

# Best Practice Award Winner

**Career Advancement:  
Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc.**

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## **Best Practice - Career Advancement: Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc.**

In many organizations, career advancement can seem overwhelming. Few signposts offer associates the confidence to know that they've made the right choice, or assist them with the next steps in their career. At Starwood, we heard from the associates that they craved more control over their career path and wanted a simple pathway to advancement. From this feedback, we created Auto Progression. Auto Progression starts with the hiring process. The initial interview processes examines the key skills, knowledge and abilities of potential candidates to determine their compatibility for not only an entry level position in Starwood's Contact Centers, but a multitude of specialty departments. This allows associates to see the world of untapped potential in their career.

Upon joining the Starwood Contact Centers, associates begin their journey in a new hire training program. During this month long immersion, associates discover the key fundamentals about the way we do business. They learn about the culture, the values and the behaviors that will make them a star in this organization. During this period, we also discuss with them the abundance of career opportunities they can achieve. Once associates have achieved their first progression, they will return to the training environment to learn more about a new set of skills and tasks. During this time, they receive all the skills and knowledge they need to serve customers who are part of the award winning loyalty program, Starwood Preferred Guest. As the process continues, and associates master new set of skills, they will auto advance to another tier and once again receive training for the new set of skills. Once again, we will outline for the associate a number of key performance indicators. This cycle repeats one last time until they reach the highest level in the Auto Progression flow before branching out to specialization.

Once this last progression level is mastered, associates are now ready to branch into a variety of different specialization pathways, including leadership roles. Whichever pathway the associates chooses, they will receive the proper training and coaching support to guide them into the respective specialization. At each step in the process, the associates receive compensation increases that match their new skill set, allowing them to actualize their progress. By creating a consistent set of criteria that determine the success at each step of the process, associates have the ability to reach their maximum potential in a transparent, seamless and simplified way. This freedom in the structure allows them to be themselves and ensures they have complete control in how far they progress, which has had a positive impact on associate longevity and commitment. As Starwood is a global company, their career possibilities are endless.

## About SQM

**Since 1996, SQM has been a leading North American contact channel research firm VoC expert for measuring and improving organizations' FCR, operating costs, employee and customer satisfaction.** We have done this by being operationally excellent at benchmarking, tracking, consulting and recognizing our clients' FCR, employee (Esat) and customer (Csat) satisfaction performance. Over 70% of our tracking clients improve their FCR and operating costs year over year. For the average call center SQM benchmarks, a 1% improvement in their FCR performance equals \$256,000 in annual operational savings. Our research also shows that when you improve your FCR, not only do you achieve operational savings, you also reduce customers at risk which is typically a 5-10 times greater savings opportunity than the operational FCR improvement savings.

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