

# Hospitality manager training a growing success in Nigeria

A recent report released by BON Hotels shows that the group's strategy to build local skills and training through a 'home-grown' programme in the Nigerian hospitality industry, has been of success in boosting the number of Nigerian managers. The programme was adopted by the group two years ago when they entered the Nigerian hotel management arena.



Image Supplied.

Speaking at the launch of their newly refurbished hotel, BON Hotel Abuja, Bernard Cassar, director at BON Hotel International West Africa, notes: "Today across our hotels in Nigeria we are profoundly proud of our people. Our expat staff have taken us seriously and have devoted their energy to transfer their knowledge and abilities to eager recruits.

"We are able to boast from the rooftops that more and more of our hotels are managed on a senior level by locally trained Nigerian staff."

According to Cassar, this strategy has been a work in progress, when in 2001 Nigerian individuals were identified and fast-tracked to form a new generation of localised senior managers.

Of the 25 hotels in Nigeria which the group manages, 78% of their general managers, deputy managers, senior management, department heads and executive chefs have, over the last two years, been trained, skilled and promoted to senior level positions by the group.

## Localising management positions

Local management is headed up by Nigerian Paul Umoh, who, from his position as executive director and shareholder of BON Hotels International West Africa, is one of many local Nigerians who has been fast-tracked through the transformation policy.

Historically, the multinational Nigerian hotel sector has been run and managed by expatriate leadership, imported from countries such as the United Kingdom and South Africa. In the twenty years of a flourishing hotel sector, transformation and transfer of these skills sets has been slow or non-existent and unacceptable. "The predisposed support of imported staff, imported raw material, imported supplies with very little local encouragement is heart-breaking," says Cassar.

Otto Stehlik, BON Hotels International West Africa chairman, concluded that he is pleased with the progress of the group: "We recognised the need of skills development when we began operating in Nigeria. We put together a transformation programme, which the board identified as a priority. We are finally in a position where we have a team of elite Nigerians who have been trained, educated, skilled and, importantly, mentored to head up and be supported by senior executive management and head office. This forms an ideal base for future growth in Nigeria on all levels."

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