

THE COURAGE TO LEAD™ CASE STUDY SERIES

Case Study No. 4 – Hilton

How One of the World's Largest Employers Became the World's Best Workplace

01
THE COURAGE TO LEAD™ CASE STUDY SERIES







RELATIONSHIPS
Because leadership begins with people.

REPUTATION
Because trust is earned every day.

RESILIENCE
Because the future belongs to those prepared for change.

Because
SUPPORTIVE AND INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES CREATE AMAZING THINGS.

INTRODUCTION

How One of the World's Largest Employers Became the World's Best Workplace

Hilton employs almost **500,000 people** across more than **140 countries and territories**. In an industry renowned for long hours, high staff turnover and relentless customer expectations, Hilton has achieved something few organisations have sustained.

It has repeatedly been recognised as one of the world's best places to work.

This case study explores the leadership philosophy, cultural practices and investment in people that have enabled Hilton to transform workplace culture into a lasting competitive advantage.



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Helping leaders empower others to create supportive and inclusive workplaces so amazing things can happen.

A GREAT PLACE TO WORK

NO.1

WORLD'S BEST
WORKPLACE

by Fortune & Great Place to Work®

BEST WORKPLACE
FOR WOMEN

by Fortune

~500,000
TEAM MEMBERSA diverse global workforce
united by a shared purpose.140+
COUNTRIES &
TERRITORIESWelcoming guests in thousands
of locations around the world.These recognitions reflect the voice of our team members and
the strength of a culture built on purpose, care and opportunity.

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A GREAT PLACE TO WORK

What independent research says about Hilton

Hilton's recognition as the **World's Best Workplace** is not based on marketing campaigns or customer satisfaction surveys. It is based on confidential feedback from hundreds of thousands of employees collected independently by **Great Place to Work®**, the global authority on workplace culture.

To achieve this recognition, organisations are evaluated using the **Trust Index™**, which measures employees' experiences across five critical dimensions:

- **Credibility** – confidence in senior leadership.
- **Respect** – whether employees feel supported and valued.
- **Fairness** – equitable treatment and opportunity.
- **Pride** – pride in individual work, the team and the organisation.
- **Camaraderie** – the quality of relationships and belonging.

Companies are also assessed on leadership effectiveness, organisational values, innovation, workforce demographics and the consistency of employee experience across diverse groups.

Hilton has consistently achieved exceptional results across these measures, leading to repeated recognition as:

- **No.1 World's Best Workplace**
- **No.1 Best Workplace for Women**
- Great Place to Work® Certified in more than **67 countries**, including **18 No.1 national rankings**.



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At the time of this case study, Hilton employs almost **500,000 team members** across **more than 140 countries and territories**, making this achievement significant not only because of its quality, but because of its extraordinary scale.

Leadership Insight

Great cultures are not measured by executive opinion.
They are measured by the daily experiences of the people who work there.

Evidence

Great Place to Work® methodology

The World's Best Workplaces list is determined through one of the world's largest workplace culture studies. Employees anonymously answer questions about trust, leadership, fairness, respect, pride and camaraderie. Organisations must also demonstrate consistent employee experiences across different countries, roles, genders and demographic groups before being considered for global recognition.

Fortune Magazine

Fortune partners with Great Place to Work® to publish the annual World's Best Workplaces and Best Workplaces for Women rankings.

Great Place to Work Methodology includes what they term a Trust Index whilst that is proprietary a general guide of these questions is listed below:

Great Place To Work® Trust Index™

Employees respond to **60 statements**, together with demographic questions and two open-ended questions, using a five-point consistency scale. The survey measures whether employees consistently experience a high-trust workplace.

The five dimensions are:

1. Credibility

Do leaders communicate honestly and inspire confidence?

Employees are effectively evaluating questions such as:

- Do leaders communicate openly?
 - Do they keep people informed?
 - Do leaders do what they say?
 - Are leaders competent?
 - Can employees trust senior leadership?
-



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2. Respect

Do people genuinely feel valued?

Employees consider:

- Does management care about me?
 - Am I supported?
 - Am I listened to?
 - Am I encouraged to develop?
 - Does the organisation care about my wellbeing?
 - Am I given the resources I need to succeed?
-

3. Fairness

Is everyone treated fairly?

Employees evaluate whether:

- Promotions are fair.
 - Recognition is fair.
 - People are treated equally.
 - Diversity is respected.
 - Ethical concerns can be raised safely.
-

4. Pride

Are people proud of where they work?

Employees reflect on:

- Am I proud of my work?
 - Am I proud of my team?
 - Am I proud of the organisation?
 - Does my work make a positive contribution?
-

5. Camaraderie (Belonging)

Do people enjoy working together?

Employees consider whether:

- People can be themselves.
- New employees are welcomed.
- People celebrate success together.



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- Relationships are genuine.
- There is a sense of belonging.



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THE CHALLENGE

Many organisations believe culture is created through values statements, policies or annual engagement surveys.

Hilton demonstrates something different.

Hospitality is one of the most demanding industries in the world. Hotels operate around the clock, employing people from diverse cultures, backgrounds and generations. Team members face constant pressure to deliver exceptional service in environments where expectations are high and margin for error is small.

The challenges are significant:

- 24-HOUR OPERATIONS**
Hotels never stop. Guests expect service at any time of day.
- SHIFT WORK**
Irregular hours make it harder to build consistency and connection.
- HIGH CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS**
Every interaction matters. Every day.
- TRADITIONALLY HIGH STAFF TURNOVER**
Industry turnover often exceeds 70% annually.

Yet Hilton has built a culture where many employees stay for decades, grow their careers and proudly recommend Hilton as a place to work.

Hilton's challenge was not just to meet expectations, but to **create a workplace where people can thrive.**

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THE CHALLENGE

Leading people in environments that never stop: Many organisations believe culture is created through values statements, policies or annual engagement surveys.

Hilton demonstrates something different: Hospitality operates in one of the world's most demanding people environments. Like healthcare, policing, ambulance services and aviation, success depends on people delivering exceptional performance around the clock while maintaining trust, teamwork and customer confidence.

Every day, Hilton's leaders manage workplaces characterised by:

24-hour operations: Hotels never close. Teams hand over responsibility continuously, requiring consistent leadership across every shift.

Shift work: Irregular hours, weekends, public holidays and overnight work can disrupt family life, wellbeing and recovery if leaders do not actively support their people.

High customer expectations: Every interaction shapes the guest experience. Unlike many industries, service quality is visible immediately and poor experiences can be shared globally within minutes.

Large and diverse workforces: Hilton employs almost **500,000 people** across more than **140 countries and territories**, representing multiple cultures,



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languages and generations. Creating one consistent culture at this scale requires intentional leadership.

An industry known for high turnover: Hospitality has traditionally experienced some of the highest employee turnover rates of any major industry. Industry reports frequently place annual turnover above **70%** in many markets, making retention and leadership capability ongoing challenges.

The Leadership Challenge

Many organisations respond to these pressures by focusing on systems, compliance and operational efficiency.

Hilton chose a different path.

Rather than asking,

"How do we manage nearly half a million employees?"

its leaders asked,

"How do we create an environment where nearly half a million people can thrive?"

That question changed everything.

Leadership Insight

The world's most demanding industries have more in common than they have differences. Whether leading a hotel, hospital, police command, fire station or airline, leaders face the same fundamental challenge:

How do you help people perform at their best when the work never stops?

Hilton's answer was not another policy.

It was a culture deliberately designed around **purpose, trust, growth and wellbeing**.



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THE POWER OF PURPOSE

"To fill the earth with the light and warmth of hospitality."

— Conrad Hilton

More than one hundred years after Conrad Hilton first expressed these words, they continue to unite almost 500,000 team members across more than 140 countries and territories.

This is not a slogan. It is leadership intent. It explains why we exist, what every team member is trying to achieve, and how decisions should be made when leaders are not present.

Great organisations simplify complexity into a purpose that every person can remember.

LEADERSHIP LEAVES CLUES

CONRAD HILTON



"To fill the earth with the light and warmth of hospitality."

A purpose that connects every role – from housekeeping to the CEO – to one shared mission.

TRINA JONES



"Homelessness should be rare, brief and non-recurring."

A clear statement that aligns government, community organisations and frontline services around one measurable outcome.

ALLY KELLY



"Spot the signs, share your concern and conduct the referral."

A clear purpose expressed through three simple actions that empower every person to recognise need, start a conversation and connect someone with support.

MARK WALES



"Elite teams simplify complexity through mission, team and self."

In Mission Ready, Mark Wales calls this the Rule of Threes – a principle that enables clarity under pressure.

WHY PURPOSE WORKS

Self-Determination Theory
People flourish when three psychological needs are met.



BELONGING – I am part of something meaningful.



AUTONOMY – I am trusted to make decisions.



MASTERY – I am continually learning and improving.

A clear purpose strengthens all three.



COACH'S REFLECTION

After interviewing almost 100 leaders across policing, emergency services, business, government and the not-for-profit sector, one lesson continues to emerge: The organisations with the strongest cultures do not have the longest vision statements.

They have the clearest purpose.

When people understand why they come to work each day, they need fewer rules, make better decisions and become more connected.



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The Power of Purpose

Purpose is the foundation of culture

Every great organisation can explain **why it exists** in a sentence that every employee can understand, remember and apply.

More than one hundred years after Conrad Hilton first articulated his vision—

"To fill the earth with the light and warmth of hospitality."

—it continues to unite almost **500,000 team members across more than 140 countries and territories**.

That is the power of purpose. Purpose is not a marketing slogan or a framed statement on a wall. It is a decision-making framework. It provides clarity when circumstances are uncertain, consistency when leaders are absent and direction when organisations are changing.

Throughout almost one hundred episodes of **The Courage to Lead Interview Series**, one lesson has emerged repeatedly. While leaders come from policing, defence, business, emergency services, government and the community sector, the strongest cultures almost always begin with a simple and memorable purpose.

Although the words differ, the intent is remarkably similar.



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Leadership leaves clues.

Conrad Hilton gave his people a purpose that transcended hotels.

"To fill the earth with the light and warmth of hospitality."

Every role—from housekeeping to the Chief Executive Officer—contributes to delivering that purpose. It creates a shared identity that connects hundreds of thousands of people across cultures, languages and continents.

Trina Jones, NSW Rental Commissioner and former CEO of Homelessness NSW, distilled an extraordinarily complex social issue into a single measurable objective:

"Homelessness should be rare, brief and non-recurring."

Those eight words align governments, community organisations, frontline workers and policy makers around one outcome. Every program, every partnership and every decision can be evaluated against that purpose.

Ally Kelly, founder of Mind Blank, demonstrates that purpose is most powerful when it becomes practical.

"Spot the signs, share your concern and conduct the referral."

Rather than expecting people to become mental health experts, Ally created three simple actions that anyone can remember. The framework empowers ordinary people to recognise someone in need, begin a conversation and connect them with appropriate support. It transforms awareness into action.

Former SAS Commander **Mark Wales** describes a similar principle in ***Mission Ready*** through what he calls the **Simplicity Rule**.

"REDUCE, CLARIFY, TEST & REFLECT"

What does this look like:

Reduce: Cut your content or plan down to essentials.

Clarify: Review the bare elements to see if it addresses the plan

Test: Share it with a teammate, can they repeat it back to you.



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Reflect: Did simplification make the mission clearer.

Under pressure, complexity becomes the enemy of good decision-making. Great leaders simplify what matters most. They create clarity that people can recall instinctively when it matters.

A common thread

These four leaders represent hospitality, social policy, mental health and military leadership. Their industries could hardly be more different.

Yet each demonstrates the same principle.

Great leadership simplifies complexity into purpose.

Whether the objective is delivering exceptional hospitality, ending homelessness, improving mental health or leading elite teams in combat, people perform better when they clearly understand **why** they are doing what they do.

This is also consistent with **Self-Determination Theory**, which suggests people thrive when three psychological needs are met:

- **Belonging** – feeling part of something meaningful.
- **Autonomy** – having clarity and trust to make good decisions.
- **Mastery** – continually learning, improving and contributing.

A clear organisational purpose strengthens all three.

Coach's Reflection

After interviewing almost one hundred leaders, I have become convinced that organisations with the strongest cultures rarely have the longest vision statements.

They have the clearest purpose. When people understand why they come to work each day, they require fewer rules, make better decisions, adapt more confidently to change and become more connected to one another.

Purpose is not simply where culture begins. **Purpose is what allows culture to endure.**



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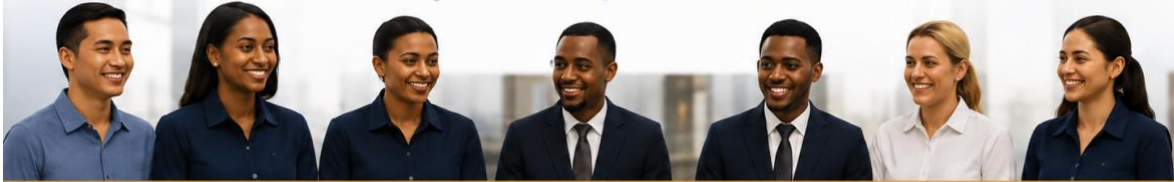
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THE FOUR PILLARS



Together they create what Hilton describes as
“a fully human experience at work.”



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THE FOUR PILLARS

Hilton describes its employee experience through four interconnected pillars:

Purpose

Helping people understand how their work contributes to something bigger than themselves.

Growth

Providing learning, mentoring and career opportunities at every stage of employment.

Wellness

Supporting physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

Inclusion

Creating an environment where every team member feels welcomed, respected and able to contribute.

Together these four pillars create what Hilton describes as **"a fully human experience at work."**



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Hilton
FOR THE STAY™

LEADERSHIP STARTS AT THE TOP

Executive Leadership

Chris Nassetta writes directly to employees every two weeks.

He shares:

- stories
- lessons
- recognition
- best practice

Leaders stay visible.
Culture stays alive.



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LEADERSHIP STARTS AT THE TOP

Culture does not grow through occasional announcements.

It is built through **consistent, visible leadership communication**.

At Hilton, Chief Executive Officer **Chris Nassetta** writes directly to team members every two weeks.

Rather than relying solely on corporate updates, he shares:

- stories from hotels around the world
- lessons learned
- recognition of outstanding people
- examples of best practice
- reminders of Hilton's purpose

These regular communications keep nearly **500,000 team members** connected to one another and to the organisation's mission.

Visible leadership keeps culture alive.



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The Principle in Practice

This same leadership principle proved invaluable during the merger of the **North Sydney and Chatswood Police Area Commands**.

In 2017, two large police commands, involving more than **250 staff**, had just **90 days** to become one organisation.

Previous command mergers had often been difficult, creating uncertainty, rumours and resistance to change.

Drawing on **John Kotter's principle of "Communicate, Communicate, Communicate,"** we adopted a simple strategy.

Every week:

- every employee received an update from the project team
- we explained what had been achieved during the previous seven days
- we outlined exactly what would happen during the following week
- every member of staff had access to a one-page implementation roadmap showing the complete change process.

Nobody was left wondering what was happening.

People understood not only **what** was changing, but **why** it was changing and **where** the project was heading.

The Outcome

Despite implementing one of the largest organisational changes undertaken within the command, a subsequent statewide NSW Police leadership survey reported leadership results that ranked among the strongest across the state.

The lesson was simple.

Communication does more than transfer information. It builds trust. It reduces uncertainty. It gives people confidence that they are part of the process rather than subjects of the process.

Leadership Insight

Whether leading **500,000 Hilton team members** across more than **140 countries**, or **250 police officers and staff** through significant organisational change, the leadership principle is the same:

People rarely resist change when they understand it, can see progress, and know their leaders are communicating honestly and consistently.



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Leadership Reflection

Every generation has organisations facing significant cultural challenges. Some are responding to cultural reviews. Some are rebuilding trust after public inquiries. Some are leading through restructuring, financial pressure or changing community expectations.

Whatever the catalyst, the leadership challenge is remarkably consistent.

How do you reduce uncertainty?

Hilton's experience suggests that culture is strengthened when leaders:

- communicate consistently
- reinforce a clear purpose
- recognise people regularly
- share progress openly
- remain visible throughout periods of change

When uncertainty becomes the dominant workplace experience, communication is no longer simply an operational activity.

It becomes a leadership responsibility.

If uncertainty is the foundation of your workplace today, what are your people hearing from their leaders this week?



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INVESTING IN PEOPLE

Building careers, not simply filling jobs.

Hilton's commitment to people extends well beyond traditional workplace training. We have created an integrated learning ecosystem designed to help team members grow from their first day of employment through to senior leadership.



HILTON UNIVERSITY

A global learning platform providing thousands of development opportunities, leadership programs and operational training to build capability at every career stage.



GUILD EDUCATION

The first hospitality company to partner with Guild Education, giving eligible U.S. team members access to tuition-free certificates, professional qualifications and university degrees from day one.



LINKEDIN LEARNING

Access to nearly 30,000 online courses covering leadership, communication, technology, business and personal development—anytime, anywhere.



MENTORING

Our global mentoring platform connects team members with experienced leaders—creating meaningful relationships that support career planning, leadership development and knowledge sharing.



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Programs such as People Leader Essentials, General Manager Academy and Manage™ with BetterUp equip new and emerging leaders with practical skills in coaching, communication, decision-making and leading high-performing teams.



LANGUAGE LEARNING

Global language learning programs help team members communicate with confidence, improve guest experiences and increase career mobility across countries and brands.



CAREER PATHWAYS

We actively develop internal talent. Approximately 63% of recent hotel and corporate leadership roles were filled through internal promotion, with many first-time managers progressing into leadership roles within around four years.

“When we invest in our people, we invest in our purpose and our future.”

— Chris Nassetta
President & CEO, Hilton

THE RESULTS



91%
believe they can continue to learn and grow.



87%
believe they can achieve their career goals.



63%
of leadership roles filled internally.



2.5M+
learning opportunities created since 2022.



Nearly 30,000
learning courses available globally.

Source: Hilton 2023 Culture Great Place To Work® Trust Index™ Survey, Hilton Impact Report 2023



LEADERSHIP INSIGHT

Hilton does not view learning as an employee benefit. It views learning as a business strategy. By investing in capability, confidence and career progression, Hilton strengthens employee engagement, leadership succession and the guest experience.



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INVESTING IN PEOPLE

Building careers, not simply filling jobs: Hilton's commitment to people extends well beyond traditional workplace training. The organisation has created an integrated learning ecosystem designed to help team members grow from their first day of employment through to senior leadership.

Hilton University: A global learning platform providing thousands of development opportunities, leadership programs and operational training designed to build capability at every career stage.

Guild Education: The first hospitality company to partner with Guild Education, giving eligible U.S. team members access to **tuition-free certificates, professional qualifications and university degrees** from their first day of employment, removing financial barriers to lifelong learning.

LinkedIn Learning: Access to nearly **30,000 online courses** covering leadership, communication, technology, business and personal development, enabling continuous learning at every stage of a career.

Mentoring: Hilton's global mentoring platform connects team members with experienced leaders, creating meaningful coaching relationships that support career planning, leadership development and knowledge sharing across the organisation.



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Leadership Development: Programs such as **People Leader Essentials**, **General Manager Academy** and **Manage™ with BetterUp** equip new and emerging leaders with practical skills in coaching, communication, decision-making and leading high-performing teams.

Global Language Learning: Recognising its international workforce, Hilton provides language learning programs that strengthen communication, improve guest experiences and increase career mobility across countries and brands.

Career Pathways: Hilton actively develops internal talent. Approximately **63% of recent hotel and corporate leadership positions** have been filled through internal promotion, with many first-time managers progressing into leadership roles within **around four years**.

Leadership Insight

Hilton does not view learning as an employee benefit. It views learning as a business strategy. By investing in capability, confidence and career progression, Hilton strengthens employee engagement, leadership succession and the guest experience.

The Results

- **91%** believe they can continue to learn and grow.
- **87%** believe they can achieve their career goals.
- **63%** of leadership roles filled internally.
- **2.5 million learning opportunities** created since 2022.
- **Nearly 30,000 learning courses** available globally.

Almost every program on this slide maps directly to one of the three psychological needs from **Self-Determination Theory & the 3Rs**:

Relationships (Belonging): Mentoring, leadership development, coaching and collaboration.

Reputation (Autonomy/Trust): Internal promotions, leadership pathways and empowering people to take on greater responsibility.

Resilience (Mastery): Hilton University, Guild Education, LinkedIn Learning, BetterUp coaching and language learning.



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WHEN PEOPLE THRIVE

Wellbeing Creates Stronger Leaders



THRIVE SABBATICAL

One month paid leave
\$5,000 grant



THRIVE RESET

One week paid leave
\$2,000 grant

Because wellbeing
creates better leaders.



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WHEN PEOPLE THRIVE

Hilton believes that exceptional guest experiences begin with team members who are physically, emotionally and mentally well.

Rather than treating wellbeing as an employee benefit, Hilton has made it part of its leadership strategy through the **Thrive at Hilton** wellbeing framework. The philosophy is simple: when people have opportunities to rest, grow and reconnect with what matters most, they return to work with greater energy, creativity and resilience.

Thrive Sabbatical: Recognising that long-serving employees occasionally need time to pursue personal goals beyond the workplace, Hilton awards selected team members **one month of paid leave together with a US\$5,000 grant**.

Recipients have used the opportunity to:

- volunteer with community organisations
- travel with family
- pursue personal passions
- complete significant life projects
- invest in their own physical and mental wellbeing.

The objective is not simply to provide leave, but to encourage personal renewal that ultimately benefits both the individual and the organisation.



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Thrive Reset: Hilton also recognises that not every employee can step away for an extended period. Through **Thrive Reset**, eligible team members receive **one week of paid leave together with a US\$2,000 wellbeing grant** to intentionally recharge before burnout develops.

Employees can use the time in whatever way best supports their wellbeing, including:

- spending time with family
- travelling
- improving physical health
- reducing stress
- pursuing hobbies
- reconnecting with personal purpose.

Leadership Insight

Many organisations invest heavily in recovering employees after they become exhausted. Hilton invests in preventing exhaustion before it occurs. This reflects one of the core principles of **The Courage to Lead**: Healthy people build healthy teams. Healthy teams build great workplaces.

Sources

Hilton — *Thrive at Hilton* Wellbeing Strategy, Hilton Impact Report (2023/2024), Great Place To Work® — Hilton Case Studies, Hilton Newsroom — *Thrive Sabbatical* and *Thrive Reset* announcements

Most organisations spend millions on **engagement**. Hilton first invests in **wellbeing**.

From a 3R viewpoint: **Relationships** — "You matter as a person." **Reputation** — "We trust you to use this time well." **Resilience** — "Recovery is part of sustained high performance."

Courageous leaders create sustainable high performance.



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Hilton's culture produces measurable outcomes.

Internal engagement data shows:

- **93%** believe Hilton is a great place to work.
- **91%** believe they can continue to learn and grow.
- **87%** believe they can achieve their career goals.
 - **85%** feel balanced and healthy at work.

These results demonstrate that investment in people is reflected in employee experience.

There is not much more to say about this other than, does your workplace reflect the same theme?

If it doesn't

Why can't your workplace be a great place to work?



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LOOKING AFTER PEOPLE CREATES BETTER BUSINESS

Hilton commissioned independent research to understand whether the way companies treat their people influences customer behaviour.

The answer was a resounding yes.

78% 

of consumers believe companies that care for employees provide better products and services.

 Among hospitality businesses, **88%** said employee wellbeing is especially important when choosing where they stay.

75% 

of consumers said they are more likely to recommend businesses known for treating employees well.

Culture isn't hidden.
People notice how organisations treat their people, and they act on it.

“When we take great care of our people, they take great care of our guests.”

— Chris Nassetta
President & CEO, Hilton



SOURCES

- Morning Consult (commissioned by Hilton, 2025): Two independent surveys of 4,200+ U.S. adults (Oct & Nov 2025).
- Hilton Newsroom: “New Data Shows Why the Best Place to Work is Also the Best Place to Stay.”
- Great Place To Work®: World's Best Workplaces™ research and Hilton case studies.



Leaders create culture.



Culture shapes employee experience.



Employee experience shapes customer experience.



Customer experience shapes organisational reputation and business results.



THE LESSON IS CLEAR.

Investing in people strengthens culture. Strong culture strengthens customer experience. Better customer experience strengthens organisational reputation and business performance.



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Because SUPPORTIVE AND INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES CREATE AMAZING THINGS.

LOOKING AFTER PEOPLE CREATES BETTER BUSINESS

Hilton also measured the impact of employee experience on customer behaviour. Research found: 78% of consumers believe companies that care for employees provide better products and services. What are the facts or stories behind this content I know there was more please provide a bit more depth and sources 75% are more likely to recommend businesses known for treating employees well. The lesson is clear. People notice culture. Customers experience culture. Strong workplace cultures create stronger brands.

LOOKING AFTER PEOPLE CREATES BETTER BUSINESS

For many years organisations have debated whether investing in employees delivers measurable business returns. Hilton decided to test the question.

Working with **Morning Consult**, Hilton commissioned independent research involving more than **4,200 U.S. consumers** to understand whether workplace culture influences purchasing decisions. The findings were compelling.

Consumers notice how organisations treat their people. 78% believe organisations that take good care of employees provide **better products and services**. For hospitality businesses, where service is delivered person-to-person, this figure increased to **88%**, with consumers saying employee wellbeing is especially important when choosing where they stay.



RELATIONSHIPS

Because leadership begins with people.



REPUTATION

Because trust is earned every day.



RESILIENCE

Because the future belongs to those prepared for change.

Culture influences reputation.

75% of consumers said they are **more likely to recommend** organisations that are known for treating employees well. Hilton concluded that employee experience is not simply an internal human resources issue—it is a competitive advantage that customers recognise and reward.

As Chris Nassetta often reminds leaders: ***“When we take great care of our people, they take great care of our guests.”***

Leadership Insight

This reinforces one of the central ideas of **The Courage to Lead**. Culture is rarely experienced first by employees. It is experienced by customers. Every interaction reflects the environment leaders have created behind the scenes. People notice culture. Customers experience culture. Brands become the reputation of their workplace.

Supporting Evidence

Hilton's internal research complements its external consumer findings.

Among Hilton team members:

- **93%** say Hilton is a Great Place to Work.
- **91%** believe they can continue learning and growing.
- **87%** believe they can achieve their career goals.
- **85%** say they feel balanced and healthy at work.

Hilton's conclusion is straightforward: Investing in people strengthens culture. Strong culture strengthens customer experience. Better customer experience strengthens business performance.

Sources

Morning Consult (commissioned by Hilton, 2025) Two independent surveys involving more than **4,200 U.S. adults** (2,043 respondents in October 2025 and 2,200 respondents in November 2025). Measured consumer attitudes toward organisations that care for employees. **Hilton Newsroom** *“New Data Shows Why the Best Place to Work is Also the Best Place to Stay.”* **“Great Place to Work®** World's Best Workplaces research and Hilton case studies.



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THE COURAGE TO LEAD™ CASE STUDY SERIES

Hilton
FOR THE STAY™

WHY GREAT CULTURES WORK

Three independent frameworks. One consistent message.

SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY What humans need to thrive	GREAT PLACE TO WORK® TRUST INDEX™ What employees experience	THE COURAGE TO LEAD™ 3Rs What leaders create
 RELATEDNESS (BELONGING) People thrive when they feel connected, valued and supported.	 RESPECT & CAMARADERIE Employees feel respected, included and part of a team.	 RELATIONSHIPS Leadership begins with people. Strong relationships create trust, belonging and engagement.
 AUTONOMY People perform best when trusted, empowered and able to influence their work.	 CREDIBILITY & FAIRNESS Employees trust leadership, believe decisions are fair and leaders are credible.	 REPUTATION Trust is earned every day. Reputation is built through integrity, fairness and empowering others.
 COMPETENCE (MASTERY) People flourish when they continue to learn, develop and become more capable.	 PRIDE, GROWTH & WELLBEING Employees experience growth, pride in their work and support for their wellbeing.	 RESILIENCE Resilient organisations invest in learning, growth and preparing people for future challenges.

“ Three independent frameworks developed over decades all point to the same conclusion:
PEOPLE THRIVE WHEN THEY BELONG, ARE TRUSTED AND CONTINUE TO GROW.
Great leaders create environments where those three conditions exist. ”



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SUPPORTIVE AND INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES CREATE AMAZING THINGS.

WHY GREAT CULTURES WORK

Three independent frameworks. One consistent message.

Self-Determination Theory	Great Place To Work®	The Courage to Lead™
Belonging (Relatedness) People thrive when they feel connected, valued and supported.	Respect & Camaraderie Employees feel respected, included and part of a team.	Relationships Leadership begins with people. Strong relationships create trust, belonging and engagement.
Autonomy People perform best when trusted, empowered and able to influence their work.	Credibility & Fairness Employees trust leadership, believe decisions are fair and leaders are credible.	Reputation Trust is earned every day. Reputation is built through integrity, fairness and empowering others.
Mastery (Competence) People flourish when they continue to learn, develop and become more capable.	Pride, Growth & Wellbeing Employees experience growth, pride in their work and support for their wellbeing.	Resilience Resilient organisations invest in learning, growth and preparing people for future challenges.



RELATIONSHIPS
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REPUTATION
Because trust is earned every day.



RESILIENCE
Because the future belongs to those prepared for change.

Helping leaders empower others to create supportive and inclusive workplaces so amazing things can happen.

Leadership Insight

Three independent frameworks developed over decades all point to the same conclusion:

People thrive when they belong, are trusted and continue to grow.

Great leaders create environments where those three conditions exist.

Upon reflection of Hilton, the Self Determination Theory and the 3Rs it shows that leaders who never stop learning and source many and varied sources other than their own experience, can learn concepts way beyond what they ever thought possible. In the words of much-loved TV Coach Ted Lasso, **“Be Curious.”**

What do I mean by this:

- behavioural science (Self-Determination Theory),
- organisational research (Great Place To Work®), and
- practical leadership (The 3Rs)

all arrive at essentially the same destination.

People thrive when they belong, are trusted and continue to grow.



RELATIONSHIPS

Because leadership begins with people.



REPUTATION

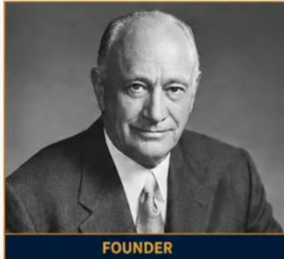
Because trust is earned every day.



RESILIENCE

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VOICES FROM HILTON



FOUNDER

CONRAD HILTON

Founder, Hilton Hotels

*"To fill the earth with
the light and warmth
of hospitality."*

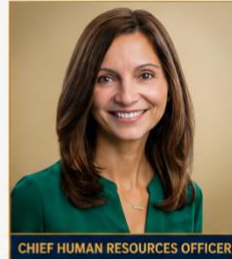


PRESIDENT & CEO

CHRIS NASSETTA

President & Chief Executive Officer

*"When we take great care
of our people, they take
great care of our guests."*



CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER

LAURA FUENTESExecutive Vice President &
Chief Human Resources Officer

*"An investment in our people
is an investment in our
business."*



CHIEF CORPORATE AFFAIRS OFFICER

SALLY SCHIFFExecutive Vice President &
Chief Corporate Affairs Officer

*"A workplace that allows
someone to be their
whole self."*

**RELATIONSHIPS**Because leadership
begins with people.**REPUTATION**Because trust is
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Because

SUPPORTIVE AND INCLUSIVE
WORKPLACES CREATE AMAZING
THINGS.

Conrad Hilton

"To fill the earth with the light and warmth of hospitality."

Chris Nassetta

"When we take great care of our people, they take great care of our guests."

Laura Fuentes

"An investment in our people is an investment in our business."

Sally Schiff

"We are trying to create a workplace that allows someone to be their whole self."

Across more than a century, different leaders have expressed the same enduring philosophy: People come first.

Closer to home on The Courage to Lead Interview Series several leaders have said the same thing, especially around the final three statements.

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begins with people.**REPUTATION**Because trust is earned
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Rebecca Pinkstone: Ep 97, 46 & 11 – The Courage to Lead Interview Series

Her observation,

"People bring their full lives to work."

Professor Pauline Boss: Ep 69 – The Courage to Lead Interview Series

Her work on **ambiguous loss** explains why leaders cannot assume everyone arrives at work with the same emotional capacity. Hilton's Thrive programs acknowledge this reality rather than pretending work and life are separate.

Michelle O'Keeffe: Ep 66 – The Courage to Lead Interview Series

Michelle consistently reinforces that psychologically safe workplaces are created by leaders who genuinely care about people. This aligns almost word-for-word with Laura Fuentes' statement:

"An investment in our people is an investment in our business."

Matt Lahood: Ep 81 – The Courage to Lead Interview Series

One of the strongest recurring themes with Matt was that leadership isn't about hierarchy—it's about caring enough to create an environment where people succeed. That mirrors Chris Nassetta's philosophy:

"When we take great care of our people, they take great care of our guests."

Professor Cordelia Fine: Ep 68 & 36 – The Courage to Lead Interview Series

Much of her work argues that workplaces must recognise people as whole human beings rather than idealised workers without competing responsibilities. Her research on gender, care, bias and organisational systems supports the principle that people arrive at work shaped by the rest of their lives.

"People cannot separate their humanity from their work."



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A CULTURE PEOPLE TALK ABOUT

Hilton team members regularly share why they are proud to be part of the Hilton family.

- ✓ Stories inspire.
- ✓ Stories connect.
- ✓ Stories build culture.



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A CULTURE PEOPLE TALK ABOUT

Hilton deliberately shares stories. Stories recognise people. Stories reinforce values. Stories connect leaders with employees across countries and cultures.

Culture grows stronger when people see themselves reflected in the organisation's purpose. Stories inspire. Stories connect. Stories build culture.

One of the most rewarding aspects of hosting **The Courage to Lead Interview Series** has been discovering that many exceptional leaders, across very different industries, share remarkably similar philosophies.

Several guest leaders immediately come to mind:

Hugh Brasher (Episode 79) and **Wayne Larden (Episodes 1 & 64)**, the CEOs of the London Marathon and Sydney Marathon respectively, demonstrate how stories unite communities, celebrate ordinary people achieving extraordinary things, and remind us of our similarities rather than our differences.

Danny Doherty (Episode 73) highlights the importance of authentic leadership, meaningful relationships and creating environments where people genuinely feel they belong.

Mike Wassing (Episode 92) reinforces that leadership is ultimately about developing people, empowering others and creating cultures where individuals can thrive and become leaders themselves.

Although their industries differ, their message is remarkably consistent with Hilton's philosophy:



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Stories inspire. Stories connect. Stories build culture.

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THE COURAGE TO LEAD™ CASE STUDY SERIES

Hilton
FOR THE STAY™



COACH'S REFLECTION

“

After interviewing leaders across policing, emergency services, business and government, one lesson continues to stand out. Organisations become extraordinary when leaders genuinely believe that looking after their people is not separate from achieving results—it is how results are achieved. ”

ALLAN SICARD

Author | The Courage to Lead

Podcast Host | The Courage to Lead

100 episodes/80 countries



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COACH'S REFLECTION

After interviewing leaders across policing, emergency services, business and government, one lesson continues to stand out. Organisations become extraordinary when leaders genuinely believe that looking after their people is not separate from achieving results—it is how results are achieved.

Hilton demonstrates that caring for people and achieving outstanding business performance are not competing priorities. They are inseparable.



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RESILIENCE

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Helping leaders empower others to create supportive and inclusive workplaces so amazing things can happen.

THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

Ask yourself...

- ✓ Does every member of my team know our purpose?
- ✓ Would they say they are growing?
- ✓ Do they feel valued?
- ✓ Would they recommend working here?

Because...

**SUPPORTIVE AND
INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES
DO NOT HAPPEN
BY ACCIDENT.**

**THEY ARE CREATED BY
COURAGEOUS LEADERS.**



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THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

Hilton's story demonstrates that extraordinary workplace cultures are not created by chance. They are built deliberately through purpose, trust, investment in people and leaders who remain visible when it matters most. Across this case study we have explored three independent frameworks:

Self-Determination Theory reminds us that people thrive when they experience **belonging, autonomy and mastery**.

Great Place To Work® measures whether employees experience trust, respect, fairness, pride and camaraderie.

The Courage to Lead™ 3Rs provide a practical leadership framework for creating those experiences every day through **Relationships, Reputation and Resilience**.

Although developed independently, they all arrive at the same conclusion.

People perform at their best when they know they belong, are trusted and continue to grow.

The challenge for every leader is not whether these principles work. The challenge is whether we choose to practise them consistently.



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Ask yourself:

Relationships – Do my people genuinely know that I care about them as individuals?

Reputation – Have I built the trust that allows people to follow me through uncertainty and change?

Resilience – Am I creating opportunities for people to learn, recover, grow and become better than they believed possible?

Finally, ask one question that sits above them all.

If someone wrote a case study about my organisation ten years from now, what leadership story would they tell?

Would they describe a workplace where people simply came to work?

Or would they describe a workplace where people belonged, were trusted, continued to grow and achieved amazing things together?

Because supportive and inclusive workplaces do not happen by accident.

They are created by courageous leaders who understand that leadership is ultimately about creating an environment where people can do their best work, become their best selves and help others do the same.



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Research Sources

- Great Place to Work® – World's Best Workplaces methodology.
- Fortune – World's Best Workplaces.
- Hilton Annual Reports.
- Hilton Newsroom.
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation interview with Sally Schiff.
- Morning Consult consumer research commissioned by Hilton.
- Hilton Careers and Learning publications.
- Hilton Thrive at Hilton wellbeing program.



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