

The Fleece Cirencester

Young people who approached a stylish Cotswolds hotel just hoping for a job have ended up with promising careers instead, thanks to the general manager's vision and the tutors of Cirencester College

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Roy Gay, general manager of The Fleece, the only three-star hotel in the town centre, says the training his staff has received from the college has changed the way they think about themselves as well as making them better at their jobs.

“This industry is renowned for very poor staff retention,” he says, “but we’ve been fortunate that a lot of our staff have stayed with us for a long time. We believe that growing your own talent is the best way – and everyone who has had training from Cirencester College has progressed well.

“It’s quite amazing, really. The benefits start with more confidence and then more competence in the workplace. It’s very good for CVs and future progress. I think that very often in the hospitality world you have people who join just looking for a job.

But through training and encouragement, it can develop into a career. It’s most important to progress people.”

The encouragement his staff have been offered includes special classes for staff with English as a second language, NVQs in hospitality and management, and an apprenticeship for a 17-year-old who’s just joined the hotel.

Others have taken one-off courses in kitchen hygiene, strategic management, and how to deal with an angry customer.

“We work very closely with the college,” says Mr Gay, whose half-timbered hotel is more than three centuries old and features log fires and beams. “One of our NVQ people, our receptionist Holly Read-Houghton, became the hotel’s employee of the year and then won the college’s own award for being the outstanding business student of the year.

“She finished her NVQ course in business studies in record time and set the pace on it. Now we’re hoping she’ll do the same with her Level 3 NVQ.”

Mr Gay believes the secret of Cirencester’s success is the tutors’ understanding of the hospitality industry, their flexibility, and their willingness to deliver the training in the workplace at times that suit the hotel’s needs.

“They understand the business we’re in and don’t appear at 12 o’clock and expect everyone to stop what they’re doing to look after them,” he says. “Little things like that are a great help.”



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