

Best Western's Boutique Brand Onboarding Training Provides Resources, Support Along Each Step

Best Western Hotels & Resorts

Best Unique or Innovative Learning and Development Program

October 2019



Company Background



Company-at-a-Glance	Best Western Hotels & Resorts
Headquarters	Phoenix, AZ
Year Founded	1946
Revenue	\$4.3 billion
Employees	More than 1,500 employees in 15 countries
Global Scale	Global network of more than 4,500 hotels and resorts in approximately 100 countries and territories worldwide
Customers/Output, etc. (Key customers and services offered)	Best Western offers 16 hotel brands to meet the needs of today's leisure and business travelers.
Industry	Hospitality
Website	www.BestWestern.com

Budget and Timeframe

Number of (HR, Learning, Talent) employees involved with the implementation?	10-15
Number of contractors involved with implementation	None
Timeframe to implement	Timeframes varied as they were dependent on when properties opened.
Start date of the program	March 2018

Business Conditions and Business Needs

For more than 65 years, Best Western Hotels & Resorts was comprised of one eponymous hotel brand — Best Western. In 2010, the company expanded its brand offerings, introducing Best Western Plus and Best Western Premier brands, which was driven by the commitment to meet needs of travelers of different types and specialize the guest experience. Following the initial launch, nearly half of the existing Best Western-branded hotels were guided through an upscaling process into one of the two new brands — and all new hotels (construction and conversion) seeking Best Western membership submitted their application to the brand that best aligned with their existing or proposed service and amenity levels.

In 2016 and 2017, Best Western heightened its focus on building scale to remain competitive in the marketplace. The legacy brands, (Best Western, Best Western Plus and Best Western Premier) were performing well but growing slowly, as the broad-midscale market was already well-represented. To shake things up a bit, Best Western embarked on a journey of transformation, which continues today. This transformation reimaged the brand’s identity and evolved into the company’s new era — “Today’s Best Western.” The transformation led to the creation of the parent company “Best Western Hotels & Resorts” which included a diversified collection of brands that meets customers’ needs for different travel purposes. One of the early decisions was to begin developing new brands, brands that would proudly carry the legacy of 70 years of the Best Western name but would be unburdened with pre-conceived notions of what they stood for. The first of these new brands to be developed were Vīb and GLō.

Vīb and GLō were the company’s first foray into designing prototype-driven brands — hotels that would provide a consistent look and feel at every hotel that shared the name, while still incorporating elements of the local market. Dubbed boutique or lifestyle brands, Vīb and GLō were designed with the modern traveler in mind, leading to a series

of stylistic, architectural and operational decisions that would break the conventional mold and better fit the needs of a changing population.

In 2018, as developers began construction on their new Vīb and GLō hotels, Best Western Hotels & Resorts came to the conclusion that to truly create a new, modern and unique hotel experience, it wasn't enough to simply redesign the buildings and fill them with signature furniture and modern amenities. The culture of the hotels would need to be intentionally designed to deliver a truly one-of-a-kind guest experience. There was a strong need to take a hard look at the human side of the equation — to mindfully identify the culture that each of these brands would need to have. The hotel staff would not only be a crucial part of the culture equation, but ultimately a key to each brand's success.

This realization was a major stepping off point for Best Western Hotels & Resorts. The company's existing I CARE service culture (launched initially in 2004 and reinforced with new training programs every three to five years) would not be enough to guide hotel leadership and staff toward developing a successful culture at their new hotels. Though the traditional concepts taught through the I CARE program (empowerment, trust, problem resolution, the 10/5 rule) were tried and true foundations of hospitality, they did not address the modern and stylistic culture that these new hotel concepts needed. A new approach had to be taken.

Led, in part, by Best Western Hotels & Resorts' Education & Training team (E&T team), cross-functional groups began to meet to discuss how these brands should look, feel, sound and even taste to the traveler. The "big rocks" of branding, architecture and furnishings had been established, but the work had seemed to stop there. These groups, for the first time in the company's history, had the opportunity to identify and mandate the consistent elements that would drive the guest experience and build the foundation for a culture that the E&T team would develop programs to support. These early meetings were indispensable in deciding the specific cultures for each of the new brands — how we would describe them, what words Best Western Hotels & Resorts would use and ultimately, what would be important to cultivate within them.

Overview

It has been proven through countless studies and surveys that the staff at a hotel is a key factor in positively impacting guest satisfaction and building brand loyalty, and both of these metrics lead to increased revenues. And, outside of the hospitality industry, organizations with a well-defined workplace culture — one where employees feel a sense of ownership and involvement in that culture — have shown higher performance than organizations with weak or unintentionally formed cultures.

With those findings in mind, Best Western Hotels & Resorts began with the goal to develop brand-specific onboarding programs that would support hoteliers to build and sustain strong brand cultures within its new brands. The company sought to build programs that would convince hoteliers to hire staff members that would not only fit within the brand cultures but would enhance them, build upon them, and make them stronger and more vibrant. An obvious challenge with these goals, of course, was the company's structure. Vīb and GLō hotels, like all of the traditional Best Western brands, are independently owned and operated — a point of fierce pride within the company and its hotels, but one that nonetheless prevents the corporate office from directing or even strongly influencing any employment decisions.

To achieve the goal of encouraging Vīb and GLō hoteliers to populate their hotels with employees that would fit the respective culture and to support them in maintaining the sense of culture, Best Western developed a multi-step training program that would provide resources and support at each step of the pre- and post-activation process. Additionally, to encourage the ownership group and leadership team to adhere to these goals, each step is accompanied with heavy doses of excitement and enthusiasm surrounding the brand culture.

Design of the Program

So, how does a corporate team with little to no power over hiring decisions affect a significant change in mindset in the groups they are working with? This was the question Best Western Hotels & Resorts sought to answer with these new programs.

Currently, new hotels that join the company (construction or conversion) as one of the three legacy brands (Best Western, Best Western Plus and Best Western Premier) receive pre- and post-activation support from various members of the corporate team.

Teams including Revenue Management, Sales, Marketing, Regional Services and others reach out to the hotel within their first year of membership (primarily via phone, email and GoToMeetings). The focus of these touchpoints is to orient them to Best Western Hotels & Resorts and the various resources available to owners, managers and staff. I CARE service culture training — accompanied by various operational topics — is provided during an Onsite Orientation (OSO) by the property's Regional Services Manager following their activation. All existing programs mentioned above are conducted somewhat generically, with few perceivable differences in the look/feel of the messaging or service level regardless of the hotel brand.

Though effective for a traditional hotel brand, this approach, like its legacy brands — was quickly acknowledged to be insufficient for these new brand cultures to thrive. With that knowledge, the E&T team set out (with the support of executive leadership) to create a

program that would be facilitated in addition to existing brand support mechanisms and training programs; one that would enhance the existing materials by focusing almost entirely on the specific brand culture at each hotel. This would be an innovative approach for Best Western Hotels & Resorts; until Vīb and GLō, no other Best Western brands have had significant brand-specific employee-facing collateral or training tools created exclusively for them.

With something as large and unwieldy as culture in sight — but with limited resources due to being a not-for-profit organization and with each Best Western-branded hotel being independently owned and operated, the program's design ultimately needed to place the responsibility for building and sustaining the hotel's culture squarely on the shoulders of the property leadership team. A cross-functional activation team — comprised of an E&T representative, the Brand Development Project Manager (BDPM), the property's area Regional Services Manager (RSM) and a Vīb/GLō task force RSM — would be gathered for each hotel (taking advantage of existing planned visits to save costs when possible), creating a group that would support property leadership each step of the way. Then, a program with four distinct phases to be facilitated by the activation team was created. Each phase was designed to lay a cornerstone that would support the property leadership team's daily efforts to build a strong cultural foundation. This program, approved by senior leadership, marked a greater show of support for the pre-activation hotel than Best Western Hotels & Resorts has ever provided for the legacy brands.

Phase 1: The Leadership Orientation

The "What"

- **Purpose:** Build excitement and connection to the Vīb/GLō culture within the property leadership team. Encourage property leadership to take ownership, role model and personalize the Vīb/GLō culture themselves. Determine how the Vīb/GLō culture will look, feel, taste and sound at their hotel. Gain the leadership team's commitment to the Vīb/GLō culture and identify how they will lead the culture. Crystallize their vision of the Vīb/GLō culture into practical decisions and action plans related to hiring, training and onboarding of staff. Prepare for the onboarding event, and introduce the purpose of the shared facilitation role that the leadership team will take during the event.
 - **Timing:** 30-60 days prior to activation
 - **Audience:** Owner/ownership group, general manager, department heads, supervisory personnel

The “Why”

Positive workplace culture must begin with the leadership team. Best Western Hotels & Resorts knew that the property leadership team's role in the success of this program was not to be taken lightly. The Brand Activation team would only be available to the property for a limited time — and not onsite on a regular basis; therefore, property leadership would need to be the driving force behind the development and sustainment of culture. With this in mind, the program was built with two objectives: to create a sense of ownership within the leadership team; and be relatable and accessible so that hotel managers and supervisors would be comfortable and excited to continue facilitating the culture after the brand activation team departs.

To further increase leadership buy-in, the company instituted multiple touchpoints prior to each onsite visit in the form of conference calls. These calls are meant to give the hotel leadership team members additional opportunities to interact with the activation team and create an informal setting to review expectations, ask questions and seek information about upcoming visits. These “in-between” touchpoints, incorporating the entire activation team (rather than just the hotel's main point of contact on the onboarding team), are meant to build a greater sense of camaraderie and connection to a larger group of individuals who will work with them toward activation and support them in their goal of a sustainable, brand-appropriate culture.

Phase 2: The Two-Day Onboarding Event

The “What”

- **Purpose:** Connect all staff to the Vīb/GLō culture and encourage them to find their role in creating it, personalizing it and living it on a daily basis. Discuss what makes the Vīb/GLō culture special, reinforce expectations established by property leadership during hiring/onboarding at the hotel, get crew members engaging with the cultural framework and begin owning it, finding their role in upholding the culture and making it their own. Build on the awareness and ownership of the Vīb/GLō culture through focused discussions and activities that apply the general cultural concepts to all major guest touchpoints: arrival, departure, food and beverage experiences, cleanliness and maintenance.
 - **Timing:** One week prior to activation
 - **Audience:** All leaders and crew members

The “Why”

Another goal that Best Western Hotels & Resorts set out to achieve in the design of these programs was to inject a greater amount of interaction and attendee engagement into the onsite training, especially the two-day onboarding event.

This goal drove many of the early decisions made around the structure of the program and the activities themselves. It was imperative that the program be fun and energetic — an experience that really gave attendees the opportunity to do more than passively take in information. Attendees would be able to actively interact with the concepts and find ways to apply them to their existing knowledge and skills.

The two-day onboarding event was also designed to be facilitated inside Vīb/GLō hotels. Though it would be easier to have the program offsite — in a controlled setting away — the benefits outweighed the potential liabilities (which, importantly, included increased incidences of leadership team members being “pulled away” by contractors regularly during the sessions).

Being onsite would help overcome the difficulty that most traditional training programs suffer from — that of immediately applying the concepts being discussed. By allowing employees to discover the role they'll play in their actual work environment rather than in a traditional classroom environment, they were more likely to tie those concepts to the job they'll perform. Maximizing on this approach, training activities take place in multiple locations (the breakfast room, the guestrooms, the various public areas). This decision enabled Best Western to design activities that used the hotel as more than a setting, it took on the role of a character itself. Role-plays could be conducted in the breakfast area or the sundries shop, crew members could discuss and identify solutions to guest challenges in the guest room or parking lot — as a result, removing the barriers between training session and practical application.

Another great benefit to hosting the two day onboarding event onsite is the sense of momentum and enthusiasm that comes from spending time in a new — and frankly, pretty cool — hotel. Those two days spent experiencing the hotel from the guest's perspective are invaluable in building excitement in the employee and leadership group.

Many times, employees attending the session have already spent time in the hotel during construction — oftentimes completing large-scale, exhausting cleaning tasks — but those early experiences of the hotel are colored by (literally) the dirty work of cleaning up construction dust. With the training sessions, the perspective shifts to focus on how the guest will experience the hotel: clean, shiny and full of life and music. As a result, the employees are able to regain some of the energy that may have been lost during readying the hotel for activation and re-engage with the product in a truly positive way.

It was known early on that a large percentage of the staff (crew members) at these pre-activation hotels would have previous hotel operations experience, so a decision was made early on in the development of the program to not focus on the operational/positional skills or knowledge employees would need to be successful — but instead place a focus on the culture of the brand, inspiring crew members to embrace it and make it their own. (During the OSO facilitated by the RSM, these properties will continue to receive operational training after activation.) Many activities were designed, then, with introspective or self-assessing activities — reinforcing the notion that the culture described on the page is merely a starting point for the hotel's living, breathing culture and that each person present will have a role in creating and sustaining the living culture.

Phase 3: Post-Activation Support

The “What”

- **Purpose:** Support the leadership team in their efforts to create and maintain the Vīb/GLō culture. Observe and reinforce cultural standards during hotel operations. Provide training opportunities for existing and new crew members during the first months of operation (when turnover is expected).
- **Timing:** Upon activation, three corporate staff members each provide the equivalent of two weeks onsite (can be divided into multiple visits).
- **Visit Options** (actual mix of options to be decided during a discussion with the leadership team prior to the visit):
 - **Crew Observations:** Observe employee/guest interactions, followed by informal feedback sharing with the team. If desired, more formal feedback sessions can be scheduled with crew members with leaders present. All reports created during Crew Observation sessions will be shared with the leadership team during or following the visit.
 - **Reinforcement Training:** Individual activities/modules from the onboarding event can be facilitated based on trends observed during the crew observations or requests from the leadership team. At least one member of the leadership team will be asked to co-facilitate all sessions. Sessions can be scheduled for individual departments or all crew members and multiple instances may be scheduled to work around operational/scheduling needs.
 - **New Crew Training:** A condensed version of the onboarding event program can be presented during an onsite support visit for employees that join the team after activation. At least one member of the leadership

team will be asked to co-facilitate all sessions. Multiple instances may be scheduled to work around operational/scheduling needs and/or to allow for existing crew members to attend who would like a “refresher.”

The “Why”:

Because the success of each individual Vīb or GLō hotel will directly impact how these new brands are perceived in the marketplace, Best Western Hotels & Resorts acknowledged and approved the need to dedicate more resources to these hotels than we ever have, including onsite support. Where the typical new member hotel (Best Western, Best Western Plus or Best Western Premier) will have operational training provided by the area RSM and via calls, emails and webinars scheduled by other key departments such as Sales and Revenue Management, GLō and Vīb hotels receive a robust series of property visits and additional resources to ensure that they provide a positive guest experience of these new brands.

Built into the onboarding programs for all Vīb and GLō hotels in North America is a commitment to six weeks of support visits from brand activation team members. Once the property is activated, each visit is coordinated through the area RSM (now the hotel's main contact with Best Western Hotels & Resorts) and the property leadership team. Goals for the visit are outlined prior to the staff member's arrival, adjusting as necessary to meet pop-up needs while onsite. The primary focus of these visits is to prop up the culture within the team — reinforcing the concepts discussed and practiced during the formal pre-activation training programs — while ensuring successful day-to-day operations. Culture doesn't happen in a vacuum, so Best Western team members are there to assist the property leadership to implement the concepts discussed during the onboarding event into daily operations and to provide an outsider's perspective on the success of culture integration on a daily basis with all staff members.

Phase Four: Follow-up Resources

The “What”

- **Purpose:** Provide the property leadership team with resources to support and reinforce the Vīb/GLō culture in the long-term. Group discussions and activities are designed to reinforce conceptual framework of the culture (through individual self-reflection and development), as well as applying those concepts in the context of daily operational practices. All activities will be designed to be brief (facilitation time: 5-15 minutes), applicable to all crew members (regardless of position), flexible (with options for small or large groups) and with simple facilitation instructions that require minimal preparation from the management team.

- **Timing:** New activities and resources to support the Vīb/GLō culture will be released to the hotel leadership team each quarter following activation.

The “Why”

Following the six weeks of onsite support visits made by the Brand Activation team, property leadership will bear full responsibility for the culture of the hotel. They will receive additional support as needed (primarily from the area RSM), but ultimately they are the ones that will prop up and sustain the culture amongst their crew for the long-term. To ensure that they have all the tools necessary to do so, we will continue to supply them with branded collateral and activities for the year following their activation.

Importantly, these reinforcement tools will be presented to the property leadership teams in an accessible format, encouraging managers to want to facilitate the activities and keep the conversation going. To do this, all follow-up activities and/or resources are designed with the following “rules” in mind:

- **Simple, Easy-to-Follow Facilitation Instructions** — The company’s touchstone rule. The goal in designing these follow-up materials is that anyone who picks up a facilitator packet for any given month can take a quick look at it and know what the activity entails and have a good idea of how to make it happen. Preparation time for any of the conversations or activities will be minimal, essentially a “plug-and-play” concept using items typically on hand at the hotel or utilizing existing materials provided during the leadership orientation or onboarding event.
- **Brief** — All activities or discussions will be able to be facilitated within 5 to 15 minutes. Time and expected resistance to activities perceived to take away from the team’s focus on operations were major considerations in the design of the follow-up program. Again, the objective is anyone who opens that month’s activity sees it can be implemented quickly and with little to no impact on the efficient operations of the hotel.
- **Applicable to All Employees** — Key to the development of the follow-up resources is their applicability to all employees at the hotel, regardless of the department they work in, their position or their tenure. Each activity or resource is designed to focus on and reinforce a key cultural concept (smiling and having fun, interacting with guests, everyone sells, etc.) that can be applied to all employees. To ensure that each concept can be reinforced effectively, facilitation instructions will include prompts and questions that can be used by those leading the activity to ensure that all employees participating in the discussion have a chance to apply it to their jobs.

- **Flexible** — All activities will be designed to be scalable so that they are usable with any group size or mix. Each will be built with various options or alternative facilitation points that will assist the property leadership teams in adjusting to fit their team's needs. The goal is to design all activities so that they could feasibly be used in any situation, including: a 1:1 discussion while working side-by-side at the front desk, during a daily stand-up meeting in housekeeping or at an all-hands team meeting with all employees present.
- **Fun and Interactive** — A central goal in the development of all activities, resources and materials created for these onboarding programs has been to make it fun, just like the hotels themselves. Staff are more likely to embrace a concept if it makes them smile or they have fun while practicing it. Therefore, each of the follow-up activities and discussions are designed to bring this element of the new brands to life in monthly installments.

Delivery of the Program

Challenges Met and Overcome

- **Property Leadership Team Participation** — Always a challenge in a busy operating hotel environment, getting the management team to participate (much less facilitate) in training programs can be difficult. But, as the success of any workplace culture must begin with leadership ownership and buy-in, Best Western knew that its role in the success of this program was not to be minimized. The activation team would only be available to the property for a limited time; therefore, the property leadership would need to be the driving force behind the culture. To address this challenge, all formal training sessions were scheduled prior to activation (i.e. regular hotel operations). Though this approach may have some draw-backs (primarily in the “lull” that could occur following training created by any unexpected delays to the activation), it was known that a pre-opening class would have the chance of better attendance from both staff (not having to operate the hotel) and leadership. To combat any significant disruptions of leadership attention during the sessions (mostly in the form of contractors pulling them out of the session), the importance of their presence and participation was reinforced during every conversation prior to the onboarding event. And during the event itself, Best Western calls upon the weeks of relationship building and camaraderie built intentionally into the earlier elements of the program (leadership orientation, conference calls) to lean upon the tried and true leadership concept of peer pressure to keep them in play.

- **Sliding Activation Timeframes** — Another challenge that was navigated around since implementing the program is the constant shifting timelines that accompany new construction projects. As Vīb and GLō hotels are nearly all new construction, Best Western learned to step back from pushing optimal timeframes for the various program elements and have shifted to discovering what the property leadership team believes will work best for their team and working within those parameters. Thinking more like its BDPM team members has also been beneficial as it further develops a skill they apply every day in their positions — that of honoring the owner/member's activation estimates (which may be overly aggressive and unrealistic) while remaining patient and helping them avoid making commitments they will not be able to keep. In that light, each hotel's project manager takes the initiative to act as the liaison with the leadership team and drive the early conversations around timing.
- **Addressing Future Challenges** — It's been found that the key to addressing these and any future challenges is the strong cross-functional relationships that the Education and Training team is building with the activation team members for each property and the recently formed boutique and lifestyle brands division within Best Western Hotels & Resorts. The Vīb and GLō brands mark a distinct shift toward a more collaborative approach within the brand.

Measurable Benefits

Though Best Western Hotels & Resorts is still in the early days of reaping all of the benefits of the new onboarding approach with the Vīb and GLō brands, which is not to say that a marked improvement in the new brands' guest satisfaction scores has not become a highly visible marker of the programs' successes.

Best Western Hotels & Resorts, as with most large hotel companies, relies on two major sources of guest metrics: social media and an internal satisfaction survey. In the case of the internal surveying device, Medallia is used to implement post-stay surveys. These surveys are sent upon departure to all guests with an email address on file. In the social media realm, TripAdvisor is the gold standard for guest reviews. A comparison was conducted to find the impact, if any, that this new approach to onboarding these hotels has had on guest satisfaction. As there is currently only one open Vīb hotel in North America, the larger sample size of GLō hotels was used for comparison. The comparison group is comprised of the Best Western legacy brands activated during the same timeframe (to reduce seasonal variables).

Figure 1: Guests' Satisfaction Scores Comparison

	Other BW Brands	GLō Hotels	Difference
Guest Satisfaction Survey (Medallia) — Overall Service (Percentage of 9s and 10s)	77.9	80.53	+2.63
TripAdvisor — Overall Score	37.94	63.04	+25.10
TripAdvisor — Service	52.61	75.00	+22.39

All GLō hotels vs. all other Legacy Brands (BW, BW Plus, BW Premier) opened during same timeframe (Sept. 11, 2018-March 11, 2019)

All illustrations provided by Best Western Hotels & Resorts

The results are quite promising. Though new hotels often benefit from an increase in perceived value, they also experience significant growing pains in terms of service and operational practices in their first months of operation. However, with increases (though moderate) in nearly every driver measured via the Medallia survey and sizeable increases across all social media review sites, it's evident that this new approach of increased support and a strong focus on culture (and the individual employee's role in it) is working. The most important critic, the guest, is experiencing the GLō brand in a very positive way. Additionally, there has been an internal lift in satisfaction that can be attributed to the increased resources and support that Vīb and GLō hotels receive from the corporate teams, and the onboarding training programs. One to two weeks post-activation, an onboarding process survey (administered via Unifocus) is sent to the primary contact at each new member hotel.

In this survey, property leadership is asked to rate their satisfaction in five areas of the overall onboarding process. Sections include: the Best Western Rewards Program, Overall Activation Process, Best Western New Member Onboarding Process, Technology Solutions, and Design Process and Assistance. In the Best Western New Member Onboarding Process section, members rate the Onboarding team on the support provided, including training and onsite visits.

Findings for the Vīb & GLō properties that have completed the survey show a 3.2-point lift in satisfaction with the New Member Onboarding Process compared to all other Best Western legacy brands activated during the same timeframe.

Figure 2: Overall Onboarding Process Satisfaction Scores

	Other BW Brands	Vīb & GLō Hotels	Difference
Best Western New Member Onboarding Process (Unifocus Survey)	90	93.2	+3.2

Returned surveys from Vīb & GLō hotel vs. All other Legacy Brands (BW, BW Plus, BW Premier) during same timeframe (Sept. 112018-March 11, 2019)

Overall

So, what’s next? The future of Best Western Hotels & Resorts is a diverse and exciting one. Since the launch of the Vīb and GLō training programs, two more boutique/lifestyle brands have been announced: Aiden Hotel and Sadie Hotel. These brands share some of the key traits established by Vīb and GLō (modern and stylistic approaches to break the traditional hospitality mold), but strike out in a new direction with more individualized designs inspired by their locale. Due to the success of the Vīb and GLō onboarding program — and the high level of buy-in received from senior executives — approval was granted immediately to begin development of cultural training programs for Aiden Hotel and Sadie Hotel properties.

Primarily conversion brands, Best Western’s Design team will work closely with the owners/developers of each Aiden Hotel or Sadie Hotel properties to identify and design a specific look/feel that fits the local flair, history or design-eye of the owner. In this way, Aiden Hotel and Sadie Hotel properties will each have distinctive looks and amenities. This individualistic approach to the interior and exterior design of the hotel will, of course, impact the prescribed culture — so building on the foundation struck for Vīb and GLō, the onboarding programs for Aiden Hotel and Sadie Hotel properties are being designed to incorporate a greater need for customization. For example, the Aiden Hotel brand culture established in the training materials acts as a starting point for the discussions and activities with the teams. This is a stepping off point to craft their specific iteration of a culture that incorporates the “story” of their hotel and local area.

Additionally, the E&T team has been asked to create a similar onboarding program for Best Western Hotels & Resorts’ extended stay brand, Executive Residency by Best Western. Also developed in recent years, the Executive Residency by Best Western brand has quietly been growing (now at six activated hotels) without any brand-specific training

materials or resources. Due to the awareness that the Vīb and GLō programs have sparked within the corporate team, the idea to establish a brand culture — this time, one that partners with operational best practices in the extended stay segment — bubbled to the group consciousness. Work is now under way in a joint venture between the Education and Training and the Regional Services team, the company's operational experts.

It is safe to say — though it may feel somewhat boastful — that the efforts of the E&T team at Best Western Hotels & Resorts to design, develop and implement the Vīb and GLō onboarding programs have changed the way the company views brand building. Executives and those involved in the early stages of brand cultivation have accepted that culture is not just a significant driver of employee engagement, but that it is a crucial piece of the puzzle in creating a successful new brand — one that speaks to the travelling public and says, "Notice me!"

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