant task-switching, multitasking and role conflict (Walters & Raybould 2007, 146; Varca 2009, 51.)

As mentioned above, some employees only want to do their specific work. However, there are workers who like to do more than one task or change tasks in a timeframe. They are called polychronic people, and research has shown that they are suitable for front-line areas in the hospitality industry. Therefore, hotel managers should put extra effort to hire, train and retain them. However, constant task-switching or multitasking may affect job performance because people need to disconnect from the previous task in order to totally focus on the present.

Finally, to minimize the drawbacks of cross-training, Jordan & al. (2002, 954) introduced chained cross-training as an alternative to total cross-training. Chaining is verified to deliver the same flexibility but with much lower cost than normal cross-training because only some employees are chosen to cross-train. For a successful cross-training program, hotel managers need to identify who should be chosen to cross-train, where to staff multi-skilled employees and how to maintain good team spirit in all departments at the hotel.

### **3 Holiday Inn Helsinki City Centre: front-line employees' current situation**

#### **3.1 Front office department**

There are 7 full-time employees and 2 part-time employees with flexible working hours in Front office department. At the hotel, cross-department tasks are required for receptionists.

The lobby bar is placed near the reception desk; therefore receptionists need to work at the bar if necessary. During daytime, reception team helps out whenever restaurant staff is away from the bar. From 23.30 front office team takes charge of the bar until closing time (1.30am). As a result, reception staffs need to know all the tasks at lobby bar counter. There has been training for front office employees to do customer services at the bar

such as cashier and serving drinks (coffee, beer, wine). The staffs are not obligated to serve cocktails or special drinks at the bar, so there has not been training on that for front office staffs. Furthermore, if guests' requests are related to room service and there are no housekeepers at the hotel, receptionists are responsible to fulfill the requests.

In cases when there are a lot of departures or arrivals, an extra employee will be assigned to do 4-hour work shifts during the rush hours, which are mostly from 7.30-11.30 or 16.00-20.00.

Recently, the hotel is undergoing some new timetable practices in front office. The second night shift worker comes at 23.30 instead of midnight in the past so that there are two people working at reception when the bar staff leaves (at 23.30). That way one person can leave the reception to help at the bar. Previously, it was hard sometimes for the first night shift worker to manage both areas at the same time before the second person came to work. Moreover, new arrangements for the duration of different shifts have been made. Night shift's hours might be lengthened in order to support morning shift in case of many departures. The schedules are made and agreed with employees in advance, after that if the hotel's occupancy continues to increase, extra staff with 4-hour work shift will be added later on shorter notice. From the manager's point of view, the changes will increase work efficiency and utilize costs.

Based on the writer's own experience at the reception in HIHCC, there are team meetings but not on a regular basis. General feedback is written in team diary, but employees do not often get regular private feedback session with managers.

### **3.2 F&B Department**

In F&B department, there are about 17 employees including both kitchen and restaurant workers. Breakfast is opened from 06.30-10.00 Monday-Friday, Saturday 7.30-11.00, and Sunday 08.00-11.00. Lunch is from Monday-Friday 11.00 -14.00. Breakfast and lunch are operated at the restaurant on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. Lobby Bar on the first floor near reception is opened from 08.00-1.30. A la carte menu is served at the Lobby bar after breakfast hours.

A training instruction for restaurant staff to do simple check-ins, check-outs was planned to be carried out, however, it was postponed and the writer is intrigued to find out the answers. Therefore at the moment, there is no cross-department training in F&B department. Nevertheless, employees do change responsibilities within restaurant tasks. There is always one employee working at the hotel's Lobby Bar from 08.00am to 23.30. In the morning, the waitress can go to the restaurant on the 2<sup>nd</sup> to help at breakfast and lunch. Simi-

larly, if there is a dinner or event in the evening, the evening worker at the bar can be an extra help. Employees also work different shifts in their work list. One person can work at the Lobby Bar for one day and change to breakfast and lunch the next day. Therefore work allocation is flexible in the restaurant. In case of high demand, restaurant manager will take external employees to compensate for the labor shortage.

It is also important to note that Conference and Meeting execution is included F&B's responsibility. Therefore, employees at F&B also need to know the procedures at Conference and Meeting. Normally there is always one assigned employee responsible for the meetings in a work shift.

### **3.3 Housekeeping department**

There are 11 employees in Housekeeping department including Housekeeping manager. Housekeeping at HIHCC is not outsourced therefore all housekeepers are employed directly by the hotel.

There has not been any cross-department training for housekeeping employees. Housekeeping executive plans the room lists for housekeepers every morning and accordingly calculates the working hours. As a result, it is difficult to suddenly add duties for the housekeepers because then the daily list needs to be changed for several housekeepers.

### **3.4 Trainees**

At this time, cross-training practices are conducted for trainees who have practical internships at the hotel. The trainees need to work at all departments before concentrating on one specific to have a comprehensive understanding of the hotel. Most of the time, the internships begin at Housekeeping department, F&B, Conference & Meeting and finally Reception. Outperformed trainees will get hired after the internship. Therefore employees in the hotel who were previously trainees are able to work at all departments in the hotel. The thesis writer was a trainee before and afterward employed in Front office. She also did shifts at breakfasts and lobby bar during her time at the hotel.

### **3.5 Implications**

At the moment, only front office employees and trainees receive cross-department training. For full-time employees, there is still a lack of cross-department knowledge and work experience. Due to that reason, the writer decided to research on cross-training so that management team of HIHCC could use as a foundation for future implementation.

More importantly, Restel hotels will be operated under Scandic's management as announced in June 2016. The writer intends to find out more information because the agreement will definitely change the hotel's internal and operating process.

#### **4 Research questions**

In order to answer the main research question and develop valuable suggestions for HIHCC regarding cross-training, four research questions are developed. The questions are based on literature findings discussed in the previous chapters. The sub-questions are linked to the research questions to support the formation of the methodology.

##### **RQ1. How is the current training method implemented in HIHCC?**

- Which type of training is used in HIHCC at the moment (formal, informal or mixed)?
- To what extent cross-training is carried out in HIHCC?
- What are the reasons for the delay of the reception training for F&B employees?

The sub-research questions aim at identifying training practices used at HIHCC. It is based on the research from Jaszay & Dunk (2003, 4) that formal training is more effective compared to informal training which is widely used in hospitality organizations at the moment. Furthermore, there was a delay of reception training for restaurant employees in HIHCC, of which the writer is intrigued to find the underlying reasons.

##### **RQ2. How to create an effective cross-department working environment in HIHCC?**

- How does each department's manager manage staff shortage during peak hours?
- What are the busy days and hours in each department?
- Which department is the most necessary to have cross-trained employees?
- How flexible is each department regards of allocating cross-trained employees?
- To what extent hotel staffs prefer to have a cross-trained working environment?

The research question 2 is used to find out the opinion of managers and employees in HIHCC about cross-training in their departments. Sub-questions are different for manag-



ers and employees. For managers, managerial questions regarding demand forecast, work shift planning, and workplace flexibility are designed in order to evaluate the possibility of a cross-training implementation. For employees, the writer asks their preferences of a cross-department working environment.

The sub-questions concern the advantages and disadvantages of cross-training. Not every employee prefers to work in other departments (Carmen & Zane 2010, 525; Bokhorst 2011, 3172) and cross-training is not suitable for all tasks and departments (Chen and Tseng 2012, 6; Carmen & Berge 2010, 524). Therefore the questions help to find out whether chained cross-training is a more optimal option as suggested by Jordan & al. (2002, 954) for HIHCC. The sub-questions also help to identify how many employees in HIHCC are polychronic and how it is linked to cross-training.

### **RQ3. What are the financial effects of cross-training on the hotel?**

- How long does it take for an employee to learn basic tasks of other departments?
- What is the hourly cost of an employee?

The research question and sub-questions are formed on the GM of HIHCC's interest for the thesis. Demo cost calculation is made with the statistics provided by the GM and all the managers of Front office, F&B and Housekeeping departments. The aim of the question is to demonstrate the benefits of cross-training regarding employee's hourly cost. According to Thompson (2004, 39), an effective cross-department employee allocation can save hourly cost by 9%.

### **RQ4. How can HIHCC accommodate different practices to hire and retain good employees?**

- How do managers give feedback to employees?
- How do managers motivate employees?

The question follows the research' results from Namin 2016, 49 that multi-skilled and polychronic employees are an asset to hospitality organizations. A good feedback system, motivating practices, and appropriate interview questions are shown to be valuable for hospitality managers to hire and retain polychronic employees (Namin 2016, 49; Chan & Lu 2013, 1). The sub-questions aim to discover the current methods used to collect feedback and motivate employees in HIHCC.

There are also different questions for managers and employees. Managers are asked about the methods used at the moment while employees are asked how they perceive those activities.

**RQ5. How does Scandic's new operation affect HIHCC's staff management activities?**

The research question is exclusively for GM of HIHCC. When Scandic officially takes over the hotel operation from Restel, there will certainly be notable changes in the hotel's internal communication, which could affect the possibility of implementing a cross-training program in HIHCC.

**Main research question:**

How can HIHCC effectively and cost-wisely implement a cross-training program?

## **5 Methodology**

This chapter presents research methods and data collection procedures used to conduct the research. Potential limitations when implementing this thesis is also discussed.

### **5.1 Research method**

In order to align with the goals of the writer and the GM of HIHCC, both qualitative and quantitative research methods are used in this thesis.

As a goal of the writer is to find beneficial ways of implementing cross-training in HIHCC, it is necessary to collect the opinions of managers and employees on the topic. A qualitative method, therefore, is selected firstly. Qualitative research concerns people's meaning, opinions, and behaviors towards certain aspects (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault 2016, 7). According to Bryman (2008, 366), qualitative method highlights words rather than numerical data. As a result, it provides an important and helpful understanding of the perspectives of the research populations (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest and Namey 2005, 1). Three categories of data in the qualitative method are interviews, observations, and documents (Patton 2002, 4). Interviews are chosen to be the method of data collection because interviews directly show people's opinions, feelings, knowledge, and experiences (Patton 2002, 4) and they are convenient to organize.

The initial intention of the writer is to apply only qualitative research method by interviewing all employees of HIHCC. However, the process is time-consuming and impractical to carry out in some departments of the hotel, for example, housekeeping employees. Therefore, the writer decides to find another method to combine with the qualitative method. Quantitative, eventually, is chosen because of its practicality and wide accessibility. Different from the qualitative method which focuses on opinions and words, quantitative method gathers numbers and statistics to deal with the research questions (Walliman 2011, 113). Researchers commonly use surveys and questionnaires in quantitative method. This method gives a clear, accurate and concise measurement (Waters 2011, 15) and can collect a large number of responses in a short period of time. Combining qualitative and quantitative is not relatively a new practice in the research field, Patton (2002, 5) stated that it is common to use both of the methods.

After considering two research methods, the writer uses qualitative method to the managers of HIHCC and quantitative method to the employees of all departments (Front office,

Food and Beverage (F&B) and Housekeeping) in the hotel. This approach allows the writer to collect data from all staff of HIHCC without any limitation of time constraint. A more detailed discussion of the data collection procedures is further presented in the following chapters.

## **5.2 Data collection methods**

There are two types of information that are collected during research: primary and secondary data. While primary data is a new data specially obtained for a research purpose, secondary data is already existed and used for some other purposes (Hox & Boeije 2005, 593). For the thesis, secondary data is collected from available books, articles and researches related to the research topic. After that, the writer conducts interviews and questionnaires to obtain primary data.

For qualitative method used for managers, semi-structured interviewing technique is used. In this technique, the interviewer prepares a list of questions in advance and follows the guide; however, the conversation can vary and change between different respondents (Cohen & Crabtree 2006). Accordingly, it gives comprehensive and reliable data but the interviewees have the freedom to express their feelings and opinions (Cohen & Crabtree 2006). The writer prepares 4 versions of interview questions for all managers of HIHCC: GM, Duty Manager, Front Office Manager, F&B Manager and Housekeeping Manager. The interview questions are based on the research questions which aligned with the literature review, but with a specific background of each department. For the GM, the questions are more general and the question about Scandic agreement is also brought up. Each question list on average consists of 24 questions.

Regarding quantitative research method, questionnaires for all employees are designed using Webropol tools provided by Haaga-Helia. Similar to interview questions, there are 3 versions of the questionnaire for each department (Front office, F&B, and Housekeeping). The questions are made according to the employee's perspectives. The questions are almost similar in all versions for a more relevant comparison afterward. However, as receptionists need to do some tasks in the lobby bar (which means cross-department tasks are already existed in HIHCC), the writer exclusively adds some related questions to the questionnaire of Front office department. Furthermore, considering the fact that there are some employees in Housekeeping and F&B departments who do not speak English well, the writer also prepares a Finnish translation of the questionnaire. On average, there are about 21 questions in the questionnaires. All respondents are kept anonymous.

### **5.3 Data collection procedures**

Firstly, for the theory review, the writer searched existing literature on the topic of cross-training then summarized and analysed the information. The information was then presented in the theory review (chapter 2 of the thesis). Research questions were then designed based on the literature discussed.

In the next step, the writer created interview questions which support research questions and then arranged meetings with the managers of HIHCC via emails. Meanwhile, questionnaires for the employees were formed with Webropol tool. For Front office department, an online questionnaire was used because receptionists normally have a convenient access to the Internet and computers during work shifts. For F&B and Housekeeping, a paper form was used and handed over to the staff to fill in. The writer gave the questionnaires to the managers during the interviews. All the interviews were held in HIHCC and recorded.

After collecting the data, the writer analysed the interview transcripts using color code technique to emphasize keywords from the participants. With questionnaires, data was presented in graphics and tables for more accurate comparison and analysis.

One expectation from the GM of HIHCC is to have a calculation of how cross-training affects employee hourly cost. The writer included cost-related questions in both interviews and questionnaires. After the results of interviews and questionnaires were analyzed and a set of recommendations was formed, cost was calculated to demonstrate the possible financial advantages as well as training cost of cross-training. Within the scope of a bachelor thesis, the writer and the GM of HIHCC have agreed that the cost calculation is mainly served as a demonstration; therefore the writer is not supposed to go into very detailed of the financial aspect.

### **5.4 Limitations**

#### **Availability**

As the schedules were packed for the hotel's managers, it was a challenge to arrange meetings with them for this research. The Housekeeping manager was unfortunately on a long sick leave when the writer carried out the interviews. Therefore the writer interviewed Housekeeping supervisor as an alternative. The Housekeeping manager may have more managerial knowledge and experience of the department's operation.

### **Information security**

For security reason, the writer could not have the access to actual statistics of the hotel when doing the cost calculation. Instead, the GM of HIHCC provided a set of average data and the writer worked on the provided numbers. Accordingly, the results in cost calculation are mostly for demonstration purposes.

### **Time constraints**

The writer decided to spend one semester doing this thesis; therefore there is a time limit when carrying out the interviews and questionnaires. To prevent any limitation, time for interviews and questionnaires had been scheduled in advance with consideration of possible delay. However, at Housekeeping department, there were 3 employees who were on long sick leaves when the writer distributed the questionnaires. The writer could not postpone the procedures and hence, decided to continue the thesis without the participation of the absent employees. There was also a delay from F&B department when filling in the questionnaires. It is because F&B department has the largest number of employees among 3 departments in the hotel and every employee has different work schedules. Eventually, the writer proceeded and continued with all available information.

### **Participants' unwillingness to answer questions**

There is a high possibility that the managers and employees do not want to answer truthfully to the thesis writer. As the thesis is published, all information about the hotel will be widely accessible. It leads to a chance that employees and managers will not mention all their problems at work, or address them in a different way. The unwillingness will make the thesis less practical and beneficial for the hotel, and prevent the writer from achieving the goals planned at the beginning of the thesis implementation.

### **Scope of a bachelor thesis**

The final foreseeable limitation is related to the scope of this bachelor thesis. As discussed above, the writer and the GM of HIHCC have agreed to simplify the cost calculation to match this research-type bachelor thesis, because the topic can be expanded to be as detailed as another thesis subject. Even though the writer is highly interested in the financial aspects of a cross-training program, it is not a main research section of the thesis.

## **6 Research results**

This chapter introduces the results from interviews and questionnaires. A comparison of the two research methods is presented at the end of this chapter.

### **6.1 Interviews' results**

In total there are 5 interviews arranged: interviews with the General Manager, Duty Manager, Front Office Manager, F&B Manager and Housekeeping Supervisor. The interviews were recorded and then converted into transcripts. Interview questions are shown in the Appendix chapter.

The time for each interview was between 15 minutes to 25 minutes. After that, the transcripts were coded into different themes using the color-coding method. The themes include current training situation of the hotel, cross-training implementation, and employee management strategy, which are compatible with the research questions.

#### **Current training situation of the hotel**

According to all 5 managers and supervisor, mixed type of training is used in all departments at the moment. Though informal, on the job training, is operated more frequently, there are many written materials and e-trainings available for employees. Front office employees receive the most training, and the training also consists of more formal instructions than in F&B and Housekeeping department. In Housekeeping, informal training is mostly used. There are certain standards that employees need to acquire such as Holiday Inn standard and Open Lobby standard. All five managers agreed that training is crucially important in maintaining service quality of the hotel.

According to the GM, F&B and Housekeeping department could provide more training about how to follow-up with guests' requests and communicate with other divisions. F&B manager preferred to have more training in meeting and conference. The reason behind the delay of reception training for F&B employees is because there were many changes for the hotel in the last 2 years. The hotel was closed for 3 months for the renovation in 2015, after that there were changes in F&B employees. New employees joined the hotel and F&B manager position was also changed. Therefore, cross-training was not considered until recently when the F&B operation has been more stable (Salonen 6 November 2017).

Regarding cross-training at the hotel, only Front office staff received training in other areas. In other departments, cross-training has not been implemented. Trainees are the

exception because they need to work at all departments before concentrating on one specific area. Receptionists were trained to do customer service tasks at the lobby bar such as cashier, serving coffee, tea, beers, and wines because they are entitled to help at the Lobby bar when needed. This is according to Open Lobby concept to ensure all guests have a comfortable, cozy and convenient stay; therefore all touchpoints at the hotel need to be smoothly operated with a welcome atmosphere.

### **Cross-department work environment**

All managers and supervisor perceived multi-skilled employees as considerably beneficial for the hotel. F&B manager emphasized the advantage of waitresses knowing reception work. As the lobby bar is placed close to reception, it is better if the staff at both reception and lobby bar can work at each other's department in order to cross-help each other. The manager also mentioned that there is one lobby bar employee who is learning reception task from her own interest.

Duty Manager and Front office manager suggested having more training at the lobby bar for the receptionists. The Duty Manager stated that she and other receptionists do not feel comfortable working at the bar because the team does not spend much time training and working there, therefore they do not know the correct procedures to serve customers. F&B manager mentioned that employees at the restaurant could have more training at Meeting and conference. The division was only opened since March 2017; therefore not every employee at F&B knows how to prepare for meetings. Housekeeping supervisor shared the same perspective and indicated the flexibility that cross-training could create to the hotel.

On the other hand, managers and supervisor showed concerns regarding the implementation of cross-training. Most managers said cross-training would be useful; however, they were not assured of its possibility and practicality, especially in planning work shifts. The work lists last for 3 weeks and normally they are ready 1 week in advance. If cross-training is executed, managers of all departments need to discuss and cooperate in order to design a cross-department worklist, which is viewed challenging by all managers. F&B manager also pointed out that not every employee would like to do work at the restaurant, for instance, some receptionists "do not like to do what we are doing here" (Noro 17 November 2017).

Nevertheless, managers expressed positivity towards the challenges. The GM stated that even though it might place some difficulties at first, it is not a big problem. The team is fairly small, so the managers can discuss together (Salonen 6 November 2017). Further-



more, Front office and F&B are the two departments that have high possibility of acquiring a cross-training program (Salonen 6 November 2017).

Regarding the current cross-department knowledge of employees, the results vary between departments. According to the GM, front office employees have the most comprehensive understanding of the hotel because they received most training. Yet the knowledge depends on personality and motivation of employees. Duty Manager and Front office Manager both assessed their team as having a good understanding of other departments. Meetings and conference, however, might be unclear to some employees. At F&B and Housekeeping, most employees are only familiar with their particular expertise, except if they were previously trainees or studied hospitality.

In case of high demand situations, managers regularly search for extra employees to cover staff shortage. In the front office, if there are more than 100 departures and 80 arrivals, an extra employee is contacted for a 4-hour work shift. F&B and Housekeeping managers take extra employees from other Restel hotels or from staff agency. According to the GM, cross-training definitely might help to reduce the extra employees hired, yet it could not totally replace 4-hour shifts.

Busy days in Front office are Friday evenings, Saturdays, Sundays and Monday mornings. In the morning on weekdays, it is busy from 7.30 – 9.00, 16.00 - 20.00 in the afternoon and from 22.00 – 1.00 at night. During weekend guests check out later and check in earlier, so 10.00 – 13.00 and 15.00 – 18.00 are the packed hours. At the restaurant on weekdays, busy time is from 7.30 – 8.30 at breakfast, 11.30 – 12.30 at lunch and 18.00 – 21.00 at the Lobby bar. Weekend breakfasts are usually crowded at the restaurant. Housekeeping department is also busier from 10.00 to 15.00 on weekdays and on weekends when there are more departures and arrivals.

In order to learn basic tasks in the hotel for an experienced employee, it could take from 2 weeks to 1 month at reception, 3 shifts to 2 weeks at F&B and 2 weeks at Housekeeping. It is important to note that those are the time required to get familiar with fundamental duty, not the time to master a job. All managers agreed that for cross-trained employees, they are expected to do only simple tasks in order to help for certain time. If employees have more experience, they can work full shifts at other departments.

### **Employee motivation and retention practices**

According to all managers, they motivate employees by giving feedback and verbal appreciation. If employees do a great work, small presents such as Restel vouchers and

coupons are given as rewards. Moreover, managers encourage innovation and appreciate new suggestions from employees. Career development for the staff is also recognized and employees are supported to take managerial training provided by Restel.

Team meetings are scheduled differently depending on the division. Front office has team meeting twice a year while it is once in two months in F&B and every work day in House-keeping. At 9.00 am every workday, there is a short meeting for Front office manager, Housekeeping, and F&B manager to discuss the situation of the day.

Managers often hire candidates with previous experience in the job and multi-skill is a big advantage. The ability to multi-task is considered beneficial; however, it is not a priority.

### **Scandic agreement and hourly employee cost**

The interviews were organized in the first two weeks of November and at that time; it had not been decided by the authority if the agreement between Scandic and Restel was approved. Therefore the GM had not been informed any official information regarding the acquired portfolio.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the hotel's financial information cannot be available publicly; therefore the GM provided some estimation of the hourly cost per employee. The cost for one employee including all social payment and taxes is roughly 24 euros/ hour.

## **6.2 Questionnaires' results**

### **6.2.1 Current training situations**

#### **Front office department**

There are 7 respondents collected from the digital questionnaire, which means that all employees, except Duty Manager, Front Office Manager, answered the form. The majority of the respondents are between 24-29 years old with 3 to more than 5 years of experience in hospitality.

According to the result, all employees in Reception have had previous experience before working at HIHCC (Figure 2). 6 employees had worked in Reception and 5 employees had worked in F&B department.



Figure 2. Experience of front office employees before working at HIHCC

6 employees received training in Front office, F&B and Housekeeping training. The mixed training method is used in front office department. There is one worker who did not receive any training either at front office or other departments.

Compared to the interview results, it can be concluded that 6 out of 7 employees at Front office were previously trainees at the hotel before hired as official staffs. One employee was already an experienced receptionist; therefore the managers only introduced him/her the general working process of the hotel.

### **F&B Department**

16 responses were collected, which showed that all employees answered the questionnaire. The majority of employees are above 30 years old with more than 5 years of working experience.

All employees had previous experience before working at HIHCC; 14 of 17 had worked in F&B department and 1 employee was a trainee at the hotel before becoming a full-time employee. Mixed type of training is used to train employees at F&B department. Half of the team did not receive training at other departments, and they are all working in the kitchen. Others mostly received training at Meeting and Conference and some had training at Reception and Housekeeping.

### **Housekeeping**

7 employees answered the questionnaire. They are mostly over 30 years old with more than 5 years of working experience.

All housekeepers had previous experience in hospitality before working at HIHCC. 2 employees were trainees at the hotel before working officially. Informal job training was used for most of the housekeepers. Only 2 workers who were trainees had training at the restaurant, the rest of the team did not have any other training.

### 6.2.2 Cross-department tasks

#### Front office department

Among 7 employees, 3 employees have worked at F&B department (other tasks than Lobby bar), 1 employee has worked at Housekeeping and the rest of the team have not tried other responsibilities at the hotel. Accordingly, when employees were asked about the understanding of F&B tasks from 1-5 scale, the average score is 3.3 /5 with three employees claimed to have substantial knowledge at the restaurant. With Housekeeping department, the average score is slightly higher than F&B's with the result of 3.43/ 5.

When the employees were asked to evaluate whether the Lobby bar training was provided sufficiently enough on a scale of 1 to 5, the average score is only 2.86. More than half of the team answered to feel unconfident working at the bar (Figure 3).

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average
I have enough training to perform the tasks	1	3	0	2	1	7	2.86
I am confident to work at the bar	0	4	1	0	2	7	3

Figure 3. Lobby bar performance evaluation of front office employees

6 out of 7 employees preferred to have more training at the bar and “making drinks” is the most requested task to be instructed (Figure 4).

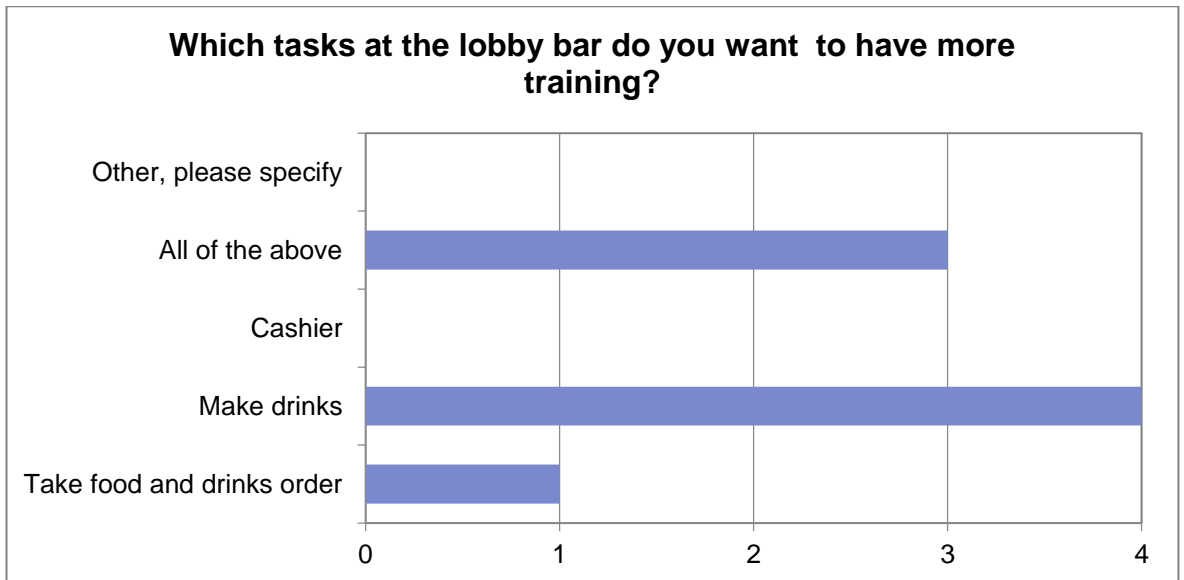


Figure 4. Lobby bar training for front office employees

6 out of 7 employees chose not to work at other departments, one employee would like to work at F&B (Figure 5).

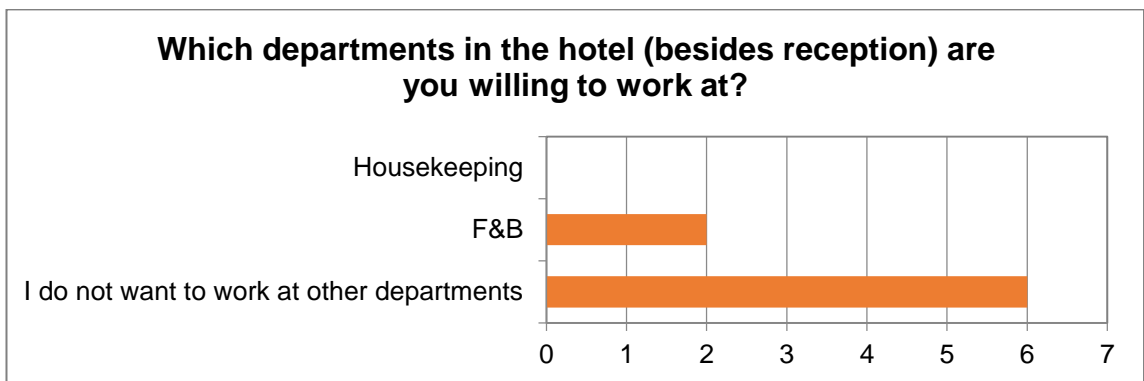


Figure 5. Cross-department's perception of front office employees

In their daily tasks, all employees needed to multi-task at their work and they preferred to do so. Most receptionists were not willing to change responsibilities in one shift, meaning, for instance, working some hours at breakfast and some hours at Reception in one work shift. Only 2 out of 7 showed positive agreement (Figure 6).

	1	2	3	4	5		Total	Average
I am totally not willing to	2	3	0	2	0	I am totally willing to	7	2.29

Figure 6. Opinion of front office employees on task-switching in one work shift

## F&B Department

As mentioned earlier, meetings and conferences are included in F&B's tasks, therefore waitresses also take responsibility whenever there are meetings. Other than meetings and conferences, the staff did not work at any other departments, except one employee, who was a trainee, worked at Reception and Housekeeping.

Regarding cross-department knowledge, almost all employees did not have a good understanding of either reception or housekeeping. The average score of understanding on a scale of 1-5 is 2.31 and 2.13 respectively at reception and housekeeping. Correspondingly, more than half of the employees did not want to work at other departments and 6 workers preferred to work at reception (Figure 7).

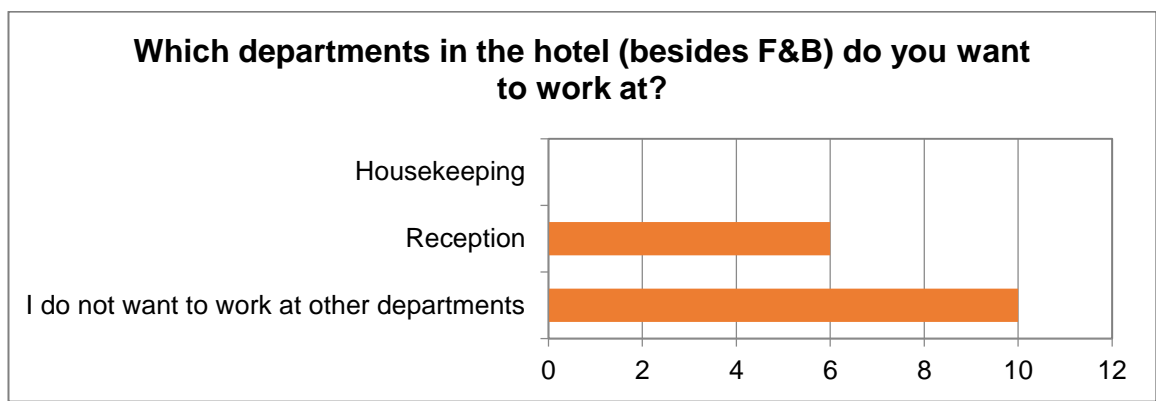


Figure 7. Cross-department's perception of F&B employees

All employees answered to multi-task in their work on a regular basis and they all wanted to multitask. Similar to the result in reception, a larger number of employees did not prefer to change departments during one shift. Only 2 of 16 employees were willing to do so.

## Housekeeping

One housekeeper has worked at the restaurant, the rest did not work at any other places. The majority of housekeepers were not familiar with the tasks of either reception or F&B. Notably, 5 of 7 employees would want to work at F&B department and all housekeepers viewed additional skills as advantageous.

Similar to the results at Front office and F&B, multi-task was necessary for Housekeeping job and all housekeepers liked to multitask. Regarding task-switching, 6 of 7 employees did not prefer to change their positions in one work shift.

### 6.2.3 Employee motivation

#### Front office department

Employees usually receive feedback from managers whenever there is something to mention; there is no official timetable for feedback sessions in the team. Managers often reward employees by verbal compliments or presents such as vouchers or coupons.

The majority of employees claimed that their work is stressful and they get distracted at work. 3 out of 7 employees acknowledged the support of managers at the workplace. The rest undecided or disagreed when evaluating the statements that managers were aware of their work problems and cared about employees' well-being.

#### F&B Department

Half of the team received feedback from the manager once a week, others had it every workday or whenever there was something to discuss. Similar to Front office team, F&B manager normally use verbal rewards and sometimes presents like vouchers. A team meeting is held once every 2 months.

The majority of employees considered their job stressful, however, only half of the employees get distracted in the work. Manager's support is recognized by most of the staff.

#### Housekeeping department

According to the data gathered, housekeepers got feedback whenever there is something to discuss. A team meeting is held every workday and normally verbal rewards are delivered. Present rewards are also used by managers.

Employees did not acknowledge housekeeping as either stressful or distracting. According to their perspective, the manager was aware of their work problems, however, did not show much attention to their well-being at work (Figure 8).

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Totally agree	Total
<b>My work is stressful</b>	0	1	4	2	0	7
<b>I usually get distracted in my work</b>	5	0	0	2	0	7
<b>My managers are aware of my problems at work</b>	3	0	0	3	1	7
<b>My managers care about my well-being at work</b>	0	2	3	1	1	7

Figure 8. Work evaluation of Housekeepers

#### **6.2.4 Department comparison**

After analyzing the questionnaires from all 3 departments, the thesis writer is able to identify some similar results as well as compare the differences between the departments.

First of all, all employees at HIHCC already had previous experience in hospitality before working at HIHCC. The majority of employees have expertise in their own department; however, if the employees were trainees at HIHCC or studied Hospitality Management, they are also familiar with tasks of other departments. Mixed training consisting of both formal and informal training is more widely used in Front office and F&B; in Housekeeping department the training is mostly informal, train-on-the-go method.

Regards to current cross-training, the Front office has the most employees who received instructions from other departments. It could be due to the fact that almost all current employees at Reception were formerly trainees at the hotel. Furthermore, receptionists need to help at the Lobby bar, leading to additional training provided. However, the majority of employees in Front office are not confident working at the bar, therefore the suggestion of more lobby bar training is highly approved.

F&B and Housekeeping employees are more opened to have employees from other departments working in their areas. They also have more willingness to work at different departments compared to employees at Reception: 6 employees from F&B wanted to work at Reception and 5 employees from Housekeeping preferred working at F&B. At Front office, only 1 out of 7 employees selected F&B. This makes Reception and F&B the favored departments among employees to have additional training. As to time required to train basic tasks for employees, Front office department consumes most time, which is around 1 month or more. In F&B and Housekeeping, the time is around 1-3 weeks to get a preliminary understanding of the job.

All employees in the hotel need to multitask at their work and they enjoy doing so. As to task-switching, employees are not willing to change responsibilities in one work shift. Nevertheless, they all agree that additional skills are beneficial for their future careers. Stress and distraction are irresistible at all departments. Housekeepers find their job less hectic and disturbing than employees at Reception and F&B Department do.

Managers often give feedback to employees whenever there is something to discuss. If employees perform outstandingly, verbal feedback and presents are accordingly given. All departments have their team meeting scheduled at a different time and frequency: twice a



year at front office, once in two months at F&B and every workday at Housekeeping department.

### 6.3 Interviews and questionnaires comparison

Interviews and questionnaires bring diverse insights from perspectives of managers and employees. At some aspects managers shared the same opinions with employees; however, there are also some gaps between the understandings of the two groups.

Firstly, the statement that not every employee prefers to work at other divisions is approved by both managers and employees. More than half of F&B employees and most of housekeepers and receptionists want to work only in their field of expertise. The claim from F&B manager that most of the receptionists do not want to work at F&B is also backed up by the questionnaire's result. Only 1 out of 7 receptionists chose to cross-train at F&B.

Furthermore, cross-training suggestion is gladly received in all departments. Both managers and employees in Front office want to have more Lobby bar instructions, more specifically in making drinks. F&B manager and employees are inclined to more Meeting and Conference training. The occupied hours of all departments collected from interviews and questionnaires are also matched. The busy hours in each department is presented in Figure 9 and 10.

Weekdays	BUSY HOURS IN EACH DEPARTMENT		
	Reception	F&B	Housekeeping
Morning	7.30 - 9.00	7.30 - 9.00 11.00 - 12.30	
Afternoon			12.00 - 14.00
Evening	16.00 - 19.00	17.00 - 22.00	
Night	22.00 - 01.00		

Figure 9. Busy hours in weekdays

Weekends	BUSY HOURS IN EACH DEPARTMENT		
	Reception	F&B	Housekeeping
	10.00 - 13.00	08.30 - 10.30	
Morning			
Afternoon			12.00 - 14.00
Evening	15.00 - 19.00	17.00 - 22.00	
Night	22.00 - 01.00		

Figure 10. Busy hours on weekends

Managers' awareness regards to employees' cross-department knowledge is confirmed by the questionnaires' answers. The majority of F&B and Housekeeping employees do not have a good understanding of other jobs in the hotel. Front office staffs, however, have relatively higher knowledge of other departments.

Managerial support to employees could be an area of improvement for the hotel. Employees from Front office and Housekeeping did not recognize managers' awareness towards their work issues and their well-being at work. While from the interviews, all managers showed great assistance and encouragement to the employees.

## 7 Discussion

This chapter reviews the research results and the literature in order to answer the main research question: **“How can HIHCC effectively and cost-wisely implement a cross-training program?”**

Both formal and informal training are used at the moment in HIHCC. Formal training is mostly provided at Front office while informal training is used more often in F&B and Housekeeping departments. Receptionists are cross-trained to do customer service at the Lobby bar but the majority of employees are not comfortable being at the bar. Among F&B employees, there is a lack of knowledge in Conference and Meeting as there has not been much training for employees. Housekeepers did not receive any other training than housekeeping tasks.

Research results showed that employees know moderately about other departments' tasks. Receptionists have the most comprehensive knowledge of other departments. For the time being only trainees receive cross-training at all departments before working in one specific area.

Both managers and employees in HIHCC have positive responses about implementing a cross-training program. Managers at the hotel confirmed advantages that cross-training may create. It provides flexibility to the workplace and helps to compensate for staff shortage in emergency situations (Toivonen 16 November 2017; Salonen 14 November 2017). Researches from Carmen & Berge (2010, 522-523), Chen & Tseng (2012, 1) and Jordan & al. (2002, 965) echo the argument with similar results.

More training at the lobby bar for all Front office employees is vital to the Open Lobby concept of HIHCC. The purpose of this concept is to provide flexibility and comfort to guests so that they can work, relax or socialize without any barriers. Open Lobby “brings together the tradition hotel lobby, lounge, bar and restaurant areas into one cohesive space” (Holiday Inn 2017). This emphasizes the importance of a cross-function working environment in the hotel. It is also suggested by managers and employees at Front office to receive more instructions at the bar, especially in making drinks.

The time to train at the bar is approximately 2 weeks according to F&B Manager. Taken into consideration that it is challenging to gather every employee at the same time, one compulsory Lobby bar training session should be organized for Front office team. After that, a handbook of how to make special drinks at the bar could be designed for later self-

study. Receptionists will, accordingly, practice at the bar later with a waitress when there is a possibility.

More training at Conference and Meeting is approved by both F&B manager employees. F&B manager, therefore, should arrange a specific training session and create an instruction guide for all employees.

Besides benefits of cross-department task, it is not suitable for all employees. The argument is backed up by the questionnaire results and the research conclusions of Carmen & Berge (2010, 525) and Bokhorst (2011, 3172). Therefore, in the beginning, managers of HIHCC should utilize chained cross-training. This method not only provides full benefits of cross-training but also reduces training cost because there are fewer employees to cross-train (Jordan & al. 2002, 954).

From the research results, there is one Front office employee who wants to work in F&B; five F&B employees who want to work in Reception and six housekeepers who prefer to work in F&B. Accordingly, managers should choose specific people from each department to cross-train.

A suggestion based on the questionnaire's results is to cross-train:

- One employee from Front office to work at F&B
- Two employees from F&B to work at Front office
- Two employees from Housekeeping to work at F&B

A guidebook with clear steps of check in, check out procedures could be designed by the Front office manager and given to the waitresses. For training at F&B, simple tasks at the restaurant take around 3 shifts to 2 weeks to acquire. Therefore F&B manager should arrange time for the cross-train employees so that they can shadow from the experienced waitresses.

Weekends are normally busy days at the hotel; therefore the multi-skilled employees should be working so that they are available if extra help is needed. To make a cross-department work list, managers should acknowledge the busy hours of other departments for better preparation. For example, mornings at reception are normally busy from 7.30 to 9.00 and the lobby bar waitress starts at 8.00. Therefore the waitress can help at the reception from 8.30 to 9.00 if the lobby bar is not busy and there is only one receptionist working.

It should be also noted that cross-training cannot totally replace 4-hour extra work shifts despite the flexibility it provides (Salonen 14 November 2017). Cross-trained employees are a great help when a department suddenly gets occupied or some employees have sick leaves with short notice. However, if managers know in advance that the demand will be certainly high, they should allocate extra employees for 4-hour work shifts.

Almost all employees stated that their job required multitasking, which proved the research of Jang & Thomas (2012, 589) and Daskin (2016, 163) that hospitality is the industry of multitasking. Though employees like to multitask at their work, they are not willing to switch tasks within one work shift. Cross-training could also create added stress and role ambiguity in the workplace (Walters & Raybould 2007, 146; Varca 2009, 51). Hence, it is more useful to experience different work scenarios with cross-trained employees. Then managers can allocate employees depending on their preferences.

The research results open up a paradox in the perspective of employees in HIHCC. Even though only a third of the employees prefer to work at other departments, all of them agree that multi-skill is beneficial for their future career. Answering to this aspect, Duty Manager of HIHCC believed that perspective of employees could change after cross-training. Employees may not like the idea of working at other departments in the first place, but they could think differently after being cross-trained (Salminen, 15 November 2017).

Therefore, it is more efficient for HIHCC to implement cross-training to full-time employees who prefer it first (chained cross-training), after that the program could be expanded for all employees. In the end, the fundamental purpose of cross-training is to bring out potential abilities of employees in order to increase organization's shared knowledge and flexibility. By implementing cross-training, managers show that they believe their employees' ability and encourage them to step out of the comfort zone. Cross-training is not all about increasing profit or cutting cost; it is also about job fulfilment and job enlargement (Namin 2016, 50).

Furthermore, from the research results, there is a gap between managers and employees regarding work motivation. Employees do not recognize their managers' attention towards their work problems and their work well-being. As a result, managers of HIHCC should express their awareness more directly and more frequently to the employees. Giving more regular feedback and appreciation is one practice that is proved to help reduce work stress and engage employees (Namin 2016, 49; Hon, Chan, and Lu 2013, 1).

## **Cost calculation**

From the statistics provided by the GM and the recommendations made above, the thesis writer is able to make simple calculations of how cross-training can benefit the hotel. The calculation is only for demonstration purposes. The GM estimated the hourly cost for one employee is 24 euros/hour.

A scenario is made as a background for the calculation. On normal weekend mornings, reception is busy from 10.00 – 13.00. Lobby bar waitress starts working at 9.00 and she helps at the breakfast until 11.00. At weekend the lobby bar is usually busy in the afternoon after 15.00.

If on one weekend morning the departures are between 95 and 100, there is not necessarily a need for a 4-hour shift. However, if there is no trainee on that day, Front office manager can still call for an extra employee (Salminen 15 November 2017). However, if now the lobby waitress who can help at reception when it is busy, there is no need for an extra person. So the cost is saved by 4 hours, which is 96 € for that day. If there is one day per week that cross-training can save 4 hours, in one year the hotel will save 4 608 € on Front office's employee's cost. And the training cost should also be taken into consideration. In order to arrange a team meeting, managers need to hire extra employees to work. If the training is for 2 hours, the cost is 48 €. Together with the hours taken to prepare the training, the cost could be up to 150€. As a result, the hotel can still save up a certain budget on employee's cost.

Nevertheless, as the GM has mentioned in the interview, cross-training cannot totally take the place of extra shifts. In real life situations, there are a lot of other factors affecting and the example scenario is an ideal case if everything goes as planned. Cross-training is not the training primarily to reduce cost; literature and this research have shown that it provides hotels with more possibilities in staff allocation, quicker solutions for emergencies and better staff engagement.

### **7.1 Conclusion**

A set of recommendation is planned for HIHCC as a primary reference of starting a cross-training program:

- More training at the hotel's lobby bar for Front office employees should be executed. An instruction guide about how to make special drinks at the bar should be designed and distributed to all receptionists.
- More training at Meeting and Conference for F&B employees.

- Managers can cross-train one employee at the Front office to work at F&B, two employees from F&B to work at Reception and two employees from Housekeeping to work at F&B.
- A guidebook of simple procedures at Reception (how to do check-ins, check-outs) can be designed.
- Managers should cooperate with each other to design a cross-department working environment. Cross-trained employees should always be working when the hotel is busy to provide better flexibility.
- Managers should motivate employees by showing attention to their problems at work and their work well-being. Give feedback and rewards regularly and encourage innovation inside the hotel.
- Managers should identify and hire candidates with the ability to multitask and deal with stress.

Scandic's agreement to acquire Restel's hotels will create major changes in the internal process of HIHCC. If the agreement is approved, the thesis writer hopes that it will be a good opportunity to integrate new changes into the organization. Cross-training is certainly a potential option for consideration.

## **8 Implication for further research and personal learning**

This chapter presents some aspects which were not discussed in the thesis but valuable for future research. After that the thesis writer reflects on her own learning when working on the thesis.

### **8.1 Further research topics**

This research could be implied to some product-types theses related to cross-training. For example, how to design a handbook of serving wine at the bar or a guide book of checking guests at Reception can be other research topics. Designing cross-department work lists is also an intriguing topic suggested from this thesis.

Cost calculation is the part that the thesis writer considers valuable for further investigation. For this thesis, the financial aspect was mainly to present the most fundamental effect of cross-training and the statistics provided from the GM was also for demonstration. However, the cost or profit is much more complicated in the actual working environment, therefore in order to evaluate the pros and cons of cross-training financially, more analysis and calculation are required.

### **8.2 Personal learning**

The thesis topic is closely connected to the thesis writer because she was a multi-skilled employee working in HIHCC. The added skills allowed her to flexibly work in different departments: reception, F&B breakfast, lunch and Lobby bar. Therefore she was intrigued to do research on the topic of cross-training.

The research results were not surprising to the writer; however, there are a lot of learning aspects from the thesis. First of all, the writer gained deeper knowledge on the subject and was able to expand the research topics; the polychronicity concept was a coincident finding when the writer was searching for some other aspects. Secondly, the writer also learned how to plan, keep track and manage an academic project, especially when things did not follow the plan. Last but not least, the writer understood the structure of a research paper and the procedures of how to execute it.

For acknowledgement, the thesis writer would like to express a deepest thank to interviewees at Holiday Inn Helsinki City Centre. The support of Salonen - the General Manager of the hotel and of all division managers and supervisor: Salminen, Toivonen, Noro



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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1: General Manager's Interview questions**

#### **RQ1. How is the current training method implemented in HIHCC?**

- How many employees are there in the hotel?
- Which type of training is used in HIHCC at the moment for front-line employees (formal, informal or mixed)?
- How does the current training method affect service quality in HIHCC?
- What are the departments that need better employee training?
- What are the reasons behind the delay of the cross-training instruction for restaurant employees?

#### **RQ2. How to create an effective cross-department working environment in HIHCC?**

- What do you think of multi-skilled employees?
- What is your opinion of a cross-training program in the hotel?
- Which department has the most necessity to have cross-trained employees?
- Which department has the highest possibility of implementing a cross-training program?
- What are the possible effects of cross-training in terms of planning work shifts between departments?

#### **RQ3. What are the financial effects of cross-training on the hotel?**

- How much is the average hourly cost of one employee (including tax and social payment)?
- What is your opinion on utilizing cross-trained employees to replace 4-hour work shifts?

#### **RQ4. How can HIHCC accommodate different practices to hire and retain good employees?**

- How do you motivate front-line employees?
- What is the career development for front-line employees at the hotel?
- How do you give feedback to front-line employees?

- How is the cross-department knowledge of all employees at the moment?
- How do managers encourage innovation within the hotel?
- How does management board of HIHCC conduct interviews?
- What characteristics are you searching for in candidates?

**RQ5. How does Scandic's new operation affect HIHCC's staff management activities?**

## **Appendix 2: Duty Manager and Front office Manager's Interview questions**

**RQ1. How is the current training method implemented in HIHCC?**

- How many employees are there at Front office?
- Which type of training is used in front office at the moment (formal, informal or mixed)?
- What are the trainings that front office employees receive when starting the work?
- How does the current training method affect service quality in front office?
- What are the tasks at the bar that receptionist need to do?
- How much time do receptionists spend at the bar on average?

**RQ2. How to create an effective cross-department working environment in HIHCC?**

- What is your opinion of a cross-training program at reception?
- Which departments are beneficial for reception staff to cross-train?
- What do you think about having employees from other departments working at reception when needed?
- What do you do in a high demand forecast situation?
- On average, how many employees are there in one work shift?
- When is the busy time during a work shift?
- What are the possible effects of cross-training in terms of planning work shifts between departments?

**RQ3. What are the financial effects of cross-training on the hotel?**

- What is the estimated time for a new employee to know basics of reception?
- How long does it take for an employee to get used to the tasks?

**RQ4. How can HIHCC accommodate different practices to hire and retain good employees?**

- How do you motivate employees?
- What is the career development for front office employees?
- How do you give feedback to the staff?
- How is the cross-department knowledge of front office staff at the moment?
- How do you encourage innovation in front office department?
- How do you conduct interviews?
- What characteristics are you searching for in candidates?

**Appendix 3: F&B Manager's Interview questions**

**RQ1. How is the current training method implemented in HIHCC?**

- Which type of training is used in F&B department at the moment (formal, informal or mixed)?
- What are the trainings that front office employees receive when starting the work?
- How does the current training method affect service quality in front office?

**RQ2. How to create an effective cross-department working environment in HIHCC?**

- What is your opinion of a cross-training program at reception?
- Which departments you think is beneficial for F&B staff to cross-train?
- What do you think about having employees from other departments working at F&B when needed?
- How do you forecast demand in F&B department?
- What do you do in a high demand forecast situation?
- On average, how many employees are there in one work shift?
- When is the busy time during a work shift?

- What are the possible effects of cross-training in terms of planning work shifts between departments?

**RQ3. What are the financial effects of cross-training on the hotel?**

- What is the estimated time for a new employee to know basics of F&B?
- How long does it take for an employee to get used to the tasks?

**RQ4. How can HIHCC accommodate different practices to hire and retain good employees?**

- How do you motivate employees?
- What is the career development for employees at F&B department?
- How do you give feedback to the staff?
- How is the cross-department knowledge of F&B staff at the moment?
- How do you encourage innovation in F&B department?
- How do you conduct interviews?
- What characteristics are you searching for in candidates?

**Appendix 4: Housekeeping Manager's Interview questions**

**RQ1. How is the current training method implemented in HIHCC?**

- How many employees are there at Housekeeping department?
- Which type of training is used in housekeeping department at the moment (formal, informal or mixed)?
- What are the trainings that front office employees receive when starting the work?
- How does the current training method affect service quality in housekeeping?

**RQ2. How to create an effective cross-department working environment in HIHCC?**

- What is your opinion of a cross-training program at housekeeping?
- Which departments do you think are beneficial for housekeeping to cross-train?
- What do you think about having employees from other departments working at housekeeping when needed?
- How do you forecast demand in housekeeping department?
- What do you do in a high demand forecast situation?



- On average, how many employees are there in one work shift?
- When is the busy time during a work shift?
- What are the possible effects of cross-training in terms of planning work shifts between departments?

**RQ3. What are the financial effects of cross-training on the hotel?**

- What is the estimated time for a new employee to know basics of housekeeping?
- How long does it take for an employee to get used to the tasks?
- 
- In your opinion, can a cross-trained employee replace 4-hour shifts?

**RQ4. How can HIHCC accommodate different practices to hire and retain good employees?**

- How do you motivate employees?
- What is the career development for employees at housekeeping department?
- How do you give feedback to the staff?
- How is the cross-department knowledge housekeeping staff at the moment?
- How do you encourage innovation in housekeeping department?
- How do you conduct interviews?
- What characteristics are you searching for in candidates?

**Appendix 5: Housekeeping Questionnaire questions (Finnish version)**

1. Missä yksiköissä sinulla on kokemusta ennen Holiday Inn Helsinki City Centerissä työskentelyä? \*

- Minulla ei ollut kokemusta
- Vastanotto
- Ravintola
- Kokous ja Konferenssi
- Kerroshoito

**2. Minkälaista koulutusta olet saanut aloittaessasi työsi? \***

- En saanut koulutusta
- Virallinen koulutus (kirjalliset ohjeet)
- Epävirallinen koulutus (ilman kirjallisia ohjeita)
- sekä virallista että epävirallista koulutusta

**3. Millä muilla hotellin osastoilla olet saanut koulutusta? \***

- En ole saanut koulutusta
- Vastaanotto
- Ravintola
- Kokous ja Konferenssi

**4. Kerroshoidon lisäksi, missä hotellin muilla osastoilla olet työskennellyt? \***

- En ole työskennellyt mulla osastoilla
- Vastaanotto
- Ravintola
- Kokous ja Konferenssi

**5. Mitä mieltä olette, kun muiden osastojen työntekijöitä pyydetään kerroksille kattamaan henkilöstön puutteen? \***

1 2 3 4 5

Täysin eri mieltä ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Täysin samaa mieltä

**6. Mikä on tavallisesti kiireisin aika kerroshoidossa? Määritä \***

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7. Missä määrin tiedät, mitä tehtäviä kuuluu vastaanotolle? \*

1 2 3 4 5

En tiedä mitään ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Tiedän kaiken

8. Missä määrin tiedät, mitä tehtäviä kuuluu ravintola-osastolle? \*

1 2 3 4 5

En tiedä mitään ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Tiedän kaiken

9. Missä hotellin osastolla (paitsi kerroshoito) haluat työskennellä? \*

En halua työskennellä muilla osastoilla

Vastaanotto

Ravintola

10. Luuletko, että muiden osastojen edellyttämät lisätaidot auttavat sinua tulevaisuudessa?

Kyllä

Ei

En tiedä

11. Kuinka usein tarvitset moniosaamista työssänne? \*

Aina

Yleensä

Joskus

Harvoin

Ei koskaan

12. Haluatko tehdä monitulokset? \*

Kyllä

Ei

13. Missä määrin haluat vaihtaa eri työosastoja yhden vuoron aikana? (Esimerkiksi aamuisin muutamia tunteja aamiaisella ja muutama tunti kerroshoidossa?)

1 2 3 4 5

En lainkaan halua      Haluan

14. Kuinka kauan vaatii perehdyttämistä, että tietää perustoiminnot kerroshoidossa? \*

Alle viikon

1-3 viikkoa

Kuukausi

1-3 kuukautta

Yli 3 kuukautta

15. Kuinka usein saat palautetta esimiehiltä? \*

Ei koskaan

Joka työpäivä

Kerran viikossa

Kerran kuukaudessa

Muu, täsmennä

\_\_\_\_\_

16. Kuinka olet saanut palkkioita esimiehiltäsi? \*

Suullinen palkkio

Lahja (kuponki...)

En ole saanut

Muu, täsmennä

\_\_\_\_\_

**17.** Kuinka usein sinulla on kerroshoitajien tapaaminen esimiesten kanssa? \*

Joka päivä

Kerran viikossa

Kerran kuukaudessa

Muu, täsmennä

\_\_\_\_\_

**18.** Arvioi nämä lausunnot asteikolla 1-5: \*

	Täysin eri mieltä	eri mieltä	Neutraali	samaa mieltä	Täysin sa- ma mieltä
Työni on stressaavaa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Työni käy hermoilleni	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Esimieheni ovat tietoisia työssäni olevista ongelmista	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Johtajani välittävät hyvinvoin- nistani työssä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**19.** Mitä ajattelet koulutusohjelmasta (esim. Meditaatiosta) stressin ja häirinnän helpottamiseksi työssä? \*

1 2 3 4 5

En lainkaan halua      Haluan

**20.** Ikäsi \*

- Alle 18
- 18-23
- 24-29
- 30-35
- Yli 35

**21. Kokemus hotellissa \***

- Alle 1 vuosi
- 1-3 vuotta
- 3-5 vuotta
- Yli 5 vuotta

**Appendix 6: Housekeeping Questionnaire questions (English version)**

1. Which departments in hospitality did you have experience before working at Holiday Inn Helsinki City Centre (HIHCC)?

- I did not have any experience in hospitality
- Reception
- Restaurant
- Meeting and Conference
- Housekeeping

2. What type of housekeeping training did you receive when starting your work? \*

- I did not receive any training
- Formal training (with written instructions)
- Informal training (without written instructions)
- Mixed (both formal and informal training)

3. At which OTHER departments in the hotel did you receive training? \*

- I did not receive training at other departments
- Reception
- Restaurant
- Meeting and Conference

4. Besides housekeeping, at which departments in the hotel have you worked? \*

I have not worked at other departments

Reception

Restaurant

Meeting and conference

5. What is your opinion when employees from other departments work at housekeeping to cover staff shortage? \*

1 2 3 4 5

Totally disagree  Totally agree

6. What is normally the busy time at the housekeeping? Please specify \*

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7. To what extent do you understand the tasks in reception? \*

1 2 3 4 5

I do not know anything  I know everything

8. To what extent do you understand the tasks in restaurant? \*

1 2 3 4 5

I do not know anything  I know everything

9. Which departments in the hotel (besides housekeeping) do you want to work at? \*

I do not want to work at other departments

Reception

Restaurant

10. Do you think that the additional skills from other departments will help you in your future career?

Yes

No

I do not know

11. How often do you need to multi task at your work? \*

Always

Usually

Sometimes

Rarely

Never

12. Do you prefer to multi-task? \*

Yes

No

13. To what extent are you willing to switch departments during one shift? (For example, some hours at breakfast and some hours at housekeeping)

1 2 3 4 5

I am not willing to  I am willing to

14. How long does it take to learn basic tasks at the housekeeping department? \*

Less than 1 week

1-3 weeks

1 month

1-3 months

More than 3 months

15. How often do you receive feedback from managers? \*

Never

Every work day

Once a week

Once a month

Other, please specify

16. How have you received rewards from your managers? \*

Verbal reward

Present (eg: vouchers...)

I have not received rewards from manager

Other, please specify

17. How often do you have housekeeping team meeting with your managers? \*

Every work day

Once a week

Once a month

Other, please specify

18. On a scale of 1 to 5, please evaluate these statements \*

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Totally Agree
My work is stressful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



I usually get distracted in my work

My managers are aware of -

my problems at work

My managers care about -

my well-being at work

19. What is your opinion on a mindfulness training program (eg: meditation) in order to help with stress and distraction at work? \*

1 2 3 4 5

I do not like it  I like it

20. Your age \*

- Less than 18
- 18-23
- 24-29
- 30-35
- More than 35

21. Your experience in hospitality \*

- Less than 1 year
- 1-3 years
- 3-5 years
- More than 5 years

### Appendix 7: Front office Questionnaire questions

1. Which departments did you have experience before working at Holiday Inn Helsinki City Centre(HIHCC)? \*

- I did not have any experience in hospitality
- Reception
- Food and Beverage (F&B)
- Meeting and conference
- Housekeeping

2. What type of front office training did you receive when starting your work? \*

- I did not receive any training
- Formal training (with written instructions)
- Informal training (without written instructions)
- Mixed (both formal and informal training)

3. At which OTHER departments in the hotel did you receive training? \*

- I did not receive training at other departments
- F&B
- Meeting and conference
- Housekeeping

4. As a part of reception task is to help at the lobby bar when needed, how do you evaluate your performance at the bar on a scale from 1 to 5? \*

1 = totally disagree

5 = totally agree

	1	2	3	4	5
I have enough training to perform the tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am confident to work at the bar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Do you want to have more training at the lobby bar? \*

- Yes  No

6. If yes, which tasks do you want to have more training?

(You can choose more than one option)

- Take food and drinks order
- Make drinks
- Cashier
- All of the above
- Other, please specify

7. Besides reception and lobby bar, at which departments in the hotel have you worked? \*

- I have not worked at other departments
- F&B
  - Housekeeping
  - Meeting and conference

8. What is your opinion when employees from other departments work at front office to cover staff shortage? \*

1 2 3 4 5

Totally disagree  Totally agree

9. What is normally the busy time at reception? Please specify \*

Morning shift \_\_\_\_\_

Evening shift \_\_\_\_\_

Night shift \_\_\_\_\_

10. To what extent do you understand the tasks in F&B? \*

1 2 3 4 5

I do not know anything  I know everything

11. To what extent do you understand the tasks in housekeeping? \*

1 2 3 4 5

I do not know anything  I know everything

12. Which departments in the hotel (besides reception) are you willing to work at? \*

I do not want to work at other departments

F&B

Housekeeping

13. Do you think that the additional skills from other departments will help you in your future career?

Yes

No

I do not know

14. How often do you need to multi task at your work? \*

Always

Usually

Sometimes

Rarely

Never

15. Do you prefer to multi-task? \*

Yes

No

16. To what extent are you willing to switch departments during one shift? (For example, some hours at breakfast and some hours at reception) \*

1 2 3 4 5

I am not willing to  I am willing to

17. How long does it take to learn basic tasks at front office department? \*

- Less than 1 week
- 1-3 weeks
- 1 month
- 1-3 months
- More than 3 months

18. How often do you receive feedback from managers? \*

- Never
- Every work day
- Once a week
- Once a month
- Other, please specify

19. How have you received rewards from your managers? \*

- Verbal reward
- Present (eg: vouchers...)
- I have not received rewards from manager
- Other, please specify

20. How often do you have front office team meeting with your managers? \*

- Every work day
- Once a week
- Once a month
- Other, please specify

21. On a scale of 1 to 5, please evaluate these statements \*

	Totally			Totally	
	disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Agree
My work is stressful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I usually get distracted in my work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My managers are aware of - my problems at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My managers care about - my well-being at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

22. What is your opinion on a mindfulness training program (eg: meditation) in order to help with stress and distraction at work? \*

1 2 3 4 5

I do not like it  I like it

23. Your age \*

- Less than 18
- 18-23
- 24-29
- 30-35
- More than 35

24. Your experience in hospitality \*

- Less than 1 year
- 1-3 years
- 3-5 years
- More than 5 years

### **Appendix 8: F&B Questionnaire questions**

1. Which departments in hospitality did you have experience before working at Holiday Inn Helsinki City Centre (HIHCC)? \*

- I did not have any experience in hospitality
- Reception
- Restaurant
- Meeting and Conference
- Housekeeping

2. What type of F&B training did you receive when starting your work? \*

- I did not receive any training
- Formal training (with written instructions)
- Informal training (without written instructions)
- Mixed (both formal and informal training)

3. At which OTHER departments in the hotel did you receive training? \*

- I did not receive training at other departments
- Reception
- Housekeeping
- Meeting and Conference

4. Besides F&B, at which departments in the hotel have you worked? \*

- I have not worked at other departments

- Reception
- Housekeeping
- Meeting and conference

5. What is your opinion when employees from other departments work at F&B to cover staff shortage? \*

1 2 3 4 5

Totally disagree  Totally agree

6. What is normally the busy time at F&B? Please specify \*

Breakfast \_\_\_\_\_

Lunch \_\_\_\_\_

Lobby bar \_\_\_\_\_

7. To what extent do you understand the tasks in reception? \*

1 2 3 4 5

I do not know anything  I know everything

8. To what extent do you understand the tasks in housekeeping? \*

1 2 3 4 5

I do not know anything  I know everything

9. Which departments in the hotel (besides F&B) do you want to work at? \*

- I do not want to work at other departments
- Reception
- Housekeeping

10. Do you think that the additional skills from other departments will help you in your future career?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

11. How often do you need to multi task at your work? \*

- Always
- Usually
- Sometimes

Rarely

Never

12. Do you prefer to multi-task? \*

Yes

No

13. To what extent are you willing to switch departments during one shift? (For example, some hours at breakfast and some hours at reception) \*

1 2 3 4 5

I am not willing to  I am willing to

14. How long does it take to learn basic tasks at F&B department? \*

Less than 1 week

1-3 weeks

1 month

1-3 months

More than 3 months

15. Which department in F&B takes the most time to master? \*

Kitchen

Bar

Restaurant (breakfast, lunch, a la cart)

16. How often do you receive feedback from managers? \*

Never

Every work day

Once a week

Once a month

Other, please specify

17. How have you received rewards from your managers? \*

Verbal reward

Present (eg: vouchers...)

I have not received rewards from manager

Other, please specify

18. How often do you have F&B team meeting with your managers? \*

- Every work day
- Once a week
- Once a month
- Other, please specify

19. On a scale of 1 to 5, please evaluate these statements \*

	Totally				Totally
	disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Agree
My work is stressful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I usually get distracted in my work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My managers are aware of - my problems at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My managers care about - my well-being at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

21. Your age \*

- Less than 18
- 18-23
- 24-29
- 30-35
- More than 35

22. Your experience in hospitality \*

- Less than 1 year
- 1-3 years
- 3-5 years
- More than 5 years