Starwood Hotels & Resorts

Proposal

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**Acknowledgement**

Jacqueline Alexander has over 20 years experience in the learning and development arena (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). Jacqueline spent 18 months at Starwood as Associate Director of Global Learning & Development Department (GLDD) (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). Jacqueline responsiblities included managing a group of instructional designers (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). The student author acknowledges Jacqueline’s invaluable contributions to the successful completion of this project.

**Overall Plan**

During the centralization of learning and development function into the global learning & development department (GLDD), a learning committee approved learning projects and served as the gatekeeper of the Learning Management System (J. Alexander, personal communication, March 16, 2018). Individual hotels pushed back in order to “do their own thing” (J. Alexander, personal communication, March 16, 2018). Fortunately, senior management championed this change and supported the learning committee model (J. Alexander, personal communication, March 16, 2018).

GLDD’s strategy included using a mixture of on-demand eLearing solutions and on-the-job coaching. Tablets such as iPads were issued to each learner for delivery of online training courses (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). Courses were delivered either using Starwood’s Cornerstone Learning Management System or a vendor’s system (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). Learner’s were given time during the work day to complete the training (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). Managers provided coaching to ensure proper appication of learning on the job (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). Coaching can improve business results (Kranz, 2011), help retain employees (Clark & Kurtz, 2014), build a leadership talent pool (Clark & Kurtz, 2014), enhance employee’s on-the-job performance (Holland, 2009), and improve staff retention (Holland, 2009).

Part of any maturity process of any organization involves time (Maturity, 2008). GLDD proposed to use case study stages of learning and development capability/maturity (2013) twice a year to re-assess GLDD’s maturity level (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). Over time, with continued support from upper management, GLDD’s new processes and procedures will move Starwood to the next level of maturity (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018).

**Learning & Development Needs Covered**

Improved upselling skills are an important learning need for Front Desk staff (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). GLDD developed a curriculum with the vendor Practice (https://www.practice.xyz/how-it-works/). Guest scenarios that provided potential upselling oppotunities were presented to learners on a tablet and learners would record video responses (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). These videos were posted to a discussion forums where other learners assessed each other’s responses (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). Finally, learners watched best practice videos and received expert feedback (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). After course completion, learners were expected to increase the number of upsells 2% in the 90 days following the training. (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). This training focused on Front Desk staff for the Sheraton, Weston, Four Points, W brands (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). This training led to increased guest satisfaction and revenue which are core to growing any hospitality business (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). In addition to meeting organizational needs, research supports this strategy. One of the most important tools in learning includes the asking and answering of questions (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005). The value of learning via student-to-student interaction supercedes that of student-to-teacher interaction (Knowles, et al., 2005).

GLDD created a course that consisted of short videos that demonstrated how to perform housekeeping activities (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). Videos included in the course covered topics such as how to make a bed, the chemicals needed to clean a room, how to clean the bathroom, and how to clean a room (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). After completing training, housekeepers were expected to complete tasks exactly as shown during the training (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). Managers checked the quality of work of new hires to ensure that rooms were perfect for guests (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). The quality of rooms directly supported Starwood’s “home away from home” mission (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). “Just-in-time is a natural fit because it feeds into what we already know: that learning is most effective where there is a genuine practical application for the knowledge and when it takes place within the working environment” (Calnan, 2017, p. 47).

GLDD turned to the Harvard Business School for assistance with the manager development curriculm (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). GLDD leveraged the Harvard ManageMentor online curriculum (https://hbr.org/product/harvard-managementor-premium-collection/5678-HTM-ENG). The Harvard ManageMentor consists of 44 self-paced modules based on real-life use cases to address the spectrum of issues students will face as managers and includes interactive learning activities, audio downloads for mobile devices, video insights, and other downloadable tools (https://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cbmp/pages/content/hmm). Starwood believes that managers help make employees happy and happy employees make customers happy as guests in Starwood’s home away from home (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). Scenario based learning solutions are more effective than traditional solutions (Hursen & Fasli, 2017).

**Integration of Online Learning**

Online learning solutions are perfect for Starwood’s multi-national audience (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). Online learning quickly provided consistent learning solutions (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). GLDD created online courses and hired translators to ensure delivery of same message anytime, anywhere to Starwood’s global audience (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). External solutions provided learning in multiple languages (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018).

**Management and Measurement**

GLDD worked on learning solution development with internal learning and development personnel and vendors as described earlier in this paper (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). GLDD worked with subject matter experts to gain expertise needed for each solution (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). Pilots measured on-the-job application and made improvements before the global release (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018).

GLDD owned the entire management of learning projects (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). GLDD coordinated project timing with the business (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). GLDD managed the project plan and led meetings for internal and external projects (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018).

Feedback on learning effectiveness came from multiple mechanisms (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). GLDD used Kirkpatrick level one evaluations for feedback on the course’s performance (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). GLDD ran focus groups with managers and learners to evaluate learning impact (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). Management’s on-the-job evaluations were part of assessing learner’s understanding of course content (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018). Finally, guest satisfaction surveys responses were another source of feedback on how well learner’s applied learning (J. Alexander, personal communication, April 9, 2018).

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