IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF STAFF TRAINING IN A HOTEL,

CASE STUDY: HOTEL X

Lahti University of Applied Sciences
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                                               Case: Hotel X

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ABSTRACT

Operating in an ever-changing and highly competitive environment, it is a must for the organizations in the hospitality industry to constantly provide adequate training for their staff. Training plays a key role in ensuring that the staff is equipped with skills and knowledge required to deliver good customer services.

For that reason, this paper is designed in an attempt to help the Case Company, a five-star hotel located in Vietnam, enhance the effectiveness of its training activities on the staff performance. As the conclusion of the research, the company is suggested to adopt the learning diary and the social network into training. These new learning experiences are believed to increase the staff motivation for learning, which is one of the main issues that the training professionals at the company find difficult to deal with.

The research is done using the deductive approach. Information used in the research is collected from both primary and secondary data, including those from books, articles, websites, the company's reports and the author's observation. Besides, the semi-structured interviews with the two core members of the Training Department contribute a significant part in acquiring an in-depth understanding about the Case Company.

In short, the theoretical part discusses the relevant theories and the practice of staff training in the hospitality industry in general. The empirical part studies the training practice in the Case Company and applies the given theories to the suggested solutions. In addition, the current situation of the Vietnamese hospitality industry is analyzed to give the readers a general thought of the reason why staff training is especially crucial for the organizations operating in this market.

Key words: staff training, hospitality industry, challenges, employee motivation, learning diary, social network

GLOSSARY

FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HR	Human Resources
HRD	Hotel X
HRM	Human Resources Management
KSAs	Knowledge, Skills and Ability
RevPAR	Revenue per available room
VIP	Very important person
VNAT	Vietnam National Association of Tourism
VND	Vietnam Dong

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background information

Growing up in a tourist city, the author nourishes a great passion for the hospitality industry, which led to her decision of having practical training at the Hotel X . Throughout five months working as a trainee in the Training Department, the author has learnt how important staff training is to the brand building and to the success of a hospitality business. Meanwhile, the author has also continuously realized many challenges associated with staff training in the hotel even though its training management system is quite well-established in comparison to other hotels in the region.

The hospitality industry, from which hotels are a main part, is service intensive and consequently relies heavily on its human resources. For a whole hotel to operate smoothly, it needs the involvement of staff of all departments: from the departments directly dealing with guests like Front Office, Housekeeping, Food and Beverages to back-office departments such as Accounting or Engineering. How their works is managed directly impacts to the service, thus to the guests' satisfaction (Hayes & Ninemeier2009, 7). Human resources management, therefore, plays a vital role in the hospitality operation.

Training is an essential and inseparable part of the human resources management, especially in this industry. Though an employee once recruited into a specific position is expected to best suit the job description, it is unlikely that he possesses all the skills and knowledge required and immediately becomes fully functioning (Decenzo & Robbins 2007, 204). A newcomer often needs months to learn the goals, rules, regulations, structure and working culture of the organization to adapt and get in the same pace with other colleagues. This is where training takes its first role of guiding and helping the employees adjust their qualities fit to the organization needs as soon as possible. The process of training goes on following the employees' career path to help them improve their abilities for further career development. Regarding the hospitality operations, training acts as a strategic tool to implement the differentiation strategy by creating a team of high quality staff to provide an exceptional level of service and to meet the guests' expectations.

Yet, there are many factors both subjective and objective that influence and stop training from functioning at its best efficiency, which motivate the author to make a deeper research on this topic.

1.2   Research objectives and research questions

The primary objective of this research is to analyze the existing issues of staff training at the hotel where the author had her practical training, from that suggest the solutions that help to resolve those issues and consequently lead to the improvement in the training effectiveness. Since it is hard to give the overarching advice that could fix all the issues in the extent of this thesis and some decisions are out of the training professionals' authority, the author tries to sort out those that are the most feasible for the company to implement.

In another word, the main objective of the research is to help the Case Company find answers for two questions.

> 1. What are the challenges of staff training in the Case Company?
>
> 2. What can be done in the future to improve the effectiveness of staff training at the Case Company without requiring too much budget spending?

While considering the solutions to suggest for the improvement of staff training at the Case Company, the cost incurred, the feasibility, the benefits, the method to implement and the measurement of each solution are all taken into account to assess if they are suitable for the company. In brief, for the second research question to be answered, the following sub-questions are imposed.

> How feasible is this solution?
> How much does it cost the company to implement this solution?
> How could it benefit training?
> How to implement it?
> How to measure the effectiveness of this solution?

1.3   Scope and Limitations

This research studies data about the schedule of the training courses designed by the Training Department in the first six months of 2013 and the training attendance status report of all employees in the Case Company, which is recorded from the pre-opening period in 2011 and updated till June 2013. The aspects looked into are the density of the training courses, the percentage of the attendances per course and how the hotel's occupancy rate affects to the attendance of the employees.

As to any study, this thesis has its own limitations. First of all, since the research is conducted only in Vietnam, the cultural factor has a strong impact to the final findings. The high gap in the staff's educational background is one of the big issues of training in Vietnam but it might not be the case for Finland for example. The cultural factor also affects greatly to the attitude of the trainers and trainees towards training.

Secondly, the conducted research targets a specific company, which has many favorable conditions compared to other hotels. The corporation under which the hotel is managed has a long experience of over fifty years in the hotel management field and has a strong financial base, so is its training system. The findings from this research therefore might not be applicable to other hospitality businesses in smaller scale.

Last but not least, the Case Company practices a very strict data privacy rule to their staff in order to protect the guests' information and other important human management related data. Most of the information is denied to be published. Consequently, a survey on the employees' opinions which is needed to evaluate the training effectiveness of the company is not accepted to be proceeding. Due to this difficulty in accessing the needed data, some findings are based on many assumptions and limit the practicality of this research.

1.4   Research methodology

By the term "methodology", this part refers to the overall approaches and the perspectives to the research process as a whole (Collis, Hussey 2005, according to Neville 2007.). It represents what type of data is collected, how it is collected and analyzed for the research purpose and also the logic behinds the methods the author choses in this study. The research methodology of this thesis is briefly described in the following diagram.

Research approach	Deductive	
Research method	Qualitative	
Sources of data	Primary sources (observation, reports, records, interviews)	Secondary sources (books, articles, e-resources)
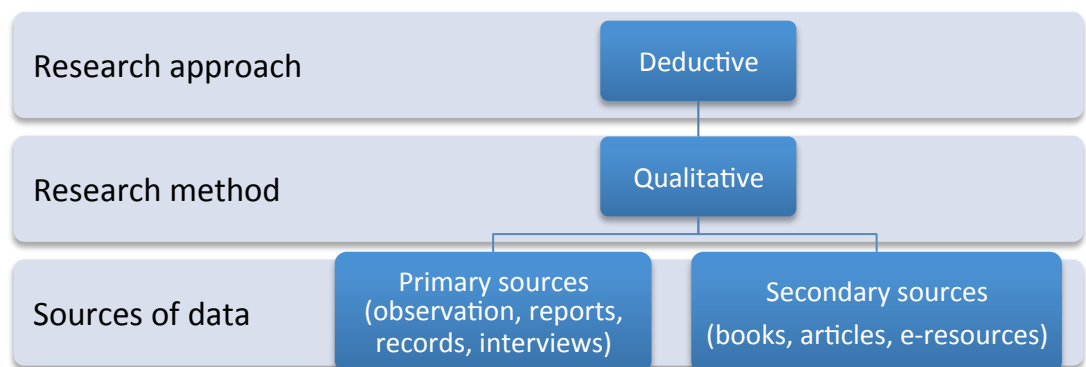
FIGURE 1. Research Methodology

There are often two methods of approaching a research namely deductive and inductive. Deductive method is a "top-down" process, approaches from the more general to the more specific (Burney 2008). It begins with an existing theory, narrows down to the hypothesis and the observations to test against the theory. Inductive method, on the contrary, goes all the way up to seek for a conclusion based on presumptions about a certain phenomenon. From the above discussion, it can be seen that the deductive method is applied in this research since it starts with a general theory about a phenomenon in the industry as a whole then applies the theory into a concrete case study.

Among two research methods which are quantitative and qualitative, qualitative is more appropriate in regards to this research as it does not require a hypothesis in order to start the process as to quantitative method (Devault 2013). Moreover, this

method allows the flexibility in using the subjective information and more descriptive understanding into attitudes, behaviors and opinions of individuals, which in this case refers to those of trainers and trainees that later have a great effect to the final findings.

This qualitative research makes use of both primary and secondary sources. Secondary resources provide information from books, articles and e-resources that are used throughout the research, especially for the theoretical and the recommendations parts. The empirical part however leans more on the primary data with an extensively use of the personal's observation, reports and records provided under the Case Company's authorization and the in-depth interviews with people who are in charge of the field studied in order to get a more truthful view about the research questions.

1.5   Theoretical framework

As stated by Sinclair (2007, 39) in his article, a theoretical framework could be generally thought as a travel map which shows the best way of travelling to a certain destination. This map is created based on the experiences and the accounts of the precursors who have been on similar trips (Sinclair 2007, 39). In another word, the theoretical framework uses facts, observations and theories from the previous studies as a navigation tool to guide the author thoroughly till the end of a research.

Concerning this research, its theoretical framework is made up of the relevant concepts and theories that are needed to underpin the knowledge base for the empirical study. The flow in the theoretical part moves from a general view about the subject matter to more detailed explanations, from an overall introduction of the concept, then nailed down to the explanation of the process and to the theory specifically deal with people who are targets of the study. The issues of staff training in the hospitality industry are approached orderly according to what happen before, during and after the process that has been mentioned earlier.

In the empirical part, after the introduction about the Case Company and the operation of its Training Department, the theories are then applied to analyze and

identify the answer for the research questions. The recommendations for the improvement of the company are explained by answering the five research sub-questions respectively.

1.6   Structure of the thesis

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┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐
│  Chapter 1:  │ ───▶ │  Chapter 2:  │ ───▶ │  Chapter 3:  │
│ Introduction │      │Staff Training│      │Market analysis│
│              │      │    theory    │      │              │
└──────────────┘      └──────────────┘      └──────────────┘
                                                    │
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┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐
│  Chapter 6:  │ ◀─── │  Chapter 5:  │ ◀─── │  Chapter 4:  │
│ Conclusions  │      │ Suggestions  │      │  Case study  │
└──────────────┘      └──────────────┘      └──────────────┘
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┌──────────────┐
│  Chapter 7:  │
│   Summary    │
└──────────────┘
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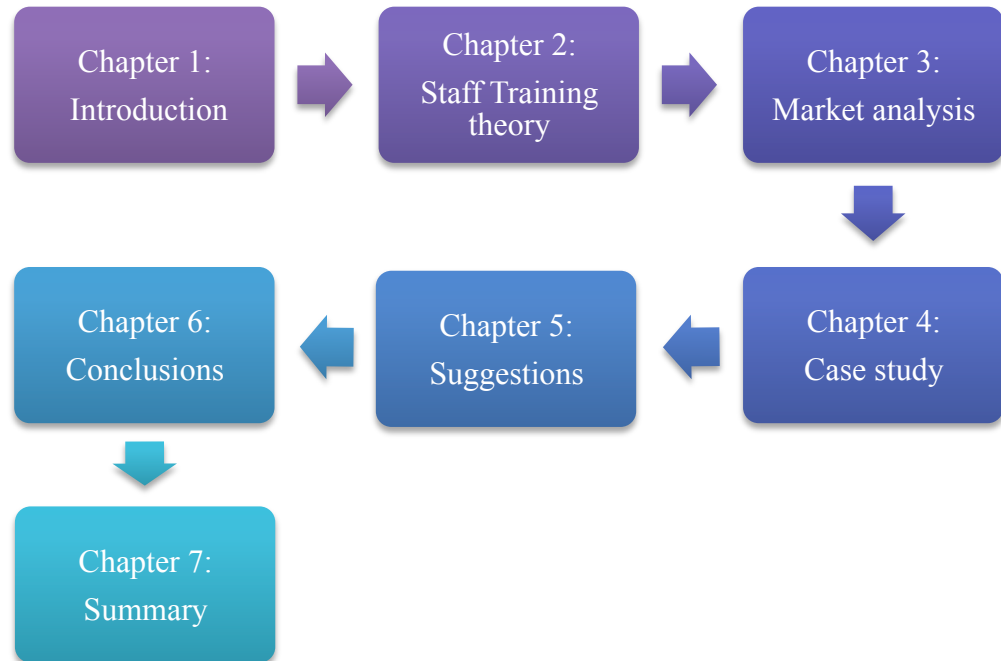
FIGURE 2. Thesis structure

Aside from the first chapter of a general explanation about how this research being done, the rest content of the thesis focuses on the research topic and is divided into seven chapters with different concerns.

Chapter two forms a theoretical background for the research by introducing the relevant theories and knowledge. The common challenges that usually occur when dealing with the staff training in the industry are studied in detail. Besides, the needs for employer-provided training are also mentioned in this chapter to show the critical role of training in the hospitality operations.

Chapter three represents the current business climate and human resources management practices in the Vietnamese hospitality industry as a connecting point to chapter four, which studies the practice of staff training at a concrete Case Company. Since giving recommendations on how to improve the mentioned issues is one of the main purposes of this thesis, it comes separately as a big part in the chapter five. Chapter six concludes on the answers for the research questions and proposes the possibilities for further researches on the topic. Finally, chapter seven ends with a summary on the highlighted information obtained from both theoretical and empirical study.

2 STAFF TRAINING IN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

This chapter forms a theoretical foundation for the later analysis in chapter four and the recommendations in chapter five. To be more specific, the content in the chapter two represents the concept of staff training, define its role in an organization, people who are in charge and its process from the preparation to the ending stage. The reasons why providing staff training is a must for the hospitality operations and other issues related to this matter can also be found in the discussion at the end of this chapter.

2.1 Introduction to staff training

The concept of staff training has been defined as

> *"a learning process that involves the acquisition of knowledge, sharpening of skills, concepts, rules, or changing of attitudes and behaviors to enhance the performance of staffs. Training is activity leading to skilled behavior"* (Naukrihub 2013).

In an organization, training therefore serves for the critical goal of human resources management (HRM), which is to maximize the employees' contributions to the organizational success. Responsibility of training however should not be mistaken as if it belongs only to the Human Resources department. Since HRM is a function of every manager's job, even though the line managers are not necessarily the one who directly conduct training, they should be concerned about how to insure that their subordinates have enough information and access to the training activities.

Training plays the role of directing new staff to their positions and providing the learning opportunities for the career development of the current staff at all levels while making sure that the knowledge delivered are kept in line with the organizational goal and culture. In large organizations, training also acts as a communication chain between the top management and the staff considering its capability of updating and informing a group of people at once. In an ever-changing world, these roles of training contribute a great part to an organization's success as it helps the staff to sharpen their existing skills and more importantly to develop new ones to cope with changes in the field.

2.2   Training process

The training content varies depending on the need of different business lines and the preference of the employers and the staff. Yet, most of the organizations share a common framework when it comes to developing an employee's learning process. Logically, a well-organized process comprises of six steps as shown in the figure below.
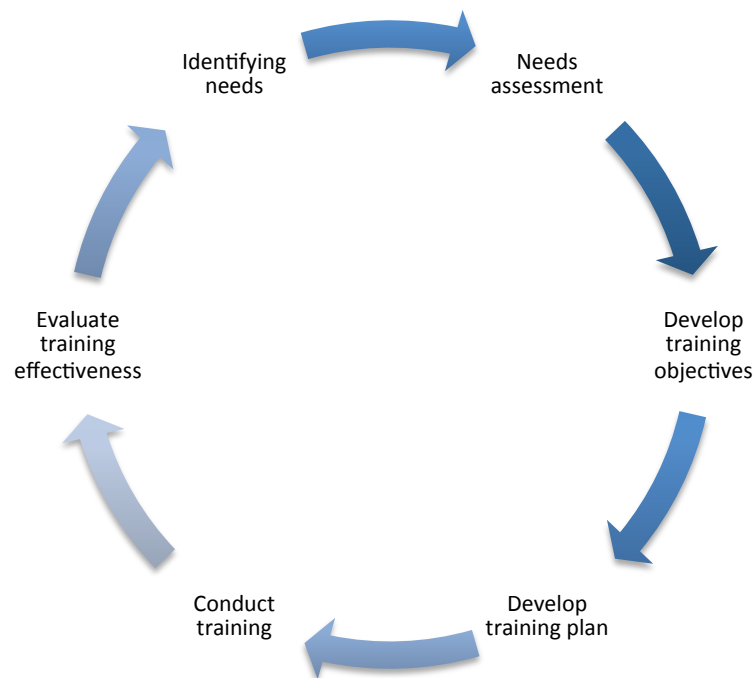
FIGURE 3. Training process (modified from Hayes & Ninemeier 2009, 189)

Usually, the process starts from the stage of identifying needs to figure out the gap between what is required and what presently exists (Woods 2006, 188). Managers should actively seek for the need of training rather than waiting for the problem turn up and fix it, as an old saying stated "Prevention is always better than cure". The needs can be determined by observe the work performance, check out the job descriptions, assess the guests and staff' feedback, analyze the previous performance, use the past experience from failure to meet standards or update the new trends and needs in the market (Hayes & Ninemeier2009, 190).

Once the needs are identified, the reasons that the organization is required to fulfill those needs and the possible solutions are assessed to see whether it is fundamental to conduct training and if training will make any difference, take into account the fact that training is not a cure-all solution. Additionally, among the numerous needs explored, an effective needs assessment helps to ensure that the budget spent is cost-effective by addressing on the most priorities which drive to a significant improvement outcome. The assessment is based on three levels which are organizational, job and individual analysis (Woods 2006, 191).

- Organizational analysis aligns training with the organization's goal, mission, vision and culture to ensure that the organization is supportive and on board with the training initiative.
- Job analysis identifies three elements called KSAs - knowledge, skills and abilities required to perform a job in a desired manner. Understanding what staffs need to accomplish in their job is important to understanding how training can tackle a performance problem.
- Individual analysis focuses on identifying people who lack of the need-to-be-improved KSAs to undertake the training.
  (Woods 2006, 191.)

The results of the needs assessment allow the training managers to continue with the next step – develop training objectives. The objectives specify what are expected after the trainees successfully complete a certain training program (Hayes & Ninemeier2009, 197). The objectives must be S.M.A.R.T which means they must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound to act as a measure for the evaluation process at the latter stage (Platt 2002, 23).

The fourth stage concerns the development of the training content. The training plan gives an overview of the structure and the sequence of the entire program. To create a training plan, several actions need to be taken including selecting trainees, estimating budget, establishing training schedule, defining training methods, designing training programs and arranging the training location, and equipment. Throughout this stage, the determined objectives are always borne in mind to ensure the consistency between the desire of the organization and the implementation.

The training plan is then put into action. Even though the methods and the content for training has been instructed clearly in the training plan, it is the trainer's teaching ability and style which impacts greatly on the success of delivering knowledge process.

The final stage aims at evaluating how effective the whole process has been. The results of the evaluation are compared with the expected results which are written in the form of objectives to demonstrate the value of training to the stakeholders (OPM 2013). Strengths and weaknesses of the designed program are also evaluated to decide on appropriate actions need to be taken. For example the trainer must consider whether the chosen method is right and can be used for the next training course or it should be replaced. Training effectiveness evaluation is the ending stage of the process but at the same time it forms the base for future needs identification, which in a way makes training becomes a continuous cycle.

2.3 Adult learning theory

The biggest difference between the school education and the training at business organizations lies in the characteristics of the target learners. As people mature, they become pickier in terms of receiving information and have their own ways of processing it (Walker & Miller 2012, 336). Employees therefore must rather be treated as adult learners. Even though this principle appears to be simple and obvious, not many HR professionals realize that this is actually the reason behind the staff's attitude and their incentives towards learning.

The above principle can be explained more explicitly using a popular adult learning theory which is known as "Andragogy" developed by Malcom Knowles, an American practitioner and theorist of adult education. This learning theory comprises of six assumptions about how an adult learns.

- **Self-concept** – Adult learners are more self-directed and dependent. Adults only learn what they want to learn and often resists when being imposed information, ideas, actions by someone else.
- **Experience** – Unlike children, adults accumulate a wide range of real experiences during their life. Adult learners therefore often recall these

memories while learning and apply them into their new learning experience.

- **Readiness to learn** – Adults become more ready to learn when they experience the need to learn it or find it somehow meaningful for the accomplishment of their responsibilities.
- **Problem-centered** – Adults are more problem-centered than subject-centered. They have the need of seeing the immediate application of knowledge into practice.
- **Intrinsic motivation** – Adult learners more orient towards intrinsic motivation than extrinsic which means they are more driven by desires that originates within their own selves.
- **Reasoning** – Adults need to know why they should learn something or the cost of not learning it to weigh whether it's worth their effort.
(Merriam et al. 2007, 84; Javis 1995, 90.)

2.4   Motivating adult learners

Driven by Knowles´s adult learning theory, the following principles are developed to address each factor that influence to the willingness to learn of the adult learners. Each of these principles does not work independently but somehow are correlated with one another.

Self-concept

Focus on learning rather than teaching – As the adult learners are very much concern about the self-concept, they should be put at the center of training. The trainers, therefore, should change their traditional perception about training where they take control over all the class activities and re-define their roles as guiding and supporting learning rather than teaching (Jarvis 1995, 103). Moreover, they should also always consider things under trainees' perspective when designing or planning a training activity to best match the trainees' expectations.

Encourage trainees to take the leading role – Since the staff is self-directed learners, they are more motivated when actively seek and obtain the knowledge

(Walker & Miller 2012, 336). Thus they should be encouraged to self-manage their own learning progress.

Communicate effectively – Adult learners are anxiety about the risk of losing face in front of their peers, the trainers should demonstrate empathy and respects towards the employees instead of criticize them in order to encourage them to share and freely express their ideas.

Recognize of accomplishment – Regular recognition on the accomplishment will make the trainees feel good about themselves and motivate them to put forth their efforts. They are not only motivated when receiving recognition for individual accomplishment but also for group achievements. The recognition is usually expressed under the form of appraisals or showing the acknowledgement when the trainees finish a certain task or reach a certain level.

Experience

Make use of the trainees' experience – The lecture content should be built so that it enables the trainees to integrate their previous knowledge into the new one while extending and challenging their current ways of acting and thinking (Jarvis 1995, 103; Department of Education 2010). The adapting of the trainees' experience not only helps the trainees to understand the delivered information faster but also contributes to the richness and the practicality of the learning content.

Readiness to learn

Create high practicality training –The training content must be up-to-dated and closely relevant to what is happening in the reality. The teaching method employed should enable the trainees to observe and experience the actual knowledge or skills which are expected of them rather than asking them to only imitate and memorize. In addition, the trainees should be given opportunity to reflect upon the information they have received and consider how it is relevant to their personal situations and how persuasive the information sounds to them. (Department of Education 2010.)

Problem-centered

Focus on real problems – Training must be able to provide useful tactics or solutions to the real problems that the trainees encounter in their jobs (Hayes & Ninemeier2009, 182). The problem solving teaching method using case study could be applied in this case to allow the trainees having chances to see the immediate application of the given knowledge into a real situation.

Intrinsic motivation

Sense of progress – Driven by the intrinsic motivation, the adult learners are motivated when they feel the sense of progress towards their personal goals. To create this sense, the training content could be designed in a way that the trainees experience a more difficult level when they escalate to the next training so that they have the feeling of moving forward. This principle is closely correlated with the principle of giving recognition for the accomplishment of the trainees and the principle of follow-up the trainees' progress, which will be presented in the following part.

Reasoning

Prepare trainees mentally – Considering that the adult learners need to be ready before receiving certain knowledge, the trainer should prepare the trainees mentally. Many trainees often judge the content of a certain training course as soon as they know the title. So in order to avoid misjudgment from happening, prior to the day the lecture takes place, the trainees must be told in advance how it would benefit them. On the day of the lecture, the trainers could ask questions to test whether the trainees have a right thinking about the reasons why they have to show up at that class then briefly tell them again about the course objectives and what they can put into practice after completing the course.

Follow-up – Throughout the learning process, the adult learners are curious if their efforts actually accomplish something (Thomas 2009). Moreover, they also have the need to know whether what they have been doing match the expectation of the company in order to correct themselves for further improvement. Hence, quality feedback that arrives at a right time will be meaningful in terms of

providing the necessary assistance and at the same time fulfilling their needs of receiving attention from others.

Aside from the principles listed above, the extrinsic motivation should not be bypassed when mentioning about ways to motivate trainees. Though it is not as important as the intrinsic one, it still plays a significant role in making the training attractive to the trainees and maintaining their interest throughout a training course. The extrinsic motivation indicates the external factors that could influence to the trainees such as the physical condition of the environment in which the training takes place and the trainers' behavior or attitude. If the classes are exciting and interesting enough, people would not want to miss any of them. The trainers could create a comfortable learning environment by keeping a good humor sense; make the learning experience pressureless and rather enjoyable.

2.5   The need of staff training in hospitality industry

While some organizations insist on the improvement in the competencies of their staff, others, however, think that the staff just needs to perform repetitive tasks and be professional in their positions. Hence, the questions imposed are that whether a proper training program is needed or only basic trainings at the first stage is enough. Is training that important or is it just optional for a hospitality business's survival?

Internal factors
- Human resources are decisive to the organizational success
- Diversity in the types of service and customers require flexible and dynamic staff
- Shortage of qualified staffs
- Involvement of obligatory training programs

External factors
- Highly competitive market
- Continuously changing environment

Training need in hospitality industry

FIGURE 4. Training needs in the hospitality industry

2.5.1 Internal factors

Despite the reduction in demand for labor force due to the development of modern technology in other industries, the hospitality sector still responsible for adding about 52000 jobs, only in June 2013 and the demand has increased 503% over the last four years (Rowe 2013). The statistics affirm the fact that the hospitality industry is a people-driven business since technology cannot replace the level of service expected by many customers (Hayes & Ninemeier2009, 172). Making an investment in the human asset is therefore worth the effort. Customers will definitely feel the difference between the service delivered by a team of unmotivated staff and a team of high-quality motivated staff. Even though it is just a part of a multifaceted process of increase the staff's working motivation, training can avoid the staff from the uncertainty of not knowing what are right to do (Decenzo & Robbins 2007, 205). Moreover, receiving training gives them a feeling that their works are somehow important, which motivate and retain them to work for an organization apart from just money.

In addition, look at the internal aspects, unlike others, the industry has a high diversity nature by the product itself and also by the customers. The hospitality industry does not simply indicate the hotel and restaurant services as many people usually misunderstood. The segment actually provides a wide range of services including lodging, food services and other businesses such as private clubs, sports, recreational Foodservice operations, cruise ships, casinos, vending businesses, amusement and theme parks (Hayes & Ninemeier2009, 4-5). The industry accordingly has high demand for dynamic people who acquire a variety of knowledge, skills and experience to meet the desire of a number of guests they get in touch with every day. The labor market in reality, nevertheless, shows a deficiency in supply for qualified staff (Woods 2006, 188). Fortunately, there is another pool of labor with people who do not attain enough skills and knowledge but are willing to take the job. Though using these people can be a solution to resolve the problem of shortage, it cannot be done without the intervention of training.

Moreover, the industry involves responsible businesses of which some training are mandatory by law such as food safety, alcohol beverage knowledge, first aids or avoidance of sexual harassment, etc. (Hayes & Ninemeier 2009, 176). Lack of training can lead to grave problems caused by the staff who are not properly trained or informed. Food poisoning can occur if an untrained chef mixes crab and persimmons together or serves stuffed meats undercooked for example. The case of Man Fu Yuan restaurant of the Intercontinental hotel in Singapore happened on December 2012 is a typical case. The restaurant had to close after being suspected to cause more than 200 cases of food poisoning (TheSundayTimes 2013). Aside from the risk of being lawsuit, it may also lead to greater consequences which are losing the customer loyalty and the business's reputation if training is not taken seriously.

2.5.2   External factors

The increase in competition also affects on the increasing need of training. Under the pressure of a highly competitive market, many hospitality business operators impress on the use of product differentiation strategy to gain the brand awareness,

especially big players such as Mariott , Ritz Carleton or Hilton (Marriott 2013; Clark 2013; Andrews 2009). Different standards are applied in order to create the difference in service, from the general like quality of service, staff behaviors to more detail standards such as way to fold a napkin, way to set up a table and cutlery, welcome sayings and maximum time allowed to conduct check-in service, etc. This practice once again arises the need for training because even a staff who has a hospitality educational background or long experience in the field still requires time, effort and adequate sources of knowledge to adjust to the new rule.

Lastly, in the fast growing hospitality industry, training becomes a useful assisting tool to prepare the organization from the inevitable changes in the future. A company can even happen to be a pioneer and win competitive advantages over the others if it can predict the right market trend and well prepare in advance. The development of technology which leads to a renovation of an operating checking system, for example, will simultaneously require a higher level of computer skills from the staff for the system to be able to put the system into operation. Another typical trend is globalization. Transcended the multinational phase, many companies now operate in two or more countries as transnational or global corporations (Gee, Yim 2008, 3). To harmonize different cultures in one union, the company thus not only need to raise the cultural awareness of their staff but also the ability of adapting and work in the new environments as the exchange human resources over nations becomes more common. In addition, there may also be the need of launching a new product or new standard requirements due to changes in the customers' preference. Retraining is therefore continually in demand to address these concerns.

As a conclusion for the questions imposed at the beginning of this chapter, the organizations working in the hospitality industry needs to provide training for staff within their organization even if they already have the relevant educational background. Moreover, training has to be a consistent and ongoing process rather than a one-time event (Hayes, Ninemeier 2009, 190). In the absence of training, the business will be kept far from the competitive line because wasted time and money occur to correct mistakes. Spending on an effective training that returns benefits exceeding cost is rather a better choice.

2.6   Common challenges of staff training in the hospitality industry

Side by side with the need and the important contribution of training to an organization's performance, there are many obstacles that HR professionals have to overcome before reaching a delightful prospect. Even though it's may not be possible to cover all of them in the limitation of this research, this chapter includes some common challenges that the author thinks will have profound effects on the effectiveness of the final results and those that normally occur throughout the training process described in section 2.2.

Before	During	After

Limitations of HR professionals' skills

- Time constraint & difficult in scheduling training courses
- Planning training for peak season
- High staff turnover rate
- Lack of financial resources
- Selection of training materials and information
- Training of trainers

- Diversity of trainees
- Limitations of different training methods
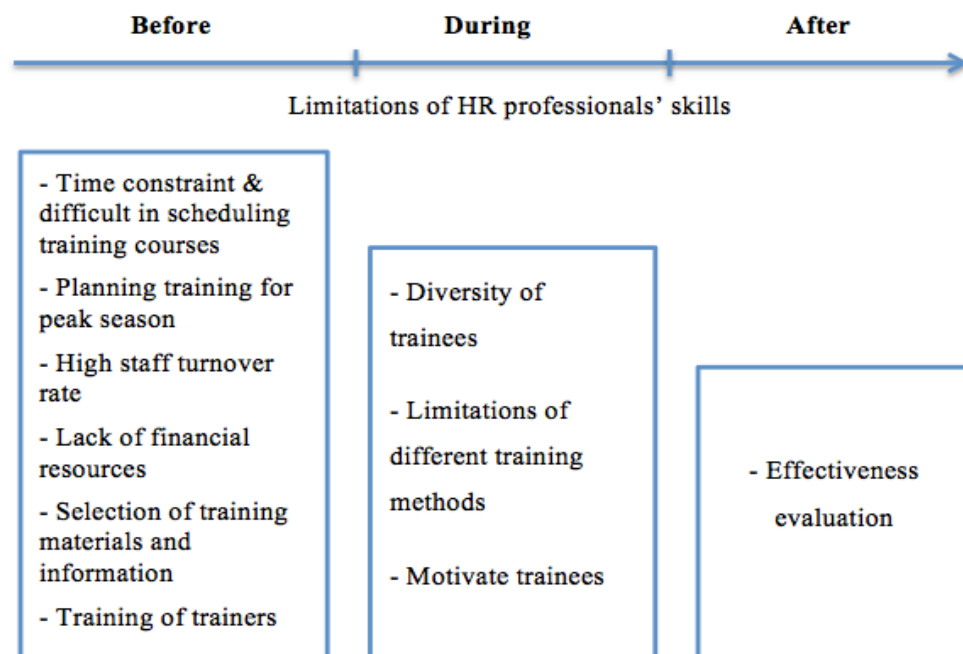- Motivate trainees

- Effectiveness evaluation

FIGURE 5. Obstacles of staff training throughout the training process

These challenges are listed respectively according to the timeline of the training process, in which the limitations in HR professionals' skills particularly have impact on the whole process as they are the key persons that mainly responsible for all the training activities.

2.6.1 Limited of HR professionals' skills

For a training process runs smoothly from the beginning to the ending stage, those who work in HR department or carry HR responsibilities contribute a decisive part in this success. Nevertheless, most of the hospitality operations are too small to enjoy the service of having special professionals to carry HR function (Hayes & Ninemeier2009, 19). What worse is that even when larger business operators can afford to have people who specialize in HR, these people's works are not meant to concern the training matters only but to cover anything related to their "internal people". Limit in time and skills of HR managers, thus, restricts training from proceeding under the best conditions.

2.6.2 Time constraint & difficult in scheduling training plan

Training is costly not only in terms of money but also in terms of the time spent. The amount of time is spent for training to take action equivalents to the time the staff and managers, in case managers are in charge of training for their subordinates, being away from their positions. If no substitute colleagues are assigned to take up their charges, staffs that are targeted for a certain training course may not be able to present at the course because the training time coincides with their working time. The situation is particularly true during the peak season or peak hours.

Moreover, in businesses that provide 24 hour service like hotel, most of the staff is required to work on shift basis which indicates the practice where staffs rotate to perform similar jobs so that the operation is able to run all day (Guo et al. 2013, 1). People who work on night-shift may feel tired and rather want to rest than to take training.

Training planner must also reserve an amount of time in between the training courses taking into account the fact that too much of training may cause unexpected side effects. Time is needed for the trainees to applying theory into practice. Arranging the time for training courses therefore can be a very distressing problem.

2.6.3 Training during peak season

Hospitality operations hire a significant number of the seasonal staff. Customers don't care whether they are permanent or temporary staff. They just care that these people represent the organization, in which they are part of. Providing quick training and ensure the quality of service for these temporary staff therefore have become one big concern of many managers when the peak season is coming. Since these people do not commit to the organization as much as the permanent staff does, it affects on their willingness of learning to improve the performance for the organizational achievement. Managers who have to take charge of both managing the business and HR management may find it very stressful during these busy times handle bulk of works.

2.6.4 High staff turnover rate

"Why do we need to train people who are not sure to stick around long enough? Isn't it risky and wasteful if they move to work for our competitors and share the knowledge and the information they have learned from us to them?"

These common questions usually make the hospitality managers reluctant to go for training. This derives from the reality of high staff turnover in the industry (Davies et al. 2001, 366-373). The highly competitive labor market is one of the main reasons that enable the staff jump from one company to another to seek for better opportunities. Besides, many of the employees working in this industry are casual and part-time workers who only stay with the business for a short period of time (Davies et al. 2001, 366-373). While this excuse for not providing training seems to be reasonable, lack of training in return may lead to staff dissatisfaction and increase the chance of resigning. This is particularly true for new employees for whom the adequate training and mentoring at first phase much influence on their decisions to leave an organization (Deery 2008, 792-806).

2.6.5 Lack of financial resources

In the small and medium organizations, where every penny spent is valued, HR managers struggle to maintain training activities using a tight budget. When the

economic downturn takes place, even those of the larger organizations suffer the same situation since the training budget will be likely among the firsts in line to be cut off (MacLean 2013). Lacking of financial resources limits training from acquiring quality materials and allows limited room for a variety of training methods to be applied.

2.6.6 Selection of training materials and information

Nowadays, thanks to the rapid growth of the Internet, trainers can easily access to an enormous sources available online easily. Just by one click and some key words, they can choose among thousands of results offered. The mentioned problem of limited financial resources also promotes the use of these free resources to reduce costs. Although its convenient usability appears to benefit the trainers who are in search of resources to design the training programs, there is no guarantee for the quality and reliability of these sources.

Another problem to be concerned is to define the boundary between nice-to-know and need-to-know information in order to pay the attention to the more necessary one (Hayes & Ninemeier2009, 172). Equally important, training planners should make sure that trainees are not overloaded by the knowledge delivered. George Armitage Miller (1956), a psychologist famous for his exploration on the limitation of the people's capacity of processing information explained in his research:

> "People have finite limits to the amount of information they can assimilate and process at one time. When people go beyond these limits "overload" results, it is under these conditions that people will become confused and are likely to make poorer decisions based on the information they have received as opposed to making informed ones" (Miller 1956, according to Malinowski 2013.).

2.6.7   Training of trainers

Practically, managers usually believe that concentrate on the planning stage is enough to drive good training results and might overlook another decisive factor, which is the quality of the trainers. Very often, the staff learns their jobs from the colleagues or the managers who are not trained properly, especially when on-the-job training is carried out. Even assuming that all the trainers are expertise at their own jobs, not all of them have the ability of delivering knowledge to the trainees in an easy and understandable way. The skills of speaking in front of public and inspiring others, which are fundamental for the trainers to maintain the trainees' attention, take time to learn as well. The teaching style will then affect to the learning atmosphere and consecutively to the attitude of trainees towards that course and amount of knowledge they received.

2.6.8   Diversity of trainees

The working environment of the hospitality industry creates favorable conditions for the development of a diversity workforce. Hotels, restaurants, Foodservice operators, clubs demand for a huge amount of staffs to fulfill various positions for different types of work ranging from the entry-level to the higher levels of seniors and managers. The diversity is expressed in terms of age, gender, mental/ physical abilities, sexual orientation, race and ethnic heritage (Hayes & Ninemeier2009, 15). These factors challenge training to be more sensitive to the differences of individuals. Different values, needs, interests and expectations must be taken into account to choose appropriate training methods best suit all of them without causing unexpected conflicts.

2.6.9   Limitations of different training methods

Regarding the training techniques, staff training can be divided into various types, in which two conceptions often heard are on-the-job and off-the-job training. These two methods are differentiated by the location where training takes place. While on-the-job training is implemented when the trainees learn by doing right at the work station and is more prioritized because it provides the necessary knowledge to perform the job "correctly", off-the-job training allows trainees to

learn away from the workplace, focuses more on soft-skills and general knowledge that help to perform the job "better" (Sommerville 2007, 220-224).

Each of these methods, however, has its own limitations. Fallacious belief in the way of putting the on-the-job training method into practice leads to fruitless results. On-the-job training usually is mistaken as guiding one or group of trainees by simply let them watch and help a more-experienced peer (Hayes & Ninemeier2009, 215-216). The experienced-staff who has to carry out this extra responsibility may find it annoying having someone follow around while they do their work if they are not well informed and prepared beforehand. Besides, as these trainers are quite familiar with the work they perform, they may skip some steps unintentionally. This mistake unceasingly causes bad "domino effect" when the trainees continue to pass down the incomplete information to other colleagues. The interruption in the middle of training because the trainers have something else to do may also cause a frustrated learning environment.

Off-the-job training traditionally occurs under the classroom format. Other similar off-site activities such as attending conferences, workshops, webinars, e-learning are also popular these days. These types of training are more expensive in the sense that the company has to prepare a location outside of the actual working environment. Also, to make the delivered messages appear to be more lively and attractive to the trainees, the training program designer must be innovative and flexible in the combination of different methods such as using PowerPoint presentation, video, role play, case study, etc. because some trainees are visual learners while others may be more auditory or kinesthetic oriented. Furthermore, off-the-job training may be not adequate to teach physical tasks because of its insufficiency of hands-on experience.

2.6.10 Motivate trainees – Psychological factors

Trainees learn best when they have the motivation to learn (Hayes & Ninemeier2009, 180). Motivation stimulates their willingness of retaining an amount of information and makes them actively participate in the training activities. Without this preparation, their minds may resist to the information

delivered as they haven't ready to receive it yet. Reasons that make the trainees not interested in training are both intrinsic and extrinsic.

Regarding the intrinsic reasons, the trainees would be discouraged if they think they already attain knowledge offered by the course. This is especially true for experienced workers who are overconfident in performing their works over the years. For staff at entry level and those who think the likelihood to get promotion is low, they have very little incentives for putting effort to improve their current performance. Additionally, many staff claims that they hesitate to go to class because it has been long since the day they leave their school life. That´s why they think things like classroom, assignments or tests do not suit them anymore.

Besides the reasons arising out of the staff' intrinsic motivation, other reasons are originated from the training side such as physical conditions of classroom, trainer's discouraging attitude, inadequate difficult level to trainees' ability or unsuitable schedule. Trainees would possibly lose their enthusiasm if the course takes away their break time or time spent for other personal business.

2.6.11 Effectiveness evaluation

Since the output training produces are intangible, the challenge that many managers find most difficult to deal with is to examine the real effectiveness of training and prove that it is cost worthy. Many methods are implemented to collect data on the satisfaction and the improvement of trainers such as asking for feedback from the trainees, conduct inspection, compare with the previous performance, etc. Nevertheless only few of them can link the result of training to ROI – return on investment rate, which makes the reliability of the effectiveness evaluation somehow doubtful (Decenzo & Robbins 2010, 200).

On top of that, the difficulty in evaluating real results of training escalates because it very much depends on the different circumstances and the interference of other factors. The overall performance barely depends on a single department. So evaluate the effectiveness of a part bases on the success or failure of the whole organization must be questionable.

The difference between the theory and practice builds up another barrier as a famous saying "In theory, there is no difference between theory and practice. In practice, there is" (Berra 2013). When planning a training program, many assumptions are given but on the contradictory they are often overlooked when evaluating the results. A front desk officer is taught to have good communication skills, he learns and practices it very well within the extent of the classroom. However, when it comes to the reality of dealing with a grumpy customer, not only the communication skills of that officer affects to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the customer but the circumstance under which the case happened must also be considered.

Ultimately, some managers easily overindulge their jobs of write reports and record data for example the data including the number of classes organized, the number of trainees, the trainee survey, etc. forgetting that these are just part of the process. A good evaluation process requires a mix of varied methods such as observation, record, data analysis or even using the audit conducted by a third party. On the contrary, an evaluation which lacks of careful consideration under different perspectives may not reflect an actual result.

3   MARKET ANALYSIS

In this market analysis, an overview of the hospitality industry in combination
with the tourism industry, within which the Case Company operates, is
represented using the SWOT analysis. Advantages, disadvantages, potential
opportunities as well as threats that are favorable and unfavorable to the growth of
the hospitality industry are discussed to serve for the purpose of this analysis to
firmly understand the core functions of the market. The chapter then narrows
down into the hotel sector and the characteristics of the labor market in the
country.

3.1   Vietnam Tourism and Hospitality industry overview

Despite the recession of other industries in recent years after the economic
downturn, the tourism and hospitality industry in Vietnam shows a positive
outlook with a stable growth in the number of foreign visitors and domestic
travelers. According to Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT)
statistics, the international arrivals to Vietnam at the end of 2012 increased
impressively more than half by 81, 5% compared to those at the beginning of
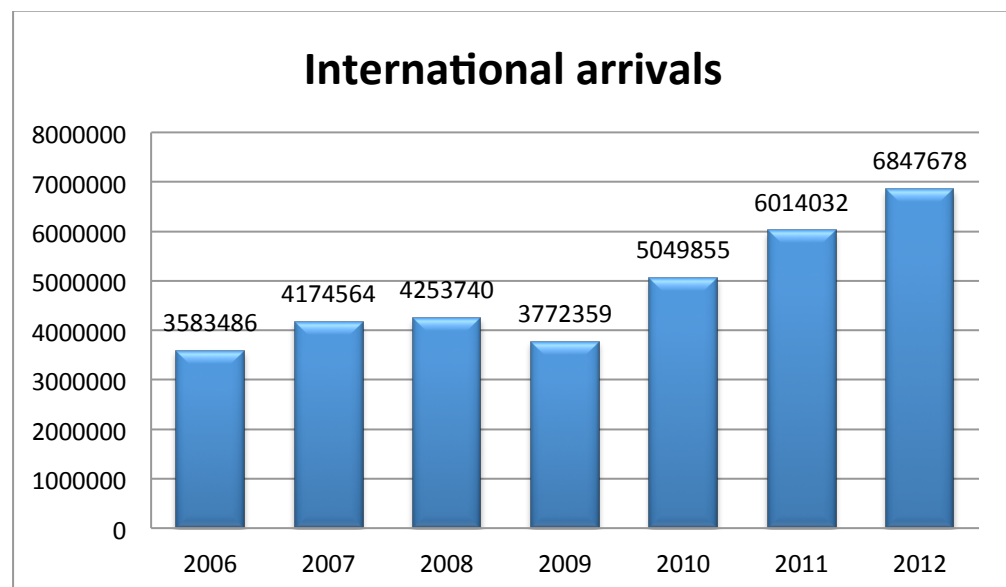2010 (VNAT 2012).

FIGURE 6. Number of international arrivals to Vietnam over the years (modified
from Vietnam National Administration of Tourism).

The domestic travelers who made up of two thirds of the total market reach 32,5 million arrivals in 2012. The total turnover of the industry obtained was 160 trillion VND, increased by 23% over 2011 and accounted for 5% of the total GDP. Experts however argue that the industry actually hasn't reached its full potential and the market still leaves space for further growth.
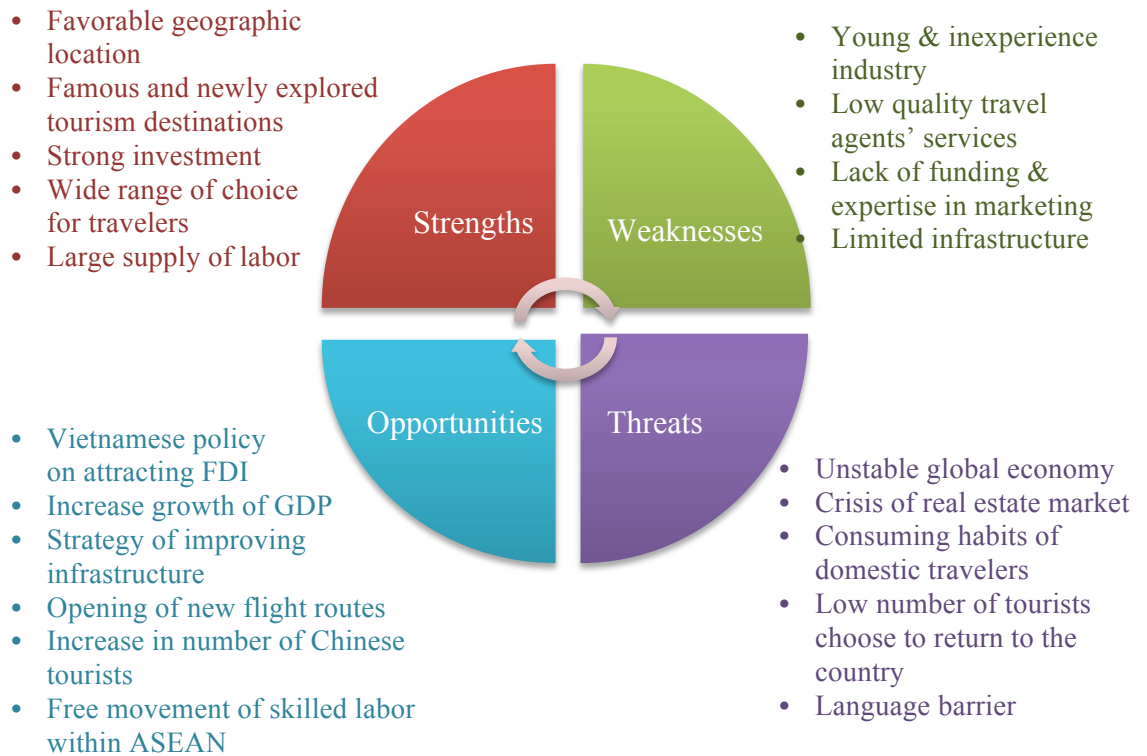
Strengths
- Favorable geographic location
- Famous and newly explored tourism destinations
- Strong investment
- Wide range of choice for travelers
- Large supply of labor

Weaknesses
- Young & inexperience industry
- Low quality travel agents' services
- Lack of funding & expertise in marketing
- Limited infrastructure

Opportunities
- Vietnamese policy on attracting FDI
- Increase growth of GDP
- Strategy of improving infrastructure
- Opening of new flight routes
- Increase in number of Chinese tourists
- Free movement of skilled labor within ASEAN

Threats
- Unstable global economy
- Crisis of real estate market
- Consuming habits of domestic travelers
- Low number of tourists choose to return to the country
- Language barrier

FIGURE 7. Vietnamese Tourism and Hospitality Industry SWOT analysis

Strengths

Recognizing strengths helps the organizations working in the industry make the best use of the existing competitive advantages of the market.

Favorable geographic location: Vietnam is situated at a strategic location on the boundary of the adjacent region between Europe and Asia and borders to the world's most populous country at North (Invest in Vietnam 2013). Stretching along the South China Sea Vietnam eastern coastline houses of many wonderful beaches and is among stops in the route of Asia cruises to many attractions and sights (Lewis 2013). Furthermore, the introduction of the East West Economic

Corridor (EWEC) which bases on 1,450 km continuous road pass through Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam has added to the ease of accessibility to Vietnam (Apichatvullop & Phucharoensilp 2007, according to Mekong Institute 2011.).

Attractive tourism destinations: Favored by the nature, Vietnam possesses many beautiful sights and attractions that are widely recognized by the world such as Halong Bay – one of the world new seven wonders or sevens UNESCO World Heritage sites (New7Wonders 2013). The popularity of beautiful beaches with the infinite white sands and the isolated islands in the South has also risen in these recent years and makes them favorite tourist hotspots in South East Asia.

Strong investments: Huge investment projects that reach the world class standards are continuously developed in commercial and industrial regions of Vietnam. Typical examples are the two big projects that have just launched including the opening of the Ho Tram Strip – the biggest tourist complex in Vietnam in late July of 2013 worth $4.2 billion and Asia's biggest underground retail and entertainment complex valued $1.1 billion which locates at the heart of the capital city (Nguyen 2013). These projects have contributed to the change of Vietnamese image of a developing country that was only well-known for its history of wars before. In addition, the government also plans to spend liberally of no less than $92.4 billion until 2030 to push up the growth (Maierbrugger 2013).

Wide range of choices: Tourists who decide to travel to Vietnam can choose among a variety of destinations available that match their individuals wants and vacation purposes. Spreading from North to South of the country, there are an abundant of attractions such as lakes, forests, mountains, terraced fields, historic destinations, ancient towns, beaches, national parks, floating markets, etc. that are ideal for nature and culture lovers. Crowded modern cities with huge amusement theme parks, shopping malls are available for tourists who either have more needs of leisure and entertainment or want to discover the country under a modern aspect. Furthermore, besides traditional tours of sightseeing, additional outdoor activities such as hiking, diving, travel across the country by motorbike or bicycle, do-it-yourself experience at handicraft villages, get to know the culture and

customs of ethnic minority groups, etc. make the travel experiences become much more interesting.

Large supply of low-cost labors: While the hospitality industry is labor-intensive, operators in Vietnam benefit from a large supply of cheap labors. Vietnam is ranked among countries that have high population in the world, in which more than half of them are in the working age. Average wage and salary remains relatively low even for graduates or higher qualification holders. Moreover, the workforce is highly appreciated for its characteristics of being young, hard-working, quick in learning, adaptable and committed to work (Invest in Vietnam 2013).

Weaknesses

Even though the tourism and hospitality industry is currently the driving force of the socioeconomic development and is targeted to be developed into one of the key industrial sectors of the country, it must be admitted that many shortcomings still remain (Vietnam Government Portal 2011).

Young and inexperienced: Only about more than 50 years of investing and develop, the hospitality industry in Vietnam is relatively young compared to other countries in the region. The plan for tourism development was started from the 1960s, but it was not really active until the implementation of open-door policy in 1990 (Texas A&M University 2013). The time constraint lowers the competitive advantage of the country regarding the infrastructure scale, the experienced human resources and the professionalism in service and promotion. According to the Deputy Chairman of the Institute for Tourism Development and Research, the Vietnamese tourism' revenues are still far behind those of neighbor countries. "In 2012, Vietnam attracted 6.84 million visitors, earning US$6.61 billion. Meanwhile the figures are 22.3 million and US$ 30.9 billion for Thailand; 25 million and US$19.79 billion for Malaysia; 14.4 million and US$19. 38 million for Singapore" (Ha 2013).

Low quality travel agents' services: Foreign tourists, excluding backpackers, usually book tours through travel agents. Sadly, the booming in the number of the travel agents during the glorious period of Vietnamese tourism is inversely

proportional with their qualities due to short of strict management law from the government. Many of them only interest in making fast buck, sell substandard tours that are different from what they advertise, have a weak link with the service providers and some are not even interested in the after-sale-services (Asia News Network 2013). Their short-term thinking has severely damaged the general impression about Vietnam in foreign tourists' memory.

Lack of funding and expertise in promotions and marketing: Despite the high growth rate, the number of the international visitors coming to Vietnam has not yet matched its real potential due to the failure of sending a clear image to the visitors around the world. In a market that competition is fierce like the hospitality market; people are overloaded with a number of advertisements in their everyday life. So the key success does not only lie on the budget but also on the right marketing strategies. Besides the insufficient funding because of the reduction in public spending, Vietnam also has been criticized for not invest money into the right marketing channels and thus the messages that the promoters want to deliver cannot reach the target audience (Xuyen & Con 2013). Moreover, the promotion focuses more on attracting new customers and overlooks the importance of retaining existing tourists' loyalty that is one of reasons discouraging the tourists from return or recommend the country to others.

Limited infrastructure: Poor infrastructure is one of the biggest weaknesses that makes Vietnam less competitive than other countries. Even though Vietnam has many picturesque landscapes, not many high quality hotels and other service providers are built close to those sites (Van 2011). The capacity of the airport is not enough to meet the high demand; the current largest airport is capable of handling only 20 million passengers per year, which is two times less than that of Singapore and Thailand. The roads have not been upgraded so traffic jam happens frequently in big cities and the transportation to rural areas always meet difficulties (Vietnam Travel Articles & Vietnam News 2011). Though the railroad system spans the length of the country, which is ideal to experience beautiful landscapes at the ground level, the speed of the trains are slow and are not fully equipped.

Opportunities

The hospitality operators are optimistic about the future prospect of this industry in Vietnam because there are still many opportunities for further growth.

Supportive law and policies: After the historic event of joining WTO in 2007, Vietnam has been opened as an attractive market to the foreign investors as many policies that were restricted previously have been now removed to comply with the WTO membership. The policies of expanding the business autonomy including the permission of using the investment sources or diversifying the forms of the investment have a significant meaning to the growth of international brands in the market (Invenco 2013). Moreover, other implementations of the Vietnamese government to attract FDI have also favored the industry. The hospitality investment is classified into the category of building and developing infrastructure and labor-intensive projects, which lies in the fields of investment preferences. Investors therefore shall enjoy the reduction in the corporate income tax rate from 25% to only 10% and 20% and other tax preferences for income earned (Invenco 2013).

Increase of GDP: The steady growth of GDP in Vietnam over the past 10 years, which represents for the increase in the national income, suggests the potential of the domestic segment (Trading Economics 2013). An increase in the level of income will positively lead to the improvement in the living standard and the consumption capacity of local people. When the basic needs are fulfilled, people will start to look after their demand for leisure and entertainment. With the population of 88.78 million people in 2013, an increase in GDP therefore is expected to widen a large number of customers in the tourism and hospitality industry (Trading Economics 2013).

Strategy of improving tourism infrastructure: Aiming at developing the tourism industry into a key economic service sector of the country, Vietnamese government pays special attention to the development of infrastructure and technical facilities for tourism (Vietnam Government Portal 2011). These strategies are believed to solve the existing problems of poor infrastructure and limited convenience in the transportation.

Opening of new international air routes and direct flights to popular tourism destinations in Vietnam: From July of 2013, three new international routes are officially launched to connect the flights directly from Vietnam to South Korea and Siem Riep (Viet Nga Tourism 2013). The expansion of the flight network will connect Vietnam with its neighbor countries (Campodia, Laos, and Myanmar) and the Northeast Asia, which opens the doors to welcome travelers from the regions that have not been much explored before. Furthermore, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) predicts that Vietnam will be the third fastest growing market in terms of the international passengers and rank second in terms of domestic passengers by 2014 (eTN 2011). If this forecast is going to happen, it will create an enormous opportunity for the industry to grow.

Increase of Chinese tourists: It's now coming to the age of the Chinese tourists dominant over the market, surpassing the position of the Western tourists in the past. The world has witnessed a surprising rise in both the number of the overseas trip made by Chinese people and their expenditure on travel. According to the statistics recorded by UN World Tourism Organization, Chinese now become the world's biggest spenders on the international tourism (The Economist 2013). Vietnam enjoys the competitive advantage over others in terms of location proximity and cultural similarities to the world's fastest growing group of consumers. Only in July, the number of Chinese tourist arrivals to Vietnam has grown by 90.9% compared to the same period last year (Loan 2013). The influx particularly focuses on Danang city thanks to the opening of new direct air routes from main lands of China to the city (Loan 2013).

Free movement of skilled labor within ASEAN in 2015: The vision of AEC in 2015 is to turn ASEAN into a single market with free trade of five core elements: goods, services, investment, capital and skilled labor (ASEAN 2008). Currently, ASEAN is putting effort on encouraging the movement of professionals and skilled labors within the region. Different actions are implemented such as facilitate the legal procedures, enhance the cooperation network among the universities, improve the labor market information network and develop the competencies and qualifications of the workforce in the service sectors (ASEAN 2008). This change promises a fulfillment in the shortage supply of qualified labor in the industry.

Threats

Besides of the availability of favorable conditions in the external environment, many threats that prevent the industry from reaching a higher growth also do exist in the Vietnamese market.

Unstable global economy: As stated by World Bank, the global economy in 2013 still remains fragile and its future is unstable (Malishka 2013). The civil war in Syria and the possible intervention of the United States at the moment alert for the happening of a regional war in a near future. The impact of the internal conflict has gone far beyond the border of the country, especially after the remarkable event of thousand deaths caused by chemical weapons in August 2013. The uncertainty creates the sense of fear and panic investors from risking their money. Customer confidence may also decline, which equally means people will save more rather than spend. The industry will be suffered both from a reduction in demand and investment as a result.

Real estate crisis: The market has witnessed a series of hotels being either partly or wholly sold off because of the decision to withdraw capital of many investors during the real estate crisis. Several noteworthy takeover of high-end hotels that could be named are the transactions of the five star resort Furama to Sovico, Hilton Hanoi to BRG Coporation, four star hotel Century to the provincial People's Committee, the selling of 70% stake by Daewoo to Hanel firm, etc. (Anh 2012). The best known hotel Metropole Hanoi has also been put up for sale (Anh 2012).

Consuming habits of domestic travelers: Even though the domestic travelers account for the greatest part of the market share, their expenditure on travel is rather low. Vietnamese usually travel in groups, either with their relatives, friends or with colleagues in tours operated by their companies. While the first group tends to operate the tour themselves and use low-cost services, the second group asks for help from tour operators but mostly choose the budget tour packages. In addition, Vietnam has very few long vacations, the longest last only for five days. For this reason, the domestic travelers can only arrange short trips. This fact somehow makes the scenarios even more challenging for the industry.

Low numbers of tourists choose to return and bad rumor: Since the advertisements are usually exaggerated to gain attention and compete with other brands, consumers nowadays are more doubtful about the reliability of the information they received. They therefore tend to trust more on word-of-mouth information from the travel blogs or the recommendations of their acquaintances. Sadly, a high number of 80% to 85% tourists said they would never return to the country after their first visits because of the bad travel experience during their stays (Thu 2012). Currently, there are several comments about Vietnam on the Internet that reflect a negative publicity of foreigners being overcharged, ripped-off, scammed, etc. (TripAdvisor 2013). What is worse is that the industry is not only likely to lose those existing customers but also a number of potential tourists who heard or read negative feedback. This problem can be a serious threat if it's not being handled properly and promptly.

Barrier of language: There are many travel websites written in English to provide information for the foreigners. Nevertheless, the language which is used on these websites is usually translated by the local writers whose style are wording and sometimes confusing to the native speakers. Most of the Vietnamese young people can speak basic English and tour guides speak several languages fluently. However, away from that, foreign tourists may find it hard to communicate with local people from the middle age and above. At the same time, many public sites do not include the necessary information in English for example the information about directions, which affects negatively to the tourists' travel experience. The language barrier is also a big concern when targeting at the Chinese market as the majority of Chinese people does not use English.

3.2 Hotel sector in Vietnam

Till September 2012, there are a total of 12 500 accommodation businesses nationwide with approximately 250 000 rooms, including 53 five-star hotels, 127 four-star hotels and 271 three-star hotels (Duc Anh Education Consultancy 2013). The small number of the high-end hotels and resorts in comparison to the total figure presents the complexity of the lodging sector with the participation of a huge number of small and medium size accommodation providers.

Though the entering of the big international and domestic brands makes the competition atmosphere even fiercer, it helps the market looks more attractive in general and more importantly rises up the quality standard of the Vietnamese accommodation system to a new level. In 2013, Vietnam has five hotels and resorts that are listed in "Top 25 Leisure hotels and resorts" via an online poll organized by a popular online travel magazine – Smart Travel Asia, in which resort The Nam Hai wins the first place (Smart Travel Asia 2013). Some other hotels are ranked in the top lists of the business and conference services category.

Leading international hotel chains in Vietnam are Accor, Hyatt, Intercontinental and Starwoods. These corporations expand their businesses in Vietnam market under the forms of direct investment, cooperation, franchising or management contract. Besides high-class hotels, other types of lodging such as villas for rent, vacation residences, bungalow or ibis – a new concept of budget hotels that provide essential comforts also grow to be popular in key tourist destinations.

To evaluate the performance of the hotel sector in Vietnam, a survey thoroughly in the hotels and resorts ranging from three to five stars is conducted annually by an international consulting firm named Grant Thornton (Grant Thornton 2013).
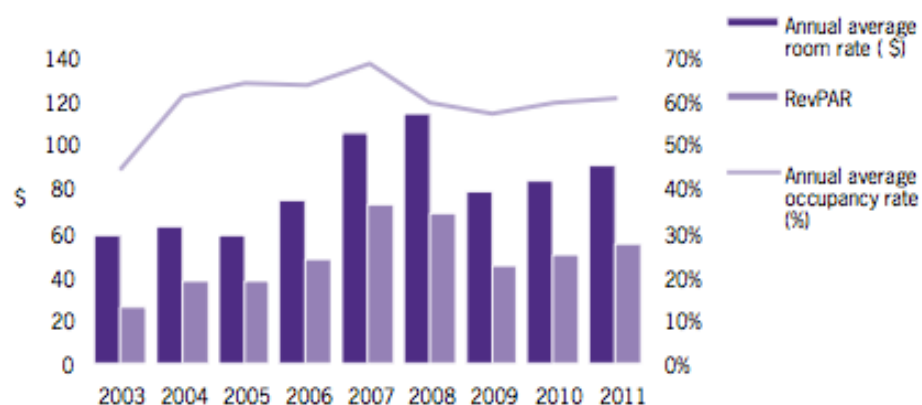
*RevPAR = Revenue Per Available Room

FIGURE 8. Annual Average Room Rate, Occupancy Rate and RevPAR (2003-2011) (Grant Thornton 2012).

Looking at the statistics recorded during nine operating years, the hotel market was booming starting from 2007 and reached its peak in 2008 with the average occupancy rate at nearly 70%. After the dramatic drop in the following year because of global economic crisis, the sector showed an overall trend of rising again. The room occupancy rate of the country in 2011 was even higher than that of the big players in Asia-Pacific market like China, India or Thailand (Stamford Advocate 2012).
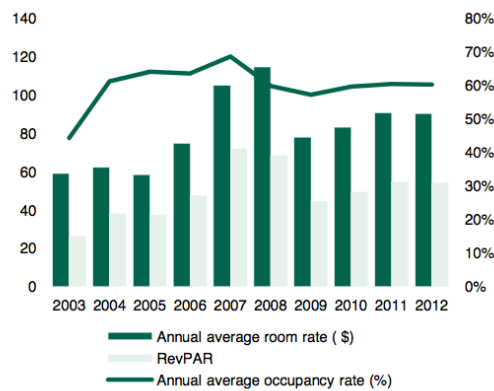

Star ranking	2011	2012	Change
3-Star	66.4%	68.5%	2.1%
4-Star	58.9%	59.0%	0.1%
5-Star	57.4%	56.3%	(1.1%)

FIGURE 10. Annual Room Rate, Occupancy Rate and RevPAR (2003-2012) (Grant Thornton 2013)

FIGURE 9. Average Occupancy rates (%) by Star ranking (2012 vs 2011) (Grant Thornton 2013)

When analyzed by star ranking, there was not much difference in the performance among these hotels. Mid-level three star hotels continued to prevail in the market with an increase of 2.1% in average occupancy rate, while four star hotels almost stayed the same and five star hotels only experienced as half as the growth of three star ones.
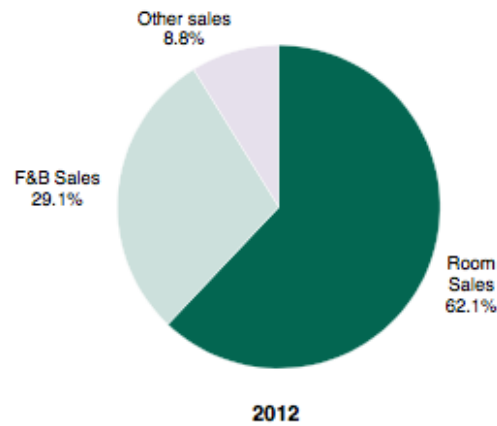
FIGURE 12. Revenue breakdown (2012)
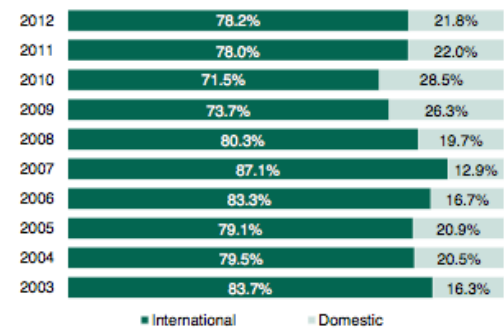(Grant Thornton 2013)

FIGURE 11. Source of guests (2003- 2012)
(Grant Thornton 2013)

In 2012, over 60% of the total revenue sources of the hotels were derived from room sales. Selling of food and beverages through restaurants and in-room dining services were the second main source of revenue. Sales that fell into other categories such as spa, banquet, conference, business center, etc. were accounted for the smallest part with only 8.8% in total.

The operation of hotels in tourist cities like Danang and Nha Trang is seasonal and guests mostly stay for vacation purpose whereas at two biggest commercial centers of the country, the occupancy is more stable throughout the year and the majority of guests are businessmen who come to attend conferences or doing businesses. In addition, as can be seen from the figure 12, the consumption capacity of domestic travelers on high-end services was rather low and diverse to its market share. Foreign tourists therefore still are the main target customers for three to five star hotels in Vietnam.

3.3   Hospitality labor market and training matter in Vietnam

Generally, the current quality of the human resources working in the hospitality industry in Vietnam has not met the demand and the international standard requirements. In 2011, there were about 480 000 workers who involve in direct jobs and 1 million workers in indirect jobs (HITT in Vietnam, 2011). However, only 3.1% among them attained the university or higher education related to the field. The labor pool continues to grow in number but still lack of staff with professional qualifications. "Well-trained staff" are the words most appeared and

insisted repeatedly in many experts' recommendations when mentioning about the strategy to improve the Vietnamese tourism in the upcoming years.

In recent years, the number of the training centers has grown significantly. Nevertheless, 284 establishments that provide tourism training, both state-owned and private in the entire country do not provide enough labors for the industry, not to mention the quality of graduates from these schools to meet the real need of each individual business (HITT 2011). Moreover these schools or training centers are mainly located in the big cities, people in rural or remote areas therefore have difficulties in accessing those formal training. So far, there has not been any public school specialize in the hospitality and tourism management major yet but only departments belong to the big national schools that educate various professions. Students who are trained by private organizations, foreign investment institutions or those trained abroad received a better education than those of state owned schools. Unfortunately not many of the students can afford the high tuition fees.

Regarding to the quality of the training centers, their training programs do not originate from the industry needs, presented in the unsuitable curriculum which is not balanced between theory and reality. There are not enough opportunities for students to practice their knowledge. Some schools require two months of practical training at hotels and restaurants as a solution for the above issues. Nevertheless, they do not provide sufficient support for students in finding a suitable workplace. Students who are interested in this industry mostly take part in courses related to management, front office or tour guide positions. However, in reality these positions only account for 5 to 15% of the operation while there is an abundant need for other occupations at the entry levels such as housekeeping, security or restaurants (Hong 2013). This creates an unsettling situation that graduated students often unsatisfied and disappoint when not being offered the expected jobs.

Quality of graduates is not adequate to the standard of luxury hotels. Communication skill and foreign language proficiency are the most worrying concerns, especially in the small businesses or in the businesses located in the remote areas. Even though English is taught since the primary school, the

curriculum mainly focuses on grammar, dictation and teachers usually apply "old-school" teaching methods such as memorizing and repetition to passing down the knowledge to their students. Vietnamese students, as a consequence, are good in reading and writing but find themselves trouble with listening and speaking. Lack of those communication skills in foreign languages will make it hard for staff to express their hospitality or offer help to guests for example.

Recognizing the urgent need of the industry, Vietnamese government asked for the support from the European Commission and together signed some agreements with the purpose of enhancing the competencies in the hospitality industry. The first corporation between Vietnam and EU in terms of training was Lux-Development project in 1996 (HITT 2011). This program aimed at providing qualified workers in the key tourist destinations by improving the teaching facilities and assisting the local tourism schools. Simultaneous to the first program, the EU also funded HRDT project, in which two highlights implementations were "National trainer development" and the development of "Vietnam Tourism Occupational Skills Standard System of Vietnam", which is briefly known as VTOS, which stands for Vocational Training Opportunity Schemes (HITT 2011). VTOS comprises of a set of standards cover 13 occupations at the entry level (HITT 2011). The standards are built based on the current situation of local tourism and hospitality industry with the expectation that provides a basic and common foundation for all hotels and other hospitality businesses in assessing the performance of workers.

Another program called HITT is run in complementary for the end of the Lux - Project in 2012. HITT stands for High Impact Tourism Training program funded by the EU in 2011 to seven least- developed countries in Asia and Africa including Vietnam. HITT shares the same purpose as the previous program. However it practices a different strategy by enhancing skills through practical and market oriented training (HITT 2011). HITT program focuses on developing skills for the entry level jobs such as homestay operating, local tour guiding, food and beverage serving and room attendants for informal workers who haven't experienced any formal training related to the tourism and hospitality industry (HITT 2011). ESRT – Environmentally and Socially Responsible Tourism Capacity Development is another program focusing on strengthening institutional

and human capacity whilst protecting and enhancing the natural and cultural resources of the country (Vietnam Responsible Tourism Program 2013). It is recommended that HITT and ESRT must work closely to each other to avoid the unnecessary duplicate.

Even though training human resources is a long process and its results cannot be seen immediately, with the support both in financial and human from the EU and the effort of the Vietnamese government, it is hoped that the quality of the hospitality and tourism workforce will be improved significantly and facilitate the growth of the industry.

4   CASE STUDY – STAFF TRAINING IN PRACTICE

The most important part of this chapter is the analysis of the issues concerning the staff training at the Training Department, which gives the answer for the first research question of this thesis. In addition, the chapter also includes an overall introduction about the company, its human resources strategy and the training activities in the company. The advantages of being managed by a leading corporation in the hotel management field are also discussed to give the readers a clear picture about the operation of the Training Department.

In this chapter, the information used are mostly taken from the company's official website, training reports, records and especially from the interviews with Ms. Pham Tan Bao Thuyen, Training Manager and Ms. Luong Thi Thanh Thao, Assistant Training Manager of Hotel X . Besides, the author also uses her personal observation and knowledge obtained during the time working in the company as a valuable source for the explanation and evaluation in the following parts.

4.1   Introduction to Hotel X

X is a well-known American hotel brand which has headquarters located in Chicago. It was first found by Jay Pritzker in 1957, in an occasion when he passed by Los Angeles and had dinner at a restaurant of a X House motel, which was located close to the airport. Realizing the potential of lodging businesses near bustling traffic points, Jay Priztker decided to take over the motel and its brand name. X was then developed into small hotels located near the airports or along the highways. Not only till 1966 that the brand of X was widely known thanks to the foundation of X Regency Atlanta and started to focus on high-end hotels. (X 2013.)

During more than 50 years of operation, X has functioned as a hotel management corporation, a franchiser, an owner and a developer of different brands worldwide. So far, X owns 7 brands including: X, Park X, Andaz, Grand X, X Regency, X Place, X House and one franchise brand, which is named solely as "X". There are more than 500 hotels under the brand name of X in more than 45 countries around

the world, which are consolidated under a single entity named X Hotels Corporation and managed by a centralized management structure. Even though X is a young player in the hospitality market, it is already listed in top ten largest hotel groups in the world, in line with other long-established groups like Marriott, Starwood and Hilton. (X Hotels Corporation 2012.)

Hotel X Resort and Spa (HRD) is a new branch of X Hotels Corporation, located on one of the top six most beautiful beaches in the world voted by US Forbes, a famous magazine in the United States (Vietnam Tourism 2011). The hotel comprises of 200 hotel rooms, 182 well-designed residences and 27 ocean view villas. Hotel X is invested by Indochina Land and the operation is managed by X Hotels Corporation. Residences and villas are for sale combined with the rental program. Hotel X 's architecture focuses on the simplicity and rusticity of a Vietnamese traditional village. X also is the only hotel in the region practices the concept "Hotel in hotel" which means a closed private club for VIP guests. (Hotel X 2013.)

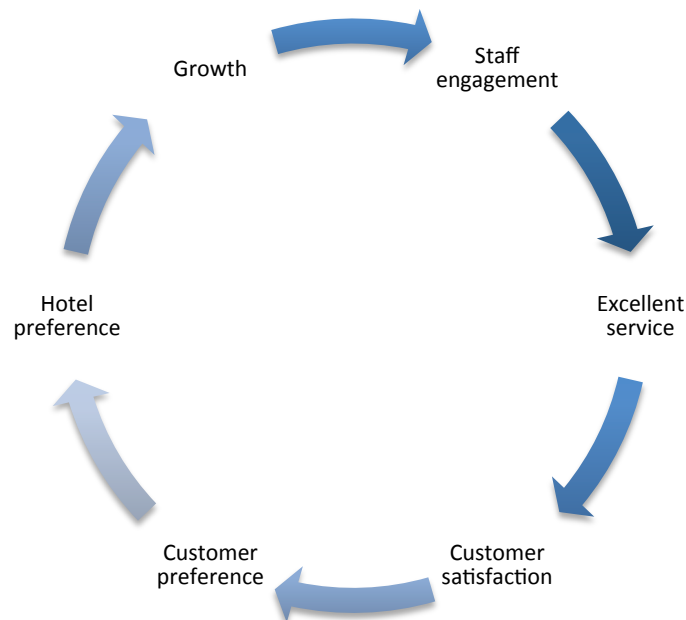4.2   X Corporation strategy

FIGURE 13. X Value Chain (modified from X Hotels Corporation 2012)

Unlike other organizations that very much concern about profit, X focuses more on satisfying the people who get involved with its businesses. This conception is reflected thoroughly in its vision, goal and strategy. As its mission, X promises to "provide authentic hospitality by making a difference in the lives of people we touch every day" and to be more specific X defines its goal as being the preferred brand by three groups of people, which are guests, owners and staff. (X Hotel Corporations 2012.)

To achieve that goal and mission, X develops its strategy based on the belief in the chain relationships as shown in the value chain above, in which its staff play a key role and drive the following outcomes. The staff who is highly engaged in the organization will have motive to perform efficiently as they see the organizational success as of their own. The engaged staff will assure the delivering of the excellent service and from that continuously lead to the customer satisfaction and preference. The reputation of the hotel will then be improved because satisfied customers will likely to give good comments and recommendations to others. In addition, the staff who is satisfied with their jobs will spread a positive message to the local community. The more well-known the hotel is the higher growth it achieves and in return enhances the staff engagement since people are proud of being part of the organization.

Thanks for the attempt of keeping its internal people motivated and satisfied, X has been selected for Gallup Great Workplace Award in two consecutive years 2012 and 2013. X also has been recognized for having one of the most engaged and productive workforce in the world. (Business Wire 2013.)

4.3   Training as part of Human Resources Management

The Human Resources division includes 2 departments: Personnel and Training. Each department has its own manager. The division in general responsible for managing every issue related to all the staff in the company such as hiring & firing, salary, insurance, organizing events for staff, managing staffs' working performance, etc. Training Department in particular mainly focuses on organizing courses to educate the staff follow the company's brand standard and mission, keeping people up-to-date with the changing policies, supervising the

departmental training activities, also motivating people and improving service quality through training.

All the employees are given the opportunity to learn, develop and grow within the organization. By setting a separate department with people who specialize only in the training matter, it shows that X much appreciates the importance of effective training in its way of achieving the final goal. The Training Department however does not work solely as a single entity but to cooperate with other division heads and operational managers to seek for their supports and ensure a smooth lifelong learning culture.

4.4 Training Department's responsibilities

Orient new staff adapt to the organization's culture

Acknowledge that the initial impressions are strong, lasting and have great impact to later behaviors; X emphasizes the Training Department's role in orienting new employees during their beginning time at a new workplace. The HRM team puts effort to make the employees' first experience memorable and positive. Prior to the first day on-board at X, the candidates who have been hired either as full-time staff, seasonal staff or interns will receive the congratulation and instruction on the arrival via email or phone call from an HR officer. New employees will then be arranged to attend the General Orientation course as soon as possible. At Hotel X , with an average of dozens of new employees on-board every month, the General Orientation course is scheduled at least once a month (Hotel X 2013). The General Orientation course lasts for three days with plenty of contents cover all the basic "must-be-known" information for the newcomers to get familiar with the new working environment.

Consult staff's learning process

X believes that training professionals do not "own" training but rather play a support role to help their employees acquire necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the working objectives throughout their career path (X Hotels Corporation 2012). Consulting and encouraging the employees to proactively involve in the learning environment are therefore one of the functions performed by the Training

Department. Every new employee when being hired for a certain position at X receives an individual learning plan comprises a list of courses which cover the knowledge needed for that position. Depending on the position, the training manager or the direct supervisors will meet to discuss, consult and guide the employees on how to personalize their learning plans. Members of the Training Department also answer the inquiries of the staff and provide additional support if their supervisors are not available to assist. (X Hotels Corporation 2013)

Identify, analyze and meet training needs

Needless to say, the main tasks of the Training Department are to provide training if there is a gap between the level of service the hotel expects and the actual performance of the staff due to the inadequate knowledge, lack of experience or the improper attitudes. The Training Manager works closely with other operational managers and observes the hotel's performance in general to identify and fulfill those needs. X has a management system that allows the customers to provide feedback and give scores for the services which is also a very useful tool in pointing out the issues dealing with training.

Schedule training calendar

Before the beginning of each month, the training team must plan and make decisions on which training activities going to be organized for that month. Some courses are conducted on a regular basis such as the general orientation course for the new hires (Hotel X 2013). The decision for the rest is made based on the priority level of the training needs in the individual learning progress of staff and the additional needs identified in the previous stage. Planners then try to arrange these activities reasonably using the time available. Training calendar sorted by month is the final output of this process, representing a curriculum with the detail date, time and venue for each activity.

An example of a monthly training calendar including the training activities in combining with the events organized by the Personnel department is presented in the figure below.

FIGURE 14. Human Resources Calendar May 2013 (Hotel X 2013)

Prepare training courses

Before a certain training activity aside from the on-the-job training takes place, it is X' standard that the Training Assistant Manager and the Training Manager must assure everything has been well-prepared in advance. Division heads and managers will first be informed about the employees who are selected for that course and the scheduled time so that they could support training by arrange the job accordingly and pass the information to the relevant employees. A copy of the training calendar is also put on a notice board for all staff to keep track with the HR department's activities. Training materials are checked to ensure the validity of the information and are updated to keep pace with the company' changing needs. On the day of the lecture, the lesson's handouts, training materials and the training room must be set up before the arrival of the trainees.

Record and report training data

After the training is completed, the training team collects feedback from the trainees for evaluation and records the number of the employees who attended that course (Luong 2013). Weekly training attendance record is then sent to department managers to take appropriate actions on the absence cases. Concerning the training activities taken by other operating departments, all the relevant data such as time and location where the training is taken, the name and number of attendances, name of the trainer and title of the training content must also be recorded by a person nominated by the department manager and then report back to the Training Department. It is the Training Department's responsibility to store all these data into an internal management system, analyze them and presents the results at the board meetings.

4.5   Training programs

Regarding the training location, training at X is classified into two including on-the-job and off-the-job training. On-the-job training is authorized to the individual department managers with the help of task breakdowns and rotational training sessions for the staff. On the other hand, off-the-job training is usually handled directly by the Training Department or otherwise is taken under the form of e-learning.

Regarding the training content, the courses that have been organized by the Training Department of Hotel X so far can be divided into four categories as presented in the table below

TABLE 1. X core training programs in a nutshell (modified from Hotel X 2013)

Types of training	Content	Course names	Selected staffs
General Studies	Courses cover product knowledge and courses that are mandatory for hospitality businesses	- Hotel general orientation - Path to Authentic Hospitality - Orientation follow-up - Codes of business conduct & ethics - Fire control & prevention - First Aid - Human Trafficking	All levels
Job skills development	Specific courses designed to improve skills needed to perform a certain task, job or function	- M-concierge training - Online computer training - Food safety management system - Cashier procedures - Wine training - How to use outlook	Depending on job requirement and individual development plan
Soft skills development		- Driving to customer preference - Changing the conversation - The arrival experience	

Management skills development	Courses aim at developing management and leadership skills, provide necessary knowledge to train emloyees at lower levels	- Leadership series phase 1:
		  + Coaching skills
		  + Receiving and giving feedback
		  + Core skills and leadership expectations
		- Leadership series phase 2:
		  + Time & task management
		  + Balanced approach to managing
		  + Communicate effectively at work
		  + Managing the work of other
		- Leadership series phase 3:
		  + Introduction interviewing skills
		  + X on skills training
		  + X on Group training
		- Path to Authentic Hospitality
		- Development of SOH materials
		- HySat
		- Performance Development Plan training
		- Staff engagement action planning
			Team Leader (only phase 1)
			Assistant Manager
			Manager
			Division head
			Executive Community

4.6   Advantages of Training Department of Hotel X

Compared to other hotels in the region, Hotel X has several advantages of being developed by an international corporation which has long experience in the hotel management field. These advantages are presented in the following figure.

FIGURE 15. Competitive advantages of Training Department

Well-established system

The company has a team of experts from the Corporate and Divisional Offices whose responsibility is to develop human resource strategies, in which Training and Development is one of their focuses, applying for all X hotel brands on global (X Hotel Corporations 2013). Training therefore benefits from a well-established system with everything has been developed and researched beforehand.

Quality materials and training tools

An internal electronic learning management system called X Leadership Network (HLN) is available as a useful tool assists in training and promotes ongoing learning by providing courses and materials appropriate to the roles of the employees in the organization while allowing the managers to track the learning progress of their team members (X Hotels Corporation 2013).

Favorable working environment

Since the role of training is highly valued by the company, the Training Department receives a certain respect from the staff, which makes it easier in terms of calling for their collaboration. The X's principle of encouraging innovation creates favorable conditions for the training team to maintain a good learning culture throughout the organization. In addition, taking advantage of the company international network, the Training Department can also learn and share experiences with its sister hotels all over the world.

Available core training courses

The Training Department does not have to perform the task of designing content for the training courses which are very time-consuming and require a lot of materials, resources and skills. All the core training courses of the company are driven by the Corporate Office in Chicago for all X worldwide to follow the same framework and standards. The Training Department can then customize the content to fit the need of local business.

Since these courses are designed by experts, their contents are well-developed using various methods such as presentation, videos, role plays, interactive games, group work, team-building, etc. Besides, the experts tailor the training content based on the researches of the staff' specific preferences and needs, which make the task of keeping the trainees' interest somehow less pressure for the trainers.

Experienced trainers

The Training Department is structured with two core members, including one Training Manager and one Assistant Manager who take the main role of lecturing in most classes organized by the Training Department. According to the information collected from the interview, the Training Manager has nearly 11 years and Assistant Manager has almost five years experience teaching in several education centers and hotels. In addition to the two full time members, each department also has its own trainers who are in charge of providing on-the-job training or act as role models for subordinates. To ensure the quality of these departmental trainers, all the employees from the team leader level and above

have to attend the "X on skills training" course that teaches coaching skills and the standard procedure of on-the-job training as part of their leadership training progress. (Pham 2013; Luong 2013.)

4.7   Challenges of staff training in practice

Among the common obstacles of staff training in the hospitality industry that have been discussed in the theoretical part, the issues that are going to be described in this chapter are the most current ones and have profound effects on the performance of the Case Company's Training Department according to what have been analyzed from the collected data and the opinions of two interviewees.

4.7.1   Employee motivation to learn

Both interviewees first mention this issue when being asked about the challenges that they have faced during their training career at the company so far. According to the Assistant Manager, the employees are reluctant to attend training courses, especially course that lasts for several days (Luong 2013). Besides, it is likely that the employees will lose their enthusiasm for training if the course takes away their break time or time spent for other personal businesses. The attendance report recorded many cases that trainees did not come to the class because the courses take place during their day offs (Hotel X 2013). Not only does the unmotivated attitude obstruct the knowledge acquisition, this discouraging attitude makes it tiring and difficult for the trainer to conduct a course knowing that people are not willing to listen and do not want to be there.

Since the hotel has policy concerning training, trainers actually have the authority to force the employees to take training by issuing misconduct warning. While this method might lead to the change of the employees' behavior right after being implemented, using compulsory measures is just a temporary solution and is not highly appreciated at X. (Pham 2013.)

4.7.2 Limit in human resources

Limit in the human resources is also a factor that restrains the efficiency of Training Department. Two full-time members are not able to carry out all the responsibilities from planning, preparing, to lecturing and doing after-training works to meet training needs and expectations of more than 500 staffs. Many plans on the training programs to enhance the staff's skills therefore still stay on papers (Pham 2013). Though theoretically the departmental trainers are available for assistance, training is only a part of their main duties. Moreover, they are expected to concern about the training activities related to their own departments only.

HR employer currently meets some difficulties in seeking an English teacher for the Training Department. The limited budget does not allow for a native speaker teacher to be hired (Luong 2013). The local candidates that have applied so far are not qualified enough for the position. In addition, the English teacher cannot rely much on the training programs developed by the Corporate Office in this case because these programs are designed generally for all the X hotels in global and do not address the specific needs of each local hotel. The workload of designing a training plan adequate to the specific needs of all staff in the company makes the job somehow less attractive for the candidates. Finding a qualified candidate to fill this position is therefore a challenging task for the employer of the company.

Outsourcing from an external educational center is given as an alternative option but it ends up to be a poor choice (Luong 2013). The ability of speaking fluently in a foreign language is not something that can be improved in a short period time because it is very much depends on each trainee´s language learning ability. The hotel´s goal of enabling staff to become proficient in English therefore should rather be a long-term strategy. Taking this fact into account, outsourcing option appears to be high cost consuming as well. Besides, there is a risk of the training quality being out-of-control because the outsource provider does not fully understand the hotel´s culture and obviously does not commit to the company as much as an internal employee does.

4.7.3 Foreign language training

As mentioned in the market analysis, the foreign language proficiency of the local workforce has always been a worrisome issue among the employers. In the same situation with other hotels, Hotel X also has a high demand for English training. The hotel receives many complaints from foreign guests about the staff's ability to communicate fluently in English. Not only does the hotel realize the negative impact of the language barrier on the overall performance, even the employees find themselves uncomfortable and not confident when dealing with the foreign guests.

An English club has been run as a temporary solution while waiting for a new English teacher being hired. However, with the length of two hours per month, the activities of the club can only be enclosed within games, quiz or talking about some topics that interest the majority of the staff. It cannot address the specific need of each department or each job. Even if assuming that the issue of the English teacher is resolved, the high difference in the trainees' proficiency remains a difficult exercise for the Training Department.

4.7.4 Scheduling conflict

Difficulties in scheduling time for training can be seen by studying the training calendar of the Training Department within the first six months of 2013. As shown in the figure below, in general the number of courses organized by the Training Department during March, April and May were much higher than that of January, February and June. The month which had the most intense course density was May with 17 courses per month while in February only five courses were taking place. (Hotel X 2013.) This was due to the fluctuation of the hotel´s occupancy rate during the high season and low season. High course density during the low season gives little time for the trainees to process information and to put what they learnt into practice. Furthermore it leads to the trainers´ pressure of lack of preparation time.
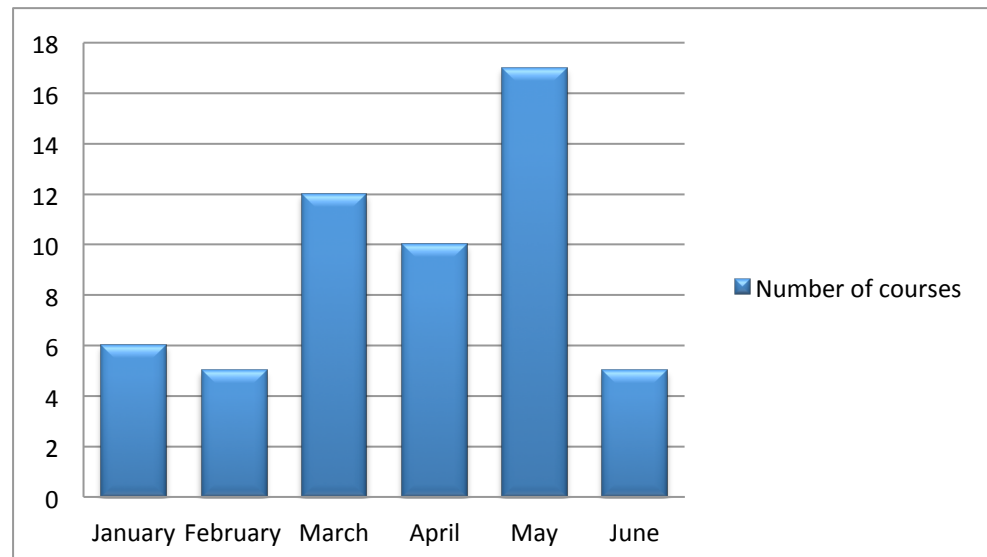
FIGURE 16. Number of courses organized per month from January to June 2013 (modified from Hotel X 2013)

Since the customer service is always put at the top priority, the training professionals usually can do nothing about the excuses for being absent due to work commitment. They therefore have no option but to keep close watch on the hotel´s occupancy rate report to have an appropriate react in a timely manner. Many times the courses which were already scheduled and widely informed by the staff were cancelled on the last minute because many of the employees were on duty. Though this unexpected situation happened because of an objective reason, it resulted in the wasting time for setting up class and the dissatisfaction from the employees who came to the class not knowing that it had been cancelled.

4.7.5   Lack of communication with other departments

Among 37 courses from January to May 2013 that are studied, there were total of 214 absences, which accounts for approximately 28% of the total attendance. As stated by the Training Manager, 80% of the absences are due to work commitment. Yet, the reports only show a small proportion of them. Meanwhile more than half of absence cases were recorded as "No information", which shows a worrying concern about one way communication from the Training Department to others and missing information from the opposite direction.
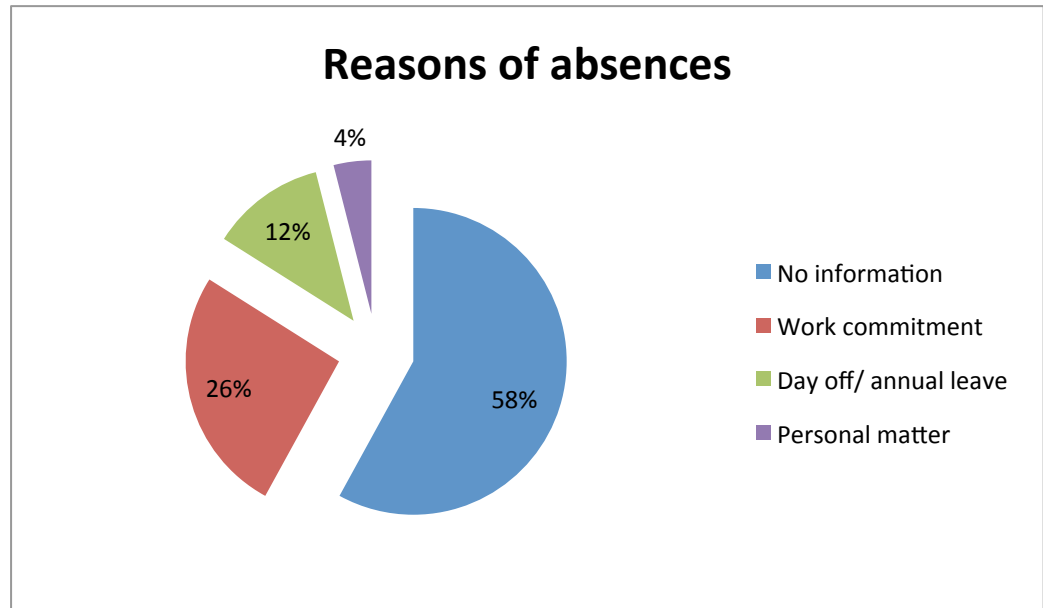
FIGURE 17. Reasons for Absence based on Training Attendance Record from January to May 2013 (modified from Hotel X 2013)

For the absences due to the personal matters, the employees usually inform directly to the trainers themselves because they are afraid of receiving penalty for being absent unreasonably. However, regarding the absences due to work commitment, the Training Department often lack of information from the employees because they think it is an excusable reason. So the managers who schedule the working time for the employees are supposed to be the ones who should inform the Training Department in advance about these absences. Nevertheless, the unclear rule creates a bias about the person who responsible for contacting the Training Department.

In addition, the information delivered from the Training Department to the employees is usually disrupted because it has to go through an intermediate channel. Whenever the training professionals at the department want to deliver a message to the employees, they have to ask for help from the managers in other departments to pass down the information. This reduces the accuracy the information and sometimes it even does not reach the target audience. A typical example is the communication for the activities of the English club. Even though before any event of the club the training team always sends an announcement to the departmental managers, many times the employees who are interested in the

club activities still claim that they missed the opportunity to join because lack of information.

4.7.6   Training effectiveness evaluation

In the interview with the author, the Training Manager admitted that the task of evaluating whether the Training Department has succeeded in achieving the goals and objectives set by the company or not is very challenging because there are many factors that affect the final outcome of training (Pham 2013). At Hotel X , the training effectiveness is usually based on three main sources of information, including the trainees' feedback from the course evaluation, the customer feedback and the staff turnover ratio. However, each of these sources is affected by various external factors as can be seen from the following figure.

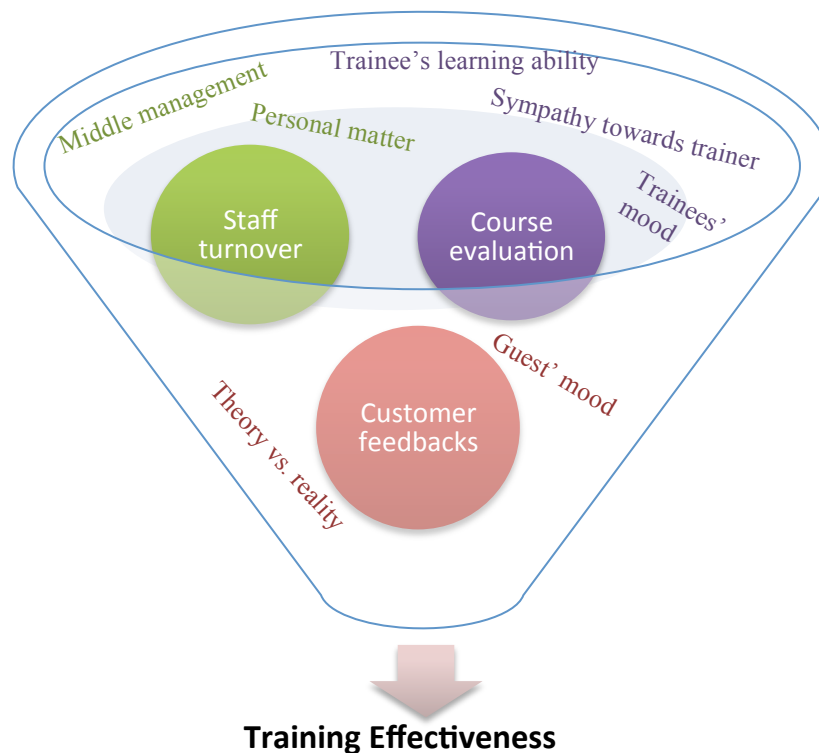FIGURE 18. Training effectiveness evaluation tools and influential factors

The course evaluation survey designed by the X Corporate Office allows trainees to grade the quality of trainer and the effectiveness of the course they attend. The survey includes questions concerning the satisfaction of trainees on the practicality and the difficulty level of the training content, the effective use of the

training methods and the trainer's teaching ability (Hotel X 2013). Though the questions can grasp right on the effectiveness of training from staff's perspective, its results often tend to be emotions driven. A trainee may simply give good grade because of his or her good mood or sympathy towards the trainer (Pham 2013).

The results shown by the customer feedback and the staff turnover also could just partly display the results of training. For instance, in an attempt to improve the staff turnover ratio, the training team has tried their best to equip the managers with necessary managing skills. Yet, they cannot control over these managers' individual leadership style, a factor that may affect to the staff's job satisfaction and thus to the staff turnover (Pham 2013). Meanwhile, the customer feedback that are used the most often to assess the employees' performance rely much on the customers' mood and different situations under which the case occurs.

5   SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

In this chapter, the author suggests two solutions with the primary purpose of helping the Case Company to increase the employee motivation for learning. The first solution promotes the idea of using the learning diary while the second one introduces the idea of developing a platform for the Training Department on the social network. Other issues at the Case Company concerning the English language training, the lacking of communication between the Training Department and the employees and the evaluation of the training effectiveness are also benefited from these solutions.

The solutions are developed based on the factors that influence to an adult learner' motivation as stated in the theoretical study earlier. In addition, low-cost and high feasibility are two selection criteria that lead to the decision of choosing them to apply for the company. The reasoning will be explained more detail as the ideas are explained.

5.1   Learning diary – Writing-to-learn

In schools, the students are motivated to actively participate in the class because their learning behaviors are also taken into account when the teacher evaluates their study results. However, at HRD, as long as the employees physically attend a certain training course, they are considered to successfully pass that course. Their behaviors during the training process do not cause any affect to them. Therefore, unlike the students, the employees are not obliged to involve into the class activities. For this reason, the author is motivated to figure out a way to engage the employees more into learning.

As people write down what they being heard they are more involved into a conversation because they have to concentrate and listen to grasp the content of that conversation. Inspired by that idea, the author promotes the use of the learning diary with the belief that it will encourage more involvement from the employees, which will consequently lead to the increase of their learning motivation.

This idea of "writing-to-learn" has somehow been practiced in the Case Company but it has not been used effectively. When taking the training courses conducted in the classroom, the trainees are usually provided with the printed handouts and blank papers to take notes. Nevertheless the handouts are given occasionally according to the need of each lecture and since the notes are written in separate papers, very often the trainees don't keep those notes or forget them somewhere after a period of time passing. Each employee also has their own notebook provided by the company to note down things related to their jobs. However, the notes for learning will be mixed with those which are recorded for other purposes if they are written in the same notebook and leads to the interruption of the learning flow as a consequent.

To make a better use of this practice, the company is proposed to equip each employee with another own notebook merely serving for the learning purpose.

5.1.1   Feasibility and cost assessment

Though this solution appears to cost more than the another one which will be presented later in this chapter, it is still applicable for Hotel X considering the fact that the company already can afford to provide each employee with an own notebook. In reference to the price list provided by the Materials department of HRD, a normal notebook which is designed according to the customer order and suitable for the purpose of this learning diary costs approximately 20.000VND (Truong 2013). The total estimated cost for 566 employees would be around 11.320.000 VND (less than 400 Euros). It would be ideal if the company could provide a uniform of the learning stationeries because it creates a sense of professional and shows the attentive care of the company to the employees' learning. However in case the proposal is not approved due to the financial reason, this idea could still be another way around implemented by suggesting each employee to buy a learning diary for themselves and design it in their own ways.

5.1.2   Benefits of learning diary

The practice of using learning diary has been long well-known in the pedagogical field because of its positive impact on a learner's learning process. Firstly, the use

of learning diary is promoted because of its ability of allowing both learners and trainers to observe the learning over time as it shows the growth in the understanding of an individual upon a certain skill or knowledge. Adult learners are motivated when they have the readiness to learn, which means they find what they are going to learn are meaningful for the accomplishment of their responsibilities. Therefore, the learning diary is believed to increase the employee motivation by giving them the sense of progress towards their goals.

Secondly, it helps to keep the learning record in a well-organized way. As all the information collected during the learning process is gathered in one place, it is convenient for the employees to find the information when they need to review any of them. Thirdly, the learning diary is valuable in terms of providing the learners with the possibility to reflect what have been taught in their own ways of thinking. By writing down briefly, the learners let themselves think about the information they receive and select only the most important ones.

Moreover, as the learning diary is personalized, people usually transfer the information in a way that is easiest for them to understand, so they will possibly remember about the knowledge from a certain lecture longer than if they don't note anything. The learning diary also reflects a truthful view about the acquisition of knowledge of each learner, which is not normally accessible to the researchers and thus contribute a rich source of information to evaluate the training effectiveness (Halbach 1999). It is especially helpful in case the learners are not good at expressing themselves orally (Boud 2001, according to Salehuddin et al. 2012.). Last but not the least, thanks to the learning diary the learners become masters of their own learning process by actively interact with the materials of the lecture, reflect the information, editing them in their own style, review the learning process and adjust themselves towards their goals (Halbach 1999).

5.1.3   Learning diary guideline

While usually no specific format is required for this type of learning record, a guideline on which elements should be included is necessary to help the learners use it effectively.

Checklist – A checklist would help the learners to identify the things they need to accomplish in an explicit way and easy to keep track. Moreover, it acts as a reminder to ensure that nothing important is forgotten. At the beginning of the learning diary, learners are therefore recommended to create a checklist of their individual goals and the tasks they set for themselves to achieve those goals at the beginning of the diary. The tasks and goals put on the checklist can be put in a prioritizing order so that the focus is paid on the most important ones first.

Lecture content – Not to mention, the knowledge taught in the lecture is what makes up of the main content of the learning diary. The learners however are recommended to note briefly and write down only things that they think are important and relevant to their jobs so that the diary would be concise and not being overwhelmed with load of information.

Personal observation and opinions – The learners should be encouraged to include in their learning diaries any inquiry that may arise during their daily jobs and relate to the knowledge or skills they have been taught. The learners could note it down to ask the trainer in the course after. Personal opinions and feelings are also essential to show the learners' reflection on the knowledge they have received and make the learning diary look more personal and interesting.

5.1.4   Effectiveness measurement

The significance of writing a learning diary would be reduced if it is not being handed to the trainers or training professionals for feedback. The comments given to the learners should emphasize on showing the empathy with the learners' learning experience, giving comments on how to improve rather than focusing on the learner's limitations and failures (Jordan 2000, according to Salehuddin et al. 2012.).

Through a quick browse of a leaner's diary entries, the training professionals could evaluate the effectiveness of this practice and that of the training on the learner's perception. The effectiveness displays right at the quality of the learning diary content and the increase in the quality of classroom training. Answering the

questions below would help the training professionals in analyzing the learners' diaries and their effectiveness into training.

> How much the learner's personal goals are achieved through learning?
>
> Do the learners show any progress in achieving their goals?
>
> Do the lecture carried out influence to the diary entries?
>
> Are the learners more willing to ask and raise questions related to what they observe in their daily jobs?
>
> How much the training content relates to the problems they encounter in their jobs?

If the training professionals do not have time to look at all the learning diaries, they could periodically organize the presentation seminar where learners can briefly present about how they use the learning diary and their learning progress. This way not only helps to save time for training professionals but also to improve the presentation skills of the employees.

5.2   Integrate online social network into training

For HRD Training Department, the most restricted resources are the time available and taken for the developmental purposes. Thinking of how to balance between the limited time and the entertainment factor that can motivate staff, author comes to the idea of developing a platform for Training Department on an online social network to create a new learning experience at the company.

5.2.1   Feasibility and cost assessment

Compare to the previous solution, this one is a better choice because it does not cause any extra cost to the company and is simple to implement. There is a wide range of free social networks that are available for choosing such as Facebook, Twitters, Pinterest, Tumblr, etc. Moreover, as people nowadays are very much familiar with these kinds of networks, it should not take much time and effort for both participants and administrators in terms of learning how to use and implement the approaches that are introduced in the following chapters.

5.2.2   Benefits of social network in training

Nowadays, online social network is not only known as a tool that merely serves for its primary purpose of connecting people. As the awareness about the benefits of the online social network has grown significantly, many business operators have also adapted these benefits into their marketing strategies, but only few have used them for the training purpose. However, as people have become increasingly mobile thanks to the rapid development of the digital technology, training should not be away from this trend. The social network could be developed as an efficient tool for HRD to resolve most of the existing issues concerning the staff training that have identified earlier.

The online social network could benefit the employees´ learning in terms of making it an enjoyable, convenient and less time-consuming experience. With connected portable devices such as smartphones, iPhone or iPad, the learners could get access to learning everywhere at any time they want. Furthermore, since it is newly launched, the employees are expected to be exciting and more willing to try this new experience.

Another benefit that could be seen from this idea is that it helps to address one of the main motivations, which is the self-recognition need of the adult learners. In the last part of the development strategy for the online platform of the Training Department, the author also mentions about her idea of letting proactive employees take turns to manage the platform. Employees who are invited for cooperation will be glad to receive the acknowledgement from the training professionals. Social network in this sense has resolved the issue of motivating employees to actively participate in learning.

Besides, it could be used as a temporary solution to improve English proficiency for X staff by consistently using English as the main language for communication within the Training Department´s profile on the chosen network. Additionally, the platform also stimulates two-ways communication, extends discussion beyond the classroom extent and reduces the distance between the professionals at Training Department and the staff through informal conversations. The information

generated from the platform would also facilitate the task of identifying needs and assessing training effectiveness.

5.2.3 Social network strategy

The social network strategy, which is shown in the following figure, includes three main parts which are Goals, Strategy and Set up address the criteria that the Case Company should be concerned to successfully deliver the author´s idea into practice.
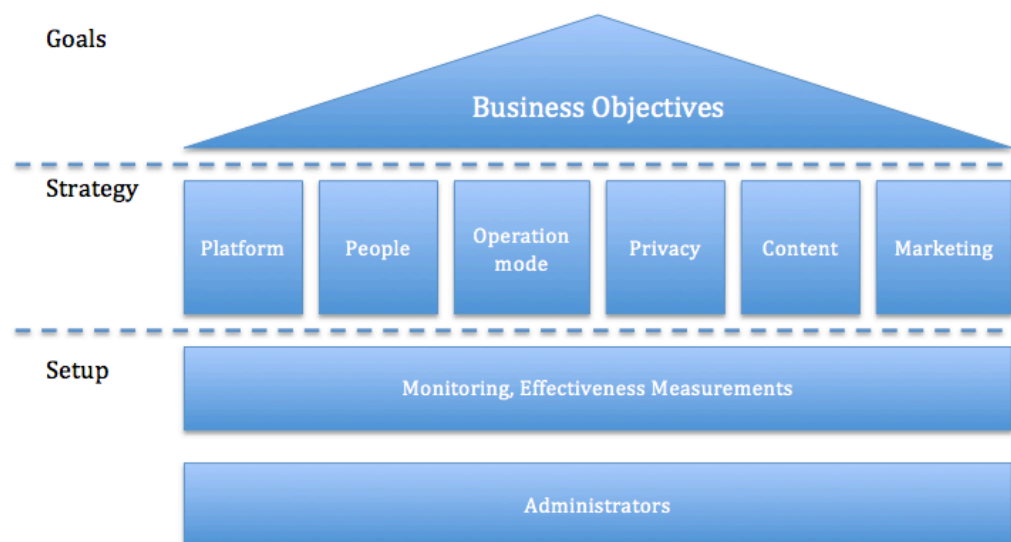

FIGURE 19. Framework of Training Department's social network plan (modified from Third Wave 2013)

5.2.3.1 Goals

The following goals are designed in alignment with the company's specific needs. It is suggested that training team should discuss with the top management to determine a concrete number for these goals to make them look more measurable and easier to be evaluated.

- Create an active learning forum among HRD employees
- Improve in the proficiency of using English spoken language for professional purposes
- Improve communication between training professionals at Training Department and employees without the need of going through intermediate channels
- Grow in numbers of feedback from trainees concerning their own learning needs and the effectiveness of training
- Increase in numbers of trainee attendance
- Decrease in numbers of absences without confirming in advance
- Enhance the relationship among employees from all departments

5.2.3.2   Strategy

Platform - Among the free social networks that are currently available on the Internet; Facebook is the most popular one, especially in Vietnam. Vietnamese people spend more than 30 hours a week on the social networks, in which Facebook is ranked at the top, on every possible electronic device (Oanh 2013). Acknowledging the growing importance of Facebook, the author decides to choose this social network for developing a new communication channel for HRD staff.

People – Target of this platform are all HRD employees regardless of their English level, especially employees who already have accounts on Facebook. Up to June 2013, at HRD there are more than 516 out of 566 staffs available on this social network (Facebook 2013; Hotel X 2013).

Operation mode – On Facebook, there are two options for creating a network among a group of people: Group and Fan Page. "Group" mode allows more control over the visibility of information to outsiders while "Fan Page" operates as a public figure (Brian & Levy 2012, 59-69). Even though the "Group" has an advantage over the "Fan Page" in regards to its ability of controlling the leaking of information, in return it has few downsides. Once a person engages in that group, he or she will receive notifications every time someone in the group post a

content on that network, which often makes people feel annoying. In addition, the layout of the "Group" is not familiar to the one that people usually use in their personal profiles and it is hard for navigating. After considering the advantages and disadvantages of both options, "Fan Page", which is referred later in this chapter as a "Page", is selected as an appropriate mode to conduct this plan.

Privacy concern –It's important to set the boundaries between what can be shared and what is not to assure a safe and effective learning environment. Training team must discuss with other HR professionals to agree on a common policy for people who engage in this network. A clear policy will avoid bias and help administrators and staffs feel more confident about engaging without being afraid of violating the organization's overall policy.

Though setting the page under the "fan page" mode equally means the page's owner has agreed on the information written on this network being published, the page's owner still could limit the access of outsiders by a number of tricks. On Facebook "setting options", the owner could choose to restrict people from certain countries or certain age groups (Brian & Levy 2012, 59). Last trick is not giving the page a name which includes words that are easy to be guessed and found such as "X", "Training" or "English", just simply use "HRD Community" for example. In addition to those tricks, training team can also limit the popularity of the page by telling staffs not to market the page to people in their personal networks.

Content strategy

To effectively attract and retain people's interest, the training team together with their co-admins should agree on a long-term strategy over the Page's content. Taking into account the safety and the usefulness of the content for the staff's benefits, the author suggests five different themes that can be used for the Page as represented in the following figure.

FIGURE 20. Content plan for Facebook Page of Training Department

By "share information and knowledge", the author does not recommend to publish the content of the company's core training programs which will unintentionally lead to the privacy violation. Rather the term refers to the contents such as useful English phrases, new vocabularies, grammar guidelines, quiz or interesting quotes that can be collected from other sources. In addition, the training team can also act as a learning help desk and show support to the staff by answer queries related to the difficulties that the employees have met during their learning progress. Since the forum is created to serve for the learning purpose, these contents should be put on the highest priority among others.

Besides of the above contents, the admins could use this Page to update and remind the staff of the training schedule, upload the staff's photos or the admins

could even share their own personal feelings. The admins could also encourage the participants' involvement by organizing interesting online contests or create offline events such as hanging out, workshop, camping, etc.

As the main focus of this forum is to improve the staff's proficiency in English and in other foreign languages if possible, there should be a clear rule for the admins not to use Vietnamese for communication within the forum's extent. If certain content includes too many difficult words that people can hardly understand, admins may use Vietnamese to translate but the content should be posted using bi-languages.

Marketing plan – Since the department already has its own community, it will not take much effort to reach them on Facebook. Training team can make use of the company's existing communication channels for marketing. Some of the traditional marketing methods for training activities at HRD are listed as follows:

- Attach the page's logo and link under any posters posted on the noticeboard.
- Inform other managers and ask for their support of passing information down to their subordinates in departmental briefings.
- Inform trainees in the occasion of training classes take place, especially to the new staff in their first orientation courses. Since they are new to the organization, they are more willing to engage in the network in order to get to know more about other colleagues and the organization.

In addition to three mentioned methods, the admins can also market the Page using the Facebook itself by recommending it to the colleagues within their personal networks.

After getting people notice about the presence of this new forum, the next challenging task is to make them "Like" the page, which means to convince them to agree on subscribe and follow the Page's activities. One way to attract people without much effort is to post content that evokes their curiousness like promising to reveal a funny picture of a certain manager if they "Like" the page for example. It is recommended that the training team proposes the plan to the top management

to get their permission and financial support for running campaigns during the opening time and maintain the offline activities.

Another suggest is to create a memorable tagline that can represent the Page's principle and at the same time can catch the people's interests. The tagline generates an impression that the Page has its own value. Considering that this Facebook Page is an additional tool to assist the core traditional learning in class, the author chooses the tagline "Virtual learning network, real value" which represents for the administrators' promise of transferring information and content that are useful and practical to staffs' working life. Additionally, it also indicates the creator's desire of enhancing people's connection and engagement in both virtual and real life.

5.2.3.3   Setup

Effectiveness measurement – Unlike traditional training activities, the effectiveness of running this Facebook page is easier to be quantified and evaluated using a number of indicators. Facebook has an analytic feature that provides deep insights about the Page's activities. Clear instructions are available and easy to understand, thus the administrators do not have to spend much time to discover and to be able to use this feature for further improvement.

The first measurements that can be quickly seen are the impressions and feedback rate which locates right under every content posted by the administrators on the Page. This rate is shown in percentage, indicates the number of times a certain post displays to users and the total number of feedback expressed under the form of "comments", "likes" and "share" against that post (Brian, Levy 2012, 112). The Page's administrators can compare the rates between different posts to identify which post get the most interaction among the participants, then tailor the content to their interests and preferred style.

More in-depth measurements are found on the admin panel including data representing for the Page's demographic and traffic. The most typical measurements for the Pages' activities evaluation are the number of new people engage to the Page, the number of active users, the number of feedback, the

number of times being mentioned in a conversation and the number of people visit the Page during a certain time period. The Page's administrators can choose the date range during which they want the data to show up (Brian & Levy 2012, 113). These data are all represented in charts so that the Page's administrators can easily identify the trend in each measurement.

Based on these indicators, the Page's administrators can give a conclusion on what can be done in the future to improve the interaction between the participants and the Page's content and adjust to it. Moreover, it also helps the training team in terms of evaluating how much the staff engages in this activity and assess whether the solution of running this social network worth the time and effort spent.

Administrator – Facebook allows having one main admin who originally creates a Facebook Page and an unlimited number of co-administrators who help to maintain it. These co-administrators have the same rights as the owner in terms of editing, posting new contents and respond to their "fans" 'comments. A co-admin should be removed or banned by the Page's owner or other co-administrators. However, in the opposite direction, the owner cannot be removed by others. (Facebook Help Centre 2013.) Taking this advantage, training professionals could take the main role and share the work of running this social platform by choosing or hiring voluntary staff at each department or intern trainees who are good in English and interest in this task to be the Page's co-administrators. The owner could eliminate the risk of the Page being out-of-control by giving permission to only one co-admin one at a time and let them take turns to involve in the Page's activities.

There are several benefits of using this solution of calling cooperation for the Page management. Firstly, it is convenient because all of the administrators could manage the page by using their own personal account. This means they don't have to give up their personal sites to handling tasks on the company's site. Secondly, it reduces the stress of work overload put on each person. Thirdly, the co-administrators have a deeper understanding on the needs of the staff at their own departments. In addition, each of them has a different style and knowledge which contribute to the richness of the content.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is devoted to finalizing the research questions and concluding on what have been found from the study of this research. Besides, the trustworthiness, the validity of the research and the possibilities for further studies on the subject matter are also discussed.

6.1 Findings

Answers for the research questions concerning the Case Company are briefly described in the following table.

TABLE 2. Research questions and findings

Research questions	Findings
What are the existing issues of staff training at the Case Company?	• The employees' motivation to learn • Limit in human resources • Foreign language training • Scheduling conflict • Inconsistent communication among departments • Training effectiveness evaluation
What can be done in the future to improve the effectiveness of staff training at the Case Company without requiring too much budget spending?	1. Require each employee to write a learning diary reflecting their learning progress 2. Build up a Facebook Page in English to create a sharing network between the trainers and the staff in the organization.
How feasible are the suggested solutions?	Possible to implement

How much do they cost the company to implement?	Affordable/ No-cost
How could these solutions benefit training?	The suggested solutions assist the company to partly solve the following issues: • Increase the employees' motivation to learn • Improve the English proficiency • Enhance the communication between Training Department and the employees • Provide more sources for training effectiveness evaluation
How to implement these solutions?	See more at chapters 5.1.3 and 5.2.3
How to measure the effectiveness of these solutions?	See more at chapters 5.1.4 and 5.2.3.3

Inherited a good learning culture from the corporation under which the company is managed, the Training Department of HRD has the advantage of having qualified persons mainly specialize in the job of training and not having to deal with the issues that other hospitality operators often find to be very challenging such as finding the quality training material resources, designing good training programs or ensuring the quality of trainers.

The training professionals working in the company, however, still experience some difficulties due to the quality of the local workforce and the specific nature of the industry. Among those issues stated in the above table, the employees' motivation is believed to have the most significant effect on the result of training. Nevertheless, this issue has not been studied in detail because of the limited access to the needed information from the company.

Even though the two suggested solutions cannot fully resolve the issues that are identified, they could become useful tools to support the traditional training conducted by the Training Department. Both solutions, if successfully run, would increase the employees' learning motivation and contribute a rich source for the training effectiveness evaluation. Additionally, the development of a platform on the social network, which in this case is chosen to be Facebook, also helps to improve the employees' English proficiency and enhance the communication between the Training Department and the employees while offering the employees a totally new learning experience. Most importantly, based on the feasibility and the cost assessment, these two solutions are considered to be possible for the company to implement. To give a clearer explanation about the ideas behind these solutions and assist the company in terms of applying them effectively, the author has developed the implementation strategies for each of them in detail. Since the performance of one solution would not cause any influence on the another, the company can choose to either practice only one of them at a time or use both of them together.

6.2   Reliability and validity

Reliability – Regarding the research's trustworthiness, the author's primary observation about the phenomenon is tested throughout this research using various sources and methods. The theoretical part is written based on previous studies taken mostly from books and scientific researches found in the database of the author's school. Since some theoretical terms and concepts explained on the Internet are easier to understand, some of them are drawn from this source as well. The market analysis, due to the limitation of published sources available related to the needed information, also merely includes information from electronic resources. Though the reliability of the sources from the Internet are somehow doubtful, the author tries to select the information from those that are most updated and written by a credible author, association or a reputable website. Other tactics are also applied to ensure the reliability of the chosen information such as checking the sources and the purposes of the website or compare information between the different websites. Moreover, the credibility of the information and data provided in the empirical case study has also been checked and approved by

the Training Manager of the Case Company. For all of the above reasons, this research is considered to be fairly reliable.

Validity – One of the outcome of this research, which is the introduction of a Facebook page, would be outdated if this social network loses its popularity and preference among its users. Yet, in case Facebook is considered no longer to be expedient for the Case Company, the same steps in planning the strategy could be applied when building a platform on another social network. The findings of the existing issues at the Case Company, as its name implies, might not be valid in the future when there are changes in the company's policy or strategy that consequently lead to either positive or negative changes of the situation under which this study was conducted.

6.3   Proposals for further studies

Within the scope and the limitations of this research, only part of the theory and practices related to the subject matter is covered and there are still several areas left undone. Further studies need to be conducted to resolve the remaining issue of the conflict in choosing a suitable time for training and to maximize the support of the departmental trainers.

Besides, due to the limitation in data access, the author could not conduct a survey among the employees to evaluate their preferences and responses upon the recommended solutions, which is believed to be necessary in terms of reducing the risk of wasting time and effort on developing things that do not suit the targets' interests. Therefore, it is advisable for the training professionals carry out the survey before putting the recommendations into practice.

Beyond the purpose of this research, HR professionals and researchers could also make deeper studies concerning the matter of staff training in smaller size hospitality businesses such as bars, clubs, family owned restaurants or small and medium size hotels, etc. Analyzing the option of outsourcing or developing an execution plan that describes necessary steps and factors need to be considered when establishing an internal training academy within these organizations might be an idea.

7   SUMMARY

In brief, this research focuses at developing solutions that help Hotel X - the Case Company to cope with challenges that occur when providing training to their staff. For this objective to be achieved the relevant theories and the training practice in the company are put into study in order to find out on which issues the suggested solutions should address and how these solutions could resolve them.

In the theoretical part, the common issues related to staff training due to the specific nature of the industry are approached respectively follow the order of the training process. Besides, the influential factors that lead to the high demand for staff training within the hospitality operations are also discussed by divide these factors into the internal and external influences. The highlighted spot in the theoretical part is the adult learning theory created by a famous psychologist named Malcom Knowles. From the factors that influence to the adult learners' motivation described in this theory, a set of training principles has been developed, which forms a foundation for the reasoning of the suggested solutions in the empirical study.

The empirical study includes three major parts, including the Vietnamese market analysis, the company's staff training practice analysis and the suggested solutions. From the study in this part, it can be concluded that the company currently encounter some difficulties in staff training concerning the employees' motivation, the time constraint, the shortage of English teacher in despite of the high demand for foreign language training, the lack of reverse information from other operating departments to the Training Department and the task of evaluating the effect of training on the employees' performance. Based on the adult learning theory and the learning principles developed in the theoretical study, the two solutions of requiring the employees to use learning diary and integrating social network into training are persuaded to be useful for the company at the moment in resolving some of those difficulties and worth a try. Yet, in order to ensure their success, further researches should be conducted before putting these solutions into practice.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Semi-structured interview with Training Manager of Hotel X Training
Department

Conducted time: 9h30 – 10h30
Date: 25 June 2013
Location: Training Manager's office

Author: How long have you been working in the training field?

Interviewee: Including the time I worked as an English teacher, I have been
working in this field since 2002. From 2007, I started to familiarize with the
hospitality industry. Normally people working in this industry switch jobs and
their working places often but for me, during six years, I have worked only in two
different five-star hotels. People switch jobs for different reasons. Personally I
choose to stay in a certain working place based on the conditions available for my
career development and what I could learn from that organization.

*Author: Could you tell me the differences that you notice the most obvious
between teaching in school and training in hospitality industry?*

Interviewee: Teaching in school and teaching in hotels are similar in a sense that
they both require the lecturer to be flexible and continuously improving his or her
ability of attracting and retaining the learners' attention. The difference is that in
the schools, the creativity of the lecturer is limited because the knowledge is
enclosed in a certain extent. In the hospitality industry, the knowledge is broader
and varied ranging from the communication skills to the management skills. It
requires the lecturer to be more knowledgeable and always update themselves.
The lecturer also needs to be more experienced in dealing with people because the
students in this environment are more diverse and include all types of people.

Author: You have been working as an English teacher before, why don't you in
charge of teaching English in X?

Interviewee: I wish I could if I have time. I don't have enough time to plan for the course.

Author: How do you handle to make the personal learning plan for every employees individually?

Interviewee: The individual learning plan is actually a list of courses that an employee needs to be trained to be able to perform a certain position. At Training Department, we use the individual learning plan to scheduling the courses and to identifying that those courses are designed for whom. This individual learning plan is also used to support the operation departments to plan and organize job skills training. I have a master list comprises of all the courses and the task breakdowns so that I can control over these individual learning plans in general. When someone is promoted to a new position, he or she will receive a new learning plan that fits to his or her new position.

Author: Is it compulsory to teach all the courses designed by the Corporate Office?

Interviewee: By right, those courses are compulsory. However, the corporation is very flexible and delegate authority to the local training team in terms of making the decision over the training content. We could add or cancel a certain courses depending on the needs of our hotel. We could also customize the contents of the training programs as long as we make sure that the core values and the culture of Hotel X are still maintained throughout the training.

Author: Do you have any compulsory method to force the employees to take training?

Interviewee: Yes, we do have the policy for misconduct. For example, at level A if an employee absents without reasons, he or she will receive a verbal warning. Two verbal warning will make it escalates to the level B. Nevertheless, in reality I don't want to force the employees for taking training because it would make them feel pressure. If they have to suffer pressure, I want that pressure does not come from the training side but from the customer services, from their own jobs. I want people to consider the role of Training Department as providing support to their

jobs rather than operating independently and forcing learning to reach our own objectives.

Author: How do you control on-the-job training and the quality of trainers at the operational departments?

Interviewee: Firstly, in order to have a team of quality trainers we must first train them. I will attend at least two of their lectures to certify them as the official departmental trainers. I manage the training of job skills by requiring the departmental trainers to sending me a departmental training plan at the beginning of every month and also a training report at the end of the month. Besides, the training team also supervises job skill training by occasionally attend the courses that have planned by the departmental trainers. Actually, we do not have to worry much about the departmental training because it is their duties to make sure their subordinates are able to perform the jobs following the company's standards. If they do not do provide training effectively, the result will be shown right on the actual performance of the employees in their departments.

Author: Do you have any difficulty when evaluating the effectiveness of training?

Interviewee: The effectiveness evaluation is always one of the hardest tasks. It is hard because each learner has different abilities and skills. Even if the trainers already try to combine different training methods to maximize the effectiveness such as role play, test, etc. but after completing the course, each person has their own way to practice the knowledge they have been learnt. Though they have somehow improved their skills, it's something that cannot be seen immediately and also very much depending on different circumstances. It is difficult to evaluate training effectiveness by a concrete number.

Author: Is there any official evaluating method aside from course evaluation?

Interviewee: At X, we evaluate the effectiveness of training based on the actual performance of the employees. What is matter to us is that whether they perform well after being trained. The employee performance is evaluated based on HySat, a customer feedback management system. Nevertheless, it is hard to say whether the results shown on HySat are caused by on-the-job training at the operation

departments, training provided by the Training Department or by the employees themselves. Aside from the customer service, the employee engagement is also used to evaluate the impact of training on the employees.

Author: Is the company afraid of brain drain if the company provides training to employees and they turn to work in somewhere else?

Interviewee: The company accepts the risk of brain drain. Even a married couple can get divorce, so the risk of employee quit the organization is unavoidable.

Author: Do you have any plan in the upcoming year to solve issues that you have faced?

Interviewee: Resolving the mentioned issues requires a long-term strategy. I think it would revolve around the organizing of different training courses to meet the training needs of the employees like usual.

Thank you very much for your sharing!

APPENDIX 2

Semi-structured interview with Training Assistant Manager

Conducted time: 15h00 – 16h00
Date: 21 June 2013
Location: Training Room

Author: How long have you been working in the training field?

Interviewee: I have been working in this field for around five years. I have worked in several education centers before starting my career at X.

Author: Could you tell me the difficulties that you have met so far since the time you have worked at Training Department of our hotel?

Interviewee: The most challenging issue is the employee motivation to learn. Most of the employees have the tendency of preferring to work than to have

training, especially for training courses that last about two or three days. Secondly, when the hotel occupancy rate is high or the employees are on their annual leaves, maintaining classes according to the scheduled plan is difficult. The third issue lies in the English training. If we outsource from an educational center, the training quality would be good. Nevertheless, the supplier does not know well the training need of our hotel. Moreover, the cost paid for them is relatively high if being maintained in the long-term. We are currently seeking for a full-time English teacher to train English for our staff. However, this option also has several limitations. Firstly, the teacher is a non-native speaker. Secondly, only one teacher cannot meet the demand of more than five hundred employees in the hotel. Even though in some departments the employees already attain good English level and do not require to be trained, the workload still seems to be overwhelmed for one person to handle.

Author: Do you have any difficulty with the course designing or training content designing?

Interviewee: The courses are designed by the Corporate Office, so we have several advantages over it. There are also tutor notes and guidelines for trainers. Yet, the way how a class is conducted still depends on the teaching skills of different trainers.

Author: Do you find the diversity in the employees' education levels one of the issues that challenging you while conducting the lecture?

Interviewee: The training courses are not designed to evaluate the employee knowledge. What matter are the trainees' attitudes during training. If the trainees are cooperative and take training seriously, the training effectiveness would be high. Actually, the difference in the employees' educational backgrounds does not matter because we believe that we are here to providing support and helping them fulfill what they are lacking, not to teaching them.

Author: How does the Training Department manage on-the-job training?

Interviewee: Training related to job skills is conducted by the operation departments but their training activities are managed by the Training Department.

At the end of each month, we collect the departmental training records from other departments. Then we will make a monthly report and send it to the Leadership Community to check if the managers at these departments place high attention on providing training to their subordinate staff.

Author: How do you evaluate the training effectiveness?

Interviewee: At the end of each course, each trainee is given a course evaluation form. Since the form does not require the employees to fill in their names, they are quite fair in evaluating the quality of the training course and express their opinions freely. So far, we have received many feedbacks both good and bad. It provides a valuable source for the trainer to look back and see if they have performed well. Aside from this method, it is very difficult to evaluating the effectiveness of training more deeply. We cannot conduct the exams or tests to evaluate how much the trainees have learnt. It is also impossible to go to other operation departments like Front Office or Housekeeping to check the employee performance. Moreover, with only two full-time members in the Training Department, it is difficult to supervise the employee learning closely.

Thank you very much for your sharing!