

Making life more satisfying for hospitality managers

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Because of the considerable amount of time that hospitality managers spend at work, the relationship between life satisfaction and job satisfaction is of particular interest. Dissonance may result when the role at work conflicts with the role at home or with family. Food service managers indicate that the top interrole conflicts area is that work time takes up time that they would like to spend with family and others; that they are too tired to do some of the things they would like to do after work; and that the job makes it difficult to be the kind of friend, spouse, or parent that they would like to be.

While it may be too elusive to define precisely, the notion of life satisfaction suggests a minimum level of contentment—a feeling that most individuals would seemingly want. By its very nature it includes the subjective perceptions of events that comprise one's daily activities. In part it can be considered contextually dependent since the societal/cultural circumstances in which one is situated will moderate one's perceptions. For example, life satisfaction for expatriate hotel

managers has been linked to "cultural adjustment."¹

There are also a number of "objective" variables that have been found to influence life satisfaction, including income, education, physical attractiveness, and health status. The reason they are considered objective is that they are more amenable to quantitative assessment. Nevertheless, they remain contextually dependent in that assessment often involves measurement and comparison to those who share similar cultural experiences. Other (exogenous) variables that have been found to affect life satisfaction are age, race, gender, and marital status.² Apparently, many of these have limited effect on satisfaction.³

Because of the amount of time that is spent at work or in work-related activities, intuitively life satisfaction or "quality of life" should include job satisfaction as one of its components. To be sure there are many studies that have

examined the relationship between job satisfaction and life satisfaction.⁴ As might be expected there is some indication that one's activities engaged in as part of the work life influence life satisfaction, and vice versa.⁵ There is also evidence that these spheres can be kept separate—and that the relationship between job satisfaction and quality of life may not be that strong.⁶ To make matters worse, the relationship between life and job satisfaction may not be stable—perhaps varying over time as circumstances change.⁷

Work influences life

Albeit the nature of the relationship may not be definitive, in certain situations life satisfaction or “quality of life” would seem to be influenced by circumstances at work. For example, in settings where employees or managers spend a substantial amount of time at their jobs—conceivably to the lack of other diversions and/or pleasures—life satisfaction scores may reflect contentment or lack thereof. For most U.S. workers who spend an average of 43.3 hours a week at work (persons working full-time), this may not be an issue. Those at the high end of the scale, however, may be affected; according to the U.S. Census Bureau 11.7 percent of all non-agricultural wage and salary workers spent between 49 and 58 hours at work in 1999, and 8.2 percent worked 60 hours or more.⁸

This situation may be driving turnover in the hospitality industry. Indeed, a number of studies suggest

that food service managers spend a substantial amount of time at their jobs. For example, in a study of hotel assistant managers, 43.8 percent of respondents indicated they spent more than 55 hours per week at work.⁹ Moreover, the primary reasons many young hospitality managers leave the industry are the long hours and the inconvenient schedules.¹⁰ In another study, intent to leave was found to be related to the number of hours worked by restaurant managers.¹¹ Yet again, food service managers indicated that the number of hours worked was one of the most important reasons for leaving their current employer.¹²

The work schedule, however, is only one aspect of job satisfaction. There are a number of other dimensions or characteristics that are used to define this construct, including autonomy, variety, task identity, feedback, dealing with others, and friendship opportunities.¹³ The following have also been used to measure job satisfaction: ability utilization, the need for achievement, the chance for advancement, company policies and practices, compensation, creativity, security, and working conditions. In addition, education, job tenure, and hours worked have been considered to influence and define job satisfaction.

Because of the considerable energies food service managers seem to be committing to work and work-related activities, understanding job satisfaction in these settings is essential; in fact, satis-

faction with life may hinge upon success and/or satisfaction in this sphere. What's more, job conditions may create dissonance as efforts are made to balance various other roles. Also, corporate efforts to develop or improve quality of life programs may depend on the strength of the relationship between job and life satisfaction. Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to examine the structure of the job satisfaction model as it applies to food service managers, to investigate further the relationship between life satisfaction and job satisfaction in situations where the number of hours worked may conceivably interfere with non-work activities, and, in particular, to study the relationships between it, job satisfaction, and interrole conflict for food service managers.

Managers are surveyed

Mail survey techniques were used to investigate the quality of life of unit-level managers in the commercial food service sector. The questionnaire included the Life satisfaction scale utilized in "The Quality of Employment Survey,"¹⁴ the short form of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire,¹⁵ and an interrole conflict scale.¹⁶ With the cooperation of eight regional and national food service companies, questionnaires were provided to the managers—who returned them directly to the researchers.

The life satisfaction scale measures satisfaction with an individual's current situation through specific mood scales. It also asks the

respondent to gauge his/her satisfaction with life in general. In deriving an overall measure of life satisfaction, the general and specific measures are combined. The two components are normalized through a z-transformation and the normalized scores averaged. The internal consistency reliability of these measures has been reported to be .87.

The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire served as the framework for examining job satisfaction. In this approach general job satisfaction is measured using all of the items in the instrument. Intrinsic and extrinsic scales are extracted using factor analysis. The items that load on the intrinsic scale are considered to measure intrinsic reinforcement factors—that is, satisfaction with aspects of a job that are intrinsically reinforcing to the employee. Extrinsic factors, on the other hand, can be considered to measure satisfaction with reinforcers that are external to the job but are important in defining overall satisfaction in that they help define the context of the job.

The intrinsic satisfaction scale includes ability utilization, achievement, activity, advancement, compensation, creativity, co-workers, independence, moral values, social service, social status, and working conditions. Extrinsic satisfaction includes authority, company policies and practices, recognition, responsibility, security, and variety.¹⁷

The interrole conflict scale attempts to measure the anxiety or

dissonance that results when the role at work conflicts with the role at home or with family. Respondents are asked to indicate the extent to which they agree/disagree with eight statements on a five-point Likert-type scale. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the interrole conflict scale has been reported to be greater than .80.

The managers were also asked to provide information about their current position and their present employer, and a limited amount of demographic information. Factor analysis was used to assess the job satisfaction scales, and regression analysis was used to examine the relationship between life satisfaction and job satisfaction. In addition to the two job satisfaction factors and the interrole conflict score, age, gender, race, education, marital status, and salary were entered into the mix. Most analyses were conducted using SAS software.

Managers are seasoned

Of the 1,209 questionnaires mailed, 438 usable ones were returned, for a total response rate of 36.2 percent. The sample consisted primarily of general managers (28.5 percent), first assistant managers (23.5 percent), and assistant managers (33.4 percent), but kitchen, dining room, and bar managers were also represented. Following the National Restaurant Association (NRA), the following food service types were included: full-service restaurants with an average check over \$10 (47.1

percent); full-service restaurants, average check under \$10 (28.5 percent); limited-menu, no table service restaurants (6.7 percent); and commercial cafeterias (17.7 percent).

On the average, respondents had been working for their current employer 5.5 years, been in their current managerial position 2.9 years, and had 7.7 years of managerial food service experience. Table 1 shows the distributions of the respondents by age and gender.

Half the respondents were married (49.9 percent), and nearly 10 percent were divorced. Table 2 includes U.S. population data for comparison.

The vast majority of managers indicated they were Caucasian/white (89.2 percent). African-Americans were the next most prevalent group, with 5.4 percent of respondents; Asian-Americans and Hispanics were equally represented with 2 percent.

More than 80 percent of the respondents indicated they had some college education. Close to 40 percent had earned a bachelor's degree or gone beyond what is ordinarily required for one (38.2 percent). In addition, 12.9 percent indicated their bachelor's degree was in a hospitality-related discipline. The highest level of education for almost one-fifth of the sample was high school. Table 3 shows the education level of managers and includes percentages of the U.S. population with similar educational achievements.

There was some variation in the average work week by manage-

Table 1
Profile of respondents by age and gender

Gender	n	Percent	Average age			
Male	284	66.0	32.9 years			
Female	146	34.0	32.1 years			

Age (in years)	Overall		Males		Females	
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent
18-19	12	2.9	4	1.0	2	.5
20-24	51	12.4	29	7.2	22	5.4
25-29	109	26.5	70	17.3	39	9.7
30-34	86	20.9	59	14.6	27	6.7
35-39	76	18.4	52	12.9	23	5.7
40-44	37	9.0	26	6.4	11	2.7
45-49	20	4.9	14	3.5	5	1.2
50-54	14	3.4	7	1.7	7	1.7
Over 55	7	1.7	6	1.5	1	.3

Table 2
Profile of respondents and U.S. population by marital status

	Respondents		U.S. Population ¹⁸	
	n	Percent		Percent
Single	142	33.1	Never married	23.6
Married	213	49.7	Married	59.7
Living with a partner	31	7.2		
Divorced	41	9.6	Divorced	9.8
Widowed	2	.5	Widowed	6.9

**U.S. population data for persons 18 years and over from U.S. Census Bureau, (March, 1998). Unpublished Tables – Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1998 (Update). Table 1. Marital Status of Persons 15 years and Over, by Age, Sex, Race, Hispanic Origin, Metropolitan Residence, and Region: March 1998. Retrieved November 21, 2001, from <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/ms-ia.html> 18.*

rial position. Kitchen managers had the longest work week; on average, they worked almost 63 hours, followed by beverage/bar managers, 60; dining room managers, 59.4; general managers, 58.3; and first assistant managers, 58. Except for those classified as other, assistant managers worked the fewest, 55.6.

There was some variation in the length of the work week by type of operation. For example, managers at limited menu, no table service operations worked the fewest hours, approximately 50 per week, whereas managers at full-service restaurants with an average check over \$10 worked the most, on average 59.4 hours per week.

Life satisfaction modeled

A stepwise regression procedure was used to study the relationship between life satisfaction and a number of variables, including two measures of job satisfaction and a measure of interrole conflict.

- **Job satisfaction:** Exploratory factor analysis was conducted to determine if the items or dimensions that defined the factors comprising job satisfaction were comparable to previous studies, and applicable to food service managers. The eigenvalue for the first factor was 6.85 and the proportion of common variance explained 83 percent. The second factor had an eigenvalue of 0.87 and explained 11 percent of the variance. In total, these two factors accounted for

94 percent of the common variance; the other factors explained only 6 percent of the variance. See Table 4. The results indicate that the MSQ is an effective tool in measuring job satisfaction for food service managers. The weight and composition of the factors, however, indicate that some adjustments may need to be made, and care must be used in interpreting the results. Specifically, Factor 1 is comparable to intrinsic satisfaction as previously determined; it appears to represent satisfaction with aspects of a job that are intrinsically reinforcing to employees/respondents. Factor 2, on the other hand, can be considered to measure satisfaction with reinforcers that are external to the job—but important in defining overall satisfaction as they help define the context of the job. Based on the results of this analysis, the reinforcers seem to better represent the notion of extrinsic satisfaction than did the previous results.

- **Interrole conflict:** Eight items were included in the interrole conflict scale. A total or composite interrole conflict score was calculated by summing the responses to the individual items. Table 5 ranks the items that comprised the interrole conflict scale from most conflicting to least conflicting.

Table 3
Profile of respondents and U.S. population
by highest level of education¹⁹

	Respondents		U.S. Population	
	n	Percent		Percent
Some high school	8	1.8	Not a high school graduate	16.9
High school diploma	76	17.5	High school graduate	32.8
Some college	138	31.8	Some college, no degree	19.8
Associate's degree	46	10.6	Associate's degree	7.3
Bachelor's degree	155	35.7	Bachelor's degree	15.7
Graduate or professional degree (in excess of a college degree)	11	2.5	Advanced degree	7.5

Table 4
Factors of job satisfaction for food service managers
(standardized regression coefficients)

Job satisfaction variables	Factor 1	Factor 2
Independence	.45	
Variety	.53	
Social status	.48	
Social service	.40	
Ability utilization	.58	
Advancement	.40	
Responsibility	.68	
Creativity	.77	
Achievement	.60	
Supervision-human resources		.84
Supervision-technical		.88
Moral values		.41
Company policies and practices		.42
Working conditions		.67
Co-workers		.48
Recognition		.40

Note: Factor loadings with an absolute value greater than 0.40 were used to construct the factors. The following variables did not load significantly on either factor: Activity, Authority, Compensation, and Security.

- **Interrole conflict:** Eight items were included in the interrole conflict scale. A total or composite interrole conflict score was calculated by summing the responses to the individual items. Table 5 ranks the items that comprised the interrole conflict scale from most conflicting to least conflicting.
- **Life satisfaction:** Using an overall score for life satisfaction, stepwise regression (SELECTION = STEPWISE) was used to study the relationship with a number of independent variables thought to influence it. In addition to the two measures of job satisfaction and the composite measure of interrole conflict, the following variables were included: age, gender, marital status, ethnicity, education level, type of food service operation, managerial level, number of hours worked, and income. The amount of variance explained by the model was 55.87 percent, $F(5, 258) = 65.33$, $MSe = .373$. The parameters for the following variables were retained at the $\alpha = .10$ level: intrinsic job satisfaction, interrole conflict, the number of hours worked, income, and age. See Table 6.

The signs of the parameters were consistent with expectations. Accordingly, the model suggests that life satisfaction increases as intrinsic job satisfaction and

income increase, and is reduced as interrole conflict and the number of hours worked increase. The model also suggests that older managers have higher life satisfaction scores.

Turnover is high

Management turnover may be the most difficult issue with which hospitality companies currently contend. Even though many standards and most operational procedures have been precisely defined, quality, consistency, and profitability can be affected significantly through the efforts of unit level managers since they are responsible for implementing and monitoring the standards and procedures on site. With turnover in their ranks, training suffers and SOPs may give way to convenience and/or expediency.

There is limited support for the view that individuals try to maximize self-reported levels of satisfaction through their employment choices.²⁰ Despite this, managerial turnover in the hospitality industry is substantial. To be sure, it is considerably higher than the average of 17 percent for all other businesses.²¹ While the hours worked and inconvenient schedules have often been cited as major reasons to leave the industry, there are other correlates and/or considerations that may influence turnover or intent to leave.²²

As it relates to turnover, a number of studies have found that intent to leave/remain is a significant indicator of future turnover action.²³ Also, employees who are

dissatisfied on the job are more likely to leave than those who are not.²⁴ Accordingly, understanding job satisfaction is important in coming to terms with turnover by hospitality managers. What's more, based on the findings of this study, it is conceivably the most important construct in attempting to understand life satisfaction.

The mean job satisfaction score for respondents in the study was 73.8 out of a possible 100. The two factors comprising job satisfaction were akin to those in previous studies and applicable to food service managers. Extrinsic satisfaction, however, which has been found to be a source of life satisfaction,²⁵ was not as important for unit level managers in the hospitality industry as was intrinsic satisfaction. The reason for this may be the relative ease with which other comparable positions can be found. If a manager is not satisfied with the supervision, policies, working conditions, etc. of his/her present employer, it does not appear to be that difficult to find another job at another company. Yet, extrinsic satisfaction may be important in the long-run retention and satisfaction of managers.

Opportunities abound

The availability of other opportunities has perhaps also made turnover seem as if it is part and parcel of the industry; its pervasiveness may be a contributing factor as well. As a result, it may be prevalent in the consciousness of industry managers. Even so,

leaving a managerial position or intending to leave can still be considered a stressful life event, especially if it is with a major industry player. Likewise, intent to turn over may be considered consuming in that it can be demanding both emotionally and psychologically. As such these events undoubtedly have an effect on one's subjective well-being--a measure of life satisfaction--which seems to be influenced by recent life events.

This may help explain the low life satisfaction scores that have been found for food service managers. This may also help explain the striking difference in the percentage of individuals who indicated they were either not too happy or determined that the way they were spending their lives was not very satisfying when compared to earlier data. Another equally important--but troubling--finding was that life satisfaction scores for hospitality workers were significantly lower compared to non-hospitality workers.²⁶

Life satisfaction can be affected when the duties, responsibilities, and time spent on the job limit involvement in other activities and positions. Based on the mean score, food service managers indicated that the top three interrole "conflicts" were that work time takes up time that they would like to spend with family and others; that they are too tired to do some of the things they would like to do after work; and that the job makes it difficult to be the kind of friend,

spouse, or parent that they would like to be. These should be a red flag to those in the corporate office.

Challenges are present

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between life satisfaction and job satisfaction for food service managers. Given the excessive turnover rates in the industry, the results are valuable if they can reduce turnover and improve the quality of life for food service managers.

The key finding is that life satisfaction increases with greater intrinsic job satisfaction, less inter-role conflict, and fewer hours worked. The data indicate that managers will benefit if they are engaged in jobs that are personally rewarding. Specifically, food service companies may be able to manipulate some of the dimensions that define job satisfaction, e.g., the chance to be creative and have variety—with the goal of increasing job satisfaction and ultimately greater quality of life. Addressing some of the other dimensions, however, will be more challenging under the organizational structure that is typically found in many of the larger companies in the industry.

Given the age distribution of the managers, the number of hours worked, and the conflicts identified, the data suggest that many companies may be misjudging their priorities by placing short-term profit goals ahead of the long-term human resources needed to

generate growth. In part, relatively small profit margins drive this approach. Research has found that the satisfaction that individuals have in an experience is derived from previous experiences and a reference point. If the experiences that assistant food service managers have are not rewarding, it should come as no surprise that they leave the industry after a couple of unrewarding attempts. These have become their benchmarks.

The findings underscore what is tacitly assumed about many food service management jobs, that the demands and rewards are not in sync compared to other management positions. Over time, satisfaction with life may be adversely effected. Given the current situation, many food service managers seek employment opportunities that will provide more balance between work and non-work activities. Unfortunately, many of those who leave the industry at a relatively young age may have loved their work.

Managers can be retained

Nights, weekends, holidays, and/or “special” events often interfere with personal needs, e.g., developing fulfilling relationships and/or non-work time activities. Providentially, there are a few independent restaurants and chains that have begun to address the potential conflicts between the work and non-work spheres by monitoring and coordinating their managers’ schedules more closely.

Table 5
Mean response for interrole conflict

	\bar{x}	n	σ
My work takes up time that I'd like to spend with family or others.	3.99	435	1.06
After work, I am too tired to do some of the things I'd like to do.	3.89	434	1.13
My job makes it difficult to be the kind of friend, spouse, or parent I'd like to be.	3.77	435	1.19
My work schedule often conflicts with my personal life.	3.75	436	1.13
Others who are important to me dislike how often I am preoccupied with my work while I am away from it.	3.60	434	1.22
On the job I have so much work to do that it takes from my personal interests.	3.57	434	1.21
Because my work is demanding, at times I am irritable outside the workplace	3.31	433	1.27
The demands of my job make it difficult to be relaxed when I am away from work.	3.22	431	1.26

Note: Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed/disagreed with the statements on a five-point Likert-type scale, with 1 indicating strongly disagree; 2, inclined to disagree; 3, neither agree nor disagree; 4, inclined to agree; and 5, strongly agree.

Table 6
Stepwise regression coefficients for life satisfaction

Variables	Coefficients	t value	p>t
Intercept	1.977	5.14	.0001
Intrinsic job satisfaction (score)	.455	10.36	.0001
Interrole conflict (score)	-.047	- 8.05	.0001
Hours worked/week	-.018	- 3.04	.0026
Income (yearly)	.020	2.25	.0254
Age (in years)	.009	2.07	.0388

Note: R² = 55.87 percent, F(5, 258) = 65.33, MSe = .373.

Two days off in a row, alternate weekends, and/or rotating shifts are among the steps that are being taken. Other considerations include holidays and sick or personal time.

While companies may not be able to accommodate all their needs, coordinating their schedules has proved successful in that hospitality managers have more time to be with friends and family and/or pursue outside interests and hobbies. Also, it may be possible to arrange their schedules so that their lifestyles are more in line with other professionals. To the extent that this can increase job satisfaction and reduce interrole conflict, other hospitality companies may want to adopt these measures.

Whether or not further research on this situation is needed is debatable. There are a number of studies suggesting that food service industry jobs may be less than desirable. Indeed, some of this is due to the nature of the jobs and the state of the industry. Some of it may also be due to the expectations that result from interfacing with an increasingly affluent culture/ society. Regardless, it is time for a change. Companies may be able to reduce interrole conflict and the number of hours worked. When companies can satisfy enough quality of life measures to retain their managers, they will benefit operationally. They will also spend less time and energy hiring, training, and replacing managers. Ultimately, the consumer will benefit in that experienced managers are

better able to provide a more satisfying hospitality experience.

Undoubtedly, there is some sample bias because of the manner in which the food service companies were chosen. Since there were only eight companies included, all segments of the industry were not represented equally, and the results should be generalized with caution. Another concern is non-response bias, especially where the questions about behavior appear to be threatening. Even though managers were guaranteed complete anonymity, the response rate was lower than preferred. Also, life satisfaction questions seem to be affected by the "momentary satisfaction levels" that respondents are reminded of before reporting satisfaction. Finally, the age distribution of the managers concerns the researchers.

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