

Closing the hospitality sector's middle-management gap

By Narendra Aggarwal

MEMBERS of Gen Y are an impatient lot. They want to get to that top rung of the career ladder, and if that doesn't happen in a hurry, they leave the industry.

This is exactly what is happening in the hospitality business, leaving a gap in its middle-management level. Filling that gap is the way to ensure higher levels of satisfaction among customers of businesses in the food-and-beverage (F&B) and hotel sectors, said David Jones, programme director of hospitality business at the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT).

"Gen Y expects things to happen very fast and that is why a good percentage of them leave the hospitality business. The result is that we are having a shortage of middle management in F&B and hotels," he said, in reference to the generation born between the early 80s and the early 2000s.

Speaking at the presentation of the results of the Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore (CSISG) study, he said: "When expectations and perceptions don't match, we have a middle-management gap. This is not good, as hospitality is big business."

It is a fact that hospitality graduates are not becoming chief executive officers of the top hotel groups in the world. Instead, non-hoteliers have risen to those positions.

Prof Jones said: "At SIT, we are changing the perception of hospitality and thinking of the youth as our future leaders and middle managers, so we have to build pathways to middle management to prepare them."

He said the typical SIT hospitality business degree freshman is on average 22 years old, and would be 24 to 25 upon graduation. All graduating students will have had at least a year



Prof Jones said hospitality business graduates need to be goal- and action-oriented individuals.

of industry internship under their belts; in future, graduates will have more industry experience as older students return for degrees.

Prof Jones said hospitality business graduates need to have a passion for the industry, specialised knowledge, be goal- and action-oriented and be willing to put theory into practice.

Those aspiring to middle management need to understand the business and develop a nose for business; they must also understand the mindset of a business-owner and be willing to take risks, that is, they need to shed the fear of failure.

At the same time, they must be given a transparent career path and be empowered to become a middle manager.

In short, the road to improved customer satisfaction is filling the middle-management gap in the hospitality industry which is a big, global business with service at the core, said Prof Jones.