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Christine Lynn

Northern Arizona University, null@nau.edu

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Training Methods Utilized by Independent Restaurant Managers

Abstract

Formal, systematic training has always been cited as a major need for the future success of hospitality operations. However, one other aspect of the job might be the development of a train-the-trainer curriculum for hospitality management students. The author studies the relationship between training preparation and training methods utilized by restaurant managers and explores this need.

Keywords

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by
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Formal, systematic training has always been cited as a major need for the future success of hospitality operations. However, one other aspect of the job might be the development of a train-the-trainer curriculum for hospitality management students. The author studies the relationship between training preparation and training methods utilized by restaurant managers and explores this need.

University hospitality management programs are graduating technically skilled potential hospitality managers or supervisors. A graduate of most hospitality management programs can design a restaurant, create a menu, secure funds for a restaurant, market the restaurant, purchase the food and supplies, prepare the food, serve the food, clean the restaurant, and balance the books.

Most graduates, however, are not single-handedly operating restaurants. Rather, they are working as managers, and their major responsibilities include directing and instructing others in the functions of the operation. Students at universities are educated and trained to perform all the jobs of the employees they will manage; however, they may not be receiving adequate training for jobs that they will actually be doing, that is, teaching and supervising employees.¹

Subject matter expertise is important in the hospitality industry,² and students are usually prepared adequately in this area. However, being able to perform a particular job is different from being able to train someone to do that particular job.³

The hospitality industry, already experiencing high employee turnover⁴ and poor quality service,⁵ is facing the prospect of fewer, less qualified people from which to choose⁶ for many new jobs which require increased skills.⁷ Management of a more culturally diverse staff requires excellent interpersonal and communication skills and more involvement in teaching, training, and motivating staff.⁸

Formal, systematic training for service positions has been shown to increase productivity and job satisfaction and reduce turnover, yet the use of formal, systematic training in the hospitality industry is almost nonexistent.⁹ Managers may not be effectively training their employees because they were never trained, and they do not know how to train.¹⁰ Previous research has suggested that the lack of formal, systematic training in many hospitality operations may be due, in part, to the absence of train-the-trainer training programs.¹¹

Hospitality management program curriculum designers develop and include courses in their programs based on identified needs. The need for the development of a train-the-trainer curriculum for hospitality management students can be ascertained by studying the relationship between training preparation (e.g., coursework) and training methods utilized by restaurant managers and supervisors. Strong positive relationships between the use of formal, systematic training methods, training attitudes, previous training, and other significant variables may suggest a need for inclusion of train-the-trainer coursework in hospitality management programs.

It has been suggested that managers who have not been formally trained and who have not had coursework in "how-to-train" are unable to effectively train their employees.¹²

Managers Must Become Experts

The hospitality industry has traditionally relied on teenagers to fill many of its entry level positions.¹³ Further, many hospitality managers were promoted from the ranks and learned management practices from senior managers. The hospitality industry has annual turnover rate percentages in the hundreds.¹⁴ In the past, however, poorly trained employees could easily be replaced because an abundance of cheap, unskilled labor allowed poor management practices to survive.

The nation's workforce is aging. By the year 2030, the over-65 segment of the population will double the 1986 population percentage to 21 percent.¹⁵ Four to five million fewer young people in 1990 were expected to be available for entry level jobs than in 1980.¹⁶

Future trends indicate that students today can expect to change jobs several times in their lifetimes.¹⁷ Specific skills that students learn in school may be obsolete in the future.¹⁸ As technology advances, entry level jobs will require increased skills and flexibility. Service industries will create most of the new jobs in the coming decade, and these new jobs in the service industries will demand much higher skill levels.¹⁹ Future success, therefore, will require managers to be experts in training.²⁰

Training in the hospitality industry is most often delivered by a worker experienced at the job he or she is trying to teach.²¹

Therefore, an experienced cook trains a novice cook. Cooking and teaching are not the same and require very different skills; however, it would be difficult to teach cooking without having subject matter expertise. Training has proven to be a cost-effective and cost-beneficial solution for the hospitality industry's problems,²² yet the industry is often relegating training to people who may never have experienced effective training and who have never received instruction in how-to-train.

Coursework in Training Is Rarely Required

University hospitality management programs are becoming more prevalent because of the shift from a manufacturing to a service industry economic base. Train-the-trainer coursework is rarely required in university hospitality management programs. If future industry success will require managers to be expert in training,²³ perhaps hospitality management programs should be preparing their students to design and implement effective training strategies.

Corporations in the manufacturing sector have begun to understand the direct and indirect benefits of training²⁴ and view training as cost-effective capital expenditures.²⁵ Successful companies are utilizing the expertise of professionals to design and implement their training programs rather than relying on ineffective, costly, amateur attempts.²⁶

The hospitality industry is confronted with several problems. Formal, systematic training programs are necessary to solve many of the personnel-related problems. However, before training programs can begin to positively affect employee turnover, quality of service, employee morale, productivity rates, and profits, managers must become more aware that training is essential, and must learn what is involved in training. Essentially, managers must be adequately trained to effectively train their employees.

National Sample of Managers Were Interviewed

A structured telephone interview instrument was developed, pilot-tested, and administered to a national sample of 50 randomly-selected managers from a population of 7,185 independent restaurants with annual sales of \$1 million or more. Of those 50, 43 agreed to participate. Open-ended items to get broader responses were posed when the respondent indicated a willingness to respond beyond the minimum required in the structured telephone interview instrument.

The 25 structured items on the telephone interview instrument were coded and analyzed using SAS statistical programs. Frequency distributions of responses were generated. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated to describe the direction and strength of the relationships between the variables. A correlation coefficient matrix was constructed to

illustrate the relationships between the two variables. Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha was calculated to determine the internal consistency reliability of the instrument. The data were also examined in regard to statistical and practical significance differences.

Upon completion of all interviews, the qualitative data were typed and identified by code numbers. The constant comparative method as defined by Glaser and Strauss²⁷ was used to analyze the qualitative interview data. The use of both quantitative and qualitative methods expands and enriches the data and allows for triangulation which increases the credibility of the results.²⁸

A number of conclusions were drawn as follows from the interviews:

- Relationships between training attitudes held by restaurant managers and previous training coursework were very weak. ($r = -.46$ to $.26$, when 1.00 is a perfect correlation.)
- Relationships between the methods of training utilized by managers and previous training coursework appeared to be very weak. ($r = .10$ to $.21$).
- There was a moderate, statistically significant relationship ($r = .50$) between the training experienced by managers and the methods used in training their employees.
- Experience, gender, location, type of restaurant, or educational level have little relationship with the type of training strategies utilized.
- The profile of the independent restaurant managers in this study was consistent with the traditional industry profile: promoted from the ranks and trained for management by managers who were promoted from the ranks.

Formal Training Is More Effective

It has been determined that formal training is more effective than informal training.²⁹ It has been determined that formal training is a learned skill, and managers must be taught how to train to be able to train.³⁰ This study was ultimately concerned with how managers should be taught to train, who should teach them, and when and where they should be taught.

University hospitality program curriculum designers may not feel compelled to design and include courses on "how-to-train." The results of the interviews indicate that there is little or no relationship between experiencing a college course in "how-to-train" and using formal, systematic training strategies for training employees. The results may seem to suggest that to deliver courses in "how-to-train" may have limited benefits. However, the benefits of training education have been well established.³¹

Table 1
Relationships Between Training Methods and
College Training Coursework and Non-college
Training Coursework

Methods	College Course	Non-college Course
Do you currently use a formal or informal training strategy to train your employees?	.15	.19
When designing your training program, do you begin with a formal needs assessment?	.10	.21
Do you evaluate the adequacy, quality, and effectiveness of your training program?	.11	.10

*Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

This study, like most studies, had several practical limitations that limit the extent to which the results can be generalized. Methodological flaws, however, may account for findings that appear to disconfirm the literature. The estimated internal consistency reliability of the instrument was Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha = .59. Inclusion of additional items or a redefinition of the parameters of the population to include corporate restaurants along with independent restaurants may have increased the reliability estimate.

Restricting the population to independent restaurants resulted in a homogeneous sample and a smaller spread of item responses. Too few of the respondents experienced training coursework, and there was much agreement within the sample. The instrument failed to ascertain the precise content of the "how-to-train" courses taken by respondents and, therefore, it is difficult to determine the impact of these courses and to determine the relationships if a limited number of managers experienced formal training courses.

Results shown on Table 2 indicate a moderately strong relationship between the type of training managers received and the type of training strategy managers utilize to train their employees. Managers who were formally trained, formally trained their employees. That experience influences behavior. Restaurant

Table 2
Relationship Between Training Experienced
and Training Methods

Methods	Training Experienced
Do you currently use a formal or informal training strategy to train your employees?	.50*
When designing your training program, do you begin with a needs assessment?	.15
Do you evaluate the adequacy, quality, and effectiveness of your training program?	.30

*Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

operators might be advised to train new managers carefully, understanding that these managers may then deliver a similar quality training to employees under their supervision.

Restaurant managers are very busy people and were rarely interviewed without interruption. Time and generalizability limitations could be reduced if a representative sample was chosen for in-depth telephone or personal interviews using a structured interview schedule and conducted away from the restaurant.

Populations for future studies should be broadened to include managers from both independent and corporate restaurants. By limiting the population and sample, responses may be too similar and result in very weak correlations and a low internal consistency reliability estimate.

An applications-based, hands-on course in "how-to-train" should be developed and tested experimentally with hospitality students. A course more closely resembling training might affect later training strategies.

The literature has cited formal, systematic training as a major need for the future success of hospitality operations.³² It also emphasizes the need for train-the-trainer coursework.³³ Hospitality management graduates must be prepared in all the areas necessary for success in the hospitality industry.

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Christine Lynn is an associate professor in the School of Hotel and Restaurant Management at Northern Arizona University.