

Summary

OPPORTUNITY

- Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises (SCORE) had an available pool of ex-offenders looking for opportunities to reintegrate into the workforce and society at large
- For hotel to tap on this to supplement the workforce and further the hotel's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts

ACTION

- Partnering SCORE to hire, train and mentor ex-offenders to equip them with skillsets to work for the hotel
- Quick facts:
 - ✓ Time taken to shortlist candidates varies, depending on departmental needs and job fit
 - ✓ No additional cost but required cross-team collaboration with HR to ensure smooth on-boarding of ex-offenders

RESULTS

- All employees who joined the hotel via the SCORE programme in 2012 completed their training and attachments with the hotel
- As at end 2013, 3 ex-offenders trained and gainfully employed at Marina Mandarin, mainly in F&B roles
- Ex-offenders given a second-chance at employment and integration into society, with the hotel's support and help

OPPORTUNITY

DRIVING CSR EFFORTS WHILE ALLEVIATING MANPOWER SHORTAGE

In 2010, facing the challenge of having to identify and hire suitable candidates, the hotel's Human Resources team explored a new solution to fill vacancies, particularly within its Food & Beverage department. During that time, the hotel was approached by Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises (SCORE), a programme established as a statutory board under the Ministry of Home Affairs on 1 April 1976. SCORE plays an important role in the Singapore correctional system through the provision of rehabilitation and aftercare services to inmates and ex-offenders. SCORE seeks to enhance the employability of offenders and prepare them for their eventual reintegration into the national workforce by focusing on four main building blocks of training, work, employment assistance and community engagement.

The hotel saw meaning and promise in a potential collaboration with SCORE, which would work with HR in identifying projected manpower requirements and help train suitable offenders before they are released for the jobs required.

Marina Mandarin Singapore started a collaboration with SCORE to offer ex-offenders a chance to rebuild their lives through gainful employment, enabling the hotel to contribute back to society more meaningfully beyond a monetary gesture, furthering their CSR efforts.

Seeing meaning in this collaboration, Kurt O. Wehinger, General Manager of Marina Mandarin Singapore, fully embraced the initiative and pushed for its implementation. To make the programme a success, the hotel realised they needed not only to integrate SCORE's ex-offenders into its workforce through training of technical skills, but also assist them in managing the stigmas and psychological barriers ex-offenders face (at work as well as at home).

Key Steps

- **Identifying suitable roles:** To start, Human Resources worked with various supervisors and identified available positions in back-of-house better suited for ex-offenders re-joining the workforce for the first time; relevant job descriptions were shared with SCORE to short-list suitable candidates.
- **Scouting suitable talent with SCORE:** SCORE identified relevant candidates who met its in-house criteria, including their work attitude and sincerity, and put them through a rigorous interview process involving SCORE representatives, hotel's HR and heads of the relevant departments. The hotel then finalised with SCORE the candidates it would like to hire with SCORE.
- **Providing on-boarding and ongoing training:** To on-board the SCORE participants, HR conducts in-house training, to supplement initial training by SCORE. The ongoing training they receive while working includes Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) Work Safety, WSQ Food Hygiene and WSQ Promote Tourism, among others — these help to advance skill sets and prepare them for working in the hotel industry.
- **Preparing supervisors to train and mentor ex-offenders:** HR realised the need to involve line supervisors early on in the process so that they would be mentally prepared and equipped to manage and mentor the SCORE participants. These supervisors also play an important role in integrating the ex-offender with the rest of the team, and making sure they are accepted and work well with other employees by building trust.
- **Actively engaging and mentoring ex-offenders regularly (not just once-off):** HR meets with each newly hired SCORE member on a monthly basis to ensure they are adjusting well in the new environment, as well as monitor their job progress. This platform allows SCORE participants to confidentially discuss how they are coping at work and in personal life. HR would provide advice and feedback on job performance, and ensure the participant is getting appropriate resources and support to successfully contribute as a hotel employee.

*“It may not have been a walk in the park for us but it has been a satisfying experience to help ex-offenders in their journey to re-join society and their own homes. It was **not only inspiring for the ex-offenders, but for the entire hotel and our employees working here.**”*

-- Kurt Otto Wehinger
General Manager
Marina Mandarin Singapore

Key Success Factors

- **Hotel-wide support:** Support of the programme from all levels of hotel employees was integral to the successful integration of the ex-offenders into the hotel. Championed by the GM, sufficient resources were channelled towards sustaining this partnership; the active involvement of HR and department heads was important in allaying the concerns and fears of the SCORE participants.
- **Advice and support beyond the job:** This is a learning point the hotel gleaned from their first batch of SCORE participants and has since stepped up comprehensive efforts between HR and supervisors to provide well-rounded support beyond technical skills. It is key that the hotel provides more than professional support (e.g., job, training), and also supports them on the personal aspect so they can focus at work.

"We see it ultimately as a start to a paradigm shift in mind-set. It's about giving people the opportunity and support that they need to get back on their feet."

-- Kurt Otto Wehinger
General Manager
Marina Mandarin Singapore

Project period: The SCORE partnership and hiring programme at Marina Mandarin **launched in 2010 and is ongoing.** The hotel has welcomed 3 batches of ex-offenders, providing on-to-job training.

Estimated cost: The effort requires **no additional cost investment** beyond the time and effort by HR and department heads.

RESULTS

PROVIDING SECOND CHANCES TO EX-OFFENDERS, RETURNING TO THE COMMUNITY

"I am very happy to have joined Marina Mandarin Singapore. I feel this second chance and opportunity enabled me to pursue my passion for cooking."

-- Abu Bakar
Junior pastry chef and SCORE
participant
Marina Mandarin Singapore

- **Successful integration of ex-offenders:** The hotel worked with 4 SCORE candidates in 2012. While some recruits have left, the hotel is glad they are now equipped with new skills. The strong mentorship creates a welcoming, positive learning environment for them to effectively learn new skills.
- **SCORE candidates as long-term hires:** The 2012 batch of SCORE candidates saw 100% completion of the agreed term with the hotel, with all recruits staying on after their contract period. They were offered same wages as other employees in the same role and treated equally. This has cultivated a nurturing, accepting culture among employees.
- **Extended benefits to the community:** Participants can give back to the community with their new skills. Encouraged by his mentor, Pastry Chef Chris Eng, Abu Bakar volunteered to make desserts for a Singapore Anti-Narcotics Association event at an old folks' home.

With early success, Marina Mandarin Singapore is committed to expanding the programme; to them, the effort holds more significance than just filling headcount.