



Students received a wealth of careers advice during the Institute of Hospitality Student Learning and Development Forum, organised by the London branch. **Ben Walker** reports

The London Branch event, now in its tenth year, was free for students in the Institute's Education Membership Scheme and attracted groups from Glion Institute of Higher Education, Westminster Kingsway College, City College Norwich, University of West London, The London College, UCK, and the Edge Hotel School.

During his keynote speech, Danny Pecorelli FIH, managing director, Exclusive Hotels and Venues, emphasised that hotel management requires both high level strategy and microscopic attention to detail, and is fundamentally about dealing with change. He illustrated this by describing what it was like to host four rugby teams during the Rugby World Cup last year, which of course didn't turn out as the English would have hoped.

Hilary Cooke MIH, director, Merlin Consultancy, wished that the next generation of hospitality managers would make greater use of data ("Without data, you're just another person with an opinion").

"The industry puts up an

image that it is not academic, but of course it's a science in every area. We need data all the time and we'd be a better-rounded industry if we used it more," she said.

Sam Coulstock MIH, business relations manager, Springboard, underlined the often overlooked opportunities in foodservice, such as catering in football stadiums, and Graham Eveleigh provided a detailed insight into BaxterStorey's operation and what is involved when contracts are mobilised across multiple sites. Arnold Fewell FIH, managing director, AVF Marketing & Access Champ, highlighted that targeting disabled guests could be highly lucrative and that people with disabilities often made extremely good employees.

Students heard that experience is the main attribute that employers look for in candidates. Michael Crow, HR manager, Shangri-la Hotel at the Shard, said: "My career didn't start at university. It started when I was sixteen and working in the local cafe.

Experience is the number one thing we look for. Any experience you can play to, make sure it's on your CV."

Susan Bland, chief human resources officer, Redefine BDL, added: "If you don't have work experience, I'd want to see life experience and examples of teamwork, such as playing in a sports team, or taking responsibility, for example, babysitting."

In order to get into the 'yes' pile, students were advised to keep their CVs to two sides of A4, target the content to the brand and position on offer, and ditch the generic adjectives such as 'reliable' and 'hard-working.' Citing unconscious bias, Alex Dimsdale, multi property director of HR, Marriott International, believed it was better not to include photos on CVs.

Iratxe Alvarez, resourcing manager, Starwood

Hotels & Resorts, said: "After seeing thousands of CVs each year, I can only remember a handful that stand out."

With a UK industry need for nearly 30,000 managers over the next four years, students were advised not to jump at the first opportunity. Martin-Christian Kent, executive director, People 1st, said: "Take time to understand what is out there and where you will fit in."

Georgette Davey, academic dean and program leader, Glion London, added: "Open as many doors as you can and only close them when you are really ready to do so. Close them politely because you may need those opportunities in the future."

The 10th Student Learning and Development Forum was generously hosted and sponsored by Glion Institute of Higher Education at their Roehampton campus on 17 November 2015.

Additional sponsors included education caterer Pabulum Catering, video production company Write Direction and Omni Facilities Management.

