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# 9

# The Role of the Professional Body in the Development of Talent

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## Learning objectives

This chapter explores the value of professional bodies with a particular focus on talent management. After reading it and carrying out the suggested activities the reader will be able to:

- Understand the history of professional bodies and view their role in today's society in a positive way.
- Understand the value industry focused professional bodies have in developing talent management within the hospitality industry.
- Understand the value academic professional bodies have in developing talent for the hospitality industry.
- Consider the value membership of a professional body has in career development.

## Introduction

Professional bodies offer their members many benefits and come in many shapes and sizes at both an international and a national level. Within the UK there are a significant number of institutions that represent members within the broad hospitality profession and they take on many forms. This chapter aims to explore the role and benefits of professional bodies and review a number of these institutions focusing on their value and purpose. A full listing is shown in Table 9.1, and whilst all of the institutions offer value to individuals, some will have more value than others to those with a role in hospitality management and particularly those hospitality organizations that are focused on talent management within the UK.

## History

Professional bodies are the societies, institutions and associations that promote and further the careers of the people who practice in that particular field, discipline or industry. The Hospitality Guild, an overarching body for hospitality bodies defines a professional body as '*an organisation that helps individuals or businesses develop their skills in a particular industry or profession*'. 14 professional bodies are members of the recently formed Hospitality Guild, though there are also many bodies that have a significant role in supporting or promoting talent management within hospitality who are not members of the Hospitality Guild. Each body has a particular focus or purpose and they offer many reasons for their existence.

There appears to be a variety of definitions regarding bodies, institutions and associations. The original body though that represents people coming together under a profession is arguably the *guild*. The guilds held significant political influence and economic power across the world hundreds of years ago. Craftsmen, merchants and drapers, for example, held significant sway across their trades from the 13th century onwards, having come from original Saxon guilds whose name comes from 'gegildan' meaning 'to pay'. During the medieval period, guilds had taken on a central role in everyday life for people in Britain, with particular focus on its cities such as London. Guilds, as associations of artisans or merchants who control the practice of their craft, were mainly city- or town-centric. Sometimes referred to as *confraternities* the guilds were organized in a manner something between what we would recognize today as a professional association, trade union and a cartel. There were also traits of a secret society about many guilds. By the 12th century, groups of people in the same trade were drawn together for it was perceived to be convenient for those in the same trade to live and work closely together, and street names across many British cities and towns indicate which trades were based there. In London for example, the bakers would be near Bread Street, and the fishmongers in Friday Street, named after the Catholic demand for fish on Fridays. Whilst the cartel approach can be seen to have many negative connotations, these traditional guilds, operating as collectives, allowed individuals to work together in many aspects of business and trade, and in particular they worked towards the advancement of quality.

Benefits were evident to society via education through apprenticeships, and quality control implemented through stamps or marks of approval and a medieval approach to peer review. These collectives were able to show significant tangible benefits as well as more intrinsic values being developed by the members of the early guilds within Britain as well as across Europe. The main role of the guilds was to protect the quality and reputation of a trade and the members of a company. Over time, these loose groupings became official Livery Companies, named after the elaborate uniform, or livery, they wore for ceremonies and processions. The oldest charter of incorporation is for the Worshipful Company of Weavers in 1155.

The guilds developed rules of behavior about how their members should behave both within business and as a person. Rules of professional behaviour and an early view on ethical business and social behaviour became apparent with accounts from hundreds of years ago stating that individuals found guilty of spending too much time in the tavern, being lazy or enjoying spectator sports such as wrestling '*shal be put of for euermore of this companye*'. There were also similar warnings for anyone who should earn themselves 'an euel (evil) name' or to be accused of breach of the peace or theft.

The economic power and political influence wielded by the medieval guilds was significant, and by the early 14th century a closed shop approach to trade had developed, with no-one being allowed to practice a trade, set up shop, or take apprentices unless they were admitted to a livery company. Members of the guilds were appointed to the most important and influential positions in the community: the burghers, aldermen and even the Lord Mayor of London came from the ranks of, and were chosen by, the guilds. Richard Whittington, a member of the Mercer's Guild and the real-life Dick Whittington, was elected as Lord Mayor of London no less than four times by the guilds.

Although each guild had its own hall and coat of arms, this powerful and influential body needed a communal meeting place, so in the early 1400s London's magnificent Guildhall was constructed. This building is the only secular stone structure dating from before 1666 still standing in the City of London, having survived both the Great Fire of London and the Blitz. The Guildhall is a physical illustration of the power of the guilds, for as well as providing a venue for the guilds' commercial business, the Guildhall was also used for the civic and administrative duties of the guilds and their members.

The numerous guildhalls across the country continue to be physical legacies of the traditional guilds, and many are still used as meeting places today. Education was an important part of the traditional guilds and the emergence of universities at Bologna, Paris, and Oxford around the year 1200 is also in thanks to the guilds of that time. Along with the physical structures, the quality legacy is undeniably from the guilds and is still evident in both a historical and more modern context today. The Bakers' Marque is a standard of quality intended to help customers make informed choices about their bakery purchases. The Bakers' Marque is an independent organisation focusing on provenance, production and participation in the local community. Not unlike many of the traditional guilds. Customers buying their bread from a bakery awarded the Bakers' Marque can be certain of where their bread comes from and how it was made.

Whilst today there is evidence of the legacies, the well developed guilds, often referred to as fiefdoms, found their political influence and economic power diminish as capitalism and free markets grew across Europe, and in the UK in particular. They still exist today in many different forms, often with a different focus or purpose, though it is evident that they still have a role to play in the modern world of business, politics and the wider society. In the UK there are over

80 'chartered' professional institutions, covering areas of work including finance, engineering, construction, health, law, journalism, personnel and management. Within hospitality there are many professional bodies each with its own focus, and many of them either directly or indirectly have a role to play in enhancing quality standards, developing individuals and thereby influencing and supporting the development of talent specific to their area.

## Professional bodies and their value to society

In an uncertain world where government, trade associations and trade unions often have to think short term, the professional bodies, with many years of stability do stand out as organizations that provide a constant and consistent drive for technical, productivity and welfare improvements over the long term. They have no political or economic gains as societies, as they are a collective representation of individuals and organizations within business sectors. Professional bodies have at their core the desire to make things better, and in the 21st century this is generally through the sharing and dissemination of information. Professional bodies will focus on issues that improve techniques and processes, maximize advances in technology or sometimes better worker welfare. This third issue is perhaps contentious amongst some professional bodies where the focus is on betterment for members rather than workers generally. Whilst members almost always exist in a competitive environment, the professional bodies are there to help members collaborate rather than compete and thereby maximize benefits to all appropriate stakeholders. With having superior talent being recognized as the prime source of sustainable competitive advantage in high performance organizations, the professional bodies have a clear role to play in supporting all members enhance their ability to develop superior talent to compete ever more effectively.

Whilst professional bodies can and will often promote best practices, these are only 'best' when they're applied in a given context; what works for one company may not work in another. Hospitality companies cannot just mimic the top performers, they need to adapt talent management practices to their own strategy and circumstances and align them closely with their leadership philosophy and value system, while at the same time finding ways to differentiate themselves from their competitors. So whilst the membership supports a collegiate collaboration and sharing, each business, in order to retain a competitive edge must share in this collaboration, but also use talent management for its own competitive advantage.

Professional bodies play a significant role in creating value and the focus on areas such as productivity and social mobility score high on the current political agenda. A recent report *Understanding the Value of Professionals and Professional Bodies*, shows some interesting findings. The report was based on a survey of more than 2,000 members of the public and over 150 MPs regarding their perception of professional bodies. The report indicated that value of professional bodies in UK society is poorly recognized by many people, with only 41% saying they know