

Hospitality Review

Volume 22

Issue 2 *Hospitality Review* Volume 22/Issue 2

Article 5

1-1-2004

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Recommended Citation

Cichy, Ronald F.; Knutson, Bonnie J.; and Cha, Jaemin (2004) "The Five Essentials of Private Club Leadership," *Hospitality Review*: Vol. 22: Iss. 2, Article 5.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/hospitalityreview/vol22/iss2/5>

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The Five Essentials of Private Club Leadership

Abstract

The authors examine underlying dimensions of private club leadership using principal components analysis. The data were collected between 1996 and 2003 from 702 club managers or club chief operating officers who are members of the Club Managers Association of America (CMAA). Five factors - innovation, vision, inner values, stewardship, and communication - were identified as essentials of private club leadership.

The five essentials of private club leadership

by Ronald Cichy,
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A generally held view is that currently there is a lack of leadership in the world.¹ Leadership is what ordinary people use to bring forth the best from themselves and others. Leadership has been an important topic among leadership scholars and practitioners over the last several decades. Research has been examining underlying attributes, characteristics, and behaviors of successful leaders. In doing so, leadership has been defined in various ways and from different research directions. In particular, academic researchers have delineated various leadership

styles including charismatic, transactional, and transformational leadership, and have focused on which type of leadership style is effective in predicting performance outcomes.²

Authentic transformational leadership is a revised theory of transformational leadership, which emphasizes the leader's ethical and moral orientation.³ George characterizes authentic leaders as those who genuinely desire to serve and empower others rather than seeking power, money, or prestige for themselves.⁴ Along with authentic leaders, servant leadership,⁵ which puts other people's needs, aspirations, and interests above the leader's own, is an increasingly popular concept in the field. Three types of leadership behaviors – relation-oriented, task-oriented, and change-oriented – have been another approach to defining leadership.⁶

Hospitality leadership defined

Prior to 1990, research relating to leadership in the hospitality

industry was scarce. Since that time, however, numerous studies⁷ have been conducted in several segments of the hospitality industry. These studies describe qualities, keys and secrets of hospitality leaders in the lodging industry, non-commercial food service industry, commercial food service industry, and club industry. Several studies have focused on applying the theory of transformational leadership in the hospitality industry.⁸ These show that managers/top executives who exhibit transformational leadership behaviors are viewed as the most effective. Testa examined a disparity between the way employees view their leaders and the leaders' own view of themselves in the hospitality industry, and found that managers (leaders) gave themselves higher effectiveness scores than did their employees.⁹

Leadership is defined

A recent hospitality leadership study by Knutson, Schmidgall, and Cichy¹⁰ contributes to the hospitality leadership field in two ways. First, this study employed factor analysis to identify the underlying dimensions of leadership while other previous studies on hospitality leadership only relied on descriptive statistics. Second, this study focuses on women leaders when most studies have been based on male leaders. The authors identified seven leadership dimensions (perseverance, trust, inner values, responsibilities, stewardship, communication,

and vision) of women hospitality leaders.

The primary purpose of this study was to identify and examine the underlying dimensions of private club leadership, using procedures similar to those of the Knutson et al study.¹¹ In the private club environment, club chief operating officers and club managers must provide leadership for the club membership, board, and staff.

The survey instrument was constructed based on three original sources: 24 leadership qualities taken from the Bennis and Nanus classical leadership study, seven keys to business leadership adapted from Labich, and 16 secrets of business leadership from Roberts.¹² Using a six-point scale, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement from 1, strongly disagreed, to 6, strongly agreed for leadership qualities and secrets and the level of importance from 1, very unimportant, to 6, very important for leadership keys. Cichy and Schmidgall note that "three sources (leadership qualities, keys, and secrets) make a good survey basis because the Bennis and Nanus work is a classic leadership study, Labich's is a popular approach to business leadership, and Roberts offers an unusual treatment of business leadership."¹³

Participants in this study (total n = 702) were chief operating officers or club managers who were members of the Club Managers Association of America (CMAA). While attending the Business Management Institute III (BMI III)

at Michigan State University between 1996 and 2003, respondents were asked to complete a survey before they were exposed to a leadership session, so that their answers were not influenced by the contents of the presentations. Data were collected during three seminar sessions each of the seven years: April, September, and November. To ensure that these data from the seven years can be aggregated for further statistical analyses, the post-hoc Duncan test was used to check for any anomalies among years on scale items. This test also looked for any trend over these seven years.

Findings show that scale items are not different from each other over that period, and there is no particular pattern except for club annual total gross revenue, which increased over the years. The authors suggest this trend is the result of inflation. It should also be noted that items in leadership scales are rooted in human values, and the theory of human value or personal value theory¹⁴ indicates that human values are stable over time. Thus it is reasonable to aggregate all data from 1996 to 2003 to analyze the dimensions of overall private club leadership. Table 1 shows the characteristics of clubs and respondents.

The majority of the total clubs were member-owned (84.5 percent), compared to corporate-owned (9.0 percent). Overall, a majority of the total respondents were from golf/country clubs (82.0 percent) followed by city/athletic

clubs (10.2 percent), and yacht clubs (3.7 percent). Of the total, average annual total gross revenues were US\$4.8 million, with an average of 121 employees. The majority of respondents were male (84 percent). The average number of years as a club manager or COO in the club industry was 6.8 years. The age range of the majority of respondents was between 36 and 45 (45.1 percent), followed by 35 years or younger (33.6 percent), then by 46 to 55 (19.4 percent) years. The largest percentage of the respondents had an earned baccalaureate degree (48.4 percent), followed by 34.9 percent who had some college or associate degree, and by 12.8 percent who had done postgraduate work.

Factor analysis employed

Because the primary objective of the present study was to identify underlying dimensions of private club leadership, factor analysis was employed as the primary statistical technique. Factor analysis is intended to reduce a large number of variables to a smaller number of factors by grouping together variables that are correlated.¹⁵ Following the study procedures of Knutson et al, factor analysis was run on each set of the following: 24 qualities of effective leadership, seven keys to leadership, 16 secrets of leadership, and the combined set (47 items in total) of all three survey sets.¹⁶

To examine whether the data were appropriate for factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin

Table 1
Characteristics of clubs and respondents*

Type of ownership	
Member owned	84.5%
Corporate owned	9.0%
Other	6.4%
Type of club	
City / Athletic Club	10.2%
Golf / Country Club	82.0%
Yacht Club	3.7%
Other	4.0%
Annual total gross revenue (Average)	4.8 million
Number of employees	121.2
Education level	
High school or less	4.0%
Some college or associate (two-year) degree	34.9%
Baccalaureate (four-year) degree	48.4%
Post graduate work	12.8%
Number of years as a club manager or COO (Average)	6.8 years
Number of years in the club industry (Average)	11.9 years
Age	
35 years or younger	33.6%
36 – 45 years	45.1%
46 – 55 years	19.4%
55 – 65 years	1.9%
66 years or older	0.1%
Gender	
Male	83.9%
Female	16.1%

* Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

(KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test were used. For data to be appropriate for factor analysis, the KMO value should be higher than .50 and the chi-square value of Bartlett's test must be significant at the .05 level (Kim and Mueller, 1978). As shown in Table 2, the KMO statis-

tics for each scale were higher than the recommended .5, ranging from .76 to .92 and Bartlett's tests were all statistically significant at $p < .01$ level. These results certify that the sample can be subjected to factor analysis to uncover the underlying patterns of variables. See Table 2.

Table 2
Results of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's tests

	Bartlett	KMO	Chi-square (df)	Significance (p < .001)
Leadership qualities (Bennis & Nanus, 1985)	2341.780	0.816	276	p < .001
Keys to leadership (Labich, 1988)	601.943	0.760	21	p < .001
Secrets of leadership (Roberts, 1985)	2928.980	0.911	91	p < .001
Combined measures of leadership	7003.924	0.919	741	p < .001

Principal components analysis and Varimax rotation method were used to generate the factors. The criterion used for the number of factors to be extracted was an eigen value greater than 1. Factor loadings above .71 (50 percent variance) are considered excellent, .63 (40 percent) very good, .55 (30 percent) good, .45 (20 percent) fair, and .32 (10 percent of the variance) poor.¹⁷ Because this study is the first specifically designed to discover the dimensions of private club leadership, all variables that loaded at .40 level or above were retained. Cross-loading items were specifically examined to see in which factor they best fit. An alpha was calculated for each factor with and without that variable. If a factor's alpha score could be improved by removing any variable(s), that item was eliminated, and a new alpha score was computed. This process continued until no further improvement in alpha scores could be made on each individual factor.

Four scales evaluated

To determine the basis for identifying the underlying dimensions of private club leadership, the authors evaluated four types of leadership scales, using three criteria: interpretability of factors, percentage of variance explained, and range of alpha scores. Table 3 shows the summary of factor dimensions for the four leadership scales examined: Bennis and Nanus, Labich, Roberts, and one formed by combining these three scales. See Table 3.

The scale of leadership qualities adapted from Bennis and Nanus¹⁸ produced factors that are more readily interpretable than the other three. Factor solutions that do not make sense in the field of study are meaningless; even obtained factors show adequate percentage of variance explained and range of alpha scores.¹⁹ It is important for researchers to ensure clear interpretability of obtained factors as prerequisite

Table 3
Summary of factor dimensions

	Number of initial items	Number of final items	Number of factors	Range of alpha scores	Percent of variance explained
Leadership qualities (Bennis & Nanus, 1985)	24	17	5	.53 to .64	52.3
Keys to leadership (Labich, 1988)	7	7	2	.31 to .67	49.2
Secrets of leadership (Roberts, 1985)	16	14	2	.70 to .84	46.2
Combined measures of leadership	47	39	8	.46 to .87	49.0

condition. In this sense, although the range of alpha scores for leadership secrets adapted from Roberts²⁰ was highest among all scales, this scale was not chosen as the best scale by which to identify dimensions of private club leadership because it suffers from unclear interpretability and also because it shows the lowest percentage of variance explained. A scale of keys to leadership adapted from Labich²¹ was not selected as the best scale by which to identify dimensions of private club leadership because this scale shows the lowest range of alpha scores among all, besides the problem of interpretability. It also should be noted that keys to leadership originally included seven items, based on annotated notes from business leaders.

The choice of the scale of leadership qualities from Bennis and Nanus²² was reinforced because this scale shows the highest percentage of variance explained (52 percent),

compared to the other three (49 percent, 46 percent and 49 percent for leadership keys, secrets, and combined set). When the scale of leadership qualities was compared to the combined set, this finding is noticeable because the numbers of items for the combined set (revised to 39 items) is more than double the number of leadership qualities (17 revised items). This result indicates that the 17 items of leadership qualities is a parsimonious measure of private club leadership, compared to the 39 items of the combined set.

Therefore, the authors selected the scale of leadership qualities adapted from Bennis and Nanus²³ as the basis for identifying the underlying dimensions. This finding differs from that of Knutson et al.²⁴, which found that the combined set produced the highest range of alpha scores and explained the largest percentage of variance when they used the sample of women financial executives. While

Table 4
Factors of leadership quality for leaders

Items	Factors				
	1	2	3	4	5
Emphasize quality over quantity.	0.70				
Place a relatively significant emphasis on learning.	0.62				
Encourage and reward risk taking.	0.61				
Surround themselves with people who are not like them.	0.58				
Don't change their minds often.	0.57				
Maintain precise desired outcomes.		0.71			
Provide a compelling message or vision.		0.69			
Have a strong personal value or belief system.		0.50			
Have strong family values.			0.76		
Have a good sense of humor.			0.71		
Know their strengths and nurture them.			0.48		
Believe there is no such thing as failure, only "next steps"; mistakes are, in fact, opportunities.				0.62	
Provide appropriate information, resources and support to allow employees to become empowered.				0.50	
Are excellent public speakers.					0.77
Are inquisitive; they ask the best questions.					0.71
Extra Method: Principal Component Analysis Rotation					
Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization					
Variance explained: 52%					
Alpha	0.63	0.64	0.61	0.53	0.53

the study by Knutson et al.²⁵ uncovered eight dimensions of women hospitality leaders based on the combined set, this present study supports five dimensions of private club leadership based on a scale of leadership qualities taken from Bennis and Nanus²⁶. These differences can be attributed to differences in sample characteristics of each study. Knutson et al.'s research²⁷ only studies female members of the Hospitality Finan-

cial and Technology Professionals, while the authors studied both male and female club managers or club chief operating officers (females = 16 percent). The level of importance placed on any one attribute is likely to be different based on such elements as industry segments, gender, time of data collection, and economic situation.

As demonstrated in Table 4, on the basis of the scale of leadership qualities adapted from Bennis and

Nanus²⁸, five factors, which accounted for 52 percent of the total variance of the revised 17 variables, were identified. See Table 4.

Innovation is important

The first factor is termed “innovation.” Innovative leaders exhibit similar characteristics or behaviors of what change-oriented leadership presents.²⁹ Change-oriented leadership implies leaders’ qualities that continuously make progress for advancement. This factor includes the items that leaders focus on quality over quantity and place a relatively significant emphasis on learning. These are prerequisites for leaders to make progress to the future.

An important characteristic of innovative leaders is that they experiment with new things. They are unafraid of trying or adopting new methods and practices of business, and they do not penalize staff members for taking risks, but rather encourage and reward risk taking. Effective leaders should be ready and willing to change direction when necessary. They do so by not surrounding themselves with people closely similar to or exactly like themselves. One of the important aspects of transformational leaders is that these leaders stimulate their subordinates by presenting them with challenging new ideas and different ways to tackle old problems.³⁰ Club leaders must embrace local, regional, national, and global changes in the club industry, and always find ways to improve business practices and

effectiveness at their individual private clubs. Effective leaders should have creative thinking and flexible planning.³¹

Vision is essential

The second factor, “vision,” is one of the four foundations of leadership discovered and reinforced in various research conducted by Cichy and his colleagues. Bill Marriott defined the essence of carrying through with a vision: “Leadership is having a vision first, and then communicating that vision.”³² Club leaders provide a compelling vision to staff members. The vision must be present in all the decisions of the leaders. This factor also includes the item, “maintain precise desired outcomes,” an important aspect of a compelling vision because many managers do not succeed well or even sufficiently in connecting vision to the striving for and reaching of actual tangible outcomes. Tangible outcomes are those that people can see and touch before they even exist. They seem real despite the fact that they exist only in the minds and hearts of those who dream of achieving the outcomes.

For example, if the club organization’s vision is to deliver the highest service quality experience to club members, staff members should be directed to an understanding of the ways in which such a vision may be made real and actually accomplished. Beyond this, club leaders should provide staff members with the tools to measure club members’ satisfac-

tion. Effective club leaders make sure that staff members clearly understand expectations and how they can reach their goals to produce desired outcomes for their club organizations.

Most importantly, effective club leaders should not impose the company's vision on staff members, but rather should allow staff members to have a shared vision with the values of the organization. Effective leaders know that it is the power of the shared vision that creates the desired outcome. They understand that the shared vision comes from individual personal visions combined and strengthened through synergy.

Quality improvements are a part of each person's responsibility daily in an organization that has a vision of providing its customers (club members and staff members) with the level of quality that meets their requirements and exceeds their expectations. All of these individuals end up communicating the message of quality and "being" the vision for improving quality.

Inner values are emphasized

The third factor is labeled "inner values." Leadership is first, foremost, and always an inner quest. Before leaders lead others, they must first understand themselves and lead themselves. Values tend to act as guiding principles for individuals and organizations. Self-knowledge is a combination of knowing and being true to self and being loyal to personal values and unwilling to compromise their prin-

ciples. People wish to follow someone who knows where he or she is going. The Hindus have a saying: "If you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there." To know their strengths, leaders regularly ponder a number of questions about their leadership vision and values: What are my personal values? What is my vision? What is my vision for me as a person? What is my vision for my family? What is my vision for the relationships I am nurturing and strengthening? What is my vision for the organization in which I am a leader? What is my vision for my life in this decade? Where am I going?

Club leaders also have strong family values and a good sense of humor. By recognizing strengths and building on them and identifying weaknesses and working to overcome them, self-confidence emerges. Club leaders must instill this confidence in their families and organizations and other people to strive to be the best that they can become in service of others, family members, and club members.

Leaders inspire

The fourth factor is called "stewardship." Effective club leaders regularly provide relevant information, resources, and support to help staff members become empowered. Being a leader means being able to encourage and inspire followers – in this example, followers are staff members. A recent Bennis and Thomas leadership book³³ points out that "when you are the leader, you have to remember that you work for

them, not the other way around.”

Empowerment occurs when information is shared, resources are made available to help all contribute to the shared vision, and all are supported in their efforts. Leaders believe that the way to get what they want is first to help others get what they want. One of the results of empowerment is an increase in the competence of staff members. Club leaders support their staff members and the staff members in turn support the values and vision of the club organization. This factor also includes an item, “Believe there is no such thing as failure, only next steps; mistakes are in fact opportunities.” Leaders support others and they do not punish others for making mistakes. Mistakes are opportunities for all to learn and grow.

The transformational component “individual consideration” also emphasizes that leaders should pay special attention to the achievement and development needs of their subordinates (staff members).³⁴ Effective club leaders should help staff members improve performance by coaching (short-term strategy) and / or mentoring (long-term strategy). Leaders foster an organizational culture that invites people to believe that they, and not the leader, are the key to achieving the shared vision. Club leaders should have the capability to let their people do their jobs and help them fulfill their responsibilities. Clubs are highly service-oriented organizations and, in that sense, club leaders’ roles are to motivate

and encourage others to make staff members to feel that they contribute importantly to the organization.³⁵

Communication is key

The fifth factor, “communication,” is one of four foundations of leadership previously identified by Cichy and his colleagues. Communication is the key to leading a team on a successful path toward a shared vision. Without communication, a leader cannot build trust or a shared vision or persevere in the journey. The more leaders learn about effective leadership, the better they will be able to communicate with others. Knutson et al.’s study also identified communication as one of the dimensions of women hospitality leaders. Knutson et al. observed that “communication is a two-way street. Most importantly, communication is active listening and asking the best questions.”³⁶ Thus, both the listening and the speaking dimensions of communication should be emphasized in private club leadership.

Club leaders must listen to the needs and ideas and support the associates of the organization. They know that the associates often see and feel what is not seen or felt by the leader because associates are more frequently in close contact with the club’s members. Leaders must listen to the members that the organization serves, as well as to the people in the organization who serve the members. Club leaders should listen to understand the

views of others so they can learn from others.

More research is necessary

What constitutes elements of leadership is an ongoing debate. The main purpose of this study was to determine underlying dimensions of private club leaders. The authors believe it to be the first to identify such dimensions in this industry. To that end, this study evaluated four types of leadership scales followed by Knutson et al.'s procedure³⁸, and found that the revised scale of leadership qualities (17 items) taken from Bennis and Nanus³⁹ best described dimensions of private club leaders. Principal components analysis with Varimax rotation method indicated that private club leaders have five underlying dimensions such as innovation, vision, inner values, stewardship, and communication. The authors also believe that current private club leaders are most likely to possess leadership qualities and characteristics associated with these five essentials.

Current and future club industry leaders should pay attention to these identified five dimensions. Elements such as communication skills, articulating vision, and creating shared vision can be enhanced and developed through formal education, training, and organizational management programs. Through mentoring programs, leaders can develop trusting relationships with their staff members (employees), and can reinforce the importance of stewardship.

Limitations of the current study should be noted. First, future researchers need to consider modifying the scales to capture other relevant dimensions of private club leadership to increase the percent of variance explained and improve factor reliability scores. Findings show that the identified five dimensions of private club leadership – innovation, vision, inner values, stewardship, and communication – accounted for only 52 percent of the total variance of the revised scale of leadership qualities. This result indicates that it may be necessary to include other dimensions to define private club leadership. For example, Kouzes and Posner emphasize that credibility is the foundation of leadership, and that credibility comprises integrity, honesty, forward looking, and confidence.³⁹ Future study requires that a scale of leadership qualities can be expanded with added items (such as items for credibility) to present a broader view of leadership dimensions in the club industry. In doing so, the evaluation of reliability should be reexamined.

Second, the five dimensions obtained from the study are based on self-perception of club leaders, not including staff members' perceptions. Past research has shown that in hospitality organizations there may be disparity between how staff members view their leaders and how leaders perceive themselves. For example, Testa⁴⁰ assessed perceptions of leadership quality and effectiveness from both supervisors and subordi-

nates, and found that supervisors/managers tended to give themselves higher effectiveness scores than did their employees. Thus, the authors recommend that future research utilize multi-rater tools to measure leadership characteristics and behaviors.

Third, this study was limited to the explorative of dimensions of private club leaders, without linking these dimensions with outcome variables. It will be important to discern the relationship between these identified dimensions and desired outcome variables (e.g., job commitment and job performance). Future research can determine which dimension plays the most important role in predicting positive outcome, assessed from both leaders' and followers' (staff members') perspectives. Furthermore, future research on how organizational variables such as organizational culture and climate influence one's level of leadership styles may contribute to understanding in this field.

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