

WINEGARDNER & HAMMONS' HOLISTIC APPROACH TO WINNING CUSTOMERS



Winegardner & Hammons, Inc. is an independent hotel management and development firm operating 24 properties throughout the U.S. The company's mission is to exceed customers' expectations through exceptional hospitality management services and quality hotel products.

CHALLENGE

Ohio-based Winegardner & Hammons, Inc. has successfully managed a diverse portfolio of hotel and resort properties in the U.S. for more than five decades. Knowing that the company's employees are the key to its ongoing success, the client has invested heavily through the years in hiring and developing the best employees it can find to help set its hotels apart.

When managing some properties for a well-known hospitality brand, Winegardner & Hammons noticed a difference in the quality of the brand's workers compared with typical employees in the industry. It turned out that these employees had been evaluated and recommended by a Gallup talent selection assessment. Company leaders recognized that a partnership with Gallup to develop a standardized, talent-based hiring approach would elevate the level of performance across all of Winegardner & Hammons' properties.

APPROACH

Select the Best

Gallup set out to design a series of selection tools for multiple roles in the organization, including front-line staff, general managers, and sales and catering managers, among others. Researchers developed the tools by studying Winegardner & Hammons' top performers to identify the specific talents that lead to success in each role. Senior leaders believe these selection tools have helped Winegardner & Hammons crack the code in identifying employees who are the right fit for the company and who have the natural ability to create a distinctive experience for guests.

Hiring great managers is vital to Winegardner & Hammons' approach because the company holds managers accountable not only for running a successful hotel but also for taking care of the employees who work in it. And the focus on talent doesn't stop there. Every employee who works at a Winegardner & Hammons property is screened by a selection tool before being hired. The company considers the quality of its employees a key differentiator for its brand.

Engage Managers and Teams

Winegardner & Hammons' talent selection approach has heightened the overall quality of its workforce. But the company understands that its employees could become disengaged if its culture doesn't support their success. Given the company's considerable investment in bringing the right people on board, its leaders wanted to do everything possible to retain them. So it partnered with Gallup to launch a company-wide employee engagement program.

Because they are most responsible for engaging employees, Winegardner & Hammons makes investing in managers the linchpin of its engagement strategy. The company hires managers with the talent to motivate and engage others and holds them accountable for sustaining momentum on engagement. Managers receive a monthly balanced scorecard with key metrics and must meet certain requirements — including employee engagement targets — to earn bonuses, merit increases, and advancement opportunities.

CASE STUDY

Winegardner & Hammons emphasizes engagement from day one of the onboarding process for each new hire, and the focus continues throughout the employee's tenure. The company hosts pep rallies and service award banquets to recognize employees for superior performance. Daily, weekly, and monthly touchpoints among employees, teams, and managers, as well as "Coffee With the Manager" meetings and a company-wide newsletter, help foster ongoing communication and keep engagement top of mind for everyone. The company's top-down, integrated approach ensures every leader, team, and individual takes ownership for making Winegardner & Hammons a great place to work.

Focus on Strengths

General managers have considerable autonomy when it comes to learning and development opportunities for employees at the locations they supervise. Many use Gallup's Clifton StrengthsFinder — an online assessment that reveals users' natural patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors — to help their employees learn more about their innate talents and develop their strengths. Because all Winegardner & Hammons employees are selected for their talents, these managers see strengths development as a natural next step to helping workers achieve their full potential in their roles and on their teams.

IMPACT

In its mission statement, Winegardner & Hammons recognizes that a positive working environment sets the stage for superior service and profitability. By centering its business strategy on talent-based selection and employee engagement, the company has found a way to operationalize its mission. This ensures that even though the company's portfolio spans different hospitality brands across the country, employees will deliver a distinctive customer experience in each and every location, helping the company meet its business objectives and exceed investors' expectations.

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WINEGARDNER & HAMMONS
ENGAGEMENT RATIO



■ ENGAGED

■ ACTIVELY DISENGAGED

GLOBAL
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In the words of a senior manager, the partnership between Gallup and Winegardner has helped the company field a winning team at every property. The company has a ratio of 15 engaged employees to every actively disengaged employee, in stark contrast to the global rate of about 2-to-1. Further, its overall engagement score places it in the top 10% of companies in Gallup's global employee engagement database. And analysis shows that hotel properties that are more engaged have 35% lower turnover and 11% higher profitability than properties that are less engaged.

Because of results like these, Winegardner & Hammons is one of three companies to win the prestigious Gallup Great Workplace Award eight years in a row.