



Gold Standard Awards 2009 Hotel of the Year (Resort Category)

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Stephen Carter
Managing Director
Cameron House on Loch Lomond

Spending £40 million on a large-scale redevelopment during one of the deepest recessions in living memory may sound foolhardy, but according to Stephen Carter, managing director at Cameron House on Loch Lomond, it makes perfect sense.

"It has allowed us to reposition Cameron House to appeal to foreign markets such as the Americans and affluent Europeans," he says. "It is also allowing us to develop a workforce that aspires to do better because they can take pride in the product we have now and therefore productivity increases as does the aspirations of our people."

The major refurbishment programme at Cameron House was ambitious and comprehensive incorporating 36 new rooms, extensive upgrades for the resort's lodges, golf course and remaining bedrooms as well as wholesale changes to the food and beverage outlets. It all started a year before Carter arrived at Cameron House.

"I was brought in to get the service levels lifted and refocus the hotel into a proper full-blown resort," he recalls. "We wanted to combine the different elements of Cameron House into one business by developing the team and a common strategy for the resort. I suppose it was really about developing our people."

The plans may have been bold but the investment certainly paid off. Not only is there a buzz about place, but the trophy cabinet at Cameron House has a new addition after it was named Hotel of the Year (resort category) at the Golf Tourism Scotland Gold Standard Awards. Carter, who was awarded an OBE in 2007 for services to the hospitality industry, says the accolade recognizes the substantial improvements that have been made at the resort.

"Through our people, we are growing a reputation as a quality tourism offering - we're on the move," he says. "The amount of investment we've made, along with the development of the pride of our people, shows we are a force to be reckoned with."

Few businesses will have the good fortune to invest £40 million in their people and premises, but that shouldn't preclude them from investing wisely. According to Carter, it's all about prioritizing. "You've got to keep re-investing in your product," he advises, "and when you do, you need to put together a project plan that looks at all the possible areas one by one so you can select your priorities. When you've made your selection, develop it as a whole, so if you decide to upgrade your restaurant, do the whole restaurant scene in terms of design and implementation. Review the product as a whole."

Ultimately, Carter says raising standards is all about delivering quality of service. "Our industry is all about people," he concludes. "The guest will always tolerate shortcomings in décor and tiredness of product if staff have the right attitude. The downside of our industry is that we're often happy to settle for friendliness, but friendlessness has always got to be accompanied by efficiency to deliver."