

Best Western / Care[®] Program

OJT

Empowering Staff and Creating Customer Service Stewards

MODEL SUMMARY

I Care[®] provides Best Western staff the leadership and problem-solving training and resources needed to provide exceptional customer service as part of its larger effort to “clean up” its overall brand.

BACKGROUND

When making hotel arrangements, customers find it challenging to determine which hotel brand is consistently the cleanest. In the early 2000s, not a single hotel brand consistently ranked high among customers for cleanliness and customer care, creating a lack of consumer trust in a highly competitive hotel market. In 2007, Best Western set out to differentiate its brand and become the industry leader in superior customer care.

To achieve its goal, Best Western established its Best Western *I Care*[®] program, a staff training initiative that seeks to provide guests better customer service during

PARTNERSHIP

To develop the *I Care*[®] program, Best Western partnered with:

- J.D. Power and Associates and other data research organizations to provide an analysis of guest feedback; and

NUTS AND BOLTS

Key elements of the program include:

- Manager Training** to improve effectiveness and build trust with staff and hotel guests.
- On-the-Job Training** on how to best use innovative cleaning tools and methods, as well as preventative maintenance. As part of *I Care*[®], housekeeping staff learned how to use ultraviolet (UV) sterilization wands and UV inspection light to clean common areas and guest rooms.

KEY ELEMENTS OF MODEL

- On-the-job training
- Leadership, communication and critical-thinking skills training
- Staff empowerment
- Training in the latest cleaning methods
- Certified service champions

their hotel stay, beginning with high standards for cleanliness. *I Care*[®] is an acronym for the ideals and beliefs held by Best Western staff – Interact, Can-Do, Ask Questions, Resolve the Problem and Express Gratitude.



- ASPIRE, IDEO, and Proctor & Gamble to design and implement the *I Care*[®] training.

- Problem-Solving and Leadership Skills** to empower hotel staff to be proactive and address the most commonly reported problems that have the biggest impact on a customer’s experience and, ultimately, the hotel’s revenue.

The program was developed using Stephen Covey leadership skills and techniques, which are available to employees through an online training tool. The first two phases of the Best Western *I Care*[®] program have been rolled out nationwide.

KEY:

A Apprenticeship

C Certification

CE Career Expo

CO Cooperative Education/Co-op

CR Credentials

CT Clinical Training/
Practicum

E Externship

H Hands-on Training

IT Industry Tour

I Internship

M Mentorship

OJT On-the-Job Training

OB Online and Blended
Classroom Training

■ PROGRAM BENEFITS, RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

The *I Care*® program is now a symbol of Best Western's culture and its commitment to providing superior customer service. Since the program was developed, Best Western guests and employees have reported a number of results, including:

- A significant decrease in customer complaints. Initial results of the training and certification suggest a 71 percent reduction in guest complaints and a 19 percent increase in customer service ratings. A Best Western hotel in Tempe, AZ, reported a 20-point improvement in customer satisfaction scores after each round of *I Care*® training.
- Reduced time spent onboarding and training new hires.

“Getting away from the one-and-done training model to a long-term model with constant staff communication is so important to maintaining a business competitive edge.”

— Michael Nalley, Director, Education, Training & Guest Feedback, Best Western International

- Increased employee engagement and sense of pride and empowerment.
- Improved quality of work among hotel staff.
- A commitment and a sense of responsibility among employees to adhere to the ideals of *I Care*® and the hotel brand. In an industry with high employee turnover, this is an invaluable shift that benefits the entire company.
- Increased feedback from hotel owners and managers regarding training resource needs.
- Certified service champions at every Best Western hotel in North America. The champion is the on-property promoter of the program and works to keep the concept and training alive at the hotel.

While the program was initially designed to be administered in a top-down approach, it has transformed into a bottom-up engagement. Now, hotel staff hold managers and owners accountable for the ideals in the Best Western *I Care*® training. The program has empowered staff to set high expectations for managers, who are responsible for ensuring that these ideals are part of hotel services and operations 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

■ SUSTAINABILITY AND OVERCOMING IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

Best Western is currently rolling out phase three of the Best Western *I Care*® program — “Creating Your Future” — which will focus on maximizing guest loyalty through superior customer care. As part of the program's evolution, when this phase is rolled out, the program will be renamed *I Care*® *Every Guest Every Time*.

During this phase, hotels will complete a gap analysis to identify areas for customer care improvement. For each

identified area of improvement, hotel staff will develop an action plan for addressing the issue and increasing guest loyalty, which ultimately leads to increased hotel revenue. If a margin in customer service still exists after phase three, Best Western management plans to analyze the data and obtain staff feedback to determine the next course in the *I Care*® program.

■ WORDS OF WISDOM

Recommendations for businesses interested in building a similar onboarding and on-the-job continuing training program include:

- **Do Your Homework:** Define the training program goals and objectives and how the program supports the company's strategy. Senior management must be committed to providing the time, money and resources to build a robust training program, like the *I Care*® program.
- **Provide Flexible and Ongoing Learning Opportunities:** Ongoing learning provides opportunities for staff to be retrained on important concepts and program ideals. It is recommended that these learning opportunities be designed in a flexible manner so they can be completed when most convenient for employees.

- **Implement Stakeholder Feedback Mechanisms:** Feedback mechanisms allow for measurement of the program's success against established goals and benchmarks. They also allow for development of new program ideas for future training phases or programs.

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Descriptions of Common Work-and-Learn Models

A Glossary of Key Terms

Following are descriptions of the most common and effective work-and-learn models that are a part of business and industry programs nationwide.

Apprenticeship

An apprenticeship is a unique, flexible training system that combines job-related technical instruction with structured on-the-job learning experiences. It provides a unique combination of structured learning with on-the-job training from an assigned mentor. Related instruction, technical training or other certified training is provided by apprenticeship training centers, technical schools, community colleges, and/or institutions employing distance and computer-based learning approaches. The goal is to provide workers with advanced skill sets that meet the specific needs of employers. In many cases, these programs provide apprentices the opportunity to simultaneously obtain secondary and postsecondary degrees, as well as credentials issued by third-party industry organizations. (Source: U.S. Department of Labor)

Career Fair, Career Expo, Job Fair

A career fair, also called a career expo or job fair, is an event held for employers and recruiters to meet with potential job candidates. Industry representatives set up exhibition booths — usually at a secondary or postsecondary institution — where students and job seekers can find information about different career fields, training opportunities and jobs currently available. Career fairs give employers an opportunity to interact with future job candidates and make direct contact with students who are making decisions about what education, training and career to pursue. Quality career fairs offer hands-on activities to participants, allowing them to see firsthand what a job in the industry entails.

Clinical Training/Practicum

Clinical training combines classroom learning with supervised hands-on immersion experiences in specific fields, mostly in industries that involve human services. In health fields, clinical training is founded on actual observation and lab instruction and/or treatment of patients, as distinguished from theoretical or experimental training. The training is usually highly specialized and includes coursework specific to performing functions and tasks in an actual workplace. (Sources: Siemens Clinical Training & Continuing Education; Clinical Training Institute)

Cooperative Education/Co-Op

Cooperative education is the integration of classroom theory with practical work experience, through which students alternate attendance at school with periods of professional employment. At the high school level, the periods of classroom and work-based experience are usually half-days. In higher education, the alternation is most often on a longer time scale. Cooperative education programs enable students to apply technical skills already acquired through the education institution in a real-world workplace setting. Traditionally, cooperative education has been used to aid a student's transition from school to work, while providing participating employers an opportunity to attract, evaluate, train and ultimately employ a ready source of educated and skilled employees. (Sources: Center for Manufacturing Excellence, University of Mississippi; University of Cincinnati)

Externship

An externship is typically a training program offered by educational institutions and private businesses that gives students brief practical experiences in their field of study and insight and knowledge in a particular career field.

Often shorter term than internships, externships are intensive career learning experiences that typically range from two days to two weeks. Although more immersive and structured than job shadowing, these experiences provide the opportunity for students to see firsthand the work activities and responsibilities in various professions and industries. The experience should provide the learner a greater sense of the knowledge, skills and attributes of people who thrive within that given career pathway and industry sector and a complete experience of day-to-day work life.

Hands-On Training

Hands-on training provides student learners an opportunity to use their hands to perform tasks. This training aims to simulate conditions that are as close as possible to real work conditions while avoiding the risks commonly associated with a new employee. In hands-on training, participants typically have the opportunity for repeated practice.

Industry Tour

Companies offer guided tours of their facilities to let students, parents and the general public witness firsthand the day-to-day operations of the business. Typically lasting up to two hours, tours are led by knowledgeable staff members who show and describe the companies' processes, products and protocols, as well as point out the skills and training needed for different jobs. Quality industry tours typically result in greater awareness of the company and the industry and increased engagement with the local community, schools and future employees.

Internship

An internship is a formal program that provides practical experience for learners in an occupation or profession, during which the learner is immersed in a work situation for a limited period of time. Internships can be paid or unpaid and usually accompany or relate to academic coursework or training. A quality internship provides the learner an increasingly thorough grasp of the career field, extensive experience in specific job functions, application of education and training to specific duties, and a feel for what it is like to work on a daily basis in the industry. While not always intended to result in employment at the sponsoring company, internships help employers expose potential workers to their workplace and industry and recruit, screen and test-fit future job candidates before they are hired full time.

Job Shadowing

Job shadowing is a work experience option through which students learn about a job by walking through the working day as a shadow to a competent worker. The job shadowing work experience is a temporary, unpaid exposure to the workplace in an occupational area of interest to the student. Students witness firsthand the work environment, employability and occupational skills in practice, the value of professional training, and potential career options. Job shadowing is designed to increase career awareness, help model student behavior through examples, and reinforce for the student the link between classroom learning and work requirements. Almost any workplace is a potential job-shadowing site. (Source: Paris, K., and Mason, S. (1995). *Planning and Implementing Youth Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, Center on Education and Work)

Mentorship

Mentorship is the coupling of a novice with an older, more experienced professional wherein the expert shares knowledge and experience with the novice over the course of time. Mentorship can be either formal or informal and can happen face to face; online; or in conjunction with other work-and-learn opportunities, such as internships and job shadowing. Mentorships help mentored youth improve their overall academic achievement and develop the necessary skills to enter or continue on a career path. They also provide guidance for decision making. Quality mentorships usually involve mentee training and alignment to the company's culture and goals.

On-the-Job Training (OJT)

OJT is training by an employer that is provided to a paid participant (either an incoming or incumbent employee) while engaged in productive work in a job that provides knowledge or skills essential to the adequate performance of the job. OJT is usually limited in duration, as appropriate to the occupation for which the participant is being trained, taking into account the content of the training, the prior work experience of the participant and the service strategy of the participant, as appropriate. (Source: Workforce Investment Act)

Pre-Apprenticeship

Pre-apprenticeship is defined by the Employment and Training Administration as “a program or set of strategies [that is] designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in a Registered Apprenticeship program and has a documented partnership with at least one, if not more, Registered Apprenticeship program(s).” Since the pre-apprenticeship model is meant to prepare learners to enter a registered apprenticeship, a quality model provides sufficient applied academic training, as well as industry-based technical skills training and practice, to ensure that students transition successfully into an apprenticeship.

Registered Apprenticeship

A registered apprenticeship encompasses the details and benefits listed in the “Apprenticeship” definition. Additionally, it meets national apprenticeship standards outlined by the registration process with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Office of Apprenticeship or through a state apprenticeship agency. Upon completion of a registered apprenticeship program, participants receive a portable credential (provided by DOL or the state apprenticeship agency) that certifies occupational proficiency as a journey worker for the selected occupation. For more information on the DOL registered apprenticeship program, please visit: www.dol.gov/apprenticeship. (Source: U.S. Department of Labor)

Returnship

A returnship is an internship specifically designed for older professionals who have been out of the workforce for an extended period of time to re-enter a career. In many cases, they are designed to help these individuals refresh their skill sets and learn new technologies before returning as full-time employees. Often lasting around 10 weeks, a returnship provides individuals with an opportunity to sharpen their skills in a given career path or pursue new areas of expertise in a work environment that may have changed significantly since their last experience as an employee. Returnships also give employers the opportunity to screen returning experienced applicants before hiring them full time. (Sources: Goldman Sachs; CareerBuilder)

RESOURCES

- **21st Century Competency-Based Apprenticeship Resources**
<http://bit.ly/1RcO4Uh>
- **Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce: *Learning While Earning: The New Normal***
<http://bit.ly/1XJMXzw>
- **National Network of Business and Industry Associations: Common Employability Skills**
<http://bit.ly/1KCBUUP>
- **National Network of Business and Industry Associations: Grads of Life ROI Calculator**
<http://bit.ly/1X6yKMP>
- **McGraw-Hill Construction Report: *Construction Industry Workforce Shortages***
<http://bit.ly/1NesrCd>
- **Change the Equation: *Work-Based Learning: An Employer's Guide***
<http://bit.ly/1jDn6du>
- **U.S. Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship**
www.dol.gov/apprenticeship

Contributors

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