

Developing Future Hospitality Leaders: Skills and Competencies for Success

JUAN ABELLA ASUNCION, JR.

President Ramon Magsaysay State University
Iba, Zambales
jasuncion@prmsu.edu.ph



Juan Abella Asuncion Jr. is an Associate Professor III and Dean of the College of Tourism and Hospitality Management at President Ramon Magsaysay State University (PRMSU), Iba Zambales. He earned his Doctor of Business Administration from the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Manila. He also completed a Master in Management major in Business Administration from Mondrian Aura College in the Subic Bay Freeport Zone, and a Master in Public Management from Columban College, Inc., in Olongapo City. He obtained his Bachelor of Science in Tourism from Columban College, Inc., Olongapo City. Prior to joining PRMSU, he served as Department Head

of the College of Hotel and Restaurant Management at Botolan Community College (now Polytechnic College of Botolan), Botolan, Zambales. With extensive experience in tourism, hospitality, management, and higher education administration, he continues to contribute to academic excellence and institutional development as Dean of the College of Tourism and Hospitality Management. He is an active member of various professional organizations, including the Asia-Pacific Consortium of Researchers and Educators, Inc. (APCORE), Council of Hotel and Restaurant Educators of the Philippines (COHREP), Association of Administrators in Hospitality, Hotel and Restaurant Educational Institutions (AAHRMEI), Philippine Association of Researchers for Tourism and Hospitality (PARTH), Asian Intellect for Academic Organization and Development, EdukCircle, and Global Leadership in Hospitality and Tourism Management.

Introduction

Leaders guide and motivate the hospitality industry's diverse workforce through their ability to foster teamwork, communication, and service excellence. Hospitality Leaders create a supportive environment supporting these three components in a hospitality focused work environment, including hotels, restaurants, or other service-oriented businesses. The fast-paced, dynamic, and often unpredictable nature of the hospitality industry makes effective leadership critical in the success of hospitality organizations. Leadership in hospitality involves more than just managing daily operations; it is about inspiring employees to achieve common goals and deliver memorable guest experiences.

Emotional Intelligence, great communication skills, and effective conflict resolution skills are just a few of the important skills required for effective hospitality leadership. Emotional intelligence allows hospitality leaders to identify and control their emotions and recognize the feelings of others, which helps him/her create a better workplace culture. Great communication skills allow hospitality leaders to establish timelines, expectations, and performance standards for staff, which ultimately builds trust and accountability between the hospitality leaders and their teams. Lastly, being able to effectively resolve conflicts amongst team members provides a path to maintaining team harmony, particularly in a high-pressure environment.

Understanding the importance of these skills will help guide the exploration of the core competencies developed by hospitality leaders. Core competencies allow the hospitality leader to support the success of the organization both at an individual level and collectively. By having an understanding of these core skills and competencies, future hospitality leaders will be better prepared to respond to the challenges facing the hospitality industry and create a sustainable workforce for the future (Williams et al., 2013).

Effective Communication – Successful hospitality leaders possess the ability to effectively communicate with all levels of the organization. In order for leaders and employee's to work together, hospitality leaders must clearly communicate their vision and goals to help create a common understanding of how each individual fits into the vision/goals, thus providing the necessary motivation for the entire team to achieve the desired results together. As a result, both team members and leaders will have a stronger sense of camaraderie, which fosters an atmosphere of collaboration and idea generation that fuels innovation in an industry where creativity and adaptability are paramount.

Not only must hospitality leaders be good communicators but must also demonstrate high-level problem-solving skills. Because the hospitality industry is very fast-paced, there are always going to be unexpected obstacles that will arise causing delays or other issues, such as staffing difficulties and complaints by guests. Leaders who can quickly identify the issue, evaluate various options to resolve it and then execute the solution demonstrate their ability to be resilient and resourceful. By demonstrating these attributes, they also provide employees with a feeling of confidence that they will be supported by their leader; subsequently creating a more positive work environment.

Another critical skill for leaders in hospitality is team management. Hospitality leaders are responsible for building a strong, unified team and assisting their team members to work cooperatively together; hence creating a successful organization. By being aware of the different skill sets possessed by each individual team member (i.e. strengths and weaknesses), leaders can assign specific responsibilities to their respective team members based upon their abilities, and allow each team member to perform at their highest level. Once this occurs, the individuals on the team will feel a sense of pride of authorship for the overall product(s) and will have increased accountability for the product(s), thereby increasing the overall performance of the team.

Upon improving their communication, problem-solving and team management skills, hospitality leaders also enhance their emotional intelligence. Developing emotional intelligence enables leaders to connect on a deeper level with their team and foster trust and empathy. Being able to understand how to interpret and communicate emotion in any situation creates a culture within the workplace of supporting one another as a team, ultimately allowing leaders to effectively lead their teams

through any challenges they may encounter. Leaders have an important role in creating a workplace where workforce experience satisfaction.

Leadership's role in building a workplace of experienced satisfaction is vital. Leaders can develop employees' emotional intelligence by models of emotional intelligence and providing feedback to their employees' emotional intelligence skills.

Leaders need to identify their own emotional intelligence level, what type their team is and have the relational-building happen to all employees. Providing employees with an opportunity to create a positive workplace requires knowing how to identify their emotional intelligence, providing feedback on the constructive uses of their emotional intelligence, and having the tools to encourage employees to help one another develop their own emotional intelligence.

Balancing Work and Life Requires Empathy from Leaders

Leaders help employees develop their work-life balance by using their empathy. When employees are experiencing difficulties managing stress related to work-life balance, leaders should identify the potential of helping their employees improve their motivation levels and/or productivity by offering flexible schedules or opportunities for their employees to develop better work-life balance.

When employees feel supported, they are more likely to feel motivated and produce greater results in the workplace. By having an environment that supports employee growth and development, it contributes to the cohesiveness of the employee's workgroup, which ultimately leads to better service to guests.

When a manager or leader displays emotional intelligence, the employees feel that they can express their feelings to one another and trust one another. This develops a sense of belonging within the employee's workgroup, which creates a collaborative work environment.

Leaders with Developed Emotional Intelligence Skills Have Strong Conflict Resolution Skills

Leaders that are effective in resolving conflicts between employee relationships create a positive environment by using their emotional intelligence to create equal levels for each side of the disagreement. This creates an environment in which all parties involved in the conflict are treated respectfully, and creates open communication between employees.

Creating a respectful and valued workplace culture for employees is critical in this organization's operations, as the hospitality industry continues to grow and a greater number of business customers will continue to be served from many different types of cultural backgrounds. It is essential that hospitality leaders develop and put into practice cultural competence while building an inclusive workplace.

Future hospitality leaders that develop their emotional intelligence as well as develop their cultural intelligence will be able to thrive in a complicated, globalized economy. Diversity and cultural competence are crucial to developing effective leaders in the hospitality industry. The hospitality industry serves a diverse range of guests who have different backgrounds; thus, a leader's conceptual and factual understanding of each specific cultural group enhances his/her/their ability to foster hospitality environments that are welcoming and provide guests with an experience inclusive of their respective cultures. A culturally competent leader understands and appreciates the unique cultural backgrounds of the staff that he/she/they manage and therefore possesses an ability to assist all team members to be productive together. Additionally, this knowledge positively influences the experience of all guests, resulting in an inclusive culture that is valued by diverse groups of individuals.

To create an inclusive work environment through diversity, leaders must actively implement strategies that support the value of diversity (e.g.,

provide training programs that promote cultural awareness to staff, promote conversations regarding differing views and perspectives, and celebrate the differences of all team members). By creating an inclusive organizational culture that respects and appreciates the differences of all team members, hospitality leaders can empower their teams to deliver superior guest services, regardless of the individual backgrounds of the guests.

While developing diversity and cultural understanding, hospitality leaders must also prepare to meet the challenges of new technology introduced into the industry. The addition of new technology to a hospitality operation can either bridge a gap or create new gaps, depending on whether a company uses technology respectfully in supporting an individual's diverse background. As such, the next step for future hospitality leaders will be to develop their own technological competence to support their diversity initiatives in their operations, thereby positively influencing each of their guests' experiences in terms of both respect and appreciation. By achieving this effective balance, all parties involved will ultimately benefit, thereby increasing both team performance and overall guest satisfaction; thus, preparing the new generation of hospitality leaders to meet the modern demands of the leaders in the hospitality industry will increasingly need to have strong technological skills due to the introduction of numerous new technologies that are changing the way that the industry works. Hospitality leaders such as managers, executives, etc. need to possess a solid understanding of modern technological applications in order to implement these systems correctly and train their employees to enhance guest service delivery and improve business operations using technological advances. For example; artificial intelligence, mobile apps, and data analytics solutions are changing how hospitality businesses operate by providing leaders with the tools required to improve operational efficiencies and improve service delivery to guests. Hospitality leaders who possess a greater proficiency

in technology will be better prepared to respond to how new technologies are impacting their business and ensure that their employees can successfully transition to the new technology systems being adopted by their property.

Hospitality leaders who are incorporating technology will also need to be sensitive to the different needs of all of their employees and guests. This includes many different demographic groups who will use technology. When these leaders are selecting technology solutions (i.e., software applications, mobile apps, etc.) and implementing these solutions at their facility, they will need to ensure that the technology they select is accessible and easy for all guests & employees to use (regardless of their age or computer experience). When these leaders can use technology and still be sensitive to and recognize the diversity of the guests & employees, this will lead to improved guest satisfaction and more positive employee relations in the workplace.

As technology continues to have a growing impact on the hospitality industry, hospitality leaders will also have to deal with the growing number of challenges associated with what the hospitality industry does in terms of acting responsibly and sustainably. The integration of technology into the hospitality industry must be done without causing harm to the environment or society. Therefore, as hospitality leaders look to prepare future leaders to balance the developments being seen with the development of sustainable practices, this will help to create a more responsible hospitality industry that can meet the needs of both hotel/implementing sustainable practices within the hospitality industry can provide advantages for employees and customers, as well as for the environment. For hospitality leaders to successfully implement sustainability during decision-making, they should utilize ethical leadership principles when running their businesses.

In addition, hospitality leaders need to ensure that their companies are socially responsible and practice sustainability. Ethical decision-making also requires addressing the ethical issues related to how businesses conduct their everyday operations (i.e., sourcing materials, managing labor).

An ethical hospitality leader will develop a trusting relationship with his or her employees and guests, which will improve the reputation of their business as a whole.

There are many examples of businesses implementing and maintaining sustainability and ethical values that have positively impacted an organization's overall effectiveness and success. For example, hotels that install energy-efficient appliances or only buy local produce will have a reduced ecological footprint and will, therefore, appeal to eco-conscious customers. Additionally, this type of sustainability effort will increase employee engagement in a sustainability-driven culture, which will foster unity among employees. Equally as important is being able to adapt to changing conditions. Leaders in the hospitality industry should have an open mind to new concepts while changing their plans based on the changing needs of the marketplace. One example, in the last few years, there has been an explosion of digital services available to guests, creating a need for leaders in the hospitality industry to start using technology as part of their daily operations. This change provides both increased operational capacity and promotes a culture of innovativeness within the teams (Albogami et al., 2024).

As hospitality leaders begin to create sustainable businesses, they must also promote continuous learning and flexibility. The hospitality industry is always changing; leaders must adjust continuously to new ideas and changes in their industries. Therefore, if hospitality leaders remain true to their vision, they will equip themselves to find innovative solutions to the

challenges currently facing the hospitality industry and advance sustainable and ethical practices (Spanos, et al., 2024).

References

- Albogami, M. F., Sharawi, O. W., & Khan, R. M. (2024). Organizational Culture Adaptability by Leaders and its Influence on Firm Performance. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Operations Management*. <https://doi.org/10.46254/an14.20240610>.
- Spanos, S., Leask, E., Patel, R., Datyner, M., Loh, E., & Braithwaite, J. (2024). Healthcare leaders navigating complexity: a scoping review of key trends in future roles and competencies. In *BMC Medical Education* (Vols. 24). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-024-05689-4>.
- Williams, J., Brown, E., Bosselman, R. H., & Foucar-Szocki, R. (2013). Former Team Sports Experiences: Development of Collaborative and Leadership Skills for Future Hospitality Managers. In *Tourism hospitality management* (Vol. 1, pp. 1-9). <https://doi.org/10.17265/2328-2169/2013.10.001>.