

The story of Americans being forced to train their foreign H-1B/L-1 replacements is very common in computer/IT and engineering. It's a sad and humiliating end to the careers of many tech workers who are blackmailed and/or pressured to train a foreign worker to do their job. To add insult to injury politicians continue to insist Americans don't have the skills to compete.

The situation unfolding at a Hyatt hotel in Boston is a slightly different situation because it involves the H-2B visa. Until now there was an assumption that the forced training wouldn't happen with H-2B because the jobs are typically lower skilled and lower paying, and therefore less of a target for this type of corporate cannibalism. This story is proof positive that there is a race to the bottom to replace Americans who work as housekeepers at hotels for \$15 an hour.

Hyatt Boston isn't hiring their own H-2Bs. They are using a bodyshop called Hospitality Staffing Solutions to import the laborers. There isn't much information on HSS on their website:

<http://www.hsstaffing.com/>

One thing to note is that HSS is designated as a woman owned minority business. Because of affirmative action regulations minority contractors have a huge advantage over non-minority companies that bid for outsourcing contracts. Lately I have seen a trend of women owned minority businesses moving into the H-1B and H-2B body trade in professions such as teaching, construction, and now housekeeping.

Ironically Hyatt is using H-2B workers to replace Americans who are mostly minority. No argument can be made that Hyatt is diversifying their workforce by doing this, although they might be able to argue that they will be able to get more workers who are bi-lingual. Click on the links to the articles below to see pictures of the unemployed Americans to see for yourself who is losing their jobs (hint -- they are African Americans and whites!). The WBTZ article has a video that is definitely worth watching.

Hyatt labor condition applications (LCA) for H-2Bs can be viewed at the DOL website. You must download the files and then import them into a program like Excel to view the data. Go here:

<http://www.flcdatcenter.com/CaseH2B.aspx>

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Here are a few data points for Hyatt. The economic incentive for them to replace their American employees is the money and benefits they save from dumping \$15 an hour American employees with benefits for \$7 and hour workers with no benefits.

HYATT REGENCY JACKSONVILLE Cleaner, Housekeeping \$6.95
HYATT REGENCY LA JOLLA Cleaner, Housekeeping \$7.65
HYATT REGENCY MIAMI ROOFER \$8.36

There is no data for Hospitality Staffing Solutions. This is probably because HSS didn't get into the H-2B business until recently. Once again the DOL is late on posting current data -- this time they are behind by more than a year because their most recent data is for 2008 (we are now on the 2010 fiscal year). HSS probably won't show up until 2010 data is posted.

Give credit to the housekeepers and other workers at Hyatt -- they aren't taking Hyatt's abuse lying down. Last week they had a protest outside of the Hyatt. The union that organized the protest has a website here:

<http://www.bostonhotelunion.org/aboutus.html>

REFERENCES:

<http://wbztv.com/local/hyatt.housekeeping.layoffs.2.1190030.html>

Workers Laid Off By Hyatt Rally In Boston

http://www.boston.com/jobs/news/articles/2009/09/17/housekeepers_lose_hyatt_jobs_to_outsourcing/

A hard ending for housekeepers

http://www.boston.com/business/ticker/2009/09/rally_for_fired.html

Fired Hyatt workers, supporters rally

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<http://wbztv.com/local/hyatt.housekeeping.layoffs.2.1190030.html>

Sep 17, 2009 10:18 pm US/Eastern
Workers Laid Off By Hyatt Rally In Boston
Supporters of fired Hyatt hotel workers are picketing the Hyatt Regency Boston near Downtown Crossing right now.

Unionized organizers say the reason for the rally is that 130 women who are non-union housekeepers were fired without warning after being required to train new workers who have now replaced them.

Conversation Nation: Train Your Replacements, Then Get Out

"People just started crying. I was like 'oh my God,' said Lucine Williams, fighting back tears.

The veteran housekeeper told us how after nearly 22 years at the Hyatt Regency Boston she and her co-workers lost their jobs August 31st.

"Everybody is in disbelief. People still crying, wanting to understand what's going on. After working here so long, how can you treat people like that, just get up and say I no longer need you anymore...They're human beings. They're human beings."

The union now advocating for them says the housekeepers fired from the Hyatt Regency Cambridge and the Hyatt Harborside at Logan Airport, as well as the Hyatt in Boston, are being replaced by employees of Hospitality Staffing Solutions, a Marietta Georgia company, at roughly half their wages and without benefits the fired workers had, such as health, dental and 401k.

"In the history of Boston hotels, this has never happened and we're not going to let it happen here," said Janice Loux, President of Unite Here Local 26.

Hyatt Hotels released a statement Thursday night saying the company had to make very difficult decisions due to the unprecedented economic client.

"Unfortunately, these decisions have affected our associates at Boston-area properties. A restructuring of our housekeeping services included staff reductions that we deeply regret."

The company also said it's providing those who were laid off with

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assistance, including severance and outplacement counseling.

While a hospitality industry research group has said this is one of the worst years on record for hotels, the recession has also been daunting for its workers such as Lucine Williams, a single mother who has a 13-year-old son with asthma.

She says, after she was fired, she picked up extra medication for him before her insurance runs out.

"I understand health care is going up. Every year, it's killing everybody...What happened to America? It's a beautiful country and people treat you like that, to save a buck?"

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http://www.boston.com/jobs/news/articles/2009/09/17/housekeepers_lose_hyatt_jobs_to_outsourcing/

A hard ending for housekeepers
Uncommon outsourcing eliminates 100 Hyatt jobs

By Katie Johnston Chase, Globe Staff | September 17, 2009

When the housekeepers at the three Hyatt hotels in the Boston area were asked to train some new workers, they said they were told the trainees would be filling in during vacations.

On Aug. 31, staffers learned the full story: None of them would be making the beds and cleaning the showers any longer. All of them were losing their jobs. The trainees, it turns out, were employees of a Georgia company, Hospitality Staffing Solutions, who were replacing them that day.

The move to outsource the jobs of about 100 housekeeping employees at the Hyatt Regency Boston, Hyatt Regency Cambridge, and Hyatt Harborside at Logan International Airport is unusual in the hospitality industry, which counts on the housekeeping staff to help make sure hotel guests are comfortable.

"It's unbelievable," said Lucine Williams, 41, who has worked at the Hyatt Regency Boston for nearly 22 years and was making \$15.32 an hour plus health, dental, and 401(k) benefits when she lost her job. "I don't know

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how they can treat people like that."

After hearing the news at meetings last month, employees cried and screamed, said Drupattie Jungra, 55, who had worked at the Cambridge Hyatt for more than 21 years and made \$15.69 an hour, plus benefits.

"Where am I going to go look for a job?" said Jungra, a widow who regularly sends money to her family in Guyana and whose four grown sons live with her.

Hyatt officials confirmed the layoffs at the three hotels, but declined to say whether the chain was considering similar moves in other locations across the country. "As part of an ongoing drive to address challenging economic conditions, the Hyatt hotels of Boston have restructured their housekeeping services," according to a statement from the hotel. "Regrettably, the restructuring included staff reductions."

Like many hotels in the Boston area, the Hyatt has struggled this year, as a recession has caused people to cut down on their travel plans. Boston area hotels experienced a 21 percent drop in revenue per available room in June compared to the year before, according to PKF Hospitality Research, and 10 percent in July. Chicago-based Hyatt reported revenue fell 18 percent to \$1.6 billion in the first half of this year.

Other hotels have taken a different approach to riding out the recession. Earlier this year the Liberty Hotel ended its contract with the company that provided its security and night janitorial service and replaced them with hotel workers from other departments who might have otherwise been laid off. "We would not [outsource housekeepers] because we want to tightly control the guest experience here and the cleanliness," said managing director Jim Treadway.

Representatives from the Hilton and Marriott hotel chains said they have not outsourced their housekeepers and have no plans to do so.

Paul Sacco, the president of the Massachusetts Lodging Association, said he isn't aware of any other hotels that have outsourced their cleaning staffs but wasn't surprised by the move. "In these economic times, it just calls for unusual initiatives that maybe we wouldn't have looked at before," he said.

But Sacco pointed out that outsourcing has been going on for years at companies around the country and that not only would the move save the

Hyatt money, it wouldn't affect the hotel guests. "If you stayed at the Hyatt last night and you bumped into the housekeeper, would you notice a difference?"

Janice Loux, the president of Unite Here Local 26, a union that represents local hotel workers, called the outsourcing a "race to the bottom." The Hyatt housekeepers were not part of the union but reached out to Local 26, which is organizing a picket and rally in support of the housekeepers today at 5 p.m. at the downtown Hyatt.

"Never ever in all my years have I seen a wholesale contracting out of an entire department," she said.

Loux said the new workers will make \$8 an hour and receive no benefits, based on information from a Hospitality Staffing Solutions employee. Staffing firm president Rick Holliday sent out an e-mail stating his employees made competitive wages but didn't answer further questions.

The dismissed workers received two weeks of pay when they were let go, plus one week of pay for every year they worked at the Hyatt up to five or 10 years, depending on the hotel. According to the housekeepers, two Hyatt employees from each hotel were asked to continue working, though it was unclear if they would be employed by the Hyatt or by the staffing firm.

Williams, a single mother of a 13-year-old with asthma, stocked up on medication before her insurance runs out at the end of the month. Last week, the former Hyatt Regency Boston housekeeper also had to cancel an airline ticket she'd bought the day before she was laid off to go see her father in Barbados. She hasn't seen him since 2005, and isn't sure when she'll see him again.

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http://www.boston.com/business/ticker/2009/09/rally_for_fired.html

Fired Hyatt workers, supporters rally
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By Katie Johnston Chase, Globe Staff
A group of about 300 fired Hyatt hotel housekeepers and their supporters

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rallied at the Hyatt Regency Boston this afternoon starting at 5 p.m. for about 2 hours to protest the company's outsourcing of 100 jobs to an out-of-state staffing firm. US representatives Michael Capuano and state Senator Anthony Galluccio and Boston City Councilor Maureen Feeney showed up for the rally, but Stephen Lynch, who was also expected to attend, did not come to the protest.

The Hyatt Regency Boston, Hyatt Regency Cambridge, and Hyatt Harborside Hotel fired their entire housekeeping staffs Aug. 31 replacing them with workers from Hospitality Staffing Solutions. The Hospitality Staffing Solutions workers had been trained by the Hyatt employees, who said they were told the trainees would be filling in during vacations.

Janice Loux, president of Unite Here Local 26, which organized the rally for the housekeepers -- who did not belong to the union -- said she has been overwhelmed by the response. "I feel change coming," Loux said.

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