

Flawless Delivery Certification Trains Hospitality Workers

427

**Flawless Delivery
certified in Alabama**

30%

**promoted or received
added compensation
due to new FD skillset**

4.8

**relevancy to job
(out of five)**

4.9

**overall experience
(out of five)**

OVERVIEW

Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association saw a need to address the high turnover rate within hospitality and tourism. By working with partners throughout the state, Flawless Delivery is able to keep hospitality workers within the industry, lowering costs to employers and freeing up revenue that be used for further investment in Alabama.

SITUATION

With a turnover rate of more than 70% within hotels, attractions, restaurants, and other related industries, a solution is needed to keep employees in hospitality, especially those who work on the “frontline” interacting with customers and clients. Many are ill-equipped to handle stress, conflict resolution or a chaotic work environment; also, many perceive themselves to be undervalued by the customer or employer. Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association (AMLA) saw a need to keep these valuable assets and thus, lower costs to Alabama hospitality businesses. AMLA, spanning 16 counties in North Alabama, provides support and awareness to a wide area of popular destinations and was well situated to establish a certification program that deals with specific industry results.

SOLUTION

After meeting with the state tourism director to educate on the current situation, a decision was made to establish a new certification program that concentrates on the soft-skill needs of employees within the hospitality and tourism industries. With financial backing from Alabama Travel, AMLA recruited Holistic Performance Group to educate the Yellowhammer state’s frontline workers on a range of tourism and hospitality needs. Alabama Black Belt Adventures Association was enlisted to set up training sessions in the 51 counties south of AMLA’s geographic footprint.

RESULTS

In less than one year, 427 employees representing 94 organizations in 29 counties have been Flawless Delivery certified throughout Alabama. More than 1,000 have been touched by Flawless Delivery. There is a direct correlation between the certification program and increased employee retention; also, those who have finished the program desire enhanced in-depth training. This certification program is deemed a success by employers, employees and industry and will ultimately provide a better more enhanced visitor experience, thus increasing visitor spending in Alabama.

POSITIVE SOLUTIONS

Attendees say

The conflict training portion helped me learn useful skills in the workplace during a struggle.

The most valuable aspect is the ability to apply our real-world experiences to our jobs. Also, the ability to meet people across Alabama.

It is great to expand on my hospitality skills for the future as we continue to grow our tourism industry.”

Overview of Flawless Delivery Hospitality Certification

What: Frontline employees in Alabama’s tourism and travel industry will learn how to deliver exceptional customer service thanks to a new pilot program developed by the Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association (AMLA) and made possible through a grant from the Alabama Tourism Department.

When: November 2022 – present

How: 30 seminars held in a twelve month span (2022-2023)

Purpose: An experiential workshop bringing together hospitality employees for two days of intensive, interactive training, that includes an overnight stay at a local hotel to be certified in Flawless Delivery®. Participants experience a local eatery for dinner that includes Four Course Hospitality Training and local speakers from the hospitality industry. Participants learn essential communication, conflict resolution, empathy and interpersonal skills needed to deliver impeccable customer service. The goal is to provide a standard for 21st century service that supports individual career development and industry growth.

Goal: This practical certification is delivered in an interactive and supportive learning environment; the program includes insightful methods for increasing resilience and retention in the growing and ever changing hospitality industry. The Flawless Delivery Hospitality Certification program provides a foundation for customer service that increases employees' sense of self-worth and their value to the organization and industry.

Why: Hospitality training certification helps the bottom line. Frontline employees have the most interaction with the visitor. When visitors are treated well, they are likely to spend more time and money within the destination. The visitor experience is elevated which will lead to increased economic impact on a community and the state.

Who: These organization have launched Flawless Delivery, a customer service training program for all employees of Alabama’s hospitality industry.



- Alabama Tourism Department
- Alabama Black Belt Adventures Association
- Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourism Association
- Alabama Travel Council
- Experience Consulting
- Holistic Performance Group
- University of Alabama Center for Economic Development

Funding:

- \$1.1 million in 2023-2024
 - \$650,000 – 16 AMLA counties
 - \$450,000 – 51 counties south of the AMLA geographic region

Current Situation

The hospitality industry has a 70% turnover rate with frontline employees. Part of this is created by design; seasonality plays a large portion in an organization’s peak and off-peak seasons; i.e. ski resorts in the winter (college students), beaches in the summer (teens). However, during hospitality training sessions there is an opportunity to indoctrinate people while they are new to the industry – especially during orientation.

Many hotels are desiring more non-for-profit training sessions. For example, a Hilton general manager mentioned that his hotel holds training sessions once every 4 to 5 months; he admits they do not train often enough either because of busyness, or not enough people to train at a time (i.e. “let’s wait till we hire 12 and then train”). Also, most accommodations do not possess knowledge of the destination. Lo, the DMO is an optimal funnel to train frontline workers.

It is found that many blue-color and hospitality workers do not possess access to the internet, hence, it is difficult holding virtual training sessions. Optimally these sessions ought to be in-person and onsite. Also, some of the existing training sessions may last only five minutes because of lower attention spans or the need to get employees back to work quickly. Hence, the need for in-person training.

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) distributed funds to universities to assist with worker training after the devastating impacts of the 2020 pandemic. Yet many of these funds ended up being used to teach marketing skills and not real-life adult coping and education skills. Hospitality certification’s core is teaching skills and destination knowledge.



“Flawless Delivery demonstrates that turnover is reduced by these certifications programs. The certifications process saves corporations millions, money that can be redirected to increase more investment in the state of Alabama. An investment by the state of Alabama legislature has the possibility of saving millions.

Thea Harvey-Barratt,
Holistic Performance Group

Do Training Programs Work?

Industry-based training programs explicitly target key sectors of the economy, where labor demand is strong and where workers without college degrees can earn living wages, and train workers for jobs in those sectors – which include health care, information technology, advanced manufacturing and hospitality.

Studies have identified large and lasting impacts of sector-based training on the education and/or earnings of those who take part, and are cost-effective over time. Harvard University reviewed several rigorous evaluations of industry-based programs that appear successful. They also identified what causes industry-based training to be so successful: an ability to train workers for high-paying jobs and sectors, the transferable and certifiable skills that such training generates, and reductions of employment barriers to high-wage sectors, particularly for women and people of color. Project Quest and Year Up, two national certification training programs, have each been evaluated a number of times and the results have indicated strong positive impacts of each.

Evidence of certification effectiveness remains strong and will continue to be a major pillar of workforce policy.

Hospitality Training Programs

Hospitality training programs offer a wide range of benefits to individuals seeking to work in the hospitality industry as well as businesses operating in this sphere.

1. Improved Customer Service: Focus on enhancing customer service skills. Employees learn how to interact with guests, handle complaints and provide personalized experiences, leading to higher levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty.

2. Increased Knowledge and Expertise: Provide employees with essential knowledge about the industry, including food and beverage management, hotel operations, event planning, and more. This assists employees perform their jobs efficiently.

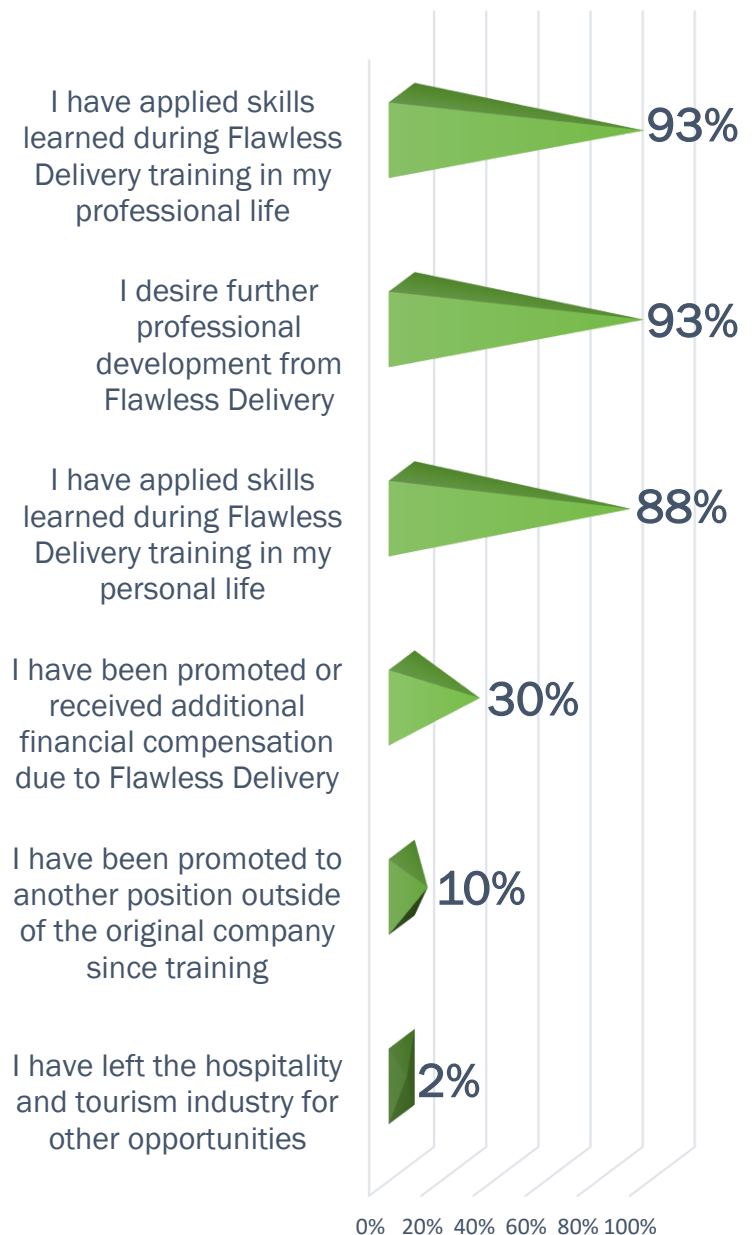
3. Enhanced Communication Skills: Effective communication is crucial in the hospitality industry. Training programs teach employees how to communicate clearly, listen actively and convey information professionally, leading to better guest interactions.

4. Consistency in Service: Hospitality training programs establish standardized procedures and service protocols, ensuring that all staff members provide a consistent level of service. This consistency is vital for maintaining a positive brand image.

5. Safety and Compliance: Training programs cover health and safety regulations, hygiene standards and legal compliance. This knowledge helps reduce accidents, foodborne illnesses, and legal liabilities.

6. Adaptability: Hospitality training programs prepare employees to handle a variety of situations, from handling difficult guests to addressing emergencies. This is valuable in a dynamic industry.

Flawless Delivery Post-Training Results



7. Teamwork and Leadership: Training programs foster teamwork and leadership skills, which are essential for coordinating efforts in hotels, restaurants and event venues. Strong leadership ensures smooth operations and employee morale.

8. Career Advancement: Hospitality training programs often include opportunities for skill development and career advancement. Employees who complete these programs often are eligible for promotions and increased responsibilities.

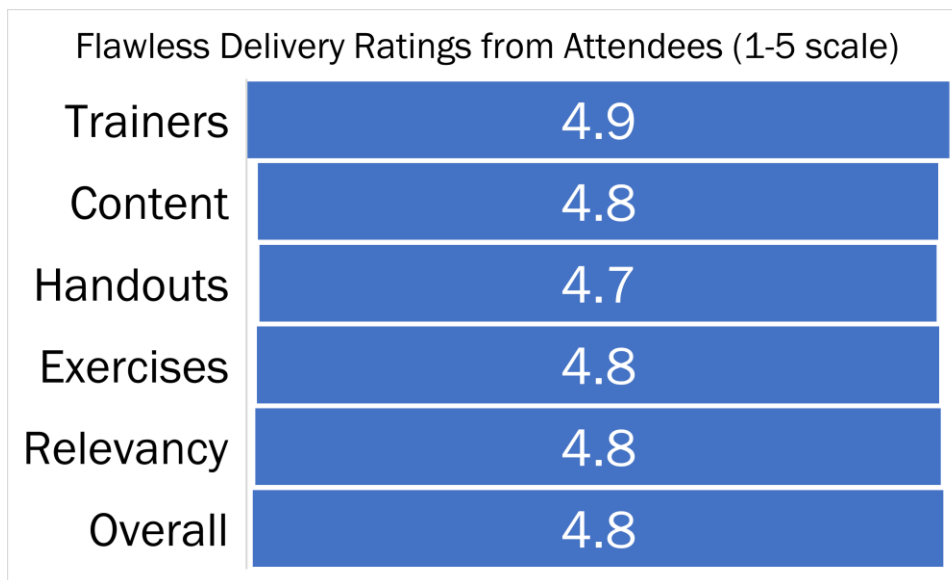
9. Increased Employee Morale: Providing training opportunities demonstrates a commitment to employee development, which can boost morale and job satisfaction. Satisfied employees are more likely to provide exceptional service.

10. Cost Savings: Properly trained employees are more efficient and make fewer errors, leading to cost savings for businesses. Training can also reduce turnover rates, which can be expensive for recruiting and onboarding new employees.

11. Industry Networking: Some training programs offer opportunities for networking with industry professionals, which can be beneficial for career growth and business partnerships.

12. Guest Satisfaction and Repeat Business: Ultimately, the improved service and guest satisfaction resulting from hospitality training programs can lead to repeat business and positive word-of-mouth referrals, helping businesses thrive.

Overall, hospitality training programs play a crucial role in ensuring the success of both individual employees and businesses in the hospitality industry. They contribute to higher levels of service quality, guest satisfaction and profitability.



Outstanding Hospitality Certification Program in the United States

Hospitality training certification programs are designed to provide individuals with specialized skills and knowledge in various aspects of the hospitality industry. These certifications can enhance qualifications and job prospects in the field, whether one is starting a career or seeking to advance in a specific area. The most widely known hospitality training certifications:

- Certified Hospitality Professional (CHP)
- Certified Hotel Administrator (CHA)
- Certified Food and Beverage Executive (CFBE)
- Certified Meeting Professional (CMP)
- Certified Association Sales Executive (CASE)
- Certified Spa Supervisor (CSS)
- Certified Restaurant Server (CRS)
- Certified Tour Professional (CTP)
- Certified Travel Associate (CTA)
- Certified Spa Therapist (CST)
- ServSafe Food Handler Certification
- Certified Guest Service Professional (CGSP)

The most widely known and respected hospitality certification program is the CHA - **Certified Hospitality Administrator**. Offered by the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute, an esteemed organization in the hospitality industry, it is designed for hospitality professionals, specifically those in leadership or management roles within the accommodations sector. It covers concentrates on hotel management, which includes leadership, finance, marketing and human resources. The CHA certification is widely recognized by employers and can boost career opportunities.

Treat 'Em Right

"Treat 'Em Right" is a phrase often used in the hospitality industry to emphasize the importance of providing exceptional customer service and making guests feel welcome and valued. This is what AMLA's Flawless Delivery offers. While "Treat 'Em Right" may not refer to a specific formal training program or institution (although there is an outstanding private hospitality training organization that is named such), the phrase encapsulates the core principles of hospitality service and encapsulated by Flawless Delivery. Key aspects of training:

Trends in
Hospitality
Certification
programs

Being empathetic

Conflict resolution

Setting expectations

The above are all addressed in Flawless Delivery

1. Customer-Centric Approach: Training certification programs emphasize the importance of putting customers or guests at the center of all interactions. This includes actively listening to their needs and preferences and going above and beyond to meet expectations.

2. Empathy and Understanding: Hospitality professionals empathize with guests. Understanding their feelings and concerns allows staff to address issues more effectively and create a positive experience.

3. Effective Communication: Staff is trained to communicate clearly, professionally and with a positive, friendly demeanor. Non-verbal communication is addressed.



“Trainers have found that most attendees are taught the mechanical skills of their position, yet lack basic people skills or have no emotional attachment to their job. They are not taught the soft skills. Flawless Delivery educates attendees to understand that each individual is a contributor to the industry and is valuable.”

Pam Swanner, Alabama Black Belt Adventures Association

4. Problem-Solving Skills: Hospitality professionals are taught how to handle guest complaints and challenges with a problem-solving mindset. The goal is to resolve issues quickly and to the guest's satisfaction.

5. Attention to Detail: Paying attention to the smallest details can make a significant difference in a guest's experience. Training programs stress the importance of cleanliness, room setup, demeanor and other elements that contribute to a pleasant stay.

6. Teamwork: Hospitality often involves collaboration among various departments, such as front desk, housekeeping and food service. Training emphasizes teamwork and effective coordination to ensure smooth operations.

7. Cultural Sensitivity: In a diverse world, hospitality professionals must be culturally sensitive and respectful of guests from different backgrounds. Training encourages an inclusive approach that values diversity.

8. Product Knowledge: Staff members need to have a deep understanding of the services, amenities, and offerings of their establishment. This knowledge allows them to provide informed recommendations and assistance.

9. Time Management: Efficient time management ensures that guests receive prompt and timely service. Training may include strategies for managing workload and prioritizing tasks.

10. Adaptability: The hospitality industry is unpredictable. Training teaches staff to adapt to changing circumstances such as emergencies or unexpected guest requests.

11. Continuous Improvement: "Treat 'Em Right" training encourages a culture of continuous improvement. Staff is motivated to seek feedback, learn from experiences and seek paths to enhance the guest experience.

12. Leadership: In supervisory roles, leadership skills are crucial for motivating and managing teams effectively. Training may include leadership development for managers and supervisors.

Many hospitality training programs incorporate these principles to ensure that staff members are well-prepared to provide exceptional service and create memorable experiences for guests.

Visitor Experience Education Strategy and Tactics

Once community relations partners, destination organization executives are now community leaders influencing the economic success of their cities. They research trends, plan for future growth and manage the city’s brand together. The teamwork extends to improving the visitor experience. Community members are getting involved with visitor experience education, from college courses to online training.

Destination managers have secured collaboration with other community leaders. Their strategic plans align with community goals. And they are positively affecting the city’s brand with exceptional visitor experiences. The strategic plans include ways to measure both the Return on Investment and Return on Expectations of improvements in service, training and marketing.

Leaders are intent on keeping funding at current levels and finding new sources of revenue. Their job is easier when they are supplying an excellent visitor experience, and their stakeholders and community know it.

Rather than thinking of your development program as an investment in learning, it may help to think of education as an investment in your workforce. Then you can point to specific improvements demonstrated by your team as proof the new knowledge is working. You may want to look at ROE instead.



“Often times, government funds meant for training that are sent to universities (i.e. ARPA) end up being used for marketing education and not real-life adult education. Hospitality certification is about teaching skills and destination knowledge.”

What is ROE?

Return on Expectations (ROE) measures the goals of a training program and then designs training sessions to meet those specific targets. Those targets might be behavioral (better greetings at a Welcome Center), learning-based (everyone understands how to recommend things to do) or focused on a specific outcome (upselling at bars and restaurants or extra nights at hotels), thus, more dollars spent in a community.

Phil Bruno, Treat ‘Em Right

Destinations International, an organization dedicated to convention and visitors bureaus encourages a transformation to experience. It is now offering ideas on how community engagement leads to a more rewarding visitor experience. Transformative experience ideas include yoga retreats, workshops on art and outdoor adventures and visitor interaction.

The industry is transforming from measuring Return on Investment and Return on Expectations.

Host Counties

Baldwin

Butler

Calhoun

Clarke

Clay

Coffee

Colbert

Cullman

Dallas

DeKalb

Escambia

Etowah

Fayette

Houston

Jackson

Jefferson

Lauderdale

Lawrence

Lee

Limestone

Madison

Marshall

Montgomery

Morgan

Shelby

Tallapoosa

Tuscaloosa

Winston

Training ROI is More Than The Bottom Line

Training often does not increase a company's bottom line directly yet it has an immediate impact in areas such as customer satisfaction, employee happiness and job performance. When there are other metrics to offer, one can give leadership a more accurate assessment of a training program's effectiveness and a better idea of the return.

Unfortunately, many organizations tend to see training as a cost, rather than an investment that will indirectly increase revenue to a destination over time; they often want proof that training programs are increasing their bottom line.

Visitor experience refers to the overall impression, feelings, and satisfaction that visitors have when they interact with a particular place, event, attraction or destination. It encompasses all aspects of the visitor's journey, from the initial contact and planning stages to the actual visit and post-visit reflections. Visitor experience is a critical aspect of the tourism and hospitality industry and can significantly impact a destination's reputation and success.

Key Elements of Visitor Experience Include

Pre-Visit Stage:

- Information and Planning: The availability and clarity of information regarding the destination or attraction, including websites, brochures, and online reviews.
- Booking and Reservations: The ease of making reservations for accommodations, tickets, tours, and other services.
- Expectations: Visitor perceptions and expectations formed before the visit based on marketing materials and word-of-mouth.

On-Site Experience:

- Accessibility: The ease of reaching the destination and moving within it, including transportation and infrastructure.
- Quality of Facilities: The condition and cleanliness of facilities such as accommodations, restrooms, and visitor centers.
- Service Quality: The friendliness, professionalism, and helpfulness of staff and guides.

On-Site Experience (continued)

- Interpretation and Education: The availability of information and educational materials that enhance understanding and engagement.
- Safety and Security: Visitors' perception of safety and the effectiveness of security measures.
- Engagement: The opportunities for visitors to actively participate, explore, and interact with the environment or exhibits.
- Aesthetic and Emotional Appeal: The visual and sensory aspects that create a positive emotional response.



“A nice benefit is the cross pollination aspect of Flawless Delivery. Attendees created packages to give special deals to each other’s guests; they also discussed how to continue to cross market. Flawless Delivery birthed new ideas”

Dr. Ryan Kate Gibson,
Holistic Performance Group

Post-Visit Stage:

- Memories and Impressions: Visitors' lasting memories and impressions of their experience.
- Word of Mouth: The likelihood of visitors recommending the destination or attraction to others.
- Repeat Visitation: The potential for visitors to return in the future.
- Feedback and Reviews: Public reviews and feedback on online platforms and social media.

How to Improve the Visitor Experience?

For decades the benchmark of a successful destination was the metric of “heads in beds,” how many visitors a destination can get in a hotel but it is now evolving to the visitor experience. Tourism destinations have often overlooked the overall experience due to lack of measurement strategies. Yet, today that is rapidly changing.

The future destination marketing organization (DMO) will look at the bottom of the funnel – the customer – rather than the top of the funnel - management. More DMOs are looking at the visitor and their experience.

DMOs content is no longer unique as it can be found anywhere. The DMO can differentiate itself by the customer experience and visitor care. Hence, the future of the marketing of tourism will revolve around visitor experiences.

Good visitor experiences will create brand ambassadors. Visitors who have an enjoyable experience in a destination tend to share their experiences creating positive word-of-mouth.

Effective Hospitality Certification Programs

Certification programs can be highly effective, but their effectiveness depends on various factors, including the type of certification, the industry or field, the quality of the program, and the individual's goals and commitment. Here are some key points to consider:

Relevance: The effectiveness of a certification program often depends on its relevance to the specific field or industry. Some certifications are highly regarded and widely recognized, making them valuable assets for career advancement.

Skill Enhancement: Certification programs can provide valuable knowledge and skills that are in demand in the job market. They can help individuals develop expertise and stay current in their profession.

Career Advancement: Many employers value certifications as a way to gauge an individual's qualifications. Holding a relevant certification can increase your chances of getting hired or promoted.

Industry Standards: In some fields, certifications are industry standards, and not having them can limit your career opportunities. For example, in the IT industry, certifications like CompTIA, Cisco, or Microsoft certifications are often required or preferred.

Learning Experience: The quality of the certification program matters. Well-designed programs with up-to-date content and experienced instructors are more likely to be effective in helping individuals acquire skills.


Networking: Some certification programs offer opportunities to network with professionals in your field, which can be beneficial for career growth and development.

Personal Commitment: Ultimately, the effectiveness of any certification program depends on your commitment and effort. Earning a certification usually involves studying and passing exams, which requires dedication and hard work.

Employer Support: Some employers provide support for employees pursuing certifications, such as covering the costs of courses and exams or offering study leave. This can make certification programs more accessible and effective.

Continuous Learning: Many fields evolve over time. To remain effective, professionals may need to pursue additional certifications or engage in continuous learning to stay current.

Market Demand: The effectiveness of a certification can also depend on market demand. In some cases, certain certifications may be more valuable in terms of job opportunities and earning potential.



“People who have never worked in the industry before are very interested in learning more. Flawless Delivery teaches that a frontline employee may be the only interaction a guest has. The techniques in Flawless Delivery can help one be a better person and employee.”

Candace Johnson, University of Alabama Center for Economic Development

Flawless Delivery Testimonials

All is very valuable, but the realization of areas I need to work on is most valuable to me. It's much easier to see issues in others but now I feel the ability to look at myself and see areas needing improvement.

The section on managing stress and building resilience was the most profound for me.

The most valuable part of training for me is learning how to become more self aware and how it affects not only me but everyone around me. Learning team work look many ways from what we believe.

This training was very relatable. It has challenged me to think of other ways of handling stressful situations in both my professional and personal life.

So Valuable: 1. Learning to read the customer. 2. Make the customer happy 3. Build relationship with co-workers

We were able to learn about other hotels and the workers at those hotels. We were able to learn how to work on emotions and responsibility.

The scientific & neuroscience facts & tips to create mindfulness & activate the parasympathetic system was helpful.

The group exercises and lectures were very good in making you think about hospitality and how you can improve the guest experience and interaction.

Training to pause - allowing time to during a shift - helpful, especially on a night audit to mediate and regroup while trying to work against your circadian rhythm.

I think listening and communication is something everyone can use. I liked the managing stress, conflict resolution and EQ sections.

I also liked how we had to think of specific situations and the outcomes of them and how to take things moving forward.

For someone who struggles with people pleasing, the part we covered about taking emotion out of business will thoroughly make a difference.