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Searching for a Motivated, Diverse Hospitality Work Force Hoteliers Must Lead with Culture

In football, the team succeeds when each player tackles their responsibilities on the field to assist the quarterback in reaching the end goal. In basketball, the team succeeds by passing the ball to one another across the court maneuvering through the opposition to score. In golf scramble, the team builds upon the talent of all team members. For a team to succeed it needs talented players, and each player must have a commitment to support one another to achieve the end goal.

The hospitality industry can relate. In order to succeed in this competitive market, dedicated staff in every department is required to form a strong team capable of standing apart from the rest. An important aspect of every successful team is the appreciation and support of the uniqueness of each member. By fostering a work environment where the differences in skills, backgrounds and ideas of everyone are recognized and valued, the team will be stronger.

We must continue to encourage organizational development within the context of diversity and inclusion and prioritize an honest assessment of what it means to inhabit and flourish in contemporary American society. Diversity and inclusion are about recognizing that differences make a stronger, healthier organization and work

environment. Through diversity and inclusion, we provide more voices at the table, and we learn from each other through the prism of experience and the diverse motivations and expectations that each person brings to work each day.

At McNeill Hotel Company, we have a sincere interest in and commitment to each individual and her or his potential for career growth with us. Our employees make us a stronger company and allow us to succeed in providing better guest experiences.

Where Do We Begin?

From our vantage point and experience, we best achieve diversity and inclusion when we emphasize our distinct culture that puts people first: our guests, our business partners, our team members and the residents of our host communities. Our foundation is a clearly articulated mission and philosophy that our people believe in, nurture and follow daily. We naturally attract a diverse pool of highly qualified and motivated candidates that are drawn to our people-first culture.

Just as with brand equity, mission and philosophy are much more than a slogan or a logo. While they initially set in motion policies, procedures and training programs, their meaningful realization is a host of actual behaviors whose impact is much greater than the sum of its parts. Our interpersonal conduct, the respect and trust we have in each other, the clues we give as leaders, and the strength that we derive by allowing team members to act on their own insights and initiative combine to allow us to best serve our guests, business partners, team members, residents of our communities and each other.

With respect to diversity and inclusion, we have found an independent council, with its own diverse leadership, budget and access to an independent adviser, to be a powerful means to demonstrate corporate seriousness about these issues. Independent council specializing in diversity and inclusion for our industry can conduct continuing programs, including communications and events that make diversity and inclusion part of a hospitality organization's everyday life. We can't underestimate today's social and cultural climate and its challenges, but we are witnessing meaningful change. Team members are learning about each other's cultures and traditions and sharing frank experiences and feelings.

In order to ensure we are best promoting a culture of diversity and inclusion at companywide meetings and events, we routinely have speakers that focus on encouraging our team members to build upon their strengths as individuals and as a

team. These continuing programs and events allow us to stay centered on inclusion and to keep that mindset at the forefront of our culture. These events work to ensure team members that their voices are valued and their skills are appreciated both in their individual roles as well as part of the greater McNeill community as a whole.

The industry as a whole must continue to strive to identify candidates that may be traditionally underrepresented in hospitality. Focusing on uplifting these underrepresented voices encourages new perspectives on how we can both improve our working environment for our employees as well as our reputation in the overall hospitality industry. Currently, we are exploring options to work with human resources partners that would assist in these efforts. This is similar to the efforts that the American Hotel & Lodging Association is spearheading in highlighting worker “pools” that our industry may have overlooked in the past.

By fostering a community built upon celebrating diversity and focused on inclusion, we can achieve so much more. Our success is dependent upon the success and passion of our team. When we support a culture of putting people first, we stand above the rest as our team has been made stronger by promoting collective growth and individuality. We can achieve great success when we lead with a shared culture.

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