



For immediate release

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**Photo available upon request*

Residence Inn by Marriott Wins 2014 Employees First Award

Vancouver, BC – The Residence Inn by Marriott Vancouver Downtown, managed by SilverBirch Hotels and Resorts, has won the coveted 2014 Employees First Award. Sponsored by go2HR, BC's tourism and hospitality human resource association, this accolade recognizes a British Columbia tourism employer that has upheld high standards of excellence in human resources and people management practices.

"It's appropriate that this award is called 'Employees First' because that's very much our philosophy," says Suzanne Allemeier, Residence Inn's General Manager. "We believe in putting employees first and treating them with the same courtesy and consideration with which we expect them to treat our guests."

The Residence Inn's HR strategy is built on four pillars:

- Building empowerment by giving employees decision-making discretion;
- Sharing information and encouraging collaboration and engagement through daily meetings (called huddles), communication boards and a Facebook page;
- Minimizing incivility through the mantra of "kindness, courtesy and respect"; and
- Providing feedback through observations and quarterly performance reviews.

These pillars are then translated into a diverse set of practical approaches to engage and develop employees, including:

- Immersing employees, called associates, in the cooperative culture from day one, with an extensive orientation program, a buddy system that pairs them with an experienced colleague for ongoing coaching, and formal 30, 60 and 90 day reviews;
- Treating service standards as paramount and breaking them down into 20 key steps, or basics, and covered, one per day, during the team huddles;
- Asking associates twice a year to rate their employer and provide feedback in anonymous surveys; and
- Conducting quarterly open houses with the General Manager.

And it's all paying off: in 2013, staff turnover at the Residence Inn was, at 14 per cent, less than half the industry average. In 2014, the hotel was on track to cut turnover to just 10 per cent. Associate engagement scores were also up, workplace injuries and time lost was down, and guests were happy too. In 2013, the Residence Inn scored among the top 10 per cent of Marriott hotels on guest surveys, and placed in the top 10 per cent of Vancouver hotels on Trip Advisor.

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“This is a perfect example of how remarkable experiences can be fostered through remarkable staff,” says Marsha Walden, CEO of Destination British Columbia. “When employee satisfaction is up, customer service levels rise. Ultimately, this has a positive impact on an organization’s bottom line, encourages repeat visitation and helps us to achieve our collective goal of becoming the most highly recommended destination in all of North America.”

“We congratulate the Residence Inn by Marriott, and all the other nominees, for continually raising the bar for human resource practices in BC. Every one of the organizations put forward for the award this year has demonstrated a real commitment to their vision, their values, their team and their customers,” adds Arlene Keis, go2HR’s CEO.

To learn more about the Employees First Award and to see past winners, visit go2HR.ca/EmployeesFirst.

About go2HR

go2HR is BC’s tourism and hospitality human resource association. As labour market specialists, go2HR coordinates the BC Tourism Labour Market Strategy and provides programs and resources in the area of recruitment, retention and training. To learn more, visit go2HR.ca.

- 30 -

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