

A photograph of two men high-fiving outdoors. The man on the left is seen from the back, wearing a dark blazer and glasses. The man on the right is facing him, wearing a denim shirt over a white t-shirt, and has a beard and a joyful expression. They are in an urban setting with a railing and a light fixture visible in the background.

THE CATERER **BEST** PLACES TO WORK IN HOSPITALITY **2022**

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Once again, *The Caterer*, in partnership with Purple Cubed and our sponsor Umbrella Training, is showcasing the 30 Best Places to Work in Hospitality. As the industry deals with the fallout of Brexit and Covid, this year's awards celebrate those putting their people first and dealing with tough decisions. *Rosalind Mullen* reports

The Best Places to Work in Hospitality awards highlight the employers who demonstrate exceptional skill at employee engagement and those who have looked after their staff during some of the most challenging times in recent history.

What stands out in this year's results is that so many people-focused strategies are not just practical, they are also kind. While many businesses already go above and beyond to nurture their people, those listed in the top 30 have pushed even harder to support staff wellbeing and create a healthy, thriving business.

As ever, this annual showcase of employment best practice celebrates companies across all sectors, large and small, established or entrepreneurial. What's special about the survey is that it is not driven by managers or operators, but by the employees themselves, who fill out an anonymous survey compiled by Purple Cubed.

Founder and chief executive of employee

"The survey is unique in that every individual tells us what's important to them at work and then scores those criteria"

engagement consultancy Purple Cubed Jane Sunley explains: "We introduced these awards eight years ago with a view to helping drive employee engagement, share great practice and improve hospitality's reputation as a great place to work.

"The survey is unique in that every individual tells us what's important to them at work and then scores those criteria. We also ask five killer questions. This gives the com-

panies who enter valuable insights, including an employer net promoter score."

Despite world events, mass disruption and, for many hospitality workers, adjusted priorities over the past two years, during 2021 there was an increase in the overall employee engagement score of 1%, bringing the average to 83%.

"This is a stunning testament to the great lengths the hospitality companies who entered this year have gone to when it comes to looking after their people in incredibly challenging times, and shows just how appreciated this was by the people who work there," says Sunley.

The results are revealed in the following pages, with the top six entries presented in alphabetical order, as they now qualify for the Best Employer Award shortlist at the 2022 Cateys in July.

To buy your ticket to the Catey awards, go to: www.cateys.com

Umbrella Training



Umbrella Training is a leading nationwide training and apprenticeship provider for the hospitality and corporate sectors.

As the highest-performing apprenticeship provider in the

sector, the company works closely with progressive businesses to develop bespoke and elite training programmes which create meaningful impacts.

The company also works with its partners to help improve perceptions of the sector through the development of diverse and forward-thinking recruitment and retention strategies.

As industry-leading experts, Umbrella Training understands

how important it is for employers to maximise return on investment, while implementing new, sustainable, and highly sought-after training and apprenticeships.

Founded in 2012 by Adele Oxberry, the company works with hotels, restaurants and foodservice businesses across the UK, as well as banks, financial institutions and other corporate organisations.

Since its inception, Umbrella Training has supported the

recruitment, development and progression of more than 4,000 apprentices. It was the only apprenticeship provider to be presented with the prestigious Princess Royal Training Award in 2020 and is recognised as a Good provider by Ofsted.

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SHORTLISTED FOR **BEST EMPLOYER CATEY**

AVIATOR

In a nutshell A four-AA-red-star, 168-bedroom independent luxury hotel

Location Farnborough, Hampshire

Employees 119 full-time equivalent (versus 100 full-time equivalent in March 2021)

As with so many good employers, the pandemic saw Aviator ratchet up its initiatives to create a sense of belonging among staff, giving them the confidence to excel in their roles.

One seemingly simple initiative has reinforced the workplace culture of valuing individuality. To celebrate its multicultural workforce, everyone is encouraged to design menus and even cook their own themed dishes in the canteen for colleagues to appreciate.

But it's the employee benefits that stand out. The HR team has set the bar high by offering everyone private healthcare, which is unprecedented in hospitality, let alone in other industries. Additional perks include an extra day of holiday on birthdays and monthly employee awards, with prizes such as personalised chef's shoes, beer advent calendars, beauty sets and DNA kits.

Staff are certainly on board. "Amazing place to work. Lots of positive, people-oriented benefits were implemented last year," said one.

New recruits are made to feel welcome too, with an induction programme that includes pre-employment overnight stays and personalised welcome gifts.

Aviator's staff Wellness Weeks are fun, particularly when the general manager pitches up to cook and serve healthy breakfasts or when food vendors drop in to offer up healthy choices. Fitness and wellbeing classes include zumba, yoga, HIT, jiu-jitsu and meditation, while a departmental step challenge creates a bit of healthy competition.

It's no surprise that staff are engaged and happy, with Purple Cubed's combined Employee Net Promoter Score and Killer Questions score hitting 96% against a benchmark of 83%. This comment sums it up: "The company and management genuinely value and look after all staff at all levels. It's a great feeling to be part of a team with these values."





SHORTLISTED FOR **BEST EMPLOYER CATEY**



DAKOTA MANCHESTER

In a nutshell Part of the Dakota luxury lifestyle brand, the 137-bedroom hotel includes the city's largest, grandest suite

Location Near Piccadilly Station in the city centre
Employees 150 (turnover rate of 24%)

At this hotel there is a demonstrable culture of recognising brilliant work and giving those with talent the opportunity for promotion. To underline its commitment to professional development, the hotel has appointed a head of engagement, learning and development. This new role is designed to sharpen its focus on retaining and valuing people.

And to give staff the best chance to pick up new skills, shine and progress within the business, HR has implemented a number of training programmes, supporting 10% of the workforce to undertake apprenticeships or further education programmes.

Coming up soon is the annual internal development training programme, which runs throughout the summer across several departments. These sessions encourage team members to learn a new skill or hone existing talents.

Post-lockdown, Dakota Manchester also introduced a series of team engagement initiatives to ensure that departments and individuals are rewarded for their hard work.

In the past, these included 'thank you' movie days and lunches.

Respondent scores were consistently high, with a score of nearly 98% from those surveyed by Purple Cubed, saying they felt "valued" and that their leaders were "supportive, positive and inspirational".

Employee comments are also robustly appreciative, with most echoing this sentiment: "Dakota is by far the best place I've worked so far. The teams across the workplace all communicate and work so well together. You are recognised for the things you do well, and as a team there are always incentives up for grabs to encourage us."



SHORTLISTED FOR **BEST EMPLOYER CATEY**

GENUINE DINING

In a nutshell An independent, family-run foodservice company specialising in the business and industry sector, delivering niche services to some of the top FTSE500 companies

Location Based in central London

Employees 347 across the UK as of February 2022 (220 in the same period in 2021)

Genuine has had to make tough decisions over the past two years, but it has still shown care for its staff. The pandemic forced the company to make almost 200 people redundant, with just 40 key positions retained through diversifying the business.

Now, as client businesses reopen, the HR team have reached out to 86% of those made redundant and have re-employed almost 70% of them. Through recent contract gains and strategic growth, the total number of employees has risen by 63% year-on-year.

To re-connect, retain and recruit talent, the company has introduced Flow, an online training platform that gives employees access to wellbeing modules, including financial and relationship advice and online GPs.

Driven by people director and mental wellbeing first-aider Candy van Antwerp, this initiative helps to gauge the mental health of staff, allowing the HR team to get to know individuals better, to understand their needs and recognise what steps are needed to improve their personal and professional lives.

Despite the hardships, what stands out in the Purple Cubed survey is that some 93% of respondents said their managers were “supportive, positive and inspiring”, with a similar number saying they felt they were in a “safe place to work”.

One employee commented: “Wonderful place to work in with opportunities to progress. I can really see me achieving my career aspirations here.” Another said: “The management are always visiting my site, I know who they are, and they always talk to us and the whole team, making us all feel like what we do matters.”



SHORTLISTED FOR **BEST EMPLOYER CATEY**



THE OLD STOCKS INN

In a nutshell A five-gold-AA-star independent, family-owned, 16-bedroom boutique inn with a 32-seat, two-AA-rosette restaurant

Location Stow-on-the-Wold, the Cotswolds

Employees 27 (average labour turnover is 10% with a baseline average number of employees around 25)

Husband and wife team Richard and Charlotte Tuck have put their energies into rewarding the “amazing team” that stood by them throughout the pandemic. In September they gave a loyalty bonus to team members who had remained from the 2020 lockdown to

September 2021, enduring the closures and reopenings. During this time, the inn was shortlisted in the top four finalists for Hospitality Team of the Year by *Boutique Hotelier*, and the Tucks ensured that everybody felt included. It worked, with some 97.5% of responders to the Purple Cubed survey feeling recognised and thanked for a job well done, compared with a benchmark of just 73.9%.

An open-door policy was promoted where staff could attend drop-in sessions, and staff engagement meetings were offered to discuss stress points. And there was an all-expenses-paid Christmas party and staff awards ceremony as well as Christmas bonuses.

“We have always acted with our decision-making in a consultative way with our team to make sure they feel involved and valued,” says Charlotte.

This clear communication has been valued by staff, with the inn’s Employee Net Promoter Score at 100% and an overall score of 97%. And they appreciate the respect they are shown. “I have worked in hospitality for 30 years... This is the first job I have had where you never work more than your contracted hours,” said one.

Another said: “The Old Stocks Inn is both my career and my home. I love it and am very proud of the achievements we have made altogether as a team over the years.”



SHORTLISTED FOR **BEST EMPLOYER CATEY**

THOMAS FRANKS

In a nutshell A privately owned, founder-led contract catering company in more than 160 locations in business and industry, independent schools and the care sector

Locations Across the UK and three European countries, with entry into two more European countries in the coming year

Employees 1,400 (no change from last year)

This family-focused employer is continuing the great initiatives it started to support employee wellbeing during lockdown. Cue its Mental Health Academy, set up on the back of mental health first-aid training with the Burnt Chef Project. And while internal wellbeing ambassadors are completing mental health in leadership apprenticeships, a director of nutrition and wellbeing has been appointed.

Closer to home, Feet up Fridays has been introduced to deliver meals to employees who are struggling with issues outside of work. As well as giving them a break and showing they are valued, it gives individuals an opportunity to discuss any problems, such as caring for a loved one, financial hardships or loneliness.

Back at work, management support has been increased through the creation of regional managing directors and a policy that operations managers never have responsibility for more than 10 locations.

More than three-quarters of respondents gave their company a score of 10 for the Killer Question "I am proud to work here". One employee told Purple Cubed: "Our large HR team provides access to support, personal development, counselling and employee assistance programme services. It's a company driven by its values and commitment to people, which I respect."

Another said: "Great teamwork. To be supported by great people who celebrate the successes of all and always look for a winning solution as a team makes working here a real pleasure."





SHORTLISTED FOR **BEST EMPLOYER CATEY**

VALOR HOSPITALITY

In a nutshell A hotel management company that operates a portfolio of hotels in the UK under brands including Hilton, IHG and Marriott
Locations Operates 35 hotels in the UK and globally manages more than 70 properties across Europe, South Africa, the US, the Middle East and Asia
Employees 1,500. Average employee turnover of 30%; year to date employee turnover is 11%

In 2021, as lockdown was ending, Valor asked its teams what would help them return to work feeling happy and engaged. Two responses stood out: the continuing prioritisation of health and wellbeing, and support with career development.

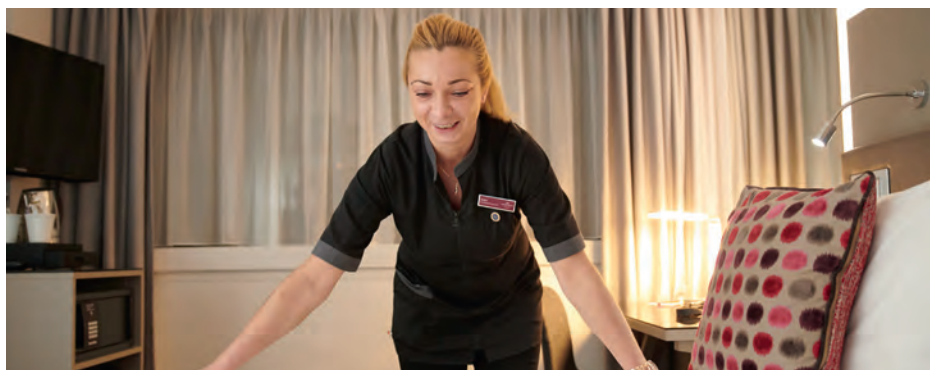
The company addressed health and wellbeing by training mental health first-aiders, providing access to free counselling, conducting wellness surveys on its Talent Toolbox platform, and implementing a calendar of wellbeing activities.

A Healthy Habits initiative saw employees offered £50 towards a new pair of trainers and £50 towards a new bike. Each of the 175 staff who took part were asked to report their progress on Valor's Facebook page, with the most inspirational stories receiving prizes.

On the people development front, Valor singles out its podcast series, the Pod, which explores good leadership. In the first series, managing director Brian McCarthy interviewed sporting legends and leadership experts, such as Keith Burnet, who rowed the Atlantic; Olympic gold medal rower Ben Hunt-Davis; performance scientist Dr Steve Ingham, who supported the British Olympic team; and Ronan O'Gara, Ireland's second most-capped rugby union player.

One employee told Purple Cubed: "We were very well looked after during the pandemic, with clear and regular communication to all, including those on furlough leave. Plenty of engagement and wellbeing activities were organised too, for all to be involved in."

Valor believes a positive working environment contributes to its delivery of sound commercial results. This is borne out by the survey, which sees Valor garner a score of nearly 85% in recognition that its leaders are "supportive, positive and inspiring".



Best places to work 2022

7 RAF CLUB
In a nutshell A prestigious private members' club founded in 1918, offering luxury accommodation, dining, meetings and events to serving and former serving RAF officers and their families
Location Piccadilly, London
Employees 115 (84 this time last year)

The club has a strong reputation for taking great care of its people, having appeared in this listing on many occasions. This is borne out by the 85% of respondents who told Purple Cubed their employer treats its people fairly and well, and the nearly 90% who said they are happy in their job.

Among many other initiatives, this year's focus is very much on developing a talented team, including a commitment that every member of staff will receive a minimum 20 hours of learning. The club recognises that this isn't a one-size-fits-all approach and that learning must be bespoke, relevant and fit with each individual's ambitions.

In addition, it is introducing a bite-sized menu of training classes offering short, concise workshops across a choice of topics, where learning can be fitted around the schedules of the team and demands of the business.

8 RBH HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT
In a nutshell A UK-based independent hotel management company with a portfolio of more than 45 hotels, from full-service country hotels to city centre properties
Location Hotels managed throughout the UK, with head offices in Glasgow and London
Employees 90 hotel specialists, up by a headcount of five on previous year



For the past 20 years, RBH has been maximising returns for existing hotel owners and developing new hotels, proving its financial acumen through partnerships with international brands such as Hilton, IHG, Accor, Wyndham and Marriott. But there is a cuddly side to RBH, too.

In fact, one of RBH's main drivers is to "give something back" to its people, the community and the environment. Last November, it launched its own accreditation programme centred around health and wellbeing. The Tree of Life Gold Leaf Standard commits to supporting all employees' activeness, nutrition, mental fitness and financial wellbeing, as well as being social, and already, the company has been shortlisted for the Springboard Employee Health & Wellbeing accolade.

It is obviously a good working environment, with the Purple Cubed survey recording employee responses that hover above 90% for everything from "being part of a team who works well together" to having "supportive and inspiring leaders" and being in "a safe, positive work environment".

9 THE PIG AT BRIDGE PLACE
In a nutshell This 29-bedroom hotel is part of the eight-strong Pig portfolio, a collection of eclectic country house hotels with restaurants and kitchen gardens started by Home Grown Hotels and Lime Wood Group, now owned by KSL Capital Partners

Location Bridge, near Canterbury, Kent
Employees 105 in March 2022 (81 in March 2021)



There is usually at least one Pig hotel on the annual Best Places listing, but this year there are three. Like the other two, this Pig has built on the experience of lockdown learning and has launched #HIVEflix, a hybrid of Netflix and Instagram that gives staff access to an online platform populated by the senior team. It also offers industry-specific Ted Talks, YouTube videos, books, podcasts, management tutorials, magazine articles and videos of inhouse craft training.

It is complemented by the Calendar, an automated interactive diary showing everything from suggestions of #HIVEflix content, food-and-drink Zooms run by inhouse teams, formal inhouse training, company occasions and industry events.

No wonder there is a strong sense of camaraderie and being valued at this Pig, with nearly 97% of respondents highlighting that. Indeed, one comment made to Purple Cubed is particularly telling: "Really made to feel part of everything. It's about we and us, not me and them."

10 THE TOMMY BANKS GROUP
In a nutshell A hospitality group comprising two Michelin-starred restaurants, a fine-dining food box delivery service, and a premium canned wine brand
Location The Black Swan at Oldstead, Yorkshire, and Roots York
Employees 100 (87 last year, an increase of 15% year-on-year)

Any restaurant worth its salt understands the importance of valuing employees, but in a post-lockdown era Tommy Banks knew he had to go even further by launching the group's most comprehensive benefits package to date.

Eye-catching additions include access to private healthcare, training opportunities, staff sign-on bonuses, Christmas and New Year closures, and an exchange programme with a fellow Michelin-starred restaurant that is open to everyone.

The biggest change, however, has been the revamp of its opening hours to nurture work-life balance and boost staff retention. For the first time in the group's 16-year history, the entire business will close on Sundays and two lunch services a week will be removed at Roots. This win-win decision means staff will have more time off with family to relax and reset and more time during their working day to train, learn and develop.

It's that sort of creative thinking that prompted a score of more than 93% from respondents, who told Purple Cubed their leaders were "supportive, positive and inspiring".

11 THE LAMINGTON GROUP
In a nutshell The 86-bedroom room2 Chiswick is the world's first whole life fully net zero homotel, meaning that all the carbon emissions from conception through to end-of-life have been reduced and rebalanced to zero
Location Chiswick, West London
Employees 74 (47 last year)



As well as creating new roles to expand the company, managing director Robert Godwin is shifting the business focus onto sustainability and educating employees on the importance of the climate crisis.

To achieve this, he has created an internal engagement programme, Team Planet. The campaign, which will run annually, is a gamified points system with a monetary prize to incentivise employees to make sustainable choices in their personal and professional lives. The process is educational with colleagues learning together and from each other, creating a springboard for new ideas and opportunities. The campaign's momentum is maintained through monthly company-wide meetings where implementations are celebrated and new topics are discussed, alongside communications on Slack and via email.

No wonder employees identified sustainability as a priority for a great place to work, with nearly 99% rating the company as doing it well or brilliantly. One employee described it as: "a positive place to work, focused on innovation and with a clear pathway of growth, makes this opportunity a career maker".

12 THE PIG IN THE WALL
In a nutshell With 12 bedrooms and a deli-bar, this is the smallest hotel in the eight-strong Pig portfolio and its only city centre bolthole
Location Tucked away in the medieval walls of the historic city of Southampton
Employees 24 in March 2022 (17 in March 2021)



The team behind the Pigs are dedicated to creating an inspiring and fun place to work, so they typically recruit people for personality and passion, not just qualifications and skills. Once they're on the payroll, they can access apprentice programmes, a Budding Entrepreneur scheme and in-hotel training.

Even this smallest of Pigs puts employee development at its heart while ensuring it's far from a chore. Building on the concept of lockdown learning, it too has #HIVEflix (see position number 9).

This is a happy little Pig. During the pandemic, the company saw the need for an "in-house furlough scheme" to ensure that even those who fell outside of government assistance were supported during tough times.

It's a tight-knit team with more than three-quarters of responders saying they were proud to work at the hotel and a similar percentage saying the company treated its people fairly and well.

13 SIGNATURE DINING
In a nutshell A privately owned, founder-led contract catering company working across the care and education sectors
Location 50 locations across the UK
Employees 220 (a 50% increase in staff numbers, with a fully retained management team)

Staff wellbeing had to be excellent at Signature because, as a care service caterer, all staff continued to work throughout the pandemic and the business operated 365 days a year.

To provide round-the-clock help and support, it launched the "OK not to be OK" programme, offering staff an open-all-hours lifeline to the senior team, access to a company mental health first-aider and signposting to outside agencies. The senior team also gave daily updates on a group Whatsapp, and encouraged staff to post foodie shots and weekly Tik Toks to keep spirits up.

"Open communication and support available to all staff in a sector such as ours has been invaluable, especially as we are having to

still operate under strict Covid regulations to protect our vulnerable diners," said founder and owner Paul Robottom.

Staff certainly felt valued. Some 97% of survey respondents said they were paid accurately and on time, and 91% stated they were proud of their positive company reputation.

They also talked about the "brilliant team ethos", with one team member saying: "I have never worked for a company that values its people like Signature does."

14 RICHMOND HILL HOTEL
In a nutshell An independent 130-bedroom destination hotel
Location Richmond Hill, Richmond, Surrey
Employees 135 (100 in 2021)



During and after the lockdowns, the focus of HR manager Liva Jones has been on the mental health and wellbeing of staff. To this end, the hotel put together a programme of activities, including a walking contest launched on Blue Monday that challenged each team to collectively count their steps for a week. Not only did this encourage staff to stay in touch, it generated gentle competition and motivated staff to exercise.

This was followed up in March with a group walking challenge. This time everyone had to count their steps to see how far the whole hotel team could get together – ultimately, it seems, they could have reached Milan.

It proved so popular that the bar team has asked for the challenge to be repeated in July to see how much further the whole team can get now that the hotel is open again.

You won't be surprised to see that 97% of respondents to the survey said they found their leaders "supportive, positive and inspiring".

15 ROSEWOOD LONDON
In a nutshell This 306-bedroom, five-red-AA-star hotel is part of Rosewood Hotels & Resorts, a collection of individual, luxurious, residential-style hotels inspired by the culture, history and geography of each locale
Location In the Grade II-listed former Pearl Assurance building in Holborn, London
Employees 370 (280 last year with a turnover of 36% in-line with pre-pandemic levels and a large percentage of leavers relocating)

Post-lockdown the hotel set a priority to re-engage, reconnect and strengthen its team



through the Calling, a culture framework that director of talent and culture Tristan Knight said: "Aimed to re-ignite [employees'] passion for an industry that had been in hibernation for the past two years."

By helping employees re-engage with the company, the HR team has been able to guide their career development and strengthen loyalty.

The initiative has also attracted new talent, prompting the hotel to launch a new induction programme, the Perfect Discovery, which provides an interactive and immersive learning journey. This comprises a two-day workshop to familiarise new staff with the hotel through meeting managers and brand ambassadors and by sampling guest experiences, followed by a 90-day "departmental discovery" in how they can excel in their roles.

It's clear why 94% of respondents said the company had "Well-defined company purpose". Unsurprisingly, three-quarters of the 91% who valued the "positive and inspiring leadership" said the hotel did it "brilliantly".

16 CASTLE HOTEL WINDSOR
In a nutshell Part of the recently formed Sutton Hotel Collection, this 108-room boutique hotel dates back to 1528
Location Opposite Windsor Castle and the Windsor and Royal Borough Museum
Employees 92 (labour turnover is 39.5%, an increase from a headcount of 50 last summer)

To get back up to speed last summer, management made sure there were significant opportunities for professional development through online and Zoom training sessions.

With business picking up post-lockdown, they also recognised staff loyalty and reinforced retention by giving all team members a profit-share bonus and significant pay review. This welcome thank you saw every employee receive an uplift and nobody earns a basic rate of pay less than the London Living Wage (before tips, incentives or bonuses) making the hotel one of the best payers locally.

It's not just about money. Management also reviewed staff benefits, making them more family-centric and sharpening the focus on work-life balance, so that team members are able to get the most out of their time off.

New benefits range from free hotel breaks to leisure passes, with the business contributing £150 towards a membership at a leisure centre or with associations such as the National

Trust. There is also enhanced maternity and paternity leave, offering 26 weeks at 90% for mothers, four weeks leave at 90% for fathers).

And there are career-focused benefits too, including Institute of Hospitality membership to provide learning, coaching and mentoring opportunities; access to Health Assured, which offers cognitive behavioural therapy, information, support and advice on many subjects; and also subsidised learning courses to support staff in a chosen area.

This is a company that excels in providing “fairness for all”, with 92% of respondents valuing this about their workplace. A similar number enjoyed the “positive company reputation”. One happy employee summed up the company culture in two words: “All great”.

17 RED CARNATION
In a nutshell A family-owned and run collection of five- and four-star hotels
Locations The UK, Ireland, Guernsey, South Africa, Botswana and Switzerland
Employees UK: 425; globally: 2,500



Not many employers offer a global online festival, but Red Carnation's was so successful post-pandemic that the company is planning a re-run around the company's diversity and inclusivity strategy and goals.

During the festival, which was recorded to make viewing easier for the global team, guest speakers discussed how everyone shares in creating an inclusive and diverse workforce. Information was shared on where the HR team go to attract and recruit staff, how they ensure everyone feels welcome and how they retain those people.

This included how they mentor under-represented groups so that they can progress into all roles, and in time into top positions. The company already counts more women in top positions than its competitors, but the festival highlighted how it wants to increase diversity across the LGBTQ+ community, ethnicity, age, the neurodiverse, single parents, disability, hidden disability and so on. Take-up among under-represented groups has already risen.

This culture of inclusivity inspired respondents to make comments such as: “We have an inclusive and diverse culture that has grown a lot these last couple of years, which I am proud to have been a part of.” Nearly 94% said they felt: “part of a team that works well together”.

18 CYCAS HOSPITALITY
In a nutshell A hotel management company founded in 2008, working with groups such as Accor, Hyatt, IHG and Marriott
Location Some 30 hotels and 4,500 rooms across six European countries (UK, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland)
Employees 70 in a central support role (with a retention rate of 40 in 2020, 65 in 2021, 70 in 2022) plus more than 630 team members, known as Cycadettes

The happiness of the team matters to Cycas. During the pandemic, the company's partnership with the Happiness Index, which enabled it to capture how its Cycadettes felt in real time via a 24/7 Employee Voice link.

This year, appreciating the enormous impact of lockdown on their people at home and at work, and to reinforce work-life balance, the company introduced the next phase of its well-being programme, which is to provide qualified mental health first-aiders in each property by World Mental Health Day on 10 October.

This initiative builds on the quarterly Cycas Wellness Weeks and Samaritans Wellbeing in the City training to ensure its teams have the skills to look after their own emotional health, recognise the signs of anyone struggling and promote healthy work environments.

The teams really do appreciate these programmes, with survey scores for being “part of a team that works well together” hitting nearly 97%, and feeling they are in “a safe, positive work environment”, at nearly 91%.

19 FARNCOMBE ESTATE
In a nutshell Privately owned with three award-winning hotels: the 39-bedroom Dormy House; the eight-bedroom boutique luxury hotel Foxhill Manor; and the Fish, with 63 rooms, hillside huts and treehouses, as well as Hillside Hangouts, a portfolio of self-catered houses
Location A 500-acre estate in the Cotswolds
Employees 256 in April 2022 (265 in May 2021)



Like everyone, Farncombe found it tough to recruit post-lockdown, but thanks to some out-of-the-box thinking, Headstart in Hospitality was born. This is a six-month work-experience placement created with Jobcentre to give job-seekers a taste of hospitality and also train them in valuable employability skills, such as food safety, health and safety, fire safety, CV

writing and interview techniques. At the end of the six months, they get the chance to join the Generation Farncombe Apprenticeship to develop the leadership skills needed to move up the career ladder.

The scheme has been an initial success. Within a month of the launch, 15 candidates had been interviewed, three had gained full-time work and six are awaiting start dates. A further 14 interviews are in the diary.

The hotels recorded good feedback from respondents. In particular, they were happy that the company had a good reputation and was a safe place to work.

And one comment from an employee at the Fish revealed the basics are very much in place: “Although it's a busy place to work, you do feel valued and it retains a family feel. It has very good terms and conditions of employment.”

20 LUCKNAM PARK
In a nutshell A privately owned, five-red-AA-star country house hotel with 42 bedrooms, six stylish country cottages, Michelin-starred Restaurant Hywel Jones and a contemporary brasserie, spa and equestrian centre within 500 acres of grounds
Location Coleme, Wiltshire
Employees 130 full-time, part-time and casual staff (average labour turnover is 42%)



Lucknam Park is on a mission to change the perception that hospitality is poorly paid and to encourage new entrants into the sector. As well as a competitive pay rate, it offers seasonal gifts, monthly service charge, access to the Hospitality Action Employee Assistance Programme and benefits such as use of facilities, employee introduction bonus and extra holidays with length of service.

“The pay package aims to set us apart from our competitors and provide our team with the pay recognition they deserve. This strategy has seen us attract some of the best talent in the industry and retain valued employees, many of whom have more than five years of service with us,” said HR executive Jo Vincent.

The hotel also invests in its employees through training and provides opportunities for internal promotions, as well as expanding its apprenticeship scheme.

Unsurprisingly, 90% of respondents singled out the fact their employer was good at showing “recognition and thanks for a job well done”.

21 THE ATHENAEUM
In a nutshell A five-star family-run hotel with 162 bedrooms
Location London's Mayfair
Employees 102 (80 last year); labour turnover -35% this year versus 44% last year



Warm, thoughtful, ethical, ambitious... you only need to take a look at a few of the core values championed by this employer to understand why 46% of employees have been with this hotel for more than two years.

In addition, there are plenty of opportunities for career progression. Two leadership development programmes have been launched since lockdown, one for the senior leadership team and the other for supervisors, each giving employees the skills they need to excel in their current role and prepare them for future advancement. A minimum of 48 classroom training programmes are delivered each year, along with 8-12 interactive e-learning modules to support personal and professional development.

The external facilitator was impressed with the training, stating, "Not all companies have this same level of commitment to their people. This is the perfect example of how their values sit at the heart of their culture".

Initiatives like these engage not only new recruits, but also the long-serving team members who wish to progress their careers. Some 93% of those who responded said all individuals "are valued" and 94% said people are "enabled to do a good job".

22 THE NINTH
In a nutshell A relaxed neighbourhood restaurant with a Michelin star, serving French Mediterranean dishes
Location Charlotte Street, London
Employees 12 and recruiting. Employees stay an average of at least two years

The Ninth has implemented a personal development plan for employees, which has no doubt contributed to the fact that 91% of survey respondents said the small neighbourhood restaurant was known as a great place to work. They also valued the fact they are paid accurately and on time.

Underlining this commitment to staff, chef-owner Jun Tanaka and his management team spoke with everyone individually to get a better understanding of the knowledge and

skills they wanted to learn while working at the restaurant. Employees were also asked about their long-term aspirations. A tailor-made plan was then drawn up for each of them to cover those specific areas.

"We believe it's our responsibility as the employer to support and provide the tools for our team to grow. When people feel listened to and they are continuously learning and improving, they are happier at work," said Tanaka.

23 THE COASTAL KITCHEN FAMILY
In a nutshell An independent family-run group of four restaurants and one wine wholesaler
Location The Canteen, the Tenth Hole and ABar Bistro in Portsmouth and the Briny in Southsea
Employees 147 (18.9% turnover in the year January-December 2021)



It's pretty much one big happy family here, thanks to the holistic management style of the owners, though the pandemic, of course, made them focus more than ever on retaining, supporting and developing their team.

To ensure everyone has physical and mental support, the family put together a Wellness Package that offers support on issues outside of work. Among the benefits, all staff now have access to Hospitality Action's Employee Assistance Programme, which offers confidential emotional, financial and legal support from trained professionals, 24/7. Furthermore, a member of each team is now trained in a Level 2 qualification in mental health first-aid, so they can identify and support mental health issues among colleagues.

To keep them in peak form, staff also have access to twice-weekly outdoor fitness sessions, run by a former Royal Marine. And let's not forget fun. Staff events are fully funded, including parties, socials and trips to Goodwood races.

It's a safe, positive environment, said nearly 92% of respondents to the survey.

24 MILLENNIUM AND COTTHORNE HOTELS AT CHELSEA FOOTBALL CLUB

In a nutshell This 231-bedroom hotel is split across two sites next to Stamford Bridge, with dining in the 55 Restaurant or Frankie's Sports Bar and Diner, which shows sport on big screens

Location In the grounds of Chelsea Football Club, London SW6
Employees 50 (average labour turnover is 20%)

A whopping 97% of respondents to the Purple Cubed survey highlighted that this luxury hotel is a "safe place to work" and gave the hotel an impressive overall score of 88%.

Also high in the rankings was that "All individuals are valued", with 86% of staff feeling this. Managers certainly wanted to show their gratitude to staff who had worked during lockdown to provide service and accommodation to front-line workers. And what better way to say thank you than organising a fun evening out, with dinner and a trip to the *Prince of Egypt* musical.

To keep the momentum going, the hotel has also created its own version of *MasterChef*, where team members get the chance to showcase their creativity in the kitchen under the eyes of head chef Stephen Renaud. The winner of this cook-out goes home with an afternoon tea voucher for two at a five-star hotel.

25 CHEVAL COLLECTION
In a nutshell A hospitality group with 12 luxury apartments
Location London and Edinburgh, with plans to expand into European cities and internationally
Employees 286



In 2021, Cheval made a commitment to embed employee wellbeing into its business – and it's working. Out of the 90% of respondents who singled out Cheval as a "safe, positive work environment", 68% said they did it brilliantly.

Everyone can access its online wellbeing hub, dealing with topics such as grief, eating disorders, fitness and diet, finances, and what to do if someone tells you they feel suicidal. Similarly, the annual appraisal has been enhanced with a wellbeing check-in and career discussion.

New benefits include 24/7 access to a GP, a second opinion on a diagnosis and support from specialists to quit smoking. And on the mental health front, the company offers counselling sessions around depression, anxiety and to address burnout. Perhaps most relevant in the current world climate is access to life event counselling to help those who have suffered trauma.

26 THE PIG AT BROCKENHURST
In a nutshell This 32-bedroom relaxed country hotel and restaurant was the first of the now eight-strong Pig portfolio started by Home Grown Hotels and Lim Wood Group, now owned by KSL Capital Partners
Location The New Forest National Park
Employees 129 in March 2022 (82 in March 2021)

Not many companies are forward-thinking enough to invest in staff training for the good of the industry. But this is exactly what the Pigs do. As one employee told Purple Cubed: "It's a stepping stone for me to gain experience and new skills. My workplace supports me in my future ambitious and aims to give me all types of learning opportunities."

Another said: "I love the way that everyone is considered for a role and given the opportunity for that role, whether you have paper qualifications or not."

And, according to the Good Hotel Guide, and many validations of the team at the Pig at Brockenhurst, what sets the original of the Pig Hotels apart are the staff with guests commenting on the "flexibility and initiative of the team" and their "excellent internal communication and joined-up service."

Standards set from the top as reflected by the two other listings for the group in this year's Top 30 Best Places to Work in Hospitality.

27 THE LITTON (CORK & BOTTLE)
In a nutshell A privately owned, award-winning country pub and boutique 13-bedroom hotel
Location Litton, the Mendip Hills area, Somerset
Employees 46 (47 last year)



This privately owned company is knife-sharp about keeping its staff engaged. At the end of furlough, for instance, the team were offered free online training, which included legal mandatory training as well as refresher courses. In addition, staff could brush up their skills or gain new talents in fun areas such as cocktail-making and wine-tasting.

Aware that staff were returning to a different working day, the owner introduced a revamp strategy to get everyone up to speed on how things have changed post-Covid. This included information about PPE policies, clocking in and new ways of working.

Employee feedback gleaned by Purple Cubed is excellent, with 97% of respondents saying they felt "part of a team that worked well together". In particular, they appreciate the owner's hands-on approach: "Working for an independent small business, I feel valued, motivated and have been supported financially and mentally throughout the Covid 19 pandemic. My employer prioritised team retention through lockdowns," said one employee.

28 THE GALLIVANT
In a nutshell An independently-owned, 20-room boutique hotel
Location Camber, East Sussex
Employees 45 in March 2022 (40 in March 2021)



The HR team were clearly focused on staff health and happiness during lockdown because they welcomed them back in 2021 with the Gallivant Wellness Charter. Highlights of the benefits package include enrolment in Bupa Premier Health Insurance; company-funded gym membership; access to the Hospitality Action Employee Assistance Programme; and an extra day's paid holiday on birthdays.

This was backed up by an inaugural Team Happiness Day in January 2022, where experts in nutrition, fitness and stress management gave advice. And to keep up the good work, staff are offered free weekly yoga classes and monthly cooking classes.

"We believe these initiatives have already made a big impact on the mental and physical wellbeing of our whole team," said head of wellness Paula Le Dao.

The team agree, with 85% of respondents saying the hotel is known as a "great place to work", and 94% adding the benefits are "clear and attractive".

29 ST ERMIN'S HOTEL
In a nutshell A 331-bedroom, independent four-star hotel that is part of the Autograph Collection, Marriott International's collection of independent hotels
Location Westminster, London SW1
Employees 132 (April 2021 to April 2022); employee turnover is 58%

On 1 April, St Ermin's decided to demonstrate to employees how much it valued them by giving them a rise. It introduced a pay-scale

above London Living Wage at a minimum of £11.25 an hour, which represents an uplift of 15% year-on-year.

As well as aiming to attract people back to the hospitality industry, it is hoped this will support the HR team in recruiting and retaining the best talent. As one director said: "We value our team, and we want to reward and recognise them for their hard work and their contribution to the success of the hotel. Our aim for the future is to be recognised as an employer of choice in our industry."

Comments from the team suggest they have been on the right track for a while. As one survey respondent said in the autumn: "So amazing to work somewhere where everybody is supportive and people are recognised for their work. All team members are living and breathing the 'Fun, Love, Energy' values, which is truly inspiring."

30 PHILEMA HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT
In a nutshell A family-owned company with a portfolio of leisure properties, including three award-winning hotels, spas and restaurants
Location Boringdon Hall, Plymouth; Fistrall Beach Hotel & Spa and the Esplanade, Newquay
Employees 327 (increased from an average of 300 in 2021)



When lockdown ended, these coastal hotels were a magnet for the pent-up public, leading to increased demand on their teams. Group human resources manager Stacey Le Gallez said: "We wanted to ensure that despite how busy and challenging each day became, our employees felt appreciated for the hard work they dedicated to our organisation."

To this end, they created the 'Random Acts of Kindness' scheme. This simple but powerful tool embraces gestures such as a small treat each month for every employee, celebrating national department days and recognising holidays to show the company's ongoing gratitude. "We know when [employees] feel valued, they are more likely to stay as part of our team, in turn, aiding staff retention and productivity," said Le Gallez.

It is obviously working. Some 88% of respondents said they are "part of a team that works well together" and 84% agreed that their leaders are "supportive, positive and inspiring".

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