

Range of considerations influences GM selection

BY JENA TESSE FOX
@JENAFOX

Climbing the ladder to the role of GM is the dream of many a hospitality employee, but what an aspiring hotelier wants and what a management company or owner needs may be two different things. Here are five factors to consider when selecting a

property's GM.

1 Familiarity with the company's culture: Promoting from within can be a good strategy, reducing the time it takes to teach the corporate mindset. "You've got someone who's already gone through the acculturation and who really understands the semantics that we use and the cul-

tural elements and its systems," said Carlos Flores, president and CEO of Sonesta International Hotels Corporation.

Promoting internally also signals to employees that there's a path forward. Chartwell Hospitality has a specific program to prepare potential GMs for their future roles, and to get middle

managers up to the next level, said COO Kevin Green.

2 Experience and engagement: When hiring a GM externally, a company should look for demonstrable signs of a candidate's success. "We look for guest satisfaction scores, employee turnover stats and success on profit-and-loss and

sales," Green said.

But numbers don't always paint the complete picture. "We look at not just guest service scores, but [at] an ability to positively effect change and demonstrate improvement in those arenas," said Pete Sams, EVP of full-service operations at Interstate Hotels & Resorts.

Leadership, said Gary Isenberg, president of asset & property management services at LW Hospitality Advisors, is the ability to be open-minded. "Everyone's contributing to the common cause of improving customer satisfaction and driving profitability for the owners," he said. "But at the same time, each department head in each discipline has a different perspective on how to do that. The general manager needs to be able to tie that together and keep them all working in harmony."

3 Experience with a product type: A candidate's experience at a specific type of hotel is also an important factor to consider. A team at a convention hotel, for example, will have a tough time getting comfortable with a GM who does not have big-box experience, said Larry Trabulsi, SVP at asset management company CHMWarnick. Similarly, if the staff at a property is unionized, does the potential GM have experience working with union reps?

4 Willingness to move: But even when promoting internally, a management company may want to move a new GM to a new property. "As a department head, there may be relationships that you've forged or maybe some conflicts that you've created," Isenberg said. "It's easier for those transitions and changes to happen when someone goes somewhere fresh, where there are no preconceived relationships and expectations."

5 A positive attitude: At the end of the day, said Green, a management company needs people who fit into the culture of both the hotel and the company itself. Added Sams, "We can't push a culture down through the organization. The culture has to exist within each and every business unit." **HM**

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