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Leadership Training in Hospitality

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Abstract

Researchers and practitioners contend that hospitality management curricula tend to focus on teaching students technical skills they need to function effectively in the work- place but do not emphasize human and conceptual skills, one of which is leadership. Universities and companies strive to address leadership training, acknowledging that leadership is perhaps one of the most important roles any hospitality manager will fill and is probably least prepared for.

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by Romy E. Saunders

Researchers and practitioners contend that hospitality management curricula tend to focus on teaching students technical skills they need to function effectively in the workplace but do not emphasize human and conceptual skills, one of which is leadership. Universities and companies strive to address leadership training, acknowledging that leadership is perhaps one of the most important roles any hospitality manager will fill and is probably least prepared for.

"If we ever think that it is not about leadership, then we don't get it."
– Michael Kaufman

In developing their model for teaching leadership in hospitality management programs, Scheule and Sneed identify leadership as one of the most important roles any hospitality manager will fill but often is the least formally prepared for. They contend that hospitality management curricula tend to focus on teaching students the technical skills needed to function effectively in the work environment without the same emphasis on human and conceptual skills, which include leadership.[1]

In another study, Nelson and Dopson found that hotel executives, human resource specialists, and graduates ranked leadership skills as extremely important among the required skills and knowledge for graduates of U.S. hospitality programs beyond the year 2000.[2] This has remained consistent from previous studies[3] and supports the fact that while several authors have concluded that leadership skills should be taught in hospitality curricula, they have not reached a consensus on how this should be done.[4] This dilemma also extends into the workplace, as hospitality companies often rank leadership skills high on their list of criteria for new managers, many implementing their own training and recognition programs to develop those identified with leadership potential.[5]

Between the post-recessionary years of the early 1990s and the slow economic downturn evident between 2000 and 2001, economic growth, more demanding consumers of hospitality services, and low unemployment rates challenged managers to develop effective leadership styles in order to be successful.[6]

The events of September 11, 2001, raised the ante, and hospitality managers must be even more prepared to fill leadership roles in an industry profoundly affected by world events. Will the new generation of managers be able to create caring cultures as companies merge and labor issues become more acute? Will they be able to inspire their followers to achieve higher levels of productivity, creating value for employees and shareholders? Will they be able to embrace the multicultural, multiethnic, and multilingual realities of global expansion in a world rocked by uncertainty and risk? Will they heed the wisdom of those who have "walked the talk"? In short, will they be good leaders?

Who is a leader?

This begets two questions: Who is a leader? What is leadership? Webster's dictionary defines a leader as "a person who by force of example, talents or qualities of leadership plays a directing role, wields commanding influence, or has a following in any sphere of activity or thought."[7] The qualities of leadership so displayed are defined as an individual's capacity to lead.

While it may be debated that leaders are born, not made, this study examines the literature that addresses the training of leaders in the hospitality industry.

Databases are searched

A preliminary search of the ABI/Inform database was done on June 10, 2002. A decision was made to retrieve any current relevant articles combining the keywords "leadership" and "hospitality." The ABI/Inform search, with dates set from 1999 to present, produced 50 records; 16 articles that seemed directly related were printed.

Further research was conducted on July 19-20, 2002. Again, ABI/Inform, from 1999 to present, was the database searched. Using the keywords "leadership" and "hotels," the database produced 179 articles, 14 of which seemed applicable. Ten were duplicates of the articles printed after the first search. Four were printed. Combining "leadership" with "restaurants" produced 180 records, 13 of which seemed relevant. Eight were duplicate articles. Five were printed. The keyword "leadership" was also combined with "professional development" to produce 156 articles, 11 of which seemed relevant. Two were duplicate articles. The other nine were printed (See Table 1).

The search was then narrowed, using the keywords "leadership training" combined with "hospitality." This time, the ABI/Inform, from 1971 to present,

Table 1
Descriptors by database and search results: leadership

Leadership and	ABI/Inform	Total number of articles to be printed
Hospitality	50	16
Hotels	179	4
Restaurants	180	5
Professional Development	156	9
Total	**565**	**34**

and WilsonBusiness databases were searched. The ABI/Inform search produced one record, which was a duplicate article from the initial search. The WilsonBusiness search produced six articles. Four seemed relevant; three were duplicates, and one was printed.

The keywords "leadership training" were also combined with "hotels." The ABI/Inform search produced three articles, one of which seemed relevant and was printed. The WilsonBusiness search produced 15 articles. Six seemed applicable; three were duplicates, and three were printed.

When the keywords "leadership training" were combined with

"restaurants," the ABI/Inform search produced two records, one of which was a duplicate. The WilsonBusiness search produced 19 records, with the seven relevant ones having already been printed from previous searches.

The keywords "leadership training" were also combined with "professional development." The ABI/Inform search produced 18 records. Three seemed relevant. One was a duplicate article, and the other two were printed. The WilsonBusiness search produced 29 records. Only two seemed relevant to the purpose of this paper and were printed (See Table 2 and Table 3).

Table 2
Descriptors by database: leadership and training

Leadership training and	ABI/Inform	WilsonBusiness	Total
Hospitality	1	6	7
Hotels	3	15	18
Restaurants	2	19	21
Professional Development	18	29	47
Total	**24**	**69**	**93**

Table 3
Search results: leadership and training

Database	Total number of records	Total number of articles to be printed
ABI/Inform	24	3
WilsonBusiness	69	6
Total	93	9

A search of Volume 13 of the *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education* also produced some relevant articles, as did a search of the *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration (H.R.A.) Quarterly*.

Articles are reviewed

The next step was to review the articles and categorize them by type of article (academic, practitioner or popular), leadership categories, and concurrent themes.

Findings are discussed by number or articles; type of article; leadership categories, i.e., leadership in industry segments and leadership training; and concurrent themes. Leadership training further examines issues related to leadership training both in the classroom and in the workplace.

During the database search, many more articles were found about leadership in hospitality and its segments than were found about leadership training. This seems to underscore the fact that while a lot is said about leadership, comparatively little is done to actually prepare those who will assume leadership roles in the hospitality industry. A few articles were found in the *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education* and other relevant articles were found in the *Cornell H.R.A. Quarterly*. This may indicate that the field is open to more research.

Academic articles were articles published in scholarly journals. Practitioner articles were published in journals and magazines aimed at working professionals. Popular articles were publications meant for the general public. The majority of the articles were written for professional publications, with some academic journals also focusing on leadership. This would seem to emphasize the importance that industry professionals place on the issue and may encourage further academic research.

Articles are classified

Articles were classified as leadership (or leadership training) in hospitality, hotels, and restaurants, and as professional development. As evidenced by the duplication of articles, they were not mutually exclusive. The disparity between the articles found that when "leadership" was used as a descriptor versus when "leadership training"

was used is very noticeable. However, the literature does support the fact that the construct of leadership is vital in the industry. The way employees perceive a hotel's leadership affects the leader's effectiveness, employees' attitudes, and employee performance.[8]

When one hears of problems in the hospitality industry, one usually hears of poor working conditions, low wages, ineffective training, or a bad image. Very rarely does one hear that leadership is to blame, even though most people acknowledge the critical influence that leaders have on their organizations. Leaders, in the very act of leading, mold the organization into their own style. Hence, good leaders inspire their followers to greatness, producing good organizations and vice versa.[9]

Leaders need vision

Employees in a service industry such as the hospitality industry need a vision to which they can commit, a culture that challenges them to fulfill their potential, a supportive team, and leader role models to show them the way.[10] Successful leaders and companies take more steps than others to engage employees in the business, create an inclusive environment and culture, and support employees' quality of life.[11] The industry can hardly dispute this deduction when there are success stories such as Marriott International and Choice Hotels to follow.[12] In examining leadership and lead-

ership training, therefore, it is imperative to review the major themes that comprise this construct and constitute good leadership.

• **Vision, mission, values:** Leaders act as role models for their followers. They must have vision and the charisma to communicate it to their employees, involving them in creating the company's mission and values and practicing what they preach.[13] The vision, what the company wants to become, gives rise to its core values and its mission, which identify the organization's key constituencies. These, along with the management principles and performance standards, create the plan.[14]

Leadership is having that plan, "getting a group of people to follow you down a certain path, and encouraging them along the way that will lead to successful achievement of the plan."[15] Does the leader clearly communicate the vision of the organization and lead by example? Does the company's value system include respect, trust, ownership, accountability, recognition, and work-life balance? Are employees offered opportunities for training, growth, and promotion? Do employees have all the tools they need to carry out their various responsibilities? Are they part of a system of excellence, molded by their leader?

• **System and culture development:** Leaders owe their followers a legacy. Once they have involved their employees in the

process of creating a mission and values, they must also ensure that suitable practices and policies are in place to carry out the mission and exercise those values. Can employees truly be accountable, sharing in the ownership, the risks, and the rewards of the company, always striving for improvement and to reach their fullest potential? Or will their attitudes reflect their disillusionment in such pronouncements as "This is the people's job; I'm only passing through"? Leadership must inspire people to put forth their best effort and provide the room for them to do so.[16]

• **Relationship building:** Cain makes a distinction between the extrinsic nature of inspiration and the intrinsic quality of motivation.[17] Leaders must be able to inspire their followers to delve deep into their inner motivations and make meaningful contributions to each other for the collective good of the team and the organization. They must create an environment where followers feel involved, empowered, and appreciated. Such positive energy will inevitably translate into relationships based on trust and respect with customers and industry partners. In cultivating these relationships, they broaden their followership, strengthening their influence and enhancing their leadership skills.

Bill Marriott espouses an "employee first" philosophy. In its simplest form, happy employees mean happy guests, and happy guests mean happy shareholders.[18] Kelley further explains that companies that link work-life programs to improved employee satisfaction also link them to improved customer satisfaction and the bottom line.[19]

Carolyn Clark and Lalia Rach agree that there is a huge demand for those who can create employee and guest loyalty, which, in turn, creates and sustains profitable growth.[20]

• **Leadership characteristics:** Leaders cannot hope to create vision, develop culture and systems, or build relationships without the characteristics of passion, integrity, honesty, discipline, responsibility, perceptiveness, and tenacity. They must cultivate the art of listening, paying attention to words and the nuances, and observing the behaviors of everyone they come in contact with. They must teach. They must make an effort to continue learning and anticipate change.[21] They must embrace the cultural diversity of the world in which their industry operates, providing the educational tools needed in developing countries, even as their companies benefit financially. They must be problem-solvers and risk-takers.[22] In other words, they should "strive daily to be the consummate example of the performance standards and behavior for which they hold others accountable."[23]

Leaders: born or made?

The hospitality industry is not immune to the debate about whether leaders are born or made.[24] While some skills may be innate, there is the view that "leadership comes from such things as being given responsibility when young, taking the opportunity to manage in a number of contexts to get broad skills, and being coached by someone who encourages you to ask people for feedback."[25] Fred Pamenter contends that there have to be leadership traits in the individual and then leadership can be developed.[26] Mayo adds that good leaders develop through a process of self-study, education, training, and experience.[27] Innate skills and leadership potential have to be identified and honed into a finely tuned leader, one who practices key behaviors and habits that will make him or her successful in the role. But, where does that process start?

Ever since Congress passed the School-to-Work Opportunities Act in 1994, business/education partnerships have taken off. Many companies are involved with career development programs, career fairs, workplace tours, internships, apprenticeships and cooperative education programs.[28] Colleges have also joined forces with elementary and high schools in these initiatives, and leadership development and training can begin as early as middle school.

In programs such as Florida International University's Gear Up, for example, students in grade eight, preparing for high school, participate in a six-week long program that introduces them to various career options, programs of study, and related businesses. Not limited to academics, the program tries to instill a sense of the discipline that will be required of them and create awareness of the major adjustments they will need to make, both qualities of future leaders. While this may be a simplistic view, many of the students have not had the opportunity to learn from example at home, and the school environment substitutes as a training ground. The School of Hospitality and Tourism Management actively participates in Gear Up as well as other summer tourism-training programs.

At the University of Houston's Conrad N. Hilton College of Hotel and Restaurant Management, Alan Stutts believes that finding and developing outstanding people who take pride in providing service is one of the top priority steps that educators and industry employers should take. Consequently, the college has established a hospitality education elective for high school juniors and seniors in Texas. It is envisioned that these future leaders of the industry will be instilled with a strong sense of service-mindedness as they head to college.[29]

Experience is lacking

In the food service industry, there has been the view that new leadership positions are being filled by a generation steeped in business

school acumen but lacking in experience.[30] Indeed, many universities are criticized for turning out graduates unprepared for the challenges of leadership.[31] How will these new leaders carry out their roles effectively, communicating the importance of the journey, inspiring followers to excellence, and leading by example if they do not share experience with their employees? For the college student in a faster paced world, some of that shared experience can be gained while pursuing a course of study.

Hospitality programs use various techniques to hone leadership in the new generation of leaders that pass through their hallowed halls. Some like FIU's School of Hospitality and Tourism Management offer a specific course in leadership. Students have the opportunity to discuss the various aspects of leadership, examining the styles of some of the most renowned leaders in their fields and internalizing those that best define their own styles.

Other courses are more experiential. The ropes course in the team-building course, for example, offers participants the opportunity to develop trust, take charge, and understand personal strengths and weaknesses. Many courses incorporate exercises in order to identify and build leadership skills. Projects are often the result of a team effort, where one group member may assume the role of leader but where each member exhibits leadership skills on various aspects of the project.

Successful functions may be the result of students leading the way. While not spearheaded by students, the Annual South Beach Wine and Food Festival, for example, gives FIU's hospitality students a myriad of opportunities to exercise their leadership skills— supervising other students, organizing stations, and coordinating seminars.

Teaching methods vary

Service learning is another aspect of teaching leadership in college environments. Often incorporated into organizational behavior courses, this type of training allows students to focus on the needs of other constituencies, enabling them to draw on their strengths and examine their weaknesses. It is also an integral component of developing those identified as leaders in honors programs. For example, Eta Sigma Delta, the hospitality honor society, requires its members to participate in various community service projects.

Hospitality programs may also partner with industry to afford students the opportunity to gain insight about successful leadership practices through internships or mentoring.[32] Working on a one-on-one basis with industry leaders and having the chance to implement theoretical knowledge practically in the workplace provide students with invaluable insight into their own leadership capabilities.

Hospitality leaders also share their stories as guest speakers. Scheule and Sneed

have actually designed a course at Kent State University that focuses on providing students with opportunities to interact with hospitality leaders to learn first hand about leadership.[33] Students have to identify principles of leadership and how they are applied, common characteristics of hospitality leaders, and trends and issues before developing and reshaping their own philosophies of leadership. The aim is to "help students synthesize leadership experiences in their courses and work environments into a cohesive experience that would further develop and broaden their understanding of leadership in today's hospitality business."[34] FIU's School of Hospitality and Tourism Management employs a similar idea in its Michael Hurst Guest Lecture Series. Once a month in the fall and spring semesters, industry leaders address the students and answer questions directly and indirectly related to their leadership styles and ensuing successes and failures.

Workplace skills observed

Similar concepts are applied with developing leaders in the workplace. Leaders should be problem solvers, risk takers, and change makers. Often, these qualities, and the actions that result, are observed in the day-to-day operations of the company, and those who exhibit them are groomed for leadership positions. They may be transferred to various departments or even overseas to deter-

mine how well they adapt to changing environments, how decisive and intuitive they can be. With increasingly multicultural followers making up the workforce, this is especially crucial in developing leadership skills.[35]

The new millennium demands a new set of leadership competencies, and outdoor adventure-based training, like the ropes course, is one method used to develop teamwork and leadership skills. The debate remains, however, on whether or not the skills learned in outdoor environments constitute leadership development and whether or not they can realistically be transferred back to the workplace.[36]

Testa proposes that any disparity may be addressed by focusing on the relationship between leaders and their followers. He believes that "if leaders know that their employees perceive the leadership climate as being less effective than what the leaders believe, the leaders may well be forced into a process of self-reflection, which aids in developing leadership ability." He also supports the use of joint leadership training where seminars and workshops are conducted jointly with leaders and followers. This helps develop a clear model of leadership, while enabling both groups to share concerns, misconceptions, and expectations.[37]

Another widely used mechanism for leadership development in the workplace is mentoring.[38] Mentors give advice and listen to their protégés, offering encourage-

ment to overcome obstacles and sharing their wealth of experience with their charges. Both gain leadership skills from this shared experience, developing personally and professionally. Whatever the mechanism, however, leadership development is a crucial factor in the life and success of many hospitality companies and ensuring that development programs have a firm foundation, whether in high school, college, or the workplace should be priority number one.

There are seven steps to establishing a foundation for leadership development:

- Commit to investing the time, resources and money needed to create a culture that supports leadership development

- Identify and communicate the skills associated with leadership abilities

- Develop the tools and measures necessary to support leadership skills

- Make leadership skills a focus of management training: communication, team-building, planning, interpersonal

- Implement ongoing programs that focus on leadership skills, such as managing multiple priorities and creating change

- Know that in the right culture, leaders can be found at every level

- Recognize, reward, and celebrate leaders for their passion, dedication, and results

Leadership training, once properly defined and implemented, will undoubtedly keep the hospitality industry in good stead for many years to come.

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