



THE GOLD SERVICE  
SCHOLARSHIP

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## Improving restaurant performance: professional development at EHL Hospitality Business School

Every year, winning Gold Service Scholarship Finalists are offered a suite of learning and development opportunities. Following the success of a bespoke three-day Executive Education Programme at Switzerland's EHL Hospitality Business School in 2019, the programme was expanded and lined up for a second year in 2022.

Despite having to be delayed due to the pandemic, the study trip finally took place with winning finalists from both 2020 and 2022 in the last week of September 2022, with a fourth day added following feedback to give more time to cover financial management, case studies and group work.

Taking place at The Lausanne Hotel School (EHL), the bespoke programme focused on three themes to improve restaurant performance: managing quality, creating value and driving innovation. This included in-depth work on cutting costs and waste, building sales and profits, managing demand and capacity, service design and innovation, and value creation in food and beverage.

Led by Dr Alain Najar, it was extremely well received by all 14 participants, who returned full of enthusiasm and praise and giving the course an 89% satisfaction rating. Most participants found the financial aspects particularly helpful, especially those relating to profit and loss analysis, and the use of key performance indicators.

The participants' subsequent projects within their own workplaces clearly showed the impact the programme had in many areas of their work.



Measurable outcomes reported included reduction in costs and increases in customer visits, as well as improved spend per head and staff retention, with corresponding increases in customer experience and satisfaction.

Some examples included:

- Quarterly year on year sales increasing by 58%, drink sales by 30% and net margins up by more than 4%.
- One project saw the monthly cost of sales decrease by 5%.
- In another, wet sales were up by 36%, food spend per cover increased from £76 to £85, and beverage spend increased from £38 to £45.
- Wine sales also increased, in one case by 13%, while labour costs fell 7%.
- One project saw year on year staff retention increase by 25%.

Evaluating the experience, participants reported that, in the six months since attending the course, they had become far more questioning, more proactive in promoting change, and had gained a much greater understanding of the financial aspects of their work.

Many commented that they were working far more closely with their respective finance and marketing team members to grow the business, control costs and develop their own team members.

Special mention was made to having developed or sharpened skills in financial planning, reporting and analysis, especially in the use of financial and other metrics. They also cited an improvement in their critical thinking skills, as well as their ability to innovate, manage teams and make better use of resources. Value chain analysis was mentioned by multiple candidates as an area of increased confidence.

And, since attending the course, they had a much better understanding of the markets within which they were operating, had been able to refocus on sustainability, and were giving more attention to the importance of driving up productivity.



**The course was largely funded by bursaries from the Lord Forte Foundation totalling £30,000, together with additional funding and support from David Levin MBE and the Gold Service Foundation. The cost of tuition on the additional fourth day was met by EHL.**

## Feedback from attendees

"I honestly hope that future finalists will have the great pleasure of being taught by Alain because his way of teaching, while involving everyone was truly exceptional. He is one of a kind."

"It really changed me and helped me seeing clear again. I am feeling regenerated, and it feels amazing. I honestly cannot thank you enough, I am back with a different mindset and a different me."

"The very well-tailored content designed to meet the specific needs of participants was very effective. It allowed me and other Winning Finalists to focus on the areas that were most relevant to us and our career goals."

"The programme helped improve my confidence in myself and my skills and so I would say that has had a massive impact on me and my work."

"Never any minute that wasn't interesting. The group work and group discussions were the most useful to me. I found that being able to discuss best practices as a group and share experiences was very inspiring."