

SPECIAL REPORT HOTEL SCHOOLS & UNIVERSITIES

So what is all the fuss about?



A lot of hype is attributed to the affiliation of local universities to eminent international hospitality schools. But just how important is this “twinning”? **Karim Asmar**, managing partner at Hodema consulting services, takes a recruiter’s perspective to a student’s dilemma

Last Thursday, Rafic, manager of a reputable hotel in Lebanon, received a phone call from a friend whose son wanted to study hotel management. The friend asked if Rafic could guide his son Makram in his choice. The son was interested in studying abroad, but also in Lebanon encouraged by his parents who had heard of the affiliation of some programs with foreign and world-renowned programs.

When they met the following Saturday afternoon, Makram displayed much enthusiasm. He was focused and asked question after question. He wanted to know everything about the industry, the available training, the traveling, the recruitment, salaries and so on. He had a number of questions concerning the schools, their programs, the validity of their degrees, and the possibility of pursuing a master degree after his bachelor.

Hospitality is a business of passion. It is quite demanding and the remunerations and working conditions more often than not are less rewarding than other industries. Rafic started by gauging Makram about the industry. It is no secret that in this industry one works in the periods where everyone else is on vacation, hours are longer, and total working hours per week are longer than other industries. Working in the hospitality industry

one gets to know the back of the house, and it is the exact opposite of the glamorous lobby that attracts guests to a property. Rafic wanted to make sure that Makram was aware of the difficulties he may have to face in this choice of career.

Makram’s excitement remained intact. He repeated that he understood all the recommendation and concerns that Rafic was voicing but what he wanted was help in choosing the school. In Rafic’s point of view Makram would have to make a series of choices.

Was he after an international career, or simply an international exposure through trainings? Was he more interested in the food and beverage or the hospitality and lodging? With pragmatism he explained that Makram should focus on the essentials.

While the reputation of the institution plays an important role, Rafic stressed that Makram should also inquire about the profile of the educators and the par of training and practice in the program. On the other hand, while an international affiliation of the program could prove very helpful in getting the first job, what is more important is the experience and practical know-how the new recruit has. What matters is how fast the recruit can become autonomous and productive.

Rafic pointed out that an important criteria is the placement capacity of the institutions and the speed of placement, plus the average time spent searching for a job. Rafic recalled a discussion he had earlier with the director of a local institution. The director mentioned that his students received an average of 3 job offers by the time they graduated. That institution did not have an international affiliation, yet locally was considered highly reputable.

Makram reverted back and stressed on his goal to pursue with a masters degree. Wouldn’t an international affiliation be important? Rafic answered that what matters is how rich the profile of the applicant is upon his application. He went on to stress the need to gain as much practical experience as possible. Hospitality is a business of operations. Living service and guest experience mattered more than textbook. While an institution may not have an international affiliation, it may have strong ties with the industry. The type and the location of the trainings the candidate has had are very important in the eye of a recruiter for a first job applicant. The location and type of training the institution is providing should be equally important in the eyes of the student when selecting a school.

Whether for a job or a master program, the degree can be a good introduction. However, in both cases managers are very pragmatic and will be more interested by the exposure the candidate has, their career vision and determination to achieve it.

When choosing a master program, the selection criteria will be different. The international exposure of the institution and the degree will become more important. In fact, an institution may prove as strong as its network of alumnae. However, in Rafic’s point of view, a master’s program should be chosen after significant experience in the industry.

While bidding farewell to Makram, Rafic told him the story of a friend who tested the service orientation of candidates by dropping his pen during the interview and watching whether the candidate would pick up the pen or not.

On his way back home, Makram had more even questions than before. Meditating on the pen story, he wondered if he would pick up the pen. He felt very determined.

www.hodema.net

News just in

The Dubai-based Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management is now recruiting for its new Master of Science Degree in International Hospitality Management - the first of its kind in the GCC region. Commencing in October 2010, the program is aimed at the hospitality leaders of the future, building on the foundations laid by undergraduate studies with an emphasis on managerial competence. It will be open to students continuing their education with the academy as well as external applicants looking to advance their careers into executive, corporate and senior management levels. The post-graduate curriculum is based on extensive industry and educational research and has been benchmarked against 15 other internationally renowned Masters programs. With senior and executive managers from the hospitality trade contributing to the course design and content, graduates will emerge with highly developed skills and knowledge relevant to the industry.

www.emiratesacademy.edu

After ten years of collaboration and cooperation, Paul Bocuse has decided to sign a educational and professional convention which allows Mgr Cortbawi Institute students to profit from a double diploma, Lebanese and international. This alliance promotes sharing skills and exchanging with the teaching staff managerial techniques, the art of cooking, table dressing and training students. In February 2010, students had the chance to meet Chef Bertrand Esnault (Responsable des études 1ère année arts culinaires) for a seminar of 5 days that enabled them to acquire the basics, to improve their culinary techniques and to develop the spirit of taking initiative and developing creativity. Chef Bertrand covered everything from basic skills to advanced techniques, and all was taught in a fun atmosphere favorable to learning. This seminar’s objective was to transmit the technical “savoir faire”, enrich the know-how, enhance the student’s skills and knowledge, develop their cooking career, and benefit from the executive chef “professional and international experience”.

www.i-cortbawi.edu.lb

