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CAREER DEVELOPMENT, PERSONAL GROWTH AND PROMOTIONS: MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME AT THE RUNNEMEDE ON THAMES

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From getting an insider look into how the hotel is managed to receiving one-to-one coaching, participants of the Management Development Programme at The Runnymede on Thames describe it as a career-changing opportunity.

Each year, The Runnymede on Thames runs a Management Development Programme to help the team progress in their careers. Run with our sister hotels, The Athenaeum and The Grove, participants also get exposure to other properties and their like-minded employees. This year, around 25 people participated from the three hotels, and the winner – Sous Chef Paul Reader from The Runnymede on Thames – received a bespoke prize.

Over the course of a year, participants of the programme attend a series of seminars and modules. The fact these sessions take place at different locations, including the three hotels and Head Office, ensures participants gain additional opportunities to share experiences and learn more about the other properties in the group. Seminars and modules range from employment law, marketing and purchasing, to presentation skills, direct sales and commerciality in the business.

"It allowed me to see what a lot of people actually do who I've worked with for ages," explained Paul Reader. "I've seen a lot of them run through the kitchen before, but I didn't know what their job titles really meant. Now I understand what they do and where we all fit together in the business."

One of the participants' favourite parts of the Management Development Programme was the one-to-one coaching they received every month by expert trainer, Donna Hepburn. With a background in training and psychology, Donna has led on training in hotels and restaurants across the globe including at the Mandarin Oriental. Participants of the programme are given access to highly regarded psychometric testing: the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and the Occupational Personality Questionnaire. This enables Donna to provide personalised and confidential one-to-one coaching.

"This is a really important aspect of the programme because it's based on the individual and what their needs are," Donna explains. "I look at their strengths and how to develop areas that might need attention."

"You find out a lot more about yourself as a person," says Paul. "I'm a lot more confident now. I get on well with everyone, but I also realised how adjusting the way I interact with different types of people can get better responses."

Throughout the course, participants also have regular meetings with the General Manager, the HR Director and their line manager, to check they're getting what they need out of the programme. Towards the end of the course, all participants write an essay and the top four do a presentation to the Board of Directors as well as

the General Managers and others involved in the running of the programme. "It was a good chance to raise our profiles in the organisation," said Paul. "I really enjoyed seeing they had an interest in us and appreciated what we did."

The final winner of the programme receives a prize aligned with their job. Last year the winner went on a sales trip to New York, while this year, winner Paul will go on a culinary journey to Italy. "In Florence, I'll be able to visit Parma ham, balsamic vinegar and olive oil producers," says Paul. "It's a great chance to try different foods and bring more knowledge back to my job!"

The impact of the Management Development Programme lasts for longer than the year of the course too. "Since I see the participants on a monthly basis, I really see them grow throughout the programme," says Donna. "There have been several promotions in the past couple of years that we've been running the programme. These are often promotions marking quite significant jumps in their careers. I'm certain it's because of the Management Development Programme."

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