International Institute of Modern Butlers

INTERNSHIPS-THE MISSING LINK

I understand some butlers and household managers graduating private service schools have difficulty finding positions. I do not believe the economy is on a downswing and that nobody is hiring (more of this in next month's column). Even if this were true, it does not give those looking for positions anything they can do. Are they suddenly meant to revert the economy so they can be hired? This makes no more sense than the suggested alternative: to roll over and die; and is about as pleasant as sending resumes into a void.

While there are certainly individual issues that may explain some difficulties in being hired, one that seems pertinent to most is a lack of experience in private service. Prospective employers are reluctant to train on the job, or fearful they may find half way into the first year that their new butler doesn't really think he or she is cut out for this line of work.

How can one overcome this chicken-and-egg Catch- 22?

My suggestion is that all private service schools offer a follow-up apprenticeship. Graduates would receive room and board, a stipend, and most importantly of all, the necessary experience and resume/CV building that will impress future potential employers. In exchange for taking a graduate under his wing, the butler or household manager will have assistance in servicing his or her employer at minimal cost to the employer, and the employer will have extra hands on deck for minimal outlay. The schools could charge a small fee for this, but mainly offer it as a value-added for their graduates, while taking full responsibility for the profession and their own reputation. The Australian Butler Training School offers apprenticeships or internships, for instance. I would like to see this applied to all deserving graduates in all schools.

The real challenge is to create a network of butlers, household managers and employers willing to participate, but it seems like a win-win for all. Maybe if prospective students and alumni asked for this service, it would come to be!

I suggest that those of you who are currently employed in private service, and who could take a graduate under their wings, contact the school they are affiliated with and work out something to their mutual advantage.