

EMPLOYER INTERVIEW AUDIO 2

INTERVIEWEE: It's, a lot of people even don't like that, young people. I mean I still prefer it when someone calls me mister or sir because it's out of respect. But I think the Hotel School students also need to understand what environment are they in, whether it's a production, predominantly production until we can go onto a first name basis or if the guest allows you to. If it's a very corporate environment like a western for instance or a government [indistinct] that's close to a convention centre where it's international delegates, professors, doctors, and so forth. Or if it's more a leisure hotel, where it's a family hotel then you need to adapt with - it's people with kids and you know, how do I address the kids and how do I do it respectfully. How do I handle the situation? If a child for instance is jumping off a wall how do I address that child? Because it's not my child for instance. So, yes, that's also like, I think it's just a lot of it's got to do with the practicality and giving practical examples then knowing how to deal with that.

INTERVIEWER: I almost think the requirement of someone in hotel school needs to be, they must have a part-time job in hospitality.

INTERVIEWER: While you're studying?

INTERVIEWEE: While they're studying. Never mind the WIL. Every other weekend or whatever they must be working in a restaurant or they must working in a guest house or they must be having some sort of a part time job where they're gaining the experience as well. So that it's not so brand new to them when they actually walk into the [indistinct].

INTERVIEWEE: With, you saying that xxxx, it's like for us we only want the reassurance. So where are they going to get the opportunity...

INTERVIEWER: At the three and four stars.

INTERVIEWEE: Okay. [Talking together]. xxx, do we sound like an arrogant bunch of so and so's?

INTERVIEWER No, no. What I was going to ask now, you're getting to the third years' [indistinct], they're better off as first years' I would agree. But now when you get them do you take responsibility – or should I say responsibility or accountability - for them when they are here. Those [indistinct] like for us,

UoT we give them to you the last six months. So it's like their last six months before they go to the industry. Let's say they are here for the six months, okay. Like I said initially I saw my student there. So she was like here for her ...

INTERVIEWEE: xxxx was?

INTERVIEWER: Yes. [Indistinct] was not here [indistinct].

INTERVIEWER: [Indistinct] sometime back, so I know her. But xxxx was here last, I think I don't know when.

INTERVIEWEE: But she are here for here WIL and then she says afterwards she got a permanent. So [indistinct]. So now...

INTERVIEWEE: But she started as a switchboard operator.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. What is she now?

INTERVIEWEE: Front office administrator.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

INTERVIEWEE: Now she's finally, a year and a half later she's finally a front office agent. [Talking together]

INTERVIEWEE: Receptionist, basically.

INTERVIEWER: So what - sorry I'm not [indistinct] the front office language. Okay, but I'll get it from there. So she moved a step like until she got ...

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. And she actually started in industry very much in an entry level position.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

INTERVIEWEE: And she's busy working her way up.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. But what ...

INTERVIEWEE: She didn't expect to walk in as a shift leader.

INTERVIEWEE: And she's one step away from being in that management capacity, in a junior management capacity but it's still maybe a couple of months, six months to a year if she feels ready and if she's got the capabilities.

INTERVIEWEE: It will be more than that.

INTERVIEWEE: But it could be more, yes, because there's a lot to learn on the desk.

INTERVIEWEE: Such a lot to learn and it's just so [indistinct]...

INTERVIEWER: So where she is now, sorry to use her – yes, sorry to use her as an example. But like I was defining the first line management role. So she's not yet there.

INTERVIEWEE: No, no.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, she's not yet there.

INTERVIEWEE: And she's been with us for about 18 months already since she got graduated.

INTERVIEWEE: Do you coach your students when they are here for WIL [indistinct]?

INTERVIEWEE: If they want to be coached.

INTERVIEWEE: So if I can add on to that? I heard you ask him do we take accountability ...

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

INTERVIEWEE: So when they come ...

INTERVIEWEE: So obviously, xxxx puts them in different departments in the lounge and [indistinct].

INTERVIEWEE: But there are schedules ...

INTERVIEWER: Okay, lovely, thank you for saying that.

INTERVIEWEE: So when they come one in the [indistinct] right now. I never had anybody [indistinct]. I don't think so. Nevertheless, when I was in the lounge, when they came over and say it's the next week. So they come over to me, "Nicky, I'm by you next week. Is it possible to get the weekend off?" I'm already – it's not, "What time do I start on Monday- can I have the weekend off?" I'm already done, I'm finished with you, hey. I write you off. Then I let you work every weekend. Every weekend you work and every Monday and Tuesday you will be off. And you can go complain by xxxx it's also okay.

INTERVIEWER: Which department are you [indistinct]?

INTERVIEWEE: Well then I was in the lounge.

INTERVIEWEE: She was a lounge manager, so she's afternoon tea, busy dinners, yes.

INTERVIEWEE: I will take accountability for you and I will guide you and teach you, and I will show you everything and anything. I'll take the time out for you. But when you start off like that, then started we on the wrong foot.

INTERVIEWEE: And funny enough on occasion when I'm interviewing candidates to do placements one of the questions are – they often ask me so I'll always love them to ask me a question and I'll say what do you expect from trainees. And my answer to them always is I want you to show an interest even if it's a department like purchasing music [indistinct] ag, I'm never going to do the purchasing in my life. I want to be an F&B Manager. I'll just have to spend a month in purchasing to understand. You throw yourself into that Purchasing Department as if this is going to be your career as well as when you're in the lounge and you're doing fun stuff like afternoon tea, please [indistinct]. You throw yourself at that department with equal enthusiasm. And if you don't then you're going to have a difficult time. And I say to them, "Our managers are very dear towards training trainees. We want the skill in our industry one day. And we're going to invest in it if you show an interest. If you do not show an interest however you will be left by the way side. Peeling potatoes when you're in the kitchen or washing glass teapots in the scullery if you're in the lounge." Because why must I - I can't expect my managers to invest time and effort into you if you are not interested. And the kids that do well are those that follow my suggestion of literally you attack every department as if it's going to be your career even if it's for two weeks. But they don't always get that.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. I was going to ask the challenges but I think it's been answered already. [Talking together]. No, it's fine, I think it's something that you are like, these are the challenges I have too - because it's good for me as well. Besides that I am doing this for the educational [indistinct] purposes. I'm actually in the restaurant, so if I'm hearing like that I finished up. I was also at a hotel school. So now some of my colleagues are also in the industry. So this other day I was phoned by one of the managers, who was Radis [indistinct] the one in Sea Point. So he was the duty manager there. So he was going, "What are you doing now at hotel school?" Then I'm like, "What did you do? How can a student come in jeans, in jeans for work?" So, I'm like, "But who is that, you know?" The first thing – you're like, who is that? Why are they even going to work in jeans? And then, I've just sent him back. I've just sent him back. We never did that at that hotel school. What are you teaching? It comes back to us. So as much as I'm doing this for educational purpose it's good

because I'm hearing it from you. And I'll make sure I change. But yes, you will see the change. You will see the change because we – it actually have started - we also want to bring back that because when I went out to my in-service in third year, I actually got a job as a first line manager. So I'm thinking [indistinct].

INTERVIEWEE: You must have been a superstar.

INTERVIEWER: As a first line manager and then it just goes from that. So I'm just thinking that it's not everyone anyway. Like if we're saying graduates it's like we're taking everyone will do it [indistinct] you can't have everyone perfect. But we must have at least two or three, you understand. So, yes. That's basically – and then the other thing – I think you've answered that one.

INTERVIEWEE: I think, like when we say back in the day ...

INTERVIEWEE: Good old people

INTERVIEWEE: You know, work [talking together]. I'm not saying you must do that.

INTERVIEWEE: So I think that is like we can't – it's like you can't give a child a hiding. They can go report you. It's the same scenario. When you're in the kitchen, [indistinct] throw you with things. Make you scrub the fridges from top to bottom. You do the ...

INTERVIEWEE: Worst jobs.

INTERVIEWEE: But we didn't [indistinct]. You're like, the chef said go [indistinct]. She said so, oops. You go and do what you must do, you go do it. But these days [indistinct] but the cleaner, that's the cleaner's job. No, it's your job today. So that, you know, [indistinct] ...

INTERVIEWEE: I'm at a hotel school that job is beneath me.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

INTERVIEWEE: That kind of attitude.

INTERVIEWER: And again, can I add something, in the restaurant who cleans the restaurant. Do you have cleaners for the restaurant?

INTERVIEWEE: We have a student team that cleans the restaurant.

INTERVIEWER: So they, they've got to clean up [indistinct].

INTERVIEWEE: They've got it very easy actually. So, the hardest department that they work is probably housekeeping because they start there

and they start from room attendant. Cleaning that bedroom and that bathroom, making that bed.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, okay.

INTERVIEWEE: Because a good executive housekeeper knows how much work your staff are doing. So that's important to me. They end up loving housekeeping, I often hear. Even though it was the toughest and they thought they were going to die on the first day. And we are by no means abusing them. We are simply making them do what their colleagues are doing. Every single day, 10 to 15 rooms a day whatever the workload might be. They have to have an understanding of that to be good executive housekeepers one day, if that's what they want to do. But shoe, they can moan sometimes.

INTERVIEWER: Because why I was asking if they clean, when we were students we used to clean for ourselves. You first of all get there, clean the restaurant, clean the windows. We were cleaning everywhere. But now things have changed.

INTERVIEWEE: There's some light cleaning like polishing glasses.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

INTERVIEWEE: Or polishing plates at the pass and whatever. But I mean that's not ...

INTERVIEWER: It's not hard.

INTERVIEWEE: That's not hard.

INTERVIEWEE: That's not the grind that, that's done by somebody else. Maybe they should actually spend a weekend in stewarding as well to appreciate ...

INTERVIEWEE: True.

INTERVIEWER: ...what the department does for them.

INTERVIEWEE: Because I mean, I remember our time we would – we had to clean our own areas. You'd get the cleaners that would clean the floor, yes. But your stove and your oven, and all of those stuff that you use you had to clean it. You worked on that section and you make sure it's clean. But I mean these days you just wrap up everything that you used and they come in and the nightshift cleans. But I mean back in the day there was no nightshift. There was no nightshift people. You cleaned ...

INTERVIEWER: Before you leave here [indistinct].

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, and tomorrow morning – because when your colleague comes tomorrow morning everything better be in place. Otherwise you probably going to get crap when you get in there.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have a [indistinct] function on your camera. Oh, sorry. [Talking together]

INTERVIEWEE: Because they come with the tattoos and all sorts of things.

INTERVIEWEE: And all you did was [indistinct]. [Talking together]

INTERVIEWER: Okay. No, I think it's [indistinct] all the questions I had. And unless if there's still something [indistinct]. But otherwise thank you very much. Yes. I learnt a lot as well.

INTERVIEWEE: And then also at the end you know, you would be in the kitchen wherever you work, and you'd go crazy because it's busy and things are just not coming out right. And you swear, the chef is swearing and you... But the nice – I mean what I remember was when you're were done, when you were busy cleaning we would laugh about it. And I don't think that happens. It's more of a [indistinct]. They get very emotional...

INTERVIEWEE: And personal, take it personally.

INTERVIEWEE: xxxxx was very rude to me and I don't think [indistinct].

She was very rude so – and or you go home and she was so rude. Like HR, she was so rude to me. We didn't do, we just laughed about it and guys, do what you need to do and [indistinct]. So, jab, we had fun afterwards, you know. So when we left, we forgot about how they swore at you or ...

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

INTERVIEWEE: And I mean our environment is changing. We're working on our managers to do better and be better. But ...

INTERVIEWEE: I don't think it's close to what we [indistinct].

INTERVIEWEE: We're not kindergarten. We're not running a crèche here. People must still be grownups and do the jobs.

INTERVIEWEE: Also in another - make the students – they've also got this idea, okay I'm going to study and then I'm going to open my business. So I'm just going to do this little bit of in-service wherever I go and then I'm going to start my own business.

INTERVIEWEE: But if you don't learn those life lessons of how to manage people and your business, and books [talking together].

INTERVIEWEE: [Indistinct] got that idea, let me just get this little bit of experience. So its okay, I'm just going to go to a 5 star hotel for my six months and just do whatever I must do. So I'm not putting my all into it because this is not my business. I don't know. Could also be, I'm just gaining the experience. Stealing with the eye.

INTERVIEWEE: [Indistinct].

INTERVIEWEE: Could be, I don't know. I'm not sure.

INTERVIEWER: **Because the expectation is there from the graduates to say if we go out there - we've been spending sleepless nights, studying and all that. And then hospitality people ...**

INTERVIEWEE: **That's just the book knowledge. It's not the life knowledge.**

INTERVIEWER: It's not the lift knowledge.

INTERVIEWEE: Sorry for just jumping in here now after my long telephone conversation with one of my reps. That wasn't exactly what actually happened in our class in our third year. One of the lecturers posed a question. How much do you think is a ballpark figure that you can be earning? And there were students in the class that said, as soon as we've got our diploma we're going to be paying R20 000 and above.

INTERVIEWEE: Hai, shame

INTERVIEWEE: And there was - beside – there was a couple of us that actually burst out laughing including one of the guys that was with me he used to run, well he started off as a waiter in Spur and eventually he progressed to management level and then entered Prime Patti when they launched. So xxxx had some good experience in hospitality, especially restaurants obviously. And he said you can be glad if you're going to be earning R3 500 or 4K. A minimum wage is about where you're going to be at and that was exactly what happened to me. I got my first position. It wasn't a great salary but it was at least a foot in. It was a permanent position and you know, the way that the general manager also sold it to me was like you know, as a cost controller starting off your position it's that, you know that foundation in finance but also understanding food and beverage purchasing. How your costings, you know,

as a food and beverage manager how it affects your profitability and so forth and so forth. And I took that position with open arms because I knew I'm not going to get that position again, just offered to me. But I think a lot of the students also they, they pull their noses up when they get offered a, you know. R4 000 a month, goodness me.

INTERVIEWEE: Switchboard operator.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, I can't buy myself a new BMW or I can't go and stay in Green Point, you know on the Promenade. It's just, I think with paying all that money they're expecting it's like a doctor. Now you're going to be a practicing medicinal doctor, which is not, it's not a 100% correct. I mean they spend more time with their experiential training than what we did [indistinct] students. Because six months, six months it is – I think it's...

INTERVIEWEE: We are talking life and death matters though.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWEE: Like my doctors have spent their [talking together] practicing.

INTERVIEWEE: But look ...

INTERVIEWEE: [Indistinct].

INTERVIEWEE: Look at it a practicing attorney, they do articles for about two to three years or so and before they come accepted before they actually write an exam to be accepted into the bar. The other question that came to mind, actually while I was on the phone now. We used to have to put in a report, an experiential report every month not the one that the supervisors or management signs off on but of your experience or at the end of my third year I almost had to write like a thesis about what did I learn. How did it affect me? How can I, why did I learn during my time at Hotel School. But what did I learn in industry. What was I exposed to. What was the challenges? How did I overcome those challenges? It's almost like a self-reflection. It is actually a self-reflection. And I don't know if they're still doing that. Because that was quite crucial. If you ...

INTERVIEWEE: It was under which subject if I may ask?

INTERVIEWEE: It was part of your experiential training when you went out.

INTERVIEWEE: [Indistinct] the WIL.

INTERVIEWEE: So at the end of – and I know specifically of some students. They never submitted that so they never got their diploma. Because they failed that subject based on the fact that they never - because you can't prove, like you're doing research now. You can't prove as to what you actually learnt because you never documented it step by step. And I think that was very important and it's part of the learning experience to see what mistakes you made or other mistakes that you saw other people make. And how you can improve yourself and you know how it can be averted and that becoming a manager is picking on mistakes but also you know coming up with solutions. And a lot of the students you will pose a problem to them and they can't give you a practical solution to that problem.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you.

INTERVIEWEE: Thank you very much. [Talking together].

INTERVIEWEE: Jor, three o'clock on the dot. Yes, I've got a conference call at Head Office now.

INTERVIEWEE: Thank you very much.

INTERVIEWEE: Thank you xxxx, that was fun.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]