

Interview with Edge Hotel School alumnus James Brackley



James was one of the early EHS alumni. Now 31, he is Restaurant and Bar Manager at South Lodge Hotel & Spa, part of the Exclusive Collection. We caught up with him to see how life in the industry is going.

You graduated from the Edge Hotel School in 2016. Looking back now, what would you say were the main benefits of studying at EHS?

"The key thing for me was that the Edge Hotel School enabled me to not only study for and get a degree, but also getting real operational experience from working alongside industry professionals in Wivenhoe House Hotel. EHS is a unique institution so I also benefited from working and studying alongside likeminded individuals – we had all chosen the course because of its very different approach."



"Studying at EHS really helped me with both my personal and professional development."

What opportunities did you have during your studies to meet people in the industry? And how did that help you?

" There were lots of different opportunities and this really helped me. I was fortunate enough to attend a range of industry events as well as experience "masterclass" lectures from industry professionals who came into the School."

The opportunities to meet people from the industry enabled me to secure work experience placements during my half term breaks and gave me a head start on growing my own professional network.

What do you think are the most important skills you need to succeed in the hospitality industry and how did EHS help you develop them?

"The hospitality industry is competitive and hard work – although very rewarding. You need a wide range of skills to be successful. The key ones for me are:

- Resilience
- Effective Communication
- Teamwork
- Innovation.

Because the Edge Hotel School blends academic, theoretical knowledge with hands on operational experience, you develop these skills as part of experience you have there."

What's the best piece of advice you've received since starting out in the industry?

"To be self directive and to never stop learning! In this industry there are never two days the same so every day brings a new experience and an opportunity to keep learning."

The hospitality industry has been particularly affected by Covid-19. How has it affected you? And what would you say to a young person thinking about a career in hospitality now?

"The industry was really hit hard by Covid-19 and I experienced at first hand the impact of the lockdowns. During the periods of closure, I was part of the asset security team which was again a unique experience. I also had opportunities to work on specific projects and tasks to prepare the property for re-opening. On a personal note I use the time to do some fund raising to support industry charities as this was a very difficult time for some people within the industry. I also ticked off some personal development – completing online learning courses and taking part in a mentorship programme."

My advice to anyone considering the industry as a career is to follow your passion and aim high. The industry will bounce back so chose to work for a company that mirrors your values and a manager who inspires you.

Very wise advice James! So thinking about your own career, where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?

"That's easy – Director of Food and Beverage within the luxury hotel sector!"

A man who knows where he's going! Do keep in touch with us here at Edge and let us know how your career is developing.



To find out more about studying at the Edge Hotel School visit:
<https://www.essex.ac.uk/departments/edge-hotel-school>