

My career in brief...

Name: Jamie Perry
Job title: Restaurant Manager
Industry: Restaurants
Company: Southwold Pier



1. Please give a brief overview of your career history – where you started, how you progressed, the companies you have worked for etc

I joined Richard Hughes at the Lavender House at the age of 15 as a front of house waiter. That's where my passion for food, wine and the hospitality trade began. I took a six month gap year and on my return, I joined the opening team of Norwich Wagamama. This taught the other side of the hospitality industry with large quantities of custom and a quick turn-over, I learnt how to follow a systematic approach.

In October 2006, Richard Hughes offered me the lucrative position of Restaurant Manager at The Lavender House which at the age of 19 was a superb opportunity. Having spent almost two years back at The Lavender House, I took a six month sabbatical in 2008 to work in the most exclusive restaurant in the Dubai International Financial Centre which catered only for the elite. It was a tremendous experience and after six months I was ready to return, which brought me to my current position managing the Boardwalk Restaurant at Southwold Pier.

2. Have you always wanted to work within hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism and why? If not, how did you end up where you are now?

In my youth, I was heavily involved with music and drama and believed that I would carry this forward into my career. Whilst I still enjoy both, it was my first part-time job that prepared me for a life in hospitality. The trade is a theatre in itself with its "backstage" areas, costumes and just like the stage, no matter what happens the show must go on! For me the need to be around people is one of the reasons I enjoy the trade so much and it's what keeps me coming back for more. Whatever sector you fall under within hospitality, we are all aware that you have to constantly re-evaluate the product you're offering and have to adapt to the demand of the business.

3. What sort of qualifications and training have you had and what else would you like to do?

I've very few qualifications in hospitality, apart from the necessities to comply with current standards. I studied up to my A-levels at sixth form, took my gap-year and then began studying Business Management at university. My grievance with qualifications is that a sector such as Hospitality needs to have people with a natural flare and affinity for the industry, which people can instantly recognise. You can have all the qualifications in the world, but if you fail to perform, you've got nowhere to hide!

4. What are the top 5 activities you would typically carry out on a daily basis?

1. Make sure we are adequately staffed for the day's trading and that we can deliver our product to the company standard.

2. Staff briefing – Each day we have a ‘Plan of Action’ sheet which determines where people will be based for the day. In addition to that, we set out daily targets, briefing points such as positive/negatives from the previous day’s trading and outline strategies to achieve the targets.
3. Kitchen – I have a ten minute chat with the kitchen to make them aware of reservations for the evening and to discuss menu changes and daily specials.
4. Liaise with all managers on site to iron out any issues for the day
5. Check the weather forecast!!!!



5. What do you most enjoy about your job?

Working as part of a team is always satisfying and pulling together, particularly on the busy days is compulsory to get through. I place a strong emphasis on the importance of every individual from the pot wash cleaning our crockery to the head chef putting the food on the plate. By consistently emphasising the importance of the individual it has become the most enjoyable part of my job watching the team perform. The sunny days are a bonus too!!

6. What would you say is the biggest challenge you face on a daily basis?

The weather; if the sun is shining people swarm to Southwold in their thousands (literally) and when the rain clouds come over people depart just as quick. With this in mind it is a constant battle to balance the staffing vs. the daily sales. This is without doubt the hardest part of working within a sector like tourism which is so heavily dependant on the weather.

7. What would you say is your biggest achievement to date?

At the end of 2007 we built a ‘kitchen table’ at The Lavender House which was the first within a 200 mile radius. Between the management, we decided the kitchen table needed a theme that could create the ultimate experience for the customers.

One of my favourite dessert wine producers is an Austrian gentleman called ‘Willi Opitz’ who has won numerous gold medals and holds a prestigious link with the Formula One McLaren group. He produces a series of wines under the ‘Silver Lake’ label, exclusively for the brand. I organised a trip to meet Willi at his Austrian vineyard, close to harvest time and spent a fabulous weekend sampling his diverse range of wines and culminated the trip on the final evening with a 14 course tasting menu with as many accompanying wines. Willi gave us the honour of naming our kitchen table ‘The Willi Opitz Room’ and thereafter we served a tasting menu with Willi’s accompanying wines and re-created our fabulous experience in Austria. So, I’d say that securing Willi Opitz sponsor to the table sits as my biggest achievement to date.

8. Who has been the greatest influence/role model in your career and why?

Working under Richard Hughes from a young age and watching his sheer determination to succeed and his commitment to the company really inspired me to work hard and achieve results. Working under Stephen Bourne at Southwold Pier has opened my eyes to a different level of business and taught me the adaptability to succeed in such a diverse business. With all of my experiences I have been very lucky with the leadership I have worked under.

9. Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?

I try to avoid questions like these!

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10. Do you have a favourite tale or most memorable moment from your career? If so, please tell us about it!

Serving the Iraqi Prime Minister in Dubai is definitely up there.

11. What piece of advice would you offer someone who wants to work within our industries?

Learn at least one thing everyday. Be the first to accept opportunities when presented and always be the last one to leave. With determination, dedication and an affinity for the business, this industry will be the most satisfying career you could pick.

12. What would you say are the essential person characteristics for your job e.g. enthusiastic, team worker, proactive etc?

Customers will always remember first impressions, so a smile and a warm, friendly welcome are the basic essential characteristics for the job. Working as part of a team is vital to deliver the 'complete product' but also working on your own initiative and being proactive with each situation will help your chances of promotion and holding senior positions within a company.

Further information

For further information on career opportunities in the hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism industries, please visit www.uksp.co.uk.

