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Hotel staff lured by thrill of IRs

Chance to be part of pioneer team a strong pull factor; hotels are filling vacancies easily

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A mini exodus of sorts is taking place in the hospitality industry as experienced staff quit to take up positions in the two upcoming integrated resorts (IRs).

It is understood that five front-end service staff from a boutique hotel in the Central Business District resigned in one day to take up jobs at either Marina Bay Sands or Resorts World Sentosa.

The Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel in Havelock Road said it has had about 10 operational staff leave for the IRs.

A spokesman said this was a low number compared with other hotels. She added that the hotel has since found replacements.

A spokesman for The Fullerton Hotel Singapore said several of its staff joined the IRs but the vacated positions were quickly filled.

Many hotels The Sunday Times contacted did not want to comment on this issue, but those in the human resource industry said the movements have been significant.

Mr Josh Goh, assistant director of corporate services of The GMP Group, said hospitality and wellness industry staff, particularly those who are experienced, have been poached by the IRs or by other hotels.

Mr Edmund Seng, managing partner of human resource company HRM3, said his company has seen more hotel clients asking for help to fill vacancies this year.

"Not only will the IRs need people with hotel experience, they'll need people with start-up experience. It's natural that they'll turn to the hotel industry for labour," he said.

Ms Shirley Chua, manager of Adecco's events and exhibitions division, said many job-seekers do not even talk about the money when applying for positions in the IRs.

"What they are interested in is being part of such a significant project and to be part of the pioneering team that shapes the future of IRs in Singapore," she said.

Mr Robin Goh, assistant director of communications for Resorts World Sentosa, said the resort has staff from a wide variety of industries, including tourism, entertainment, hospitality, retail, fashion and food and beverage.

A Marina Bay Sands spokesman said that although experience helps in most rank-and-file positions, more important are a good attitude, the passion to serve, enthusiasm and integrity. He added: "We are reaching out to a wide pool of candidates, including fresh graduates from tertiary institutions, job applicants who are crossing over from other service-related sectors, as well as existing hospitality staff."

Some hotels are taking measures to retain their staff.

Mr Leslie Chua, the manager of boutique hotel Berjaya Singapore in Duxton Road which has only 21 employees, said he has offered an annual increment and a year-end bonus despite the weak economy.

"I'd rather reward them and keep them with us," he said. "I keep a good relationship with my staff to give them a sense of belonging and teamwork."

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