

Preliminary Survey for Training Programme

Report (extract of report in English)

2011/12

This material has been composed for the project *Starting up with Wellness Training – WELLNESS (2011-1-EE1-LEO05-02454)*

Contact:

Project coordinator: Sirje Ellermaa, Development Manager of Kuressaare Training Centre
Sirje.ellerm@ametikool.ee

Composed by: Sirje Pree sirje.pree@gmail.com

Objective and sample

In connection with the idea of creating a training programme for wellness service workers, the task to map the expectations and needs in that area of activity was set up. Figure 1 describes the vision of the training programme workgroup on wellness services (created in autumn 2011 in Haapsalu).

On that basis, initial questionnaires (for managers and service workers) were created, the questions were tested in January 2012 and changes were made. From the beginning of February 2012, the respondents (the sample) could answer the questions. Two questionnaires were created: one for managers, one for service workers. The questionnaires were available in an interactive form and also on paper.

The questions were created with reference to the set tasks in order to find answers to the following questions:

- * What fields of services?
- * Who will be the workers?
- * What characterises the jobs in wellness services?
- * What kind of trained workers are needed?
- * etc.

There were 16 respondents to the managers' questionnaire and 24 respondents to the service workers' questionnaire. As in a smaller business the manager may also perform the duties of a service worker and a larger business can have several management positions, the number of respondents does not reflect the number of involved businesses.

The obtained results were coded and put in tables, the main figures required for an analysis (sums, means) were calculated, the service workers were grouped according to the types of service. Subgroups were formed for beauty services, body treatments and accommodation services staff, represented by at least 10 respondents, i.e. 42%).

As to the responding managers, most of the respondents (7 i.e. 44%) were from large cities (Tallinn, Tartu, Pärnu), an equal number of responding managers were from businesses located in the countryside and those located in county centres (25% i.e. 4 from each category), one respondent was from a town of another type. Because information about the questionnaires was provided by the Estonian Spa Association, the sample does not include beauty parlors or other such businesses.

The fields of activity of most of the respondents included most of the traditional wellness services. To some extent it can be said that the providers of beauty services stay longer in their jobs than for example staff in accommodation services, but the difference is not significant.

Different wellness services can be of different importance for the business and the workers. First and foremost, accommodation and catering are considered important services, which can be combined with traditional wellness services as accompanying or accessory services. Also a strong correlation was detected between accommodation and catering.

There is no significant difference between the opinions of the managers and those of the service workers. There are minor variations as to the importance of services among the representatives of different fields of services, but those results don't exceed the critical limit.

Workers in a particular field of activity perceive their field as more important for the business than the others, i.e. the workers have received feedback (been noticed). This figure is a little lower for beauty services as a whole, but for example hairdressers don't feel so about their work.

Expectations and needs in respect to workers

In order to map the skills and qualities necessary for wellness service workers and their future prospects, the following information was collected:

- Jobs that are more difficult to back up or more difficult to find new staff for (responses of both managers and service workers with indication of reasons)
- Qualities that are preferred when staff is hired for that particular type of services (responses of managers)

- Skills that are expected when wellness service workers are hired (responses of managers)
- Importance/ necessity of particular service skills (rated by service workers)
- Skills of providing information (importance evaluated by service workers)
- Training combinations that (would) meet the needs of the business (responses of both managers and service workers)
- Qualities of the job (evaluated by service workers on the Like - Don't like scale, with the option to skip non-applicable qualities)
- Recommendations (service workers recommended a job, the managers recommended a service, for identification of the trendiest services)

Jobs that were difficult to find staff for existed in different fields of services. There were service workers who said that it was easy to find staff, and there were managers who said that every job was difficult to find staff for (the latter correlated with provision of conference services). Service managers in different fields of services tended to describe their own field as difficult to find staff for.

It is more difficult to fill certain positions of skilled workers, such as beauticians, hairdressers, masseurs and hotel receptionists.

The lack of skills and the location of the business were indicated as reasons. It was also noted that the reasons were different for workers in different fields of services. The shortage of people with specialised skills is prominently mentioned, which gives a reason to hope that the future students' prospects of finding jobs are good.

There are certain differences between the reasons mentioned by the managers and those mentioned by the service workers. It is worth mentioning that in many cases the service workers did not indicate any reason when they answered the question.

Some comments of the managers on the subject of finding staff:

- Hotel receptionist – language skills + very extensive training in the use of the hotel administration program. Can only be backed up by another receptionist, because the backup staff needs to know how to work with the program, and the reception must be covered with a receptionist 24 h.
- Finding suitable workers is just time-consuming, not complicated or impossible. It could be worth mentioning that the choice of experienced and competent service managers is limited in a small town.
- It is most difficult to find a good beautician who in addition to facials would also be able to do good manicure/pedicure and body treatments. Schools teach only basic skills, which is not enough for a good spa. It is also difficult to find a good masseur who has a good knowledge of the human anatomy and can notice problems.

- Good service/sales staff in general. People who are service-minded (smile, are equally friendly to all customers and able to solve difficult situations), scrupulous, good at additional sales, able to learn in detail how to use specialised programs and, first of all, willing to communicate with people, are hard to find!
- Cooks – the choice is limited
- Beauty parlor receptionists – can't speak Finnish
- Providers of beauty services (body treatments, manicure/pedicure), because previous practice/ work experience is needed. It also depends of the location of the work place.
- Specialised skilled workers (beautician, hairdresser, masseur/body treatment provider). Reasons: low salary, use of different product brands (backup staff needs training), foreign language skills, frequently changing work schedule (depends on the number of customers in the spa and how actively they order services)
- Receptionist (permanent worker and backup) – stressful work with much responsibility. Beautician (permanent worker and backup) – shortage of qualified workers. Hairdresser, manicure/pedicure (permanent worker and backup) – shortage of qualified workers. Masseur (permanent worker and backup) – shortage of qualified workers.
- It has not been difficult to hire suitable workers, but it is difficult to find backups, because the job of spa service worker requires special training.

At the meeting of the workgroup in Haapsalu, a discussion on the subject of specialists and universal staff took place. That is why it was asked what training combinations are preferred.

The combinations used or preferred when hiring staff were as follows:

- Trained workers are hired to provide beauty and body treatment services, workers for other service groups are trained internally.
- Specialised training (specific knowledge of that particular field of work) is expected of every service worker.
- In addition to having been trained in one or two specific fields of services, every service worker should preferably have the competence to perform simple tasks in all other service groups. The work can always be organised in a better (more flexible) way.
- Beauty and body treatment staff are also able to provide information about and recommend other services. There are so-called universal service workers who can perform simple tasks in beauty and body treatment services.
- There are special workers who inform/supervise customers and others who actually provide the services (they needn't know the specific features of each other's work).

· Most of the wellness services are provided by other businesses who rent rooms on the premises, so the core business is not involved in the selection and training of their staff.

The results confirmed the hypothesis. The managers focused on the beauty and body treatment workers (mostly hiring trained workers for those jobs) who were also expected to provide information on other services, i.e. to understand the "big picture". The attitude of the service workers was more "strict", they would rather expect specialised knowledge and skills as a precondition for hiring. However, this can be just a sign of attachment to their special field of work. It can be concluded that "more universal" workers are welcome. Some comments were added, such as "both parties, the desk staff and the providers of services must know the specific features of each other's work." "The need for specialised training is different in different departments, for example a receptionist is trained on the job, but a masseur is expected to have a completed specialised training"; „We prefer professionally trained workers and provide additional on-the-job training to them, so they will be able to work with the products that we use. This is ongoing training, because new treatments and special services are introduced all the time."

When asked more specifically, what skills could be combined and how, the respondents found some tasks in every service group that workers without high professional skills could be trusted to perform. Such tasks were easiest to find in each respondent's own field of work. There were also responses where possible simple, so-called universal-skilled work tasks were described in detail.

Holding and providing information was considered the most important universal skill. As to the subjects of the information that the worker should hold/provide, the accommodation service workers (probably a few hotel receptionists among them) said that it was important to hold all the information, but the beauty service workers considered providing information about their own service preferable/sufficient. This could rather be expected, taking into account how long the beauty service workers, especially hairdressers, stay in their jobs and how highly specialised their training is.

Training of workers

Although it can be stated on the basis of the average education figures that most of the staff (service workers) have received secondary specialised education or a similar training, the real picture is more varied (also depending on the location and size of the business, the worker's field of work, etc. Usually beauty service workers and masseurs have completed the longest and most thorough training program. This is related to the development of the Estonian training market, where there have been and still are separate schools for hairdressers and masseurs. On-the-job training is provided in the fields of healthy diet, pools/saunas and general customer care.

However, the beliefs about the levels of training don't match the facts. It is believed that there are more skilled workers in the beauty services and more "casual" people in cleaning services and water halls. Because very few respondents represented the water halls and the cleaning services, it was not possible to verify that assumption.

Skills and qualities

Competence is formed of knowledge, skills and attitudes. This research mainly focused on the personal qualities and skills. However, it revealed that it was easier for the managers to list the desired personal qualities and attitudes than the skills. Among the skills, both universal, specialised and general skills were mentioned. Mostly the existence of specialised skills was mentioned, trusting the traditional specialised training and connecting the specialised skills to specialised education. Foreign language skills and service skills are considered to be the most important general skills. Among the foreign languages, the Finnish language was specifically mentioned.

Responses about service skills were obtained from the service workers who considered all of them important. However, readiness to assist skilled workers (which could have been expected on the basis of previous questions) was rated lower. Technological skills, i.e. knowing how to use the equipment was considered the most important service skill, in addition to a positive attitude. However, the technological aspect of wellness services is the fastest changing aspect which continuously requires internal training, the so-called product training.

The respondents were asked to rate the importance of the following service skills:

- Addressing the customer in a positive and caring way
- Listening to (finding out) the customer's wishes and needs
- Offering services to the customer, including additional sales
- Solving the customer's complaint so that the customer is satisfied and the business doesn't suffer loss
- Smiling also in difficult situations
- Apologizing
- Being punctual
- Accurate time planning
- Correct documentation of orders
- Neutral or positive relations with co-workers
- Staying in the role of a service worker until the end of the shift
- Having a groomed appearance appropriate in the job
- Knowing how to use the work equipment
- Knowing how to check the working condition of the equipment
- Detecting and immediate reporting of equipment malfunctions

- Being able to clean different service rooms (knowing how to use different cleaning agents, etc.)
- Knowing how to prepare tools for and assist the skilled worker (e.g. hairdresser)
- Knowing how to prepare tools for and assist the skilled worker (e.g. manicurist/pedicurist)

Need for learning or training

In the light of the rapid development of the wellness services and the shortage of qualified staff, the interest of the service workers in training was surprisingly low. Many service workers did not answer this question at all. There are two major areas where training is needed: vocational language skills and facial treatments. Also knowledge of health care and massage skills (except for body treatment providers) seem to be important. A significant correlation between the shortage of manicurists/pedicurists and the generally narrow knowledge of the school-leavers and their poor knowledge of anatomy was revealed. To some extent the picture formed by the responses describes the workers' awareness of the need to have wider skills/knowledge.

Qualities of wellness services as a job

There is a great variety of wellness services available, which means that the work in that field should be varied as well. There were no big differences in the main characteristics of the jobs (the differences were mostly arising from the organisation of work). Among other things the beliefs about the qualities of the wellness service jobs were evaluated.

An adequate amount of work, learning opportunities created by the employer, summer holidays (which are often impossible in tourist industry), variety, teamwork, flexible working hours, etc. were mentioned as positive qualities.

Irregularity, working late nights and weekends were mentioned as less pleasant.

A service job usually includes additional duties which the worker should be aware of. 65% of the responding service workers performed additional duties. The list of expected additional duties also included occasional "odd" ones, which were expressly or silently expected of the worker or were a result of poor awareness.

The following additional activities were mentioned:

- Backing up other workers
- Receiving deliveries
- Administrative work (coordination)

- Inventory
- Ordering facial care products
- Workout sessions
- Collecting catalogues
- Cleaning
- Working in the gym
- Participation in fairs
- Shining 24h
- Learning and development
- Heating
- Preparing saunas
- Assisting
- Spring cleaning

The managers were asked to describe the ways of verifying the quality of the services/products that could be a basis for the selection of staff and the planning of training, etc.

It appears that different businesses use different methods of obtaining feedback from the customers and workers – there is both systematic collection of feedback, recorded in writing, and casual collection of oral feedback.

Future prospects or what is good

The service workers were asked to compose a sentence inviting to work and the managers were asked to recommend a service provided by their business.

The service workers first and foremost see good future prospects for body treatments, where specialised training is expected, the managers have detected the needs of a society suffering from stress.