

Seminar with horses for Falkensteiner's GMs

Leaders do things differently

Aleksandar Vasilijevic stands in the middle of a pegged out square area. A horse circles him, makes a turn and, visibly exhausted, approaches him. Aleksandar Vasilijevic has done it. He has successfully directed "Maxi" over the dressage area. The people on the wooden benches are clearly relieved and start clapping.

While this may seem strange to an outsider, it is actually part of a Falkensteiner Academy seminar. **Aleksandar Vasilijevic** is the General Manager of Falkensteiner Hotel Belgrade and one of the participants in the seminar "Leadership Perception". The seminar has left a deep impression on him: "It is the first time I have had a training experience like this and I am sure it will make a great impact on the way in which me and my team members communicate with each other in future. I now realise how important feedback from employers is and how much my leadership style affects the team's spirit, as well as hotel operations."

People have a key function in the hotel business: from reservation, to



Tine Brodnjak,
Resident Manager of the Falkensteiner Iadera:
"Horses are great teachers when it comes to leadership skills."

housekeeping. However, companies are often readier to invest in hardware than they are in their employees' further development. The money spent on personnel development in this sector is shockingly low. It amounts to 79 Euros per member of staff per year. In comparison: The amount spent on personnel development in the insurance sector is 1,500 Euros. (DeStatis 2011)

The Falkensteiner Group, with over 30 hotels and residences in six countries, takes a different approach. **Elisabeth Burgis**, Director of HR for the Falkensteiner Group, makes this clear: "Our employees play a central role in giving our guests that special Falkensteiner 'Welcome Home' feeling. It is therefore essential that we give them the opportunity to constantly work on their further personal development." **Monika Strahwald**, responsible for the Falkensteiner Academy, expands on this; "Even though we offer a variety



Adriana Marchetti,
General Manager of Falkensteiner Schladming:
"A unique experience – I still profit from it today."

of professional seminars, such as wine steward training and hospitality systems training, our focus lies on the further development of our management staff and we are taking a new approach here. Learning doesn't only have to take place in the seminar room."

The seminar with horses is one of the highlights of the extensive educational program at Falkensteiner Academy. For **Tine Brodnjak**, Resident Manager of the Falkensteiner Iadera in the Punta Skala resort, it was the best training he has ever had: "There is nothing better than testing and improving your leadership skills by dealing with animals like horses. Horses respond best to an honest relationship which is built on authentic-

ity, trust and respect. When working with them, you are testing yourself to see how you react to different types of employees. Will they be followers or will they be those whom you have to push? They are either with you, or they are simply not even paying attention to you, just as in everyday life.”

The trainer for “Leadership Perception” is **Monika Eibler**. She had her first experience with horses when she was 5 years old and has now turned her passion into a profession. She provides effective, high quality horse-assisted leadership, communication

and team-building training courses for small to midsize companies and for large international enterprises, as well for individuals. The benefits of these types of training programs are obvious; “People learn through actual experience. Horses give experience. In addition to the rational level, the work with horses also addresses the emotional level. This makes learning sustainable and defines the essential starting point for the change process.”

The aim of the horse seminar is similar to that of other leadership seminars. It’s about trust. It’s about

acting authentically. It’s about motivation. It’s about achieving your goal. Elisabeth Burgis, Director of HR of the Falkensteiner Group, sees a big difference between this seminar and other types of seminar, namely, the strong impact of the experience. She notes: “Your experience with these horses becomes engraved on your memory. All of our members of staff can feel the enthusiasm the participants bring back with them from the seminar and, in the end, so can our guests.”

Miona Milic



Falkensteiner Hotels & Residences

‘Welcome Home’ is the motto of the family-run hotel group’s more than 30 Falkensteiner Hotels & Residences. And it is this feeling of being at home whilst on holiday or business trip that you can enjoy in their hotels in Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Italy, Slovakia and Serbia.

www.falkensteiner.com

**Monika Eibler (first left)
Coaching & Training ‘ANDERS’**

“Leadership trainings with horses shouldn’t be one shot events - they should build the foundation for long term personal & leadership development.”

www.monika-eibler.at



For Falkensteiner: Learning doesn’t only have to take place in the seminar room.