

## Cora Domnick: Competing hard for skilled labor



Working for one of the world's leading hotel operator with more than 15 000 employees worldwide, the topic of skilled labor shortages and skilled migration is of great concern to me. Cultural diversity is of fundamental importance to a company offering services to international clients. In Germany alone, the staff represents 106 different nationalities.

Above all, there is an increasing need to implement new ideas within the hospitality industry to make up for skilled labor shortages. Unfortunately, after years of strong growth, the number of apprenticeships and trainee programs is decreasing constantly (2012: minus 6,3%).

Given how companies complain about difficult-to-fill vacancies, I have been thinking about one question: **How can companies change their culture in order to attract more qualified people?**

I believe there are four main levers to attract the "right and high potentials":

1. **Strong HR Marketing and employer branding.** It is a fact that hotels operating in the upper or luxury segment tend to have fewer problems to find appropriate applicants than such offering services in an economic or budget segment. Building a strong employer brand is one important step to increase both the motivation of existing employees and external advertising effects.
2. **Education and training.** Cooperation with universities will help attract highly qualified young people and provide them with the opportunity to combine vocational training with academic skills.
3. **Managing across generations.** Recently, there have been a lot of discussions about how to meet employment expectations considering the characteristics of the so-called "Generation Y". Compared to previous generations, young professionals of this generation are said to be more work-life balance driven and expect their opinions to be heard and considered individually. At Accor, employees with management responsibilities are offered training in order to raise their awareness of what young people of different origins expect from their jobs and their future. A working environment adapted to those needs and cultures will be more attractive to talented young people.
4. **Transfer of experience.** Due to the ongoing demographic change, companies also have to focus on the potential that older employees represent, offering them growth potential and social support.

It seems to me that by now, many companies from different industries are aware of the challenges related to skilled labor shortages and skilled migration. Governments and employment agencies are also working on new programmes to alleviate this negative trend.

To create a welcoming culture with an international base, and for Europe to be recognized as one diverse market place, companies, governments and European companies need to pull together and build **one strong "employer" brand**. On the one hand, this would facilitate finding a coherent approach to match labour supply and demand across the European countries. On the other hand, such partnerships would encourage discussions which would allow best practices and new ideas to be shared and - above all - which would give companies and countries the possibility to learn from each other.