

Employer  
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Fairmont Hotels  
& Resorts,  
Canada

While hospitality ranked 14th in the list of sectors that people want to work in, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts was the third most attractive company among Canadian graduates and the fifth most attractive overall. Its most appealing traits are **financial stability, strong management** and a **pleasant work atmosphere**.

# Fairmont Hotels & Resorts: our **Success** is their **Success**

From The Savoy in London and The Plaza in New York to the stately elegance of Quebec's Le Château Frontenac and ocean-side splendor of Vancouver's Pacific Rim, Fairmont's hotels and resorts are some of the most iconic in Canada and worldwide. Yet it's the people within the company rather than the bricks and mortar that guests remember. "Guests don't comment on room amenities, they want to share stories about the warm and engaging service they received from our colleagues and how special it made them feel," says **Carolyn Clark, Senior Vice President, Talent & Culture, North & Central America.**

The importance of people in fulfilling Fairmont's mission to turn "moments into memories" is reflected in a rigorous proprietary selection process and the care the group takes over its employees. This care and attention have helped Fairmont Hotels & Resorts to be one of Canada's most attractive employers in the Randstad Employer Brand Research, an achievement that's all the more outstanding when set against the low attraction ranking for hospitality overall. So how does Fairmont create such an appealing environment and career path for its people?

**T**he Fairmont brand in Canada brings together 21 hotels and resorts, which range from rural retreats to city center landmarks. The some 12,000 strong workforce stretches from receptionists, servers and other 'front of house' teams to the less visible but equally critical 'heart of house' room attendants, culinary and laundry teams.

"To be truly successful, we need people with the motivation, engagement and training to turn moments into memories for our guests. The key to this is creating an emotional connection with our colleagues, so that they in turn create an emotional connection with our guests. And this connection is as important

for our heart of house as our front of house colleagues. Each and every one of them takes great pride in creating an experience that guests will want to remember," says Ms Clark. "How do we achieve this? Our philosophy is actually quite simple. If we take really good care of our colleagues, they will take really good care of our guests, which results in guest loyalty and financial return to our owners. A great colleague experience is as important as a great guest experience."

#### **passion for service**

This connection starts with talent selection. "Great service can never be prescriptive or robotic – it requires people who have a ▶



**Carolyn J Clark,**  
Senior Vice President, Talent  
& Culture, North & Central  
America, AccorHotels Canada

■ Carolyn Clark has held various senior positions with Fairmont Hotels & Resorts since 1974. In 2013, she was appointed Senior Vice-President, Human Resources, Americas for FRHI Hotels & Resorts and then took up her current position following the merger with AccorHotels.

■ Ms Clark was awarded the Educator of the Year at the Ontario Hospitality Institute Gold Awards. Additionally, she was granted an Honorary Degree in Hospitality Operations Management from the Center for Hospitality & Culinary Arts, George Brown College, Toronto.

■ Most recently, she was recognized with the 2015 Human Resources Award from the Hotel Association of Canada and inducted into its Hall of Fame.

natural passion for delivering exceptional service. The passion manifests itself in natural warmth, genuine kindness and the ability to anticipate the needs of our guests. And this passion is in people's DNA rather than being something that can be learned. So we've developed a highly-structured selection process to identify people with this passion," says Ms Clark. "The foundation for this process is the result of many years spent profiling our best people to identify the characteristics of a great guest service agent or a great room attendant. Through our online Talent Meter assessment and subsequent interviews we can identify the candidates who have the necessary passion and match the ideal profile. By applying this rigorous selection criteria we benefit from a better talent fit and lower staff turnover. Even when we face the recruitment pressure of opening a new hotel, our applicant-to-hire ratio is still very low," says Ms Clark.

### feels like home

The other cornerstones of this connection are the working environment and care for staff. While a reputation for long hours and low pay deters a lot of people from working in hospitality, Fairmont is living proof that the reality is often very different. "We're running 24/7 and therefore colleagues often have to work late in the evening and early in the mornings. But for us hospitality provides an energetic and fun working environment. We provide competitive pay and benefits. This ranges from health and dental care to opportunities to unwind such as yoga classes and beach volley ball. Our colleagues also get special discounts at all of our hotels and resorts around the world, so they can enjoy the Fairmont experience for themselves. But I think what really sets us apart is the sense of community we want to create and sustain within our organization, which manifests itself as much in the small details of how we relate to each other as formal benefits such as healthcare.



What we're about is summed up in the words of a colleague who said: 'Working with Fairmont is like being part of a family, it's like coming home'," says Ms Clark.

Fairmont runs extensive career and leadership development programs as part of its commitment to enabling everyone to realize their full potential. One of the attractions for talent is the opportunity to work in different parts of the world. The underlying philosophy is that "our success as a company is their success as colleagues". Examples include the Summit Program, which works with people who are identified as aspiring leaders when they join the company through to high potential managers and candidates for possible future executive positions. "We identify people with high potential through our annual talent review. But they still have to apply to join the program rather than being

**"our philosophy is actually quite simple. If we take really good care of our colleagues, they will take really good care of our guests..."**

assigned as we recognize that leaders need the aspiration as well as ability to grow within their careers. As a result of such programs, we're able to promote two-thirds of senior positions internally on an annual basis. The remainder comes from other parts of the hospitality sector and further afield to ensure we have

access to new thinking and a broad range of experiences," says Ms Clark.

A true test of this commitment to colleagues came with its recent acquisition by the AccorHotels group. Any such acquisition is very demanding. Yet the Chairman and CEO of

AccorHotels still found time to send a personal message to Fairmont's internal social media platform. "Rather than being anxious, our colleagues are excited about the opportunities of working for a larger group, while still being able to sustain Fairmont's distinctive culture," says Ms Clark.

So what can other organizations learn from Fairmont's success? We all know that if you take care of your staff that they will take care of your customers. Fairmont puts this connection between employee and customer experience at the very center of its enterprise – everyone is valued and valuable, whatever they do. "The close correlation between colleague and guest satisfaction rates defines our business and its success, and we know that if we get the first right, the other will follow," says Ms Clark. ■