

1-1-1991

Leadership in the Hospitality Curriculum

Matt A. Casado

Northern Arizona University, null@nau.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/hospitalityreview>



Part of the [Hospitality Administration and Management Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Casado, Matt A. (1991) "Leadership in the Hospitality Curriculum," *Hospitality Review*: Vol. 9 : Iss. 2 , Article 9.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/hospitalityreview/vol9/iss2/9>

This work is brought to you for free and open access by FIU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Hospitality Review by an authorized administrator of FIU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact dcc@fiu.edu.

Leadership in the Hospitality Curriculum

Abstract

Although some universities have introduced leadership courses in their curricula, schools of hotel and restaurant management are not following suit. As the industry's rate of growth and complexity outpaces that of its human resources, the formation of hospitality leaders becomes indispensable.

Keywords

Matt A. Casado, Leadership in the Hospitality Curriculum

Leadership in the Hospitality Curriculum

by
Matt A. Casado

Although some universities have introduced leadership courses in their curricula, schools of hotel and restaurant management are not following suit. As the industry's rate of growth and complexity outpaces that of its human resources, the formation of hospitality leaders becomes indispensable.

As the industry enters the decade of the '90s, the complexity of hospitality operations increases with the corollary need more than ever before to have hospitality leaders who are trained and prepared to deal with growing economic and labor relations challenges and ever more demanding customer expectations.

It is apparent that organizations whose top and middle managers have the leadership skills necessary to face the increasingly more complex hospitality environment will be those that succeed into this decade. The successful organization has one major attribute that sets it apart from unsuccessful ones—dynamic and effective leadership. Statistics make this point evident; of every 100 new business establishments started, approximately one half go out of business within two years. By the end of five years, only one third of the original 100 will still be in business¹. For the hospitality industry, statistics are even more dismal; the National Restaurant Association reports that about 50 percent of new restaurants fail in their first year and 65 percent within two years. Most of the failures can be attributed to ineffective leadership.

A wide variation is found in courses taught among the four-year educational institutions offering hospitality programs. College and university curricula have been influenced by the leading institutions, particularly Cornell University, but almost all offer “core” requirements which must be satisfied before a student is graduated. These requirements often comprise almost half of the hospitality student's curriculum. Hospitality courses tend to vary with each program.

Some will emphasize food and beverage operations, others hotel or institutional management, yet others financial analysis.²

Core Courses Emphasize Skills

As offshoots of business schools, hospitality programs have traditionally offered core courses emphasizing technical hospitality administration skills. During the decade of the '80s, however, there was a strong tendency to introduce courses intended to integrate modern organization concepts with the operational skills stressed in the past. Thus, human and conceptual skills were recommended for schools of hotel and restaurant management.³ Baccalaureate programs began to be viewed as preparing students for leadership positions in the industry.

Thomas Powers considered in 1980 that human and conceptual skills, together with technical management skills, ought to be important components of an effective baccalaureate program; he saw the development of problem-solving ability in students as the difference between vocational and leadership-oriented programs.⁴ Lester Thurow had already asserted that industry can often teach the technical aspect of the career more quickly and effectively than the university.⁵

There are several definitions of leadership. According to George Terry, "leadership is the activity of influencing people to strive willingly for group objectives."⁶ Robert Tannenbaum, et al., define leadership as "interpersonal influence exercised in a situation and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specialized goal or goals."⁷

Because the leadership process deals with influencing the activities of individuals toward the achievement of company goals, leadership strategies should be taught to future hospitality managers. Furthermore, as the world becomes less stable and predictable, the concept of leadership overshadows that of management. As Peter Vaill puts it, "today's executives must be leaders."⁸

Some non-hospitality schools at leading universities have introduced leadership courses in their curricula, with the rationale that there is a great difference between an administrative executive and an industry leader. Hospitality managers, as the industry sees them, are required to manage beyond the administrative level. Hospitality corporate recruiters attach more importance to the way graduates are able to communicate in an interview situation than to their grade point averages. Recruiters are searching for potential managers who will measure up to what is expected of higher-level hospitality managers. Hospitality corporations look for individuals with the following skills: information processing, time management, value judgment, written analytical ability, interpersonal and problem-solving capability, and the ability to evaluate and direct the work of others.⁹

Curriculum Should Include Leadership

Curricular requirements can be addressed by schools of hotel and restaurant management through the incorporation of a leadership

course at the undergraduate level in their programs. Besides preparing students for leadership roles in the industry, such a course would evaluate the future managers' abilities to deal with interpersonal relationships and decision-making situations. Students often obtain hospitality degrees without having been put to the test in leadership situations. Academe leaves to industry the task of finding out which of the students they hire are executive material. Many graduates fail in real situations because of their inability to grasp what is expected of them as leaders. By taking a required undergraduate course in leadership, students would be made aware of industry expectations while having the opportunity to improve their managerial skills before their studies are completed.

A hospitality leadership course could be taught at the 400 level, focusing on the following supervisory and middle management skills:

- **Management from a behavioral sciences perspective:** Application of behavioral sciences concepts that can have an impact on making future managers and supervisors more effective.
- **Motivation and behavior:** Study of theoretical framework that may help future managers to understand human behavior.
- **Management and human behavior:** How to diagnose the work environment, exercise power effectively, develop human resources, exercise constructive discipline, build effective relationships, and communicate efficiently.
- **Group dynamics:** Discussion of problem-solving, helping and hindering roles in groups, and learning how to plan and implement change.

The course could incorporate the following objectives conducive to the understanding of three leadership skill dimensions:

- **Administrative skills:** Problem analysis, judgment, organizational ability, company and individual values, and decisiveness.
- **Interpersonal skills:** Sensitivity training and stress tolerance.
- **Communication:** Oral and written communication.

The following exercises could be used to assess the current management abilities of the students and establish an individual plan of action to reinforce their strengths and improve their foibles:

- **Leaderless group exercise:** Students are asked to complete a task while interacting in a group. The behavior of each student is analyzed on problem analysis, leadership, judgment, sensitivity toward others, and oral communication.

- **In-basket exercise:** Students are asked to deal with a series of decision-making problems as a manager would have to in a real situation. Information processing, ability to prioritize, and time management are assessed.
- **Executive committee participation:** Students are asked to assume roles of department managers and deal with organizational and operational tasks. Their capacity for solving problems and their interpersonal skills are evaluated.
- **Personal oral interview exercise:** Students are videotaped during a personal job interview and assessed on their ability to answer questions, show a confident attitude, maintain eye contact, and control body language.

The course could also incorporate supporting materials from the fields of political science, psychology, and sociology.

Some might argue that leadership training would only be helpful to those with inherent leadership traits. A review of research using this trait approach to leadership has revealed few significant or consistent findings.¹⁰ Gary A. Yukl has observed that “The old assumption that ‘leaders are born’ has been discredited completely and the premise that certain traits are absolutely necessary for effective leadership has never been substantiated in several decades of trait search.”¹¹

Leaders Are Made, Not Born

The development of hospitality industry leaders can and should be made possible at the undergraduate level. John W. Gardner answered the question, “Can leadership be taught?,” with an emphatic but qualified “yes.” The notion that all attributes of a leader are innate is demonstrably false. Most of the capabilities that enable an outstanding leader are learned.¹²

Gardner warns about the dangers of schools, colleges, and universities emphasizing just specialization. He argues that the versatility shown by young students as they join centers of learning is diminished drastically through specialization. He goes on to say, “We must persuade our high schools and colleges that whatever they may teach young people in the way of specialized skills, they must also equip them with something broader. Specialization is an integral feature of contemporary social organization not to be denigrated; but breadth and versatility are important too.”¹³

If leadership is the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (the hospitality manager or supervisor) induces a group (the hospitality employees) to pursue and achieve objectives (company goals), the need for leadership to be taught to future hospitality operators is obvious and, therefore, indispensable.

References

- ¹George R. Terry, *Principles of Management*, 3rd ed., (Homewood, Ill.: Irwin, 1960), p. 5.
- ²Patrick Moreo and David J. Christianson, "European Hospitality Education: An American Perspective," *Hospitality Education and Research Journal*, (1988), p. 140.
- ³Thomas F. Powers, "Hospitality Management Development for the 1980s," *The Cornell H.R.A. Quarterly*, (February 1980), p. 47.
- ⁴*Ibid*, p. 45.
- ⁵Lester C. Thurow, "The Relationship of Education to Employment," in Thomas F. Powers, ed., *Educating for Careers*, (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University, 1977), p. 39.
- ⁶George R. Terry, *Principles of Management*, 3rd ed., (Homewood, Ill.: Irwin, 1960), p. 493.
- ⁷Robert Tannenbaum, et al., *Leadership and Organization: A Behavioral Science Approach*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959).
- ⁸Peter B. Vaill, *Managing As A Performing Art*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1989), p. 16.
- ⁹Florence Berger, "Assessing Assessment Centers for Hospitality Organization," *The Cornell H.R.A. Quarterly*, (August 1985), pp. 56-57.
- ¹⁰Cecil A. Gibb, *Leadership: Handbook of Social Psychology*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1954).
- ¹¹Cary A. Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ.: Prentice Hall, 1981), p. 70.
- ¹²John W. Gardner, *On Leadership*, (New York: The Free Press, 1990), p. 157.
- ¹³*Ibid*, p. 164.
-

Matt A. Casado is a lecturer in the School of Hotel and Restaurant Management at Northern Arizona University.