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CASE STUDY:

AI-POWERED WORKFORCE: HOSPITALITY'S NEXT EVOLUTION

A Quarterly Publication on AI's Role in Talent Management

2025 | SPECIAL REPORT

THE STATE OF GENERATIVE AI IN TALENT MANAGEMENT FOR HOTEL SALES, MARKETING AND REVENUE MANAGEMENT

AI-Powered Workforce: Hospitality's Next Evolution

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Series Introduction

As the hospitality industry navigates rapid digital transformation and workforce challenges, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into talent management is no longer optional—it's essential. In particular, AI is reshaping recruitment, revolutionizing professional development and transforming employee retention in the hospitality industry.

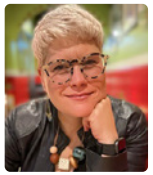
To support industry leaders through this evolution, the HSMAI Foundation is launching a quarterly publication series that builds upon HSMAI-F's foundational research, *The State of Generative AI in Talent Management for Hotel Sales, Marketing, and Revenue Management*. Each quarter we will deep dive into a different topic and explore how AI is impacting the workforce. Articles will highlight case studies from around the industry, and offer timely, practical, and strategic insights on how leaders can leverage AI to transform their teams.

Our first publication will examine the impact AI is having on professional development for hospitality sales teams, and feature a case study from the Expedia Group.

We hope you enjoy this series,

Brian Hicks
HSMAI CEO

Lori Kiel
HSMAI Foundation Chair
Senior Vice President of Revenue Management
Pyramid Global Hospitality



Kristin Miodonski
HSMAI Foundation Executive Director

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What Happens When Sales Coaching Stops Being Subjective?

AI's Impact on Professional Development for Sales Teams

Exploring how hospitality sales organizations use AI tools to develop skills, improve coaching, and increase close rates, featuring a case study from the Expedia Group.

By late-2024, the HSMAI Foundation captured a snapshot of how hospitality was approaching generative AI in talent management. Around the same time, Expedia Group launched Zoom Revenue Accelerator (ZRA), a conversational intelligence platform embedded into its global commercial sales workflows. While developed independently, Expedia Group's early results offer real-world validation for many of the gaps, needs, and aspirations surfaced in HSMAI's research, especially around professional development and measurable outcomes.

This article uses Expedia Group's experience as a lens to explore how AI is already reshaping sales organizations in hospitality. It focuses on the practical steps hotel leaders can take today to move from experimentation to execution. The aim is to examine how integrated approaches can drive real business results across brands, management companies, and ownership groups.

Expedia Group didn't follow the common paths identified in the HSMAI study. These were structured LMS-driven training or decentralized experimentation through AI champions and informal learning. Instead, it embedded development into daily work. ZRA lives inside core sales processes. Training happens as the work happens. This allowed Expedia Group to scale learning without fragmentation, customize development without losing consistency, and directly connect professional growth to business outcomes. It's a model that shows what fully integrated AI talent solutions can look like for commercial teams.

As a point of reference, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing sales across various industries, including hospitality. Recent data indicates that sales teams leveraging AI are 1.3 times more likely to experience revenue growth compared to those not utilizing AI[1]. This statistic underscores the significant impact AI can have on improving sales performance and close ratios.

Ground-Level Insights: How ZRA Illuminates AI's Real-World Impact on Revenue Teams

Before diving into the quantified impact, it's important to understand the role of Zoom Revenue Accelerator (ZRA) within Expedia Group's commercial operations. ZRA is a conversational intelligence platform integrated into Expedia Group's sales workflow, designed to analyze calls, surface coaching insights, and streamline post-call follow-up. ZRA operates in the daily rhythm of sales activity, providing real-time feedback for both managers and sellers. This embedded model delivers a data-driven perspective on how generative AI tools can shape commercial performance, coaching quality, and team efficiency. It also highlights the tangible pain points and breakthroughs that arise as AI shifts from trial to implementation.

Quantified Impact: What Expedia Group Measured and Why It Matters

Across the industry, our research found that most organizations struggled to measure the impact of generative AI on coaching and professional development. Measurement often relied on completion rates or anecdotal reports. Expedia Group took another approach. By integrating ZRA directly into the workflow, they created a continuous feedback loop that produced hard data, not just impressions. This allowed them to track tangible outcomes, fine-tune team performance, and make smarter decisions about talent development investment. Learning was no longer framed as a single event. Measurement was built into everyday work, proving that growth can be tracked and tied to strategy.

Time savings:

ZRA cut post-call administrative work by more than two minutes per call. For teams handling hundreds or thousands of calls monthly, this adds up to hours saved per person each week. That time went to higher-value activities like proposal prep, deeper partner engagement, and strategic outreach. Individual gains multiplied across the organization, building new operational capacity. For lean teams, this creates a meaningful operational difference.

Manager productivity:

Eighty-four percent of managers said ZRA saved them at least one hour weekly. That time was used for more focused coaching and development. Instead of manually sifting through random recordings or anecdotal team reports, ZRA highlighted moments that deserved attention. Feedback became specific, contextual, and timely. This shifted coaching from reactive to proactive. Managers were also able to support more team members with fewer resources.

Coaching quality:

Eighty-three percent of managers said ZRA improved their ability to coach. These gains did not come from adding staff or external training. They emerged from surfacing conversation patterns such as objection handling or tone changes that usually go unnoticed. With ZRA, coaching became guided by data instead of gut feel. Managers identified repeatable behaviors,

1 Salesforce Report: Sales Teams Using AI 1.3x More Likely to See Revenue Increase

compared performance across reps, and corrected issues early.

Seller confidence and performance:

Seventy percent of sales team members reported that ZRA helped them improve the partner experience and increase close rates. This ties learning to confidence, a major factor in both engagement and retention. Sellers who feel equipped are more likely to stick with the role and invest more in performance. ZRA made feedback useful and actionable, clarifying what effective selling looks like. Over time, this built a shared playbook that boosted consistency across the team.

Sales effectiveness:

Pitch success rates rose by 0.3 percent. While small at first glance, that number means real revenue when scaled across a global sales team. In high-volume settings, small gains translate to large outcomes. The increase also proves that better conversations, shaped by AI insights, improve results. It is one of the few examples where coaching and revenue are directly linked.

Tactical experiments and behavioral insight:

ZRA supported micro-experiments in sales behavior. Flexible language when reframing objections improved success by 8 to 12 points. Co-browsing tripled demo success. Setting time expectations early boosted conversion by 1.3 times. Assertive language raised pitch outcomes by 1.4 times. These results reveal more than techniques. They show that feedback-enabled experimentation creates measurable change. Coaching becomes performance science, grounded in evidence rather than guesswork.

Why This Matters for Hospitality

Our research showed that professional development often felt sporadic, disconnected, or hard to assess. Expedia Group's model proves another way is possible. Development became ongoing. Feedback was driven by data. Coaching improved without extra burden. Engagement rose with capability. For an industry still running on legacy systems, this proves that transformation does not require a full structural overhaul. The key is building intelligence into daily workflows, rather than bolting on new layers.

And for hotel companies without access to a platform like ZRA, the message is straightforward. Start small, but start tracking. Identify key behaviors, like ramp-up time for new sellers or how often AI is used in campaign planning. Use basic tools like call transcripts or AI-generated summaries to gather data. The goal is not to build a perfect system on day one. It is to establish a rhythm of feedback where learning connects to performance.

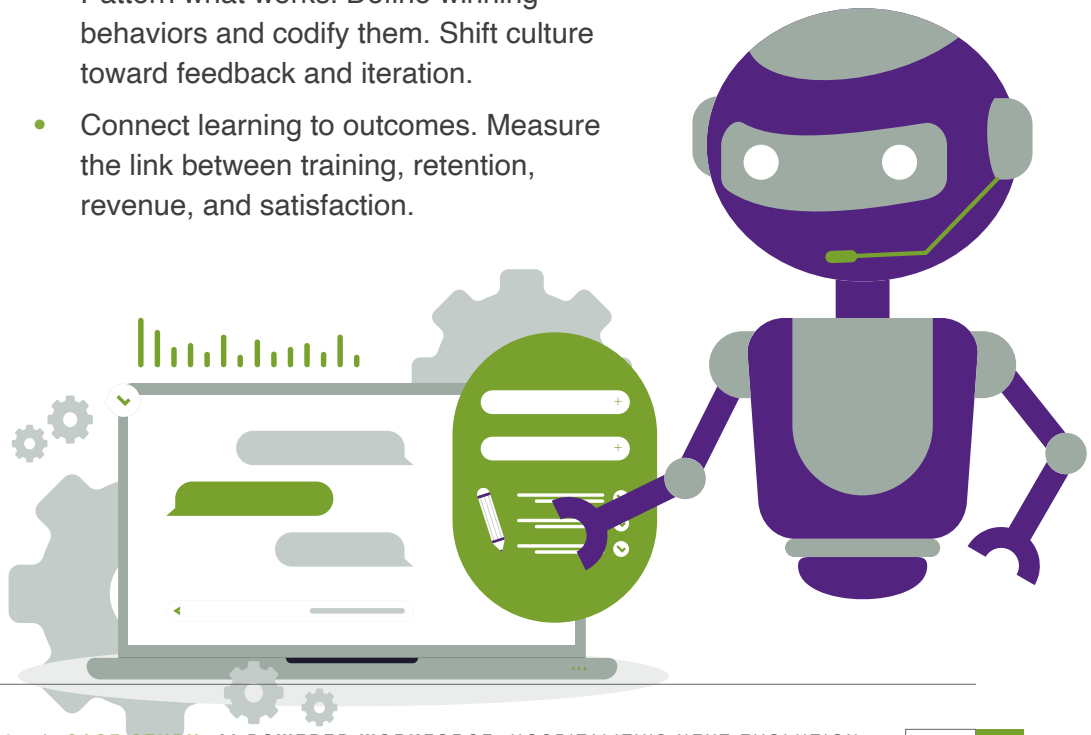
Tactical Actions for Today, Strategic Design for Tomorrow

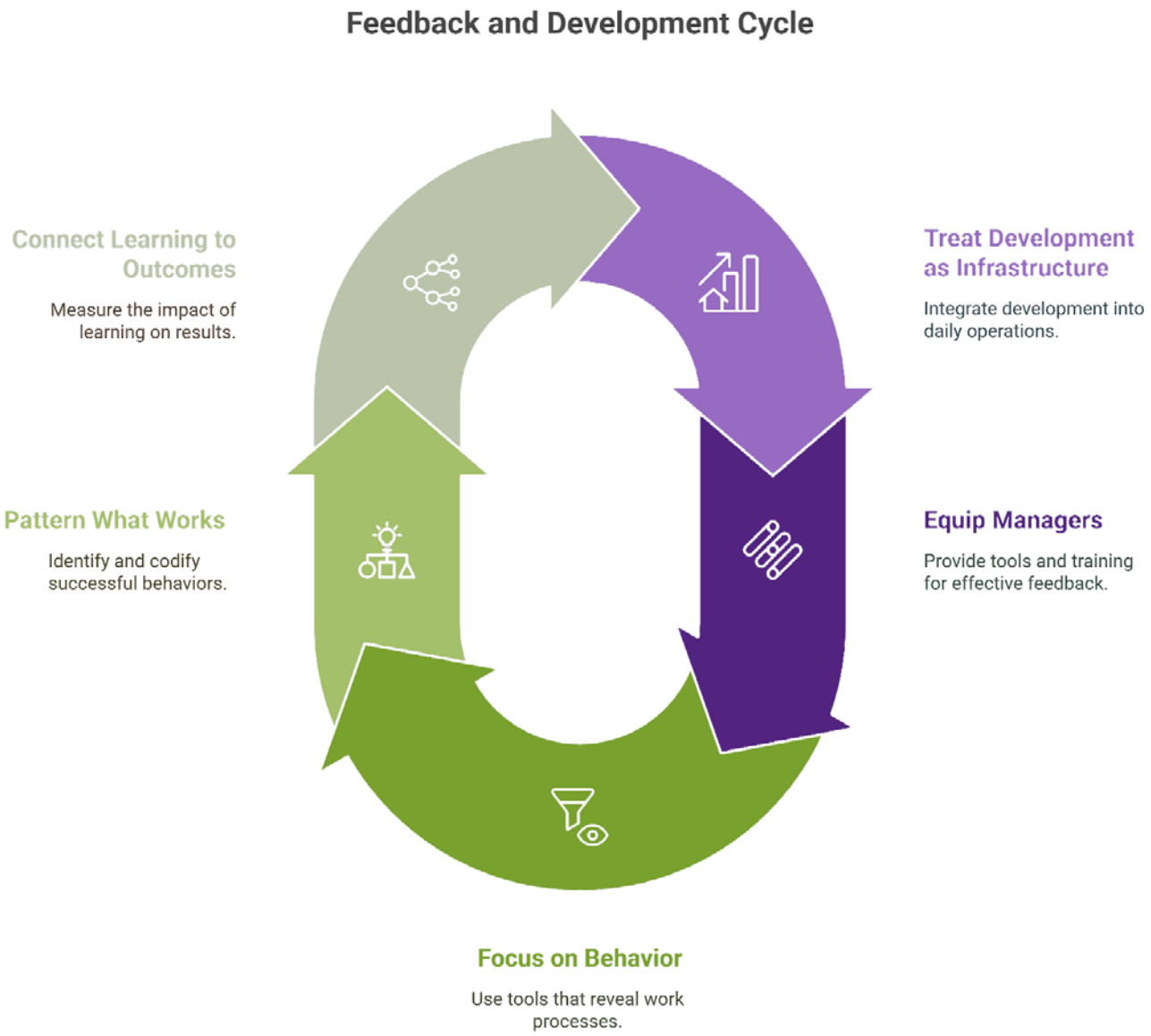
Short-term steps for hotel leaders:

- Audit time and spot friction. Identify repetitive communications or manual reports that could benefit from automation or AI support.
- Try lightweight tools. Use AI-based transcription or summarization in meetings and sales calls. Review insights for coaching use.
- Track behavior. Have team leads log observable sales or service habits. This supports evidence-based coaching.
- Experiment with intent. Let a small team try a new AI feature or platform. Use their results to guide wider deployment.
- Begin measuring. Track how quickly feedback is delivered, how often coaching occurs, and how helpful it's perceived to be. Build a baseline.

Strategic priorities to build toward:

- Treat development as infrastructure. Make feedback part of the everyday system, not a special event.
- Equip managers. Give them tools and training to interpret insights and use feedback constructively. Do not assume equal comfort with tech.
- Focus platforms on behavior. Choose tools that reveal how work is done, not just whether goals are hit.
- Pattern what works. Define winning behaviors and codify them. Shift culture toward feedback and iteration.
- Connect learning to outcomes. Measure the link between training, retention, revenue, and satisfaction.





The Broader Opportunity

Hospitality defines itself as human-centered. That mindset must now include operational clarity, developmental transparency, and data-informed decisions. Expedia Group's case is about pinpointing where capability shows up, how behavior drives results, and what tools help people improve. This was not training for training's sake. It was embedded learning.

Expedia Group did not roll out a development program. They built a system. The gains of time saved, coaching sharpened, success rates improved are visible and repeatable. Hospitality leaders now have a playbook to modernize how people grow, share knowledge, and sustain success.

To retain top talent, improve performance, and build stronger brand relationships, hotel companies need to integrate learning directly into work. Professional development should not exist outside daily workflows. It should live within them.

From Concept to Culture: Industry Reflections on Conversational Intelligence and AI-Enabled Coaching

Expedia Group's integration of conversational intelligence sparked a broader conversation across the hospitality sector about what it truly means to develop people in the flow of work.

Noreen Henry, Chief Revenue Officer at Sojern, captured this shift well. "ZRA's approach to turning coaching into a proactive, data-led function validates what's possible when you stop treating learning as an event and start making it continuous." Her observation points to a deeper trend. AI has more impact when it becomes part of daily routines rather than being added as a separate initiative.

Amanda Voss, VP of Sales at Bellagio, Park MGM, and NoMad Las Vegas, offered a view from the luxury hospitality front lines. While MGM Resorts already uses AI for tasks like presentation building and time management, she sees clear opportunity in using it for sales coaching and behavior analysis. Her perspective emphasizes the need for a hybrid model. The high-touch nature of luxury sales requires preserving the human connection while adding AI to identify effective language, unify tone, and improve coaching consistency. She put it simply: AI should support emotional intelligence, not replace it.

Rick Garlick, who works in both consulting and higher education, emphasized what made Expedia Group's approach distinctive. "They didn't just deploy a tool, they operationalized a mindset," he said. His phrasing highlights the difference between using technology and redesigning how development happens inside an organization. Garlick sees embedded learning as essential for scaling talent development without losing personalization. At the same time, he expressed caution. While AI can enhance coaching and feedback, it cannot replace the human touch in areas like leadership presence, emotional intelligence, or ambiguity management. These still require interpersonal context and relationship-based learning.

Mike Gamble, CEO of SearchWide Global, drew connections between the Expedia Group case and executive-level development. His firm is building proprietary AI tools for leadership coaching and succession planning, and he sees ZRA as a model worth adapting. "Even small improvements have scalable impact," he noted. That 0.3 percent lift in pitch success translates into measurable revenue. In the executive context, slight changes in behavior can shift company culture and performance.

He stressed that organizations do not need ZRA to get started. What matters is integrating feedback into daily workflows, tracking behaviors, and supporting managers with usable insights. In other words, the lesson is about integration, not technology alone.

These reflections reveal a shared belief: the future of professional development will be shaped by how well learning is built into daily work. It is about systems, behavior, and mindset. Whether in a high-end sales environment, a classroom, or a boardroom, the takeaway is consistent. When coaching becomes continuous and feedback becomes visible, teams improve. Real change begins when development stops being an extra step and starts becoming part of how the work gets done.

About the Foundation

The Foundation's mission is to elevate the overall caliber and performance of sales, marketing and revenue management professionals in the global hospitality industry by driving initiatives that will attract new talent, develop emerging talent, and engage existing talent. The work of the Foundation is supported by private donations and corporate talent partners. The HSMAI Foundation is a 501(c)3 organization established in 1983 to serve as the research and educational arm of the Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International. Visit hsmaifoundation.org for more information.

About the Author

Michael J. Goldrich is the founder and chief advisor of Vivander Advisors, specializing in generative AI education and digital transformation strategies. With over 20 years of experience in hospitality and technology, he currently serves as Chief Experience Officer at The Hotels Network, leveraging AI and predictive analytics to enhance guest engagement and conversions. As co-leader of GAIN's AI Hospitality practice, he drives revenue growth and cost savings through AI integration. Goldrich also serves on the HSMAI Foundation Board. A recognized industry leader, Goldrich was named one of HSMAI's Top 25 Extraordinary Minds in 2020 in Sales, Marketing, and Revenue Optimization and has received multiple Adrian Awards for innovative campaigns. He is the creator of an AI Literacy Program that helps hospitality professionals integrate AI into workflows and frequently speaks on AI and digital transformation. Goldrich holds degrees from the University of Michigan and Northwestern University and has refined digital strategies for Accenture, Starwood, and Wyndham, shaping the future of AI in hospitality.