

GROWING THE BIRCHWOOD FAMILY

Birchwood's General Manager Andries Brink says, "The biggest challenge, as with any big business, is keeping our staff motivated on a day to day basis."

Happy staff is key to good service and happy guests. "We live by a couple of simple rules – keep smiling and greeting and ensure the communication channels remain open. If you are dealing with someone and you are smiling and friendly, then half the work is done. We are not about airs and graces."


Brink is on first name terms with most of Birchwood's 700 staff members. "We run it from the floor. Almost everyone who started with us 12 years ago is employed with us today. These guys are very easy to motivate. They've grown with the company, they understand the company so they understand what we are trying to achieve. The challenge is getting new staff to get the sense of a family. To do it we are continuously talking to our people and being involved in their progress."

Brink attends weekly meetings with all levels of staff and asks their opinions on every matter, from working conditions to the latest linen bought for table cloths. "We let them know we value them and care about what they think. They are the ones that have the most contact with guests, they are the ground specialists."

"We try to promote people, a lot of middle and senior management started here as cleaners. Today they are an integral part of our business and are running departments. If you have the right attitude, you can get really far in this business." Birchwood currently has 120 management learners in different aspects of the business.

**"WE VALUE OUR STAFF
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"Because we treat our staff so well we have a high retention rate, which means top management positions are limited. We only have so many managers and no one wants

to leave. Then it comes down to whether people are happy with their earnings, working environment and the way they are being treated." 



Andries Brink