

# **HRAWI Forms Special Task Force to Tackle Hospitality Industry Talent Shortage**

In the aftermath of the pandemic's impact on the hospitality industry, although there has been a gradual recovery, the sector continues to grapple with workforce management challenges.

The post-pandemic era has exposed vulnerabilities within the industry, leading individuals, including both students and professionals, to explore alternative career paths. Notably, between 2019 and 2022, there was a significant decline in student admissions to hospitality programs.

In response to this concerning trend, the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI) has established a specialized task force comprising educational experts. Their primary objective is to address the shortage of skilled professionals, workforce gaps, and the declining interest of students in hospitality courses.

This task force comprises prominent figures from the hospitality sector, including leaders from various Institutes of Hotel Management (IHMs), hospitality establishment owners, experienced professionals, and representatives from HRAWI.

The core team of this special task force includes individuals such as Arun Kumar Singh, Principal of FIHM; Irfan Mirza, Principal of V M Salgaonkar IHM; Ms. Pallavi Chaudhari, Director of D.Y. Patil School of Hospitality & Tourism Studies; Dr. Rohan Soni, Principal of Amro College of Hotel Management, Nashik; Dr. Jagat K. Mangaraj, Principal of IHM Ahmedabad; Mr. Pradeep Shetty, President of HRAWI; Mr. Jimmy Shaw, Honorary Secretary of HRAWI; Mr. Vishal Kapoor, General Manager of Radisson Blu Mumbai; Mr. Kamlesh Barot, Ex-officio Member of HRAWI; and Mr. Sandeep Talaulicar, Executive Committee Member of HRAWI.

"As new opportunities continue to emerge, the hospitality sector recognizes the importance of attracting fresh talent. In response, HRAWI has established a specialized task force with three primary objectives. These include developing an enticing framework or strategy to encourage students to pursue careers in hospitality, reassessing the current hospitality education system and curriculum with input from educators and industry experts to provide relevant recommendations to the National Council and the Ministry of Tourism. Furthermore, the task force aims to address the shortage of skilled professionals by offering effective training resources such as informative videos, visual aids, data-driven analysis, and supportive literature," explained Mr. Pradeep Shetty, President of HRAWI.

Statistics reveal significant skill gaps within the Indian hospitality industry, particularly in hotel management and food production. Concerns include deficiencies in practical knowledge (33 percent) and outdated courses (24 percent) in the food production field. Similarly, managerial personnel face challenges due to inadequate practical understanding (43 percent) and the prevalence of outdated courses (29 percent).

Front office managers, their assistants, bell captains, bellboys, and travel desk staff also lack essential skills like effective communication, attentive listening, proficient handling of billing software, adept team management, and a comprehensive understanding of service provisions.

According to industry experts, specific job positions suffer from a pronounced talent shortage. Skilled chefs and proficient food and beverage managers are in high demand but are challenging to find. Likewise, positions within the front office and housekeeping sectors struggle to attract suitably qualified candidates. Recognizing the urgency of addressing this issue, HRAWI is actively recruiting experienced chefs to join their ranks and contribute to the training of aspiring hospitality professionals. Additionally, HRAWI plans to release a comprehensive report that evaluates various aspects of contemporary hospitality education and proposes solutions to enhance the quality and effectiveness of academic curricula. The association is optimistic that the industry's increased revenues in the post-pandemic era will contribute to achieving these objectives.