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Abstract

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This article discusses the results of pioneer research done by Michigan State University's School of Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Management researchers, in cooperation with the Japanese Management Association, on the foundations of Japanese lodging industry leadership. While the results presented here simply represent the opinions of CEOs and presidents in Japan's lodging industry, the research offers an insight into leadership foundations and the results provide a guide for developing leadership skills in those who aspire to be future leaders in Japan's lodging industry.

Leadership qualities have been the subject of much discussion and numerous publications. While many have argued the basic differences between leadership and management, few have sought to identify the foundations of leadership in the hospitality industry.

Japanese management practices and the impacts of these practices have been published widely and discussed globally. The topic of leadership and the general qualities of Japanese business leaders have been frequently cited in the literature. Imai, in *Kaizen: The Key to Japan's Competitive Success*, describes the deeply-ingrained philosophy of "kaizen" (continuous improvement) as the almost unconscious assumption that Japanese leaders make relative to life. Kaizen involves everyone, both leaders and followers.[1] The essence of kaizen is a philosophy that home life, social life, and working life deserve to be continuously improved.

Hasegawa, in *Japanese Style Management: An Insider's Analysis,* suggested that the essence of Japanese management practices is to think quality and be competitive.[2] Regarding quality, Hasegawa challenges leaders to never be satisfied by striving to continuously improve. Again, the kaizen philosophy surfaces. Regarding competition, Hasegawa stresses the importance of service as a competitive advantage. He suggests that leaders should treasure their employees and "treat all employees like the conscientious, loyal, intelligent, and hardworking people you want them to be."

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Reischauer, in *The Japanese Today: Change and Continuity,* described the relationship between superiors, peers, and subordinates in a Japanese organization as a club. He suggested that "as members of the same club,"[3] people in an organization "must do their best to cooperate during their whole careers." Reischauer also pointed out that disruptive changes in leadership, internal friction, and interpersonal competition are reduced with this strong cohesion.

While a great deal has been written about leadership in a general business context, substantially less is available about the lodging industry specifically. In the November 1977 *Cornell Quarterly,* Nebel and Sterns reported on research they had conducted which centered on the effectiveness of leadership style in the hospitality industry.[4] Based on situational variables such as task structure and employee needs for interdependence, their research suggested a task-oriented (as opposed to participative-oriented) leadership style was preferable for the hospitality industry. They encouraged assessment of each individual before selecting a leadership style.

Prior to gaining notoriety for his "excellence" books, Tom Peters wrote about leadership qualities in the November 1980 *Cornell Quarterly.*[5] Peters cited hospitality industry examples from the 1970s, such as Jan Carlson at SAS and John Teets at Greyhound Food Management, as individuals who demonstrated leadership attributes including encouraging experimentation, persistence in shifting organizational focus, and "management by walking about."

In the August 1989 *Cornell Quarterly,* Berger, Ferguson and Woods reported on their study of eight innovative hospitality firms.[6] They conducted interviews with top executives and managers at each organization and discovered five common characteristics among those they interviewed. The common characteristics of innovative leaders were as follows:

- ability to juggle many tasks
- high energy level
- sense of humor
- people orientation
- willingness to span job and company boundaries in search of ideas and information

One classic study frequently referenced in leadership-related publications was conducted by Bennis and Nanus and was assembled into their 1985 book, *Leaders.*[7] Bennis and Nanus undertook a five-year study of 90 outstanding leaders (60 private sector, 30 public sector.) Using a combination of interviews and observations, they concluded that there were four areas of competency that all of their leaders possessed:

• **Attention through vision:** Leaders can create a sense of outcome or vision so compelling that others are drawn into a commitment to it.

• **Meaning through communication:** Leaders communicate their sense of vision with clarity and understanding. Interestingly, Bennis and Nanus found that not all 90 of their leaders were exceptionally articulate. Those who were not as verbally adept substituted models, drawings or other symbols with no apparent weakening of communication.

• **Trust through positioning:** Leaders consistently demonstrate and earn trust via their reliability, predictability, and accountability. The researchers discovered that the leader's clearly communicated vision was almost less important than remaining predictable and consistent (unless it was unreasonable to do so.) Inconsistency breeds misunderstanding and distrust, obstacles that are not easily overcome.

• **The deployment of self through positive self regard:** Leaders know their strengths and constantly work to enhance them. Leaders also recognize their shortcomings and seek to compensate for them. The capacity to develop and improve upon their skills distinguishes leaders from followers. Additionally, the 90 leaders studied did not include the word "failure" in their vocabularies. Bennis and Nanus cite numerous examples from their research that confirm leaders focus their efforts on their desired outcomes, not looking back and making excuses.

Bennis and Nanus suggested that leaders with these traits foster an environment that helps employees feel important, one where competence and development matter, and where employees are team members and the work is stimulating. Effective leaders shape an atmosphere where dedication to goals fuels efforts, and quality is of the utmost importance.

In his latest book, *On Becoming a Leader,* Bennis emphasized the critical importance of self-awareness and self-understanding.[8] He suggested that "nothing is truly yours until you understand it — not even yourself." Self-understanding begins when an individual pauses and reflects on his past experiences. This process leads to understanding. Bennis quoted Socrates who said: "The unexamined life is not worth living." Bennis also stressed that leaders use learning and understanding to become self-directed. He pointed out that you learn about yourself, in part, through your relationships with others.

The topic of leadership also has repeatedly appeared in the popular business magazine, *Fortune.* In the October 24, 1988, issue, Kenneth Labich authored an article entitled, "The Seven

Keys to Business Leadership."[9] In his article, Labich compiled the opinions of consultants, academicians (business schools) and corporate CEOs to develop his seven "keys." The seven keys to leadership cited are as follows:

• **Trust your subordinates:** Through a belief in subordinates, decision making can be driven far from the CEO's office. This results in an involved workforce, one which is committed beyond the "I'm just here to collect a paycheck" mentality that permeates far too many organizations.

• **Develop a vision:** People are more willing to follow someone who can communicate a clear sense of where he or she is going. The most effective leaders live up to their own expectations; they demonstrate the vision through personal example.

• **Keep your cool:** Nothing separates leaders from followers like a crisis. Thinking clearly under pressure inspires followers and enhances credibility.

• **Encourage risks:** Experimentation, even when the results fall short of expectations, is the rule. Fred Smith, founder of Federal Express, is widely recognized for living this value. Labich quotes from the *Federal Express Manager's Guide* which states that "fear of failure must never be an excuse not to try something different." Again, personal example conveys the message most vividly.

• **Be an expert:** Leaders are effective because they do their homework. Followers are more likely to rally behind the leader whom they believe knows what he or she is doing.

• **Invite dissent:** Effective leaders recognize and encourage an honest exchange of ideas and difference of opinion. Labich quotes Barry Rand, president of the marketing group at Xerox Corporation, who sums up this concept by saying, "The higher you get in an organization, the more important it is to have people who will tell you when you are right or wrong. If you have 'yes' people, then either you or they are redundant."

• **Simplify:** To be an effective business leader, you must clearly identify your expectations and present them to your followers in understandable, concise terms. The idea is not to look for only the quick and easy solutions, but to focus on what is important and communicate it effectively.

A unique approach to the subject of leadership was presented by Wes Roberts in his 1985 book, *Leadership Secrets of Attila the*

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Hun.[10] Roberts used the context of the notorious Attila to examine the basics of leadership as a foundation for the development of skills needed for success in virtually any field.

Through Attila, Roberts proposed that leaders possess an array of qualities that make them effective. These included many of the attributes cited by Bennis and Nanus and Labich: dependability, accountability, credibility, emotional stamina, decisiveness, and tenacity. Roberts also included anticipation, self confidence, and stewardship (a caretaker quality that encourages confidence, trust, and loyalty).

The authors and researchers agree that there are many attributes associated with successful business leaders. But there is no consensus about exactly what constitutes the best leadership style. Effective leaders can come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and personality types. They consistently demonstrate exceptional listening and communication skills. Leaders earn trust with their consistency and strong personal values yet, almost paradoxically, remain flexible in dealing with the often contradictory circumstances they encounter. Effective business leaders create a climate which encourages the development of their subordinates. They make available the resources (time, information, and money) necessary for their followers to succeed.

Words such as "vision," "trust," "communication," "passion," "self-awareness," "risk taking," and "simplify" show up consistently throughout the literature on the topic of leadership. These qualities and attributes formed the framework for the construction of the original survey.

The pioneer study of U.S. lodging CEOs and presidents led these researchers (Cichy and Sciarini) to conclude that the four foundations of leadership are as follows: vision, communication, trust, and perseverance.[11] These foundations were further strengthened in the responses from two additional studies: noncommercial food service leaders[12] and commercial food service leaders.[13] The collective data for the leaders yield a snapshot of the opinions of three important segments of the U.S. hospitality industry. Minimally, there is a consistency in responses that identified the four foundations. These foundations were the basis for the present study.

Survey Was Based on Key Leadership Qualities

To discover what Japan's lodging industry presidents and CEOs think are essential leadership qualities, the survey developed was based on key leadership attributes identified in the literature review and in the U.S. hospitality industry leadership research.[14] These three sources represent a recognized classic leadership study of current popular business thinking, and a unique approach to the subject of business leadership. A comparison of the three sources is presented in Table 1.

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Table 1
A Comparison of Essential Leadership Foundations

Essential Leadership Qualities	Leaders Bennis & Nanus	7 keys Labich	Attila Roberts
Vision	Attention through vision	Develop a vision	Anticipation
Communication	Meaning through communication	Simplify	Credibility
Trust	Trust through positioning	Trust your subordinates	Stewardship
Perseverance	Management of self	Keep your cool	Tenacity

The survey was mailed to 409 lodging industry leaders by the Japanese Management Association (JMA.) These leaders were selected based on membership in the Japan Hotel Association and the Japanese Management Association. Survey responses present an excellent opportunity for comparison to the general business leadership attributes identified via the literature review and earlier research. In addition, comparisons between Japanese and U.S. lodging leaders are of interest; however, this is not the focus of this article.

The mailing of 409 leadership surveys resulted in 53 (13 percent) usable responses; 85 percent of the companies led by respondents were publicly held; 11 percent were a subsidiary of a publicly-held company, and 4 percent were privately held. Management categories were similarly distributed, with 81 percent of the companies owning and managing their own hotels; 15 percent managing hotels owned by other concerns, and 4 percent franchised hotels.

The 1990 annual sales of presidents' and CEOs' companies ranged from 100 million to 450 billion yen and averaged 4 billion. The average number of total employees in these organizations was 4,364.

The sample consisted of 53 males. In terms of age, 11 percent of respondents were between 36 and 45 years of age; 21 percent were between 46 and 55 years old; 45 percent were between 56 and 65 years old; and 23 percent were 66 years of age or older.

All respondents were high school graduates; 11 percent had completed some college work or an associate's degree, 74 percent had earned a bachelor's degree, and 8 percent had completed some post-graduate work.

The leaders' hospitality industry experience averaged 14 years, with a range from one to 40 years. Additionally, respondents had been a president or CEO for an average of nine years, with a range from one to 40 years.

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Table 2
Qualities of Effective Leaders

Level of agreement	
5.1	have a strong personal value or belief system
5.1	know their strengths and nurture them
5.0	are best judged in extraordinary circumstances
5.0	provide a compelling message or vision
4.9	believe there is no such thing as failure, only "next steps"
4.9	recognize that the ability to adjust is a necessity
4.9	maintain precise desired outcomes
4.8	place a relatively significant emphasis on learning
4.8	provide appropriate information, resources, and support to allow employees to become "empowered."
4.7	make their desired outcomes tangible
4.7	listen as well as or better than they speak
4.7	do not surround themselves with people just like them
4.6	believe in informality to enhance communication
4.5	seek to create the circumstances they desire
4.5	seldom change their minds (people can know where they stand)
4.4	have strong family values
4.3	believe that trust, once lost, is irretrievable in a relationship
4.3	are excellent public speakers
4.3	emphasize quality over quantity
4.2	recognize that a company's "culture" is less important than the rational aspects of managing
4.1	have a good sense of humor
4.1	feel so good about their work that they create systems which facilitate rather than control
4.0	are inquisitive; they ask the best questions
3.3	encourage and reward risk taking

The survey included 24 questions which asked respondents to rate the importance of various leadership attributes which Bennis and Nanus had discussed in *Leaders* (Table 2). Using a scale from 6 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree), leaders either agreed or strongly agreed that four of these attributes were associated with leaders.

Leaders rated the most important attribute as a "strong personal value or belief system." They also placed high emphasis on qualities related to self awareness, vision and perseverance. Respondents also rated highly flexibility, precise desired outcomes, and placing an

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Table 3
Qualities Leaders Must Possess

Level of Agreement	
5.3	self-confidence
5.2	courage
5.2	anticipation
5.2	dependability
5.2	emotional stamina
5.1	tenacity
5.1	credibility
5.1	loyalty
5.1	competitiveness
5.0	responsibility
5.0	timing
4.9	stewardship
4.9	empathy
4.8	physical stamina
4.8	decisiveness
4.7	desire

emphasis on learning. Other attributes mentioned included "empowerment" of subordinates, making desired outcomes tangible, and listening.

Using the same six-point scale, our leaders agreed or strongly agreed that four of the seven keys to effective leadership included in the *Fortune* article were important to their leadership style: develop a vision, simplify, trust subordinates, and keep your cool. Three items — invite dissent, encourage risk, and be an expert — were rated below five on the five-point scale.

Hospitality educators and those involved in training and development within lodging organizations might be well advised to pay particular attention to respondents' opinions that "being perceived as an expert" is not as important as other leadership attributes. Management training programs and school curricula which do not stress, nor more strongly integrate critical thinking skills, interpersonal communication, ethics, and other areas related to the "important" attributes recommended by respondents may be missing an opportunity.

Qualities of Effective Leaders Analyzed

Questions were also asked based on 16 qualities of effective leaders according to *Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun*. Using a

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six-point scale, respondents agreed or strongly agreed that 11 of these 16 qualities are associated with effective leaders (Table 3). Qualities most often mentioned as important in leaders were self-confidence, courage, anticipation, dependability, and emotional stamina. Respondents rated the attributes tenacity, credibility, loyalty, and competitiveness just slightly less important.

Respondents did not agree strongly that desire was necessary in a leader. In addition, decisiveness and physical stamina were not as important as some of the other qualities in the survey.

Results indicated that 80 percent of those who strongly agreed that effective leaders maintain precise desired outcomes also believed that it is very important for leaders to simplify (significance: alpha=.00015). Precise desired outcomes with concentrated and clear intentions help leaders simplify. The end result is a big picture focus that helps set a course, then communicate and maintain it.

Of those who strongly agreed that effective leaders possess stewardship, 67 people also thought it very important for leaders to trust their subordinates, (significance: alpha=.00000). It appears that leaders who trust subordinates and believe in them also believe in practicing the caretaker quality of stewardship that encourages confidence, loyalty, and trust.

Additionally, 69 percent of those who strongly agreed that leaders must possess emotional stamina also strongly agreed that leaders should have strong personal values (significance: alpha=.00001). Leaders who agreed that emotional stamina and personal values are linked believe that a self-awareness and personal values are critical to effective leadership.

When asked the one piece of advice to give someone who wanted to be a leader like them, 62 percent of respondents replied. Advice offered indicates strong identification among the leaders with the attributes of effective leaders identified earlier; self-awareness, vision, communication, trust, and perseverance showed up frequently.

Leaders Stressed a Sense of Balance

Japanese lodging leaders advised others to "develop yourself constantly." They challenged future leaders to "increase your intelligence and develop a sense of responsibility and a sense of balance." While future leaders were advised to "have your own goals in life," they were cautioned to not be "too serious in everything. A sense of balance is important." One leader responded that "even under extraordinary circumstances, believe in yourself."

Many said that leadership is first, foremost, and always an inner quest. Leadership must start from within with a self-awareness and self-understanding. An analysis of self begins the leadership process and helps guide the outcomes.

Self-awareness is improved when the self evaluates the inner feelings, motivations, and desired outcomes as well as the feelings

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and perceptions of others. Most important, however, is the inner self, a knowledge of which drives leaders to commit to the vision and live it. Internalizing the vision is critical to the success of the efforts. Desired results are achieved when the desired outcomes are made tangible by example and being a role model.

The feelings and perceptions of others must be understood. This understanding leads to modifications in the leader's foundations as those relationships develop with others. Input from others is critical to a leader becoming effective with the group being led. In the hospitality industry, a variety of inputs come from staff members, guests, peers, and superiors.

Self-awareness also extends to the organization for the leader. This includes an analysis of the organization's strengths and weaknesses, its mission, culture, and value system. A leader must be aware of his desired outcomes while considering his resources and the competition. Organizational self-awareness includes a marketing analysis, systems and operational analysis, financial analysis, and, most importantly, a human resources analysis.

Japan's lodging leaders repeatedly remarked: "develop your own clear vision," "develop your own philosophy and beliefs," "have a dream and do not miss an opportunity," "look ahead," "and "be flexible to changes." It was suggested that, as part of vision, a leader must "develop a customer-oriented hospitality mind." Another critical part of vision was to "think in the long run." One leader advised others that "when you make an important decision, do it with a comprehensive view of the situation." Another said that it is important to "have an explicit objective to be achieved and endeavor to attain it. Without having an objective, we cannot achieve anything." One Japanese lodging leader stated that it is "critical to give a compelling vision or message to your staff."

Communication Skills Stressed

Comments from Japanese lodging leaders covered both verbal as well as nonverbal communications. It was suggested that opinions should be expressed explicitly. One leader advised to "keep your boss and subordinates well-informed"; another suggested that it was important to "maintain good communications with those surrounding you." An essential component of communication was reinforced by another leader who wrote: "maintain a good relationship not only with your bosses but also with your colleagues and subordinates." Other leaders advised that listening was a critical leadership trait. "Listen to others" and "listen to your subordinates and encourage them to develop their ideas" are comments that sum up the importance of listening. Remarks related to nonverbal communications included "keep smiling" and "set a good model for your subordinates." One Japanese leader summarized the importance of communication by writing "vitalize your organization's climate through better communication."

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Japanese lodging leaders' comments regarding trust could be applied to two distinct groups: customers and employees. Regarding customers, leaders wrote "make your company customer-oriented," "be sincere," and "enjoy yourself by keeping good relationships with others." Many of these comments also apply to relationships with employees. Specifically, the leaders advised future leaders to "give adequate consideration to subordinates," "develop subordinates as well as yourself," "be fair in dealing with your subordinates," "discover others' strong points and praise them," and "trust your subordinates."

One leader cautioned future leaders to not "be afraid of making any mistakes." Another suggested that a leader should help employees, take care of them, and motivate them. This leader further remarked "in dealing with them, be fair to everyone." The importance of trust was best summarized by the leader who wrote: "be a man of trust."

Comments from Japanese lodging leaders focused on completing a project and maintaining effective leadership, particularly under stressful conditions. One leader advised future leaders to "try to achieve your goals with unwavering confidence and with a hope for the future. By doing so, you can develop yourself into an effective leader." Another suggested that a leader should "try to understand the prime essential points in dealing with problem-solving" situations. Other leaders advised future leaders to "keep your cool" and be "considerate, cool, and decisive under extraordinary circumstances."

Leaders Can Build Their Own Skills

These comments suggest that future leaders can build their own individual skills in each of the following qualities: self-awareness, vision, communication, trust, and perseverance. Skill building should take place in both academic and industry settings. Classes can help leaders build and internalize the five qualities in a variety of ways. Through internships and work experiences, skills can help provide the best of both worlds and help develop the individual into an effective leader.

In terms of the importance of leadership at various levels within their own organizations, leaders agreed or strongly agreed that leadership is very important from the corporate level on down, including general managers and department heads. The level of agreement was highest at the general manager level, followed by corporate executives and department managers, and on down to regional managers, supervisors, and hourly workers.

Interestingly, respondents did not attach much importance to leadership at the line/hourly level. Perhaps industry leaders view these employees as "the followers" and leadership skills/attributes are expected to be developed as an individual rises through the organization. On the other hand, perhaps the way to develop future leaders is to facilitate leadership building in hourly workers. The question to those responsible for training and development within organizations is "What are we doing to foster leadership skills in the

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various levels within our organization?" It may be that too many organizations are spending too much time on technical information, "creating experts," rather than developing self-aware visionaries and communicators and those who persevere and earn trust.

The survey concluded with a section inviting respondents to share additional comments of their choice. The results of this section are best summarized by a direct quote from one of the respondents: "The traits of effective leaders will be affected by the needs and demands of the eras in which they belong. Therefore, we should be flexible to meet them."

This message was reinforced by Weinstein in *The Human Face of Japanese Leadership,* who wrote: "Their (Japanese leaders) values and actions are shaped by their belief about their historical heritage, and the future they are working to build is based on heritage... Probably the most remarkable qualities of the Meiji leaders were their practicality and the openness of their minds."[15] This message emphasizes the need for an historical connection to the future and the need for flexibility.

Based on our survey results, there is a strong correlation between five of the attributes of effective leaders identified via the literature review and the leadership qualities considered important by the sample of current Japanese lodging industry leaders.

Attributes related to self-awareness, vision, communication, trust, and perseverance consistently received the highest mean levels of agreement/importance based on the survey. Additionally, the open-ended question relative to advice for future leaders again revealed that qualities related to self-awareness, vision, communication, trust, and perseverance were considered very important to respondents.

The ability to understand oneself, develop and provide a compelling vision, earn and return trust, listen and communicate effectively, and persevere when most give up may, in fact, be the five foundations to effective leadership in the Japanese lodging industry. The importance of the survey results for present and future hospitality leaders should not be overlooked. Whether it be through formal education or management development programs, the sample of leaders suggested that anyone who aspires to lead others must develop these attributes. Schools and lodging organizations should strive to develop curricula and programs which allow for the teaching and modeling of these behaviors and mentoring to reinforce them.

Further research may serve to validate the findings for the Japanese hospitality industry. For example, the responses of CEOs and presidents of Japanese food service systems could be compared with this sample of lodging leaders. Similarities and differences could be discovered and discussed. Conclusions could be drawn for the Japanese hospitality industry as a whole. Additional research into the perception of leadership qualities by students in hospitality management programs could yield interesting comparisons

regarding perceptions of future hospitality industry leaders and realities of present hospitality leaders. Identification of the foundations of leadership in the Japanese hospitality industry will serve to help strengthen both industry as well as academic programs designed to develop leaders.

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