



THE GROWING PAINS OF A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

David Magee MIH set up a social enterprise to offer free health and safety training for vulnerable young people to get jobs within the international hospitality industry



KOTO APPEAL

KOTO is a social enterprise in Vietnam that relies on the profits from its restaurants plus donations and sponsorships. The costs involved in housing, feeding, clothing and training young people are high, even on the tightest budget and we welcome the support of organisations that can help us in any way. Individuals or companies can even sponsor a specific trainee and follow them throughout their time at KOTO all the way through to graduation.

We also welcome the opportunity to have sponsored work experience placements. We recently sent a group of seven trainees from both front-of-house and kitchen to do their three-month work experience in New Zealand. This was an amazing opportunity for them, particularly coming from the disadvantaged backgrounds they started at. The trainees came home to Vietnam very excited about how much they learned. The Alumni Relations department headed by Ms Hanh, also a KOTO graduate, is able to look after all of the details of the work experience, from visas to paperwork. These young people have been working part time in the KOTO restaurant for 18 months by the time they are ready to do their work experience, so as well as learning English at KOTO during their studies they get to put it into practice in the restaurant with the many tourists that support the cause of KOTO by eating there.

KOTO is looking for sponsors and supporters especially within the UK and Ireland who would be interested in having an intern for six months to a year, or supporting them in any other way. The organisation has a lot of experience in this and can organise visas. Should you be interested, please contact Ms Hanh at: alumni.co@koto.com.au or Ms Leanne Dowler at volunteers@koto.com.au



“Give a man a fish and you feed him for day, teach him how to catch a fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” This is the mantra for many charities in their long-term assistance planning. In many developing countries, there are a number of good vocational training colleges being set-up and run to help disadvantaged and vulnerable young people become independent and socially mobile instead of falling into lives of crime, prostitution or other forms of exploitation. Many of these are specifically aimed at helping young people gain employment within the international hospitality, catering and tourism sector. They are similar to Jamie Oliver’s Fifteen

In addition to being a former chef and hotel manager, I am an English teacher and registered trainer for Health and Safety courses. I currently work at a vocational training-centre in the Middle East. Teachers get long holidays, and so for a number of years I have worked voluntarily during the school holidays in vocational training colleges throughout South-East Asia. In 2015 I set-up my own social-enterprise called Occupational

Safety and Health (OSH) Literacy. The purpose of OSH Literacy is to raise awareness and best practice with regards to the language, literacy and learning issues which can act as barriers and prevent people from accessing health and safety training and communications in work. Adult illiteracy in the workplace is a big problem. There is now international and national legislation in place to ensure that Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) information and instruction is inclusive.

In Vietnam I work with KOTO, which stands for Know One, Teach One. From very small beginnings fifteen years ago, it now has a large training-centre in Hanoi and two very successful restaurants (in Saigon and Hanoi) with plans to open more. OSH Literacy provides all their accredited safety training courses.

In addition to teaching the practical elements, great emphasis is put into teaching English communication skills. All trainees are taught how to communicate effectively in English for customer service, but also for emergency situations such as evacuating a building in a fire, dealing with a First Aid casualty or communicating with emergency

services. As English is the official language of the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) member states international hotels really appreciate this unique addition to the training. As well as their health and safety certificates, the trainees also receive English Language Competency Certificates for Communicating in Emergency Situations.

From its initial small beginnings, teaching a group of eight trainees in Vietnam, there are currently OSH Literacy training projects in Europe, the Middle-East and Asia. OSH Literacy is now a registered training-centre for both the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) and the Highfield Awarding Body for Compliance (HABC). We offer nearly 60 different internationally-recognised and accredited courses, which are free to the trainees and staff of NGOs. Funding comes from donations or from offering private training sessions. We deliver a whole range of courses including: occupational safety and health (OSH), food hygiene, First Aid, Fire Safety (Fire Warden), customer service and Train-the-Trainer.

Another big part of the training is to give trainees the confidence and competence to

seek advice and assistance should they feel exploited or harassed in work. This is a big aspect of health and safety within our industry. There has been a lot of discussion and publicity regarding the plight of migrant workers in the Gulf region, especially those working on the Qatar World Cup sites. I was recently asked to attend a conference on the subject and to give a presentation on how to make OSH information and instruction accessible to all. I initially thought the programme was going to deal mainly with construction workers. However, I was quite shocked to hear about the scale of abuse happening to hospitality workers in the region. As the price of oil drops, there is a significant knock-on effect to the service-sector in the Gulf region. Staff are not being paid or being expected to work double shifts. Quite often they live in terrible conditions and are virtually indentured slaves. There is little money available for staff to have proper health and safety-related training. OSH Literacy, in association with the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) has started a pilot project to try and deal with this issue in the GCC region.

Within the UK and wider Europe there

has also been a lot of discussion regarding immigrants and refugees. Many migrants traditionally find jobs within hospitality as they begin their new lives. The Belfast International Language Academy (BILA) runs funded English language courses to help the newly arrived integrate. Last August, OSH Literacy set-up programmes with BILA, similar to those we run in Vietnam, to help refugees and migrants meet legal requirements and to safely and successfully get jobs within our industry. These are ongoing.

In the two years since OSH Literacy began, there have been a number of ups and downs. It has been extremely hard work, especially as I work full-time and also have family commitments. However, the positives outweigh the negatives and it is extremely rewarding work. I hope that it will continue to develop and be supported. I would like to thank the Institute of Hospitality, and especially those who work at the magazine, for their continued interest and support of the project.

Should any readers be interested in OSH Literacy training projects or wish to volunteer, please visit the website: www.oshliteracy.org or contact davidmagee@oshliteracy.org