

REPORT

# Balancing *recognition* and *development*

Motivating hospitality managers for success





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# Key *takeways*



**Motivation in hospitality management is multifaceted**, with both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards necessary to foster engagement and job satisfaction among managers.



**Managers often face unique challenges**, whether promoted from within or hired externally, requiring tailored development and recognition programmes.



**Psychological theories like self-determination theory and Herzberg's two-factor theory** show that managers need both basic job security and opportunities for growth & recognition to thrive.



**Non-monetary rewards**, such as recognition, leadership development and career progression, are critical for retaining and motivating managers, especially those early in their careers.



**Scenario-based points systems** provide a dynamic and measurable way to track performance, rewarding managers for meeting specific goals and encouraging continuous development.



**Flexibility in reward systems** allows managers to take ownership of their growth, with the ability to choose learning opportunities that align with personal and team goals.



**Development-focused rewards**, such as shadowing senior leaders or spending the day in different roles, offer managers valuable hands-on experience that enhances leadership skills and empathy.



**Younger managers, particularly Millennials and Gen Z**, value work-life balance, personal growth and innovative leadership opportunities, making it essential to tailor reward systems to these values.



**Incorporating gamification and digital rewards**, like leaderboards and badges, can create a competitive yet collaborative environment, motivating managers to improve their performance and leadership.



**A holistic reward system** combining performance recognition with professional development is essential for long-term motivation, job satisfaction and retention in hospitality management.

# Understanding motivation in *hospitality management*

In the fast-paced and often high-pressure environment of hospitality, the role of management is pivotal to success. Whether they are promoted from within the company or hired externally, managers face a unique set of challenges.

Often, they have worked their way up through the ranks and received general staff training but may lack the specialised skills needed to manage teams effectively.

On the other hand, managers hired externally may have the technical expertise but lack specific knowledge of the unique dynamics of hospitality management or the new company they work for.

Rewards and recognition programmes can play a crucial role in addressing these challenges, motivating managers to not only meet their responsibilities but also exceed expectations.

This report will explore how the psychology of rewards can be applied to training and developing managers within the hospitality industry, helping them to stay motivated and improve team performance.



# The science of motivation:

## *Psychological theories at play*

Effective management requires understanding the factors that drive behaviour. Several key psychological theories can help explain how rewards influence motivation, especially for managers in hospitality:

### 1. Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Managers in the hospitality industry must first have their basic needs met before they can focus on motivating their teams. This includes a secure position within the organisation and fair compensation.

Once these foundational needs are met, managers are more likely to be motivated by higher-order factors, such as recognition, personal development and career progression - important elements for managers who need to balance leadership with personal growth.

### 2. Herzberg's two-factor theory

Herzberg's theory differentiates between hygiene factors (such as job security and salary) and motivators (such as recognition and achievement).

Managers need both hygiene factors to prevent dissatisfaction and motivators to drive engagement and performance.

In the hospitality industry, managers are often motivated by the opportunity to shape their teams, influence company culture and receive recognition for their leadership success.

### 3. Self-determination theory (SDT)

Managers are more likely to be motivated by intrinsic factors such as autonomy and personal achievement. SDT suggests that motivation flourishes when individuals feel competent, autonomous and connected to others.

### 4. Operant conditioning and reinforcement theory

Management training and leadership behaviours can be reinforced through rewards.

When managers meet performance targets or lead their teams effectively, positive reinforcement, such as public recognition or opportunities for advancement, can strengthen these behaviours, creating a cycle of improvement and growth.

# Rewards in action:

## *Types and effectiveness for managers*

Managers in the hospitality industry, whether in a managerial position or in training for one, respond differently to rewards compared to front-line staff.

Understanding the types of rewards that resonate with them is key to driving engagement and performance.

### 1. Extrinsic rewards for managers

Monetary rewards, bonuses and career advancement opportunities are often the most immediate motivators for managers.

These extrinsic rewards are particularly effective when tied to measurable outcomes such as team performance, customer satisfaction or revenue growth.

However, research suggests that while extrinsic rewards can provide short-term motivation, their effectiveness tends to diminish over time and anything longer term requires further intrinsic support to maintain sustained engagement and performance.

### 2. Intrinsic rewards for managers

For managers, intrinsic rewards such as recognition from peers, opportunities for leadership development and the ability to take ownership of projects are vital

Managers often thrive when they are trusted to lead with autonomy, given opportunities for personal growth and recognised for achieving leadership milestones.

### Research insight

Studies, like the research from **Jo and Shin** or from **Luthans and Stajkovic**, show that managers who receive frequent, meaningful recognition from their superiors are more likely to be motivated to exceed expectations, not just in terms of their own work but also in how they lead their teams.



# The impact of rewards on managerial *job satisfaction and retention*

The hospitality industry often faces a high turnover rate in management roles, with many managers feeling unsupported in their development and training.

Properly structured rewards systems can help improve satisfaction and reduce turnover.

## 1. Resource engagement points

Non-monetary rewards, such as opportunities for professional development or tailored leadership training, are particularly valuable for managers who are looking to grow within the organisation.

Providing a clear career path with ongoing leadership learning programmes can also contribute to job satisfaction.

## 2. Career development access points

Many managers are promoted internally but receive limited or general training, often without a dedicated focus on leadership development. This lack of investment can lead to burnout, dissatisfaction and, eventually, turnover.

Reward systems can address this by offering career development incentives, recognition and job satisfaction.

### Research insight

According to **Gallup**, managers who feel that they are offered adequate professional development opportunities are more likely to be engaged in their roles and less likely to leave the company.



# Best practices for implementing *reward systems for managers*

To create a reward system that truly motivates hospitality managers, organisations must focus on the unique needs of this group.

Managers, more than any other employee, require a rewards system that recognises both their individual and leadership achievements.

## 1. Designing an effective reward system for managers

A well-designed reward system for managers should focus on both their personal achievements and the performance of their teams.

Recognition should be both formal (bonuses, awards) and informal (public acknowledgment, praise from peers).

Rewards must be aligned with the organisational goals and values to reinforce the desired behaviours.

## 2. Technological integration in reward systems for managers

Technology plays an important role in enhancing manager reward systems.

Platforms like Mapal can be used to track performance metrics and provide real-time feedback, allowing managers to understand how their leadership efforts are contributing to overall business goals.

This kind of feedback loop is crucial for managers who are trying to improve both their performance and their team's performance.



# Understanding motivation in *hospitality management*

While the points system itself is an effective way to track and recognise progress, complementing it with development-focused rewards can further enhance motivation.

Managers, particularly those early in their careers or those promoted from within, often benefit from rewards that go beyond monetary incentives.

These types of rewards help managers build new skills, expand their leadership capabilities and gain exposure to different aspects of the business.

**Here are some hypothetical examples of how managers could earn development-focused rewards for collecting a set number of points:**

## Spend the day as a chef

Rewarding a manager with the chance to spend a day in the kitchen offers more than just skill-building; it's a unique and engaging way to experience the operational side of the business.

Managers can learn how to prepare a signature dish, providing insight into the challenges faced by kitchen staff while developing a deeper appreciation for their roles.

This hands-on experience not only enhances empathy but also equips managers with practical knowledge they can apply to their leadership style, such as handling time constraints, working under pressure and team coordination.

## Behind-the-scenes access at other locations

Instead of just a standard job rotation, this reward allows managers to visit and work in different locations within the business, experiencing roles they might not have encountered before.

Whether it's observing operations at a high-end restaurant or managing a busy front desk in a hotel, this type of exposure broadens their understanding of the business and allows them to bring fresh perspectives back to their teams.

It's a unique experience that goes beyond traditional training, offering fun and learning opportunities all at once.

## "Lead for a day" experience

Allowing a manager to "lead" a different part of the business for a day, such as running a specific department or leading a team on a special project, can be a rewarding way to give them more responsibility in a fun, low-risk way.

They can gain valuable insights into different facets of leadership while also feeling like their skills and decision-making abilities are being tested and valued.

This could include a "shadowing day" where the manager steps into the shoes of a senior leader and takes on their responsibilities for the day.

## Exclusive industry conference experience

Instead of simply offering attendance at a conference, turn it into a reward by offering all-inclusive access to special sessions, VIP meet-and-greets or opportunities for personal networking.

Rewarding managers with a fully curated experience at a high-profile event can be a motivating way to let them learn from experts while feeling like they're being invested in as future leaders.

The additional exposure to new trends, strategies and insights can energise them and inspire new approaches to their roles.

### Team celebration with special activity

Reward top-performing managers with an opportunity to organise a celebratory activity for their team, such as a day out, team-building exercises or an offsite event.

The reward can include a budget for a fun, memorable experience (e.g., an escape room challenge, a cooking class or a weekend retreat).

This not only rewards the manager but also fosters team cohesion and allows the manager to take charge of a fun, engaging activity - an opportunity to practice leadership skills in a more relaxed, creative setting.

### Personalised leadership “adventure” day

Instead of generic leadership coaching, give managers the opportunity to choose a hands-on experience that ties to their leadership development.

Whether it's taking part in a leadership adventure course, attending a workshop focused on strategic thinking or spending the day with an industry leader for exclusive mentorship, this personalised approach makes the reward feel tailored to their growth journey.

It allows managers to develop leadership qualities in a unique and fun way, making the process feel more exciting and impactful.

### A day with a mentor

Pairing a manager with a high-level mentor for a day of personalised insight and guidance offers an enriching experience.

Not only is this an exclusive, rewarding experience, but it also allows the manager to ask questions and learn firsthand from someone who has achieved success in their field.

This can be an incredibly inspiring and motivating reward, deepening their commitment to their career and leadership journey.

These rewards, which focus on skill development and leadership enhancement, align with the intrinsic motivators discussed earlier, such as personal growth and autonomy.

By offering managers the opportunity to develop new skills and expand their professional knowledge, businesses can enhance both engagement and job satisfaction.



# The future of rewards for *hospitality managers*

As the hospitality industry evolves, so do the expectations of its managers. Future reward systems must take into account the changing needs of managers and how they want to be recognised and motivated.

## 1. Generational shifts in reward preferences

Younger managers, particularly Millennials and Gen Z, place **high value on work-life balance**, personal growth and opportunities to lead in innovative ways.

Tailoring reward systems to these values can help attract and retain the next generation of managers.

## 2. Gamification and digital rewards for managers

As with front-line staff, gamification can play a positive role in rewarding managers. Offering badges, leaderboards and team challenges can foster collaboration and a community of practise where people ask for support, recognise top performers and reach out for their advice.



# Integrating scenario-based points systems for *manager motivation and development*

As we've explored in previous sections, motivating hospitality managers requires a balance of both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards that support their professional growth and job satisfaction.

The introduction of a scenario-based points system adds a dynamic layer to how businesses can engage their management teams, offering a flexible and measurable framework for recognising achievement and encouraging continuous development.

## Enhancing motivation through Mapal's scenario-based points system

Mapal's new points system provides a practical way to motivate managers by tying specific actions and achievements to tangible rewards.

Managers earn points for completing key tasks that reflect their leadership and development progress. These tasks - such as completing required modules or appraisals - are designed to align with organisational goals while also fostering individual growth.

The system allows for a degree of customisation, enabling businesses to toggle scenarios on or off based on their priorities.

For example, managers can earn points for completing required training or for engaging in exploratory learning through optional modules.

This flexibility not only supports performance but also encourages managers to take ownership of their professional growth, as they can choose to explore areas outside of their immediate job requirements.

Additionally, this system can complement Mapal's Engagement platform, enhancing the learning experience by encouraging managers to engage with their peers, share insights and participate in communities of practice.

This collaborative learning environment fosters shared knowledge and supports continuous development, allowing managers to learn from others and apply new ideas within their teams.

As managers earn points, their progress is displayed on a Leaderboard, which introduces an element of friendly competition and then you can shout about it using Mapal's Engagement tools.

This public recognition can motivate managers to continually push their performance, creating an environment where achievement is celebrated and growth is prioritised.

## Linking with managerial motivation theories

The integration of the points system complements the psychological theories of motivation discussed earlier in the report.

According to **self-determination theory (SDT)**, motivation is strongest when individuals feel competent, autonomous and connected. By allowing managers to take ownership of their learning and development through the flexible points system, they are more likely to experience the autonomy that fuels intrinsic motivation.

Similarly, the **Herzberg two-factor theory** is reflected in the balance between hygiene factors (such as meeting training requirements) and motivators (such as leadership development and recognition through the leaderboard).

Furthermore, the system's adaptability to specific organisational goals aligns with the idea that motivation is most effective when it is personalised.

By enabling scenarios that reflect both individual and team goals, Mapal's points system helps to ensure that managers are not only meeting expectations but also advancing in their careers in a way that feels rewarding and aligned with their aspirations.

# Fostering motivation and development *in hospitality managers*

Motivating and retaining effective hospitality managers requires a balanced approach that addresses both immediate performance and long-term development. To achieve this, organisations must create reward systems that cater to the unique challenges faced by managers, whether promoted from within or hired externally.

Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators play a crucial role in helping managers thrive, with recognition of personal achievements and leadership success being key to fostering engagement. While monetary rewards are important, they should be complemented by opportunities for growth and recognition beyond financial incentives.

Mapal's scenario-based points system offers a flexible framework for tracking progress and rewarding managers, allowing for customisation to fit organisational needs. When paired with development-focused rewards, such as spending time in other roles or hands-on experiences, this system creates an engaging way to motivate managers.

These rewards not only enhance skills but also foster leadership and empathy, ultimately contributing to stronger teams and improved business performance.

A comprehensive reward system that combines performance recognition with growth opportunities is essential for keeping hospitality managers engaged, helping them grow within their roles and supporting the success of the organisation.



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