Hospitality management graduate perceptions of management development practices

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Abstract: Companies have long recognized the importance of training and developing their managers in order to prepare them for their short and long-term careers. Formal management development programs and other less formal means of management development abound in the hospitality industry. Therefore, it would be pertinent to ask whether these programs are perceived to be effective in the eyes of the entry-level managers exposed to them. This study will seek a deeper understanding of the management development practices, procedures, techniques and their effects on job satisfaction, and organizational commitment.
Introduction & Definitions

A common human resource management cliché states that “people are your best asset”.

Arguably an organization’s success or failure will depend in large part on the quality of its talent pool. Recruiting the best talent is important to an organization’s success, especially when it comes to professional and managerial personnel. However, an organization’s human resource can also be a major liability for employers. From an organizational perspective, it is in the “how” a business manages their talent that will account for success or failure. Hamblin in Adams and Waddle (2002) suggest four types of measure for the effectiveness of training and development efforts. These are: reaction, learning, job behaviors, organizational outcomes and ultimate level (profits).

In the hospitality industry, many recent college graduates are recruited for and placed on a management development program (MDP). Such programs, depending on their specific objectives, seek to prepare young managers, assistant managers and supervisors for a career in the hospitality industry. Watson (2008) defines management development as the “training, education, and learning practices that are intended to assist managers realize their potential, either for personal or organizational benefits” (pg. 759). It should be noted that management development activities can take place at any time during a manager’s career and in a variety of industries. However, this research emphasizes the early stages of a manager’s career in the hospitality industry. This research will seek to evaluate the effectiveness of management development programs from the perspective of entry-level hospitality managers.

This research project will likely be significant to both industry and academia. First, from an industry perspective, this research will provide an overview of common managerial development practices in the hospitality industry. Second, a deeper understanding of common practices and their
perceived effectiveness from a trainee point of view, will assist organizations in developing management development programs that are more suited to the needs and preferences of their trainees. From an academic standpoint, this research will assist in settling a variety of debates within training and development literature. First, debate exists whether a more strategic (or narrow) or a broader (well-rounded) approach to training and development is best to use within the hospitality industry. Second, this research will study the relative importance of managerial support, development techniques or methods utilized and horizontal integration in the perceived effectiveness and consequently trainee satisfaction.

**Statement of Problem**

Despite the industry’s eagerness to engage recent graduates in management development programs, there is not enough empirical research to support how most companies evaluate the effectiveness of such programs. This study will seek to understand the organizational and personal outcomes of management development for entry-level management positions. The impact of such programs on job satisfaction and ultimately retention and career progression warrant further study. In light of this situation, it would be pertinent to ask, what are the most common training practices in the hospitality industry? Does trainee satisfaction vary according to the types of training offered by their respective companies? What impact does training and development have on managerial job satisfaction? What role does senior level management support play in trainee satisfaction? Consequently, the purpose of this research is to examine how are management development practices perceived by recent hospitality management graduates. The main research objectives for this study are outlined as follows:
To ascertain how the perceptions of senior level support impact trainee and consequently job satisfaction. The information for this objective will be obtained from questions regarding job satisfaction and managerial support, as outlined in the survey instrument (Appendix 1).

To determine whether a well-rounded approach to management development (whereby trainees are trained in a variety of ways and in which they’re exposed to various functional areas) is more or less conducive to job satisfaction and intention to stay employed by the company. The information to fulfill this research objective will be obtained from a series of questions regarding utilization of management techniques and exposure to other functional areas, as outlined in the survey instrument (Appendix 1).

Review of Literature

Different organizations use various forms of development methods to prepare their young managers for careers within the hospitality industry. Programs may also stress different skill sets or highlight an organizational philosophy towards training and development. Shaw and Patterson (1995) studied the skills that managers considered important to them. Accordingly, managers ranked service quality, motivation & training, and communication skills among their highest. Advertising and personal selling where ranked the lowest (Shaw and Patterson, 1995). Additionally strategic planning and budgeting where considered important for managers within the lodging subset of the industry (Shaw and Patterson, 1995). Watson (2008) identifies people skills, cultural sensitivity and flexibility, as well as leadership, corporate and strategic skills, as important among managers.

Management development practices can vary within the industry (Watson, 2008). On the one hand, some companies will prefer new managers to train mostly in their area of specialty. On the other hand, other organizations will be well-rounded in their approach, thus encouraging new managers to obtain as much exposure to every functional area of the business. Organizations can also vary in their...
techniques of methods for engaging new managers. Some rely heavily on a module-based approach, whereby managers are given a book of materials they must cover on a self-phased basis.

Other organizations will encourage their managers to spend certain periods of time in different departments and learn by doing (or on the job training or action training, as it is referred to in training and development literature). Yet other organizations, will stress the importance of more personal methods such as mentoring. In today’s information age, many organizations are also turning to electronic training and virtual universities to provide more consistent and economical delivery of content (Adams & Waddle, 2002).

Watad and Ospina (1999) studied the impact of horizontal and vertical integration in the development implementation of a management development program. Horizontal integration refers to the level of involvement of people at the same or similar hierarchal level at different departments, functional areas or divisions of the organization. Vertical integration, in this context, refers to the level of involvement of superiors and subordinates within the same department, functional area or division within the organization.

The use of horizontal integration on a development program encourages a more strategic perspective of the organization (Watad and Ospina, 1999). It also, allows for better and more effective problem resolution. Finally, horizontal integration allows for better communication and an internal-customer view of other organizational departments (Watad and Ospina, 1999). The use of vertical integration promotes a better development culture, a more objective performance appraisal process and a quicker implementation of training knowledge and initiatives (Watad and Ospina, 1999).

Some researchers advocate for a more customer-driven (in this case, trainee-driven) approach to training and development (Prestoungrange, 2002). In this research, the argument is made that a pre-made curriculum could be viewed as an imposition (Prestoungrange, 2002). The pattern and exchange
of ideas is also studied by Prestoungrange (2002). In this perspective any development program must encourage a more casual exchange of ideas, reminiscent of normal social interaction, and less so of formalized learning. Prestounrange (2002) also argues that for most practitioners learning comes in an active and pragmatic way, as opposed to a more traditional reflective approach. Thus the importance of saliency in creating a development program.

Different hospitality organizations might have a need for a different skill set from their managers (Watson, et.al.). For instance, a casual restaurant might have different requirements than a five star hotel. Watson (2008) studied the research regarding barriers to career progression in the industry. Low pay, low skills and lack of career opportunities can have an impact in the retention of managers (Martin, et. al in Watson, 2008). Doherty (2004) concluded that the long hours culture negatively affects female manager’s progression from entry- and middle manager into senior management positions.

Even in the field of hospitality education, there is considerable debate as to whether hospitality firms should stress operational abilities versus a more reflective approach, reminiscent of traditional management schooling (Alexander 2007, Connoly & Mcging, 2006, Raybould and Wilkins, 2005). Watson (2008) also studied the factors that account for career progression in the industry, including: training and education, networking, mentoring, individual commitment to career advancement, willingness to be mobile and interpersonal relations.

Pavesic and Brymer (1992) studied the topic of job satisfaction among recent graduates of 11 hospitality management programs. According to their study, one fifth of all graduates leave the industry after the first year and one third would have left the hospitality industry after their third year of work (Pavesic and Brymer, 1992). In analyzing the reasons for management turnover among young managers, they found no relationship between the amount of previous work experience and the turnover rate.
(Pavesic and Brymer, 1992). However, their study did find that most managers leave a company for the following reasons: a better hospitality job, money reasons or not enough pay, management, and work hours and work-life balance concerns. Job dissatisfaction is especially pronounced among graduates of top hospitality programs (Pavesic and Brymer, 1992).

Sturman (2001), in his study of comparative compensation between the hospitality industry and similar occupations, utilized the graduates of Cornell’s hospitality management program as a case study. This study demonstrated that college graduates who accepted positions within hospitality operations where likely to have a lower grade point average (GPA) and to earn a smaller base salary than those who accepted positions as either hospitality specialists (outside of operations – i.e. specialists, consultants) and those who accepted comparable positions outside of the hospitality industry (Sturman, 2001).

Management turnover can be especially problematic in organizations, because of its negative consequences. A firm typically invests a considerable amount of money in recruiting and training new employees and even more so for a new manager. Additionally the loss of productivity during the initial weeks or months of employment is yet another reason for increased costs. Andrews, Van Rooy, Steilberg, and Cerrone (2006) in Costen, Johansson and Poisson (2009) revealed that employee turnover is positively associated with management turnover. It is therefore important for organizations to retain their managers from a financial standpoint. Costen, Johansson and Poisson (2009) also argue that much attention is focused on developing entry-level and mid-level managers for senior management positions, while little training is focused on developing hourly staff into managerial positions. An employee’s perception of a company investing in their development can arguably increase their level of commitment (Costen, Johanson, and Poisson, 2009).

Addams and Waddle (2002) criticize the amount of money spent on management development with no accountability for results. It is therefore important for organizations to assess the effectiveness...
of their programs. Buckley and Caple in Adams and Waddle (2002) define evaluation as: “the process of attempting to assess the total value of training: that is the cost benefits and general outcomes, which benefit the organization as well as the value of the improved performance of those who have undertaken the training” (pg. 15). Hamblin in Adams and Waddle (2002) provide four types of measure for the effectiveness of training and development efforts: reaction, learning, job behaviors, organizational outcomes and ultimate level (profits).

Ideally a development program should evaluate all of these criteria. However, from a practical standpoint it can become difficult to track specific job behaviors and financial outcomes attributable to the development. Reaction and learning are the simplest to measure among these alternatives. Further study in the outcomes of management development is needed in order to assess the effectiveness of such practices and possibly benchmark best practices.

Methodology – Future Research:

Hypotheses

Future research will seek to answer the following hypotheses:

H1: The entry level manager’s perception of support from middle and upper manager will be positively associated with job satisfaction

H2: A well-rounded approach to management development (as defined by the amount of techniques and the amount of departments a trainee is exposed to) will be positively associated with job satisfaction and intent to stay

H3: Job satisfaction will vary with relation to the development method or technique utilized
The research will use a survey in order to obtain the needed data to study. The survey will be conducted among recent graduates of Purdue’s Hospitality and Tourism Management program. For the purposes of this study, a recent graduate is someone who has graduated a minimum of 3 months and a maximum of five years ago. The benchmark of five years as the upper threshold of the sample is set because of several reasons. First, someone who has spent more than five years in the industry is likely to be working at a different position (presumably higher-level) than their entry-level job. Second, people who have spend five or fewer years in the industry are likely to have better recollections of their management training and development. Third, the task of obtaining contact information is much simpler for people who have spent five or less years in the industry, as respondents could potentially move across geographical boundaries.

The addresses of respondents have been obtained from database of the department of hospitality and tourism management. A pilot test of the survey has been conducted with five subjects. In order to obtain the necessary number of responses, the survey will be mailed to all 600 Purdue Hospitality Management Alumni, which have graduated within the last five years. If a recent graduate has not worked within the hospitality industry since they graduated, they will be asked not to fill a survey. Assuming that 70% of all graduates have worked in the hospitality industry since graduation, the number of potential respondents will be reduced to 420 (again, respondents who have not worked in the hospitality industry will not be considered usable responses). Assuming, also 30% response rate, such number goes down to 126 responses. Assuming that out of these 90% will be usable responses, 113 final responses are expected. Respondents will receive the survey via the US postal service and will have a pre-stamped return envelope to send back the responses. Should research subjects not respond during the first week, a reminder will be sent during the second week.
Since Purdue is a major research university and one of the top programs in the field; the graduates of Purdue University, are expected, to a large extent to start their careers in entry-level managerial positions. This will in turn provide a useful sample of managers who have recently been exposed to a management development program. The management development offered to the graduates of Purdue University is not perceived to be different than those offered to other entry-level managers.

**The Survey Instrument**

The survey instrument (Appendix 1) is designed for ease of use among respondents. All the questions on a similar scale are group together in order to facilitate a quick completion of the survey and thus reduce the number of respondents who might not finish the survey due to time constraints. For the most part, the survey groups questions related to the same topic together. The first section of the survey begins with a series of demographic questions (1-3). After this, questions 4-10 address the topic of management support for training and development activities. The response for such questions ranges from “Never” (1) to “Always” (4).

Questions 11-15 address the concept of job satisfaction. Questions 16-24 address the company’s philosophy towards training and development. In other words, it addresses how narrow or how broad is the company’s approach when training new managers. The questions are also listed on a scale that ranges from “Never” (1) to “Always” (4). Additional survey questions address the trainee job satisfaction and exposure to various functional areas within the business.

**Discussion of Potential Results**

Management development is not only an expected practice, it is a necessity for any organization that seeks to have a competent and committed group of managers. The skill set required by these new
managers can be diverse, but must take into accounts the reactions, perceptions and needs of the new managers. Debate exists as to whether a management development program should be job-specific (or narrow in focus) or expose the trainee to a variety of different experiences (thus, well-rounded in focus). The authors expect that this research will reveal that a well-rounded approach to management development is more likely to convey a long-term perspective in management development and thus it is likely to be perceived positively by entry-level mangers.

Perceptions of support from the entry-level manager’s supervisor, as well as other senior management within an organization is yet another important factor likely to have an impact on perceived management development effectiveness. In studying management development, the authors cannot isolate the perceived effectiveness of MDP’s and job satisfaction from other human resource practices. A new manager is likely to stay or leave; to excel or lag based on other factors including compensation and benefits, the work environment, job design, etc.

Finally, a variety of techniques or methods can be employed for developing new managers. The authors expect that the preferences and perceived effectiveness of such methods will likely have an impact in the manager’s job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Organizations can vary in their approaches and philosophies, thus more research is needed to discover best practices or a needs-based model for management development. Leaders have been responsible for the rise and demise of businesses and civilizations. Can management development make a difference?

Conceptualization

Having reviewed the relevant literature, the authors propose Figure I as a conceptualization of management development inputs and likely outcomes. The figure reflects how a variety of training techniques and methods (i.e. mentoring, conferences, on-the job training, classroom training, online training, mentoring, and teambuilding among others), exposure to different functional areas (or,
departments within the same organization) and support from both the immediate supervisor and senior management is likely to result in trainee satisfaction with their development process and thus lead to improved retention. Using the survey instrument, the researchers will seek to study the proposed model and make any necessary modifications, as the data may suggest.

Figure I – Conceptualization of Management Development Practices and Outcomes

Works Cited:


http://scholarworks.umass.edu/refereed/CHRIE_2010/Friday/24
Appendix 1: Survey

Survey Instructions: The following survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Please fill out the questions below. For all the questions, please recall your first managerial or supervisory role in a hospitality organization.

1. After graduation from the Purdue HTM program, did you start working at one of the following levels within the hospitality industry: Assistant Manager, Manager, Supervisor, Management Trainee, Leader-in-Training?
   A) Yes
   B) No

2. What is your age?
   A) 21-25
   B) 26-29
   C) 30-35
   D) 36-40
   E) 41 or more
3. What is your gender?
A) Male
B) Female

For the following questions, please how often have each one takes place on a scale from 1-5, with 1 being “never” and 5 being “Frequently”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Infrequently</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
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<td>4. My Manager takes time to train me</td>
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<td>5. My manager is a mentor to me</td>
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<td>6. My manager spends at least 30 minutes a day on training and development efforts</td>
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<td>7. My manager cares about my career progression</td>
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<td>8. My Manager delegates my training &amp; development onto other employees (or other managers or supervisors)</td>
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<td>9. My manager has an “open door” policy</td>
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<td>10. I have the opportunity to interact with and learn from other Senior managers within the organization</td>
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<td>11. I would recommend my company for others to work in?</td>
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<td>12. My work is interesting</td>
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<td>13. My work is challenging</td>
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<td>14. I feel empowered at work</td>
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<td>15. My work offers a positive work environment</td>
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<td>16. I have or am expecting to receive training in one functional area of the business (i.e. front desk or housekeeping or restaurants or banquets or event management or other business function)</td>
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<td>17. My company uses classroom training as one technique for my training and development?</td>
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<td>18. My company uses online classes or sessions as part of my</td>
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<td>19. My company uses online classes or sessions as part of my training and development?</td>
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<td>20. My company uses mentoring as part of my training and development?</td>
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<td>21. My company uses conferences or corporate retreats (2 or more days) as part of my training and development?</td>
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<td>22. My company uses teambuilding as part of my training and development?</td>
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23. I have or am expecting to receive training in two functional areas of the business (i.e. front desk and housekeeping or banquets and human resources or any combination of two functional areas)  

24. I have or am expecting to receive training in three or more functional areas of the business (i.e. event management, finance and restaurants or any combination of three or more functional areas)  

25. At the present time, I foresee myself continuing my employment with my current company for at least one year  

26. At the present time, I foresee myself continuing my employment with my current company for at least three years?  

For the following questions, please provide an answer to the best of your recollection and mark how important was this to you  

27. During the first year of my employment with my company I spent (or am expected to spend)____ amount of days in other functional areas  

28. Other than your immediate supervisor, how many other managers are involved in your training and development  

Thanks for your participation – Please mail in the pre-stamped envelope