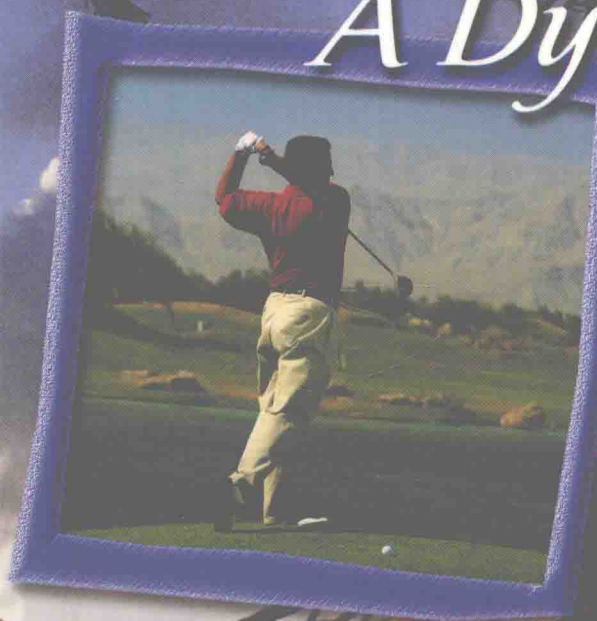


The Hospitality Industry

A Dynamic Experience



Brian Miller

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A DYNAMIC EXPERIENCE



Brian Miller

University of Massachusetts Amherst



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Careers in the Hospitality Industry

**Charles R. Adams
Lynn M. Huffman
Linda A. Raley**

The hospitality industry has a long history of providing meaningful employment in a variety of career fields. From simple inns providing shelter and safety to the earliest travelers, to modern tourism destination management, to food service in space, a career in hospitality offers a rewarding professional future. According to the Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education (CHRIE), the hospitality industry is comprised of four major career fields: food, lodging, tourism, and recreation. These career tracks take very different directions but have a similar mission and history—serving the guest.¹ Within each of these groups, there are many diverse and exciting career opportunities. Some jobs at the entry level require no experience and no particular preparation. A strong work ethic and a desire to learn are all that are needed. However, employment in technical, supervisory, and managerial positions typically require more experience and an academic background. Two-year and four-year hospitality programs have been designed to provide the preparation needed to enter these higher level jobs. Examples of managerial positions in the hospitality industry are presented in Table 1.1. The remainder of this chapter will discuss techniques and ideas for securing and keeping a job in the hospitality industry.

WHAT TO DO NOW, SO YOU CAN BE READY THEN

Getting Started

When you enter college and begin the study of hospitality, you must consider what direction your career should take within the field. Hospitality offers a wide variety of opportunities in restaurants, lodging, casinos, city/country clubs, cruise lines, theme parks, meeting planning, tourism bureaus, and sales.

As America's economy becomes increasingly service-oriented, employers outside the field are also looking to hospitality graduates to fill entry-level management positions. The first question that you must answer is, "What path do I want my career to take?" Talking to hospitality professionals, other students, and professors is a good way to answer your questions about possible career paths, as well as finding out what you should do to prepare yourself to be a marketable professional upon graduation.

Your second task is to write a professional, quality resume early in your first year in the hospitality program. Writing a resume forces you to ask hard questions about what you have done, what you have yet to do, and where you want to go from here. It will also give mentors a much better idea of how to assist you with your career development. A resume serves to outline your education, work history, activities, and accomplishments as they relate to your professional goals in hospitality. It is a personal statement about what you have done and where you are going. You may be asking yourself, "How am I going to write a resume if I have little or no experience?" Everyone has done things that can be put into a resume, and everyone has had to start somewhere.

Think of your resume as the tool that will help you obtain part time jobs, internships, summer work, scholarships, and additional educational experiences. It will highlight your accomplishments and the areas where you still need experience. As you develop your hospitality skills, your resume will develop right along with you. It is a document that is never finished and must be regularly updated throughout your career. A current resume will always assist you as you move toward your career goals.

There are only a few rules for writing a resume, but following these rules are critical to your success:

Table 1.1 Examples of Career Titles in Hospitality Management

General Manager (GM)
District Manager (DM)
Regional Manager (RM)
Human Resources Director
Casino Manager
Attractions Manager
Cruise Director
Theme Park Manager
Travel Agency Manager
Rental Car Agency Manager
Country Club Manager
Athletic Activities Manager
Marina Manager
Banquet Manager
Restaurant Manager
Dining Room Manager
Catering Manager
Food Service Director
Food and Beverage Analyst
Food/Beverage Controller
Chef—all levels
Purchasing Agent
Executive Housekeeper
Executive Steward
Guest Services Manager
Front Office Manager
Reservations Manager
Rooms Division Manager
Controller/Auditor
Sales/Marketing Manager
Convention Manager
Convention Services Director

1) Always do your resume yourself. Otherwise, you will continuously be paying someone else to update your resume. Paying writers is expensive, and places you at the mercy of other people's schedules. Opportunities often arise at the strangest times. It is best to always be prepared. 2) There can be no mistakes. This is the one document that has to be perfect! Recruiters and prospective employers will often discard resumes that contain even small mistakes. 3) Your resume **MUST** be concise and no longer than one page. (The only exception to a one-page resume is a person with 10+ years of industry management experience who may utilize a two-page resume.) People who read resumes usually read hundreds of them and tend to only spend about thirty seconds on the first look at a resume. For that reason, a resume should be easy to read, well organized, and contain specific information that helps

market your abilities to the reader. 4) Remember that this is your resume. There are numerous people and resources available to assist you. Ask faculty, campus placement services, or current employers for advice. Each may have a differing opinion or a favorite resume style. Their contributions are important, but you are the one that has to decide what information should be included as well as the best way to present that information.

Filling the Gaps

It is significant to remember that as a hospitality student, part of your education involves working in the hospitality field while you are attending college. Work experience should not be chosen randomly as merely a means to earn money. A solid record of employment in a particular area is more meaningful than a random patchwork of varied experiences. Experience should reflect desire. It is important to have work experience in the area in which you hope to start your career. Hospitality businesses have a variety of "foundation skills" that a person must master to be competitive as a manager. Restaurateurs have all had to bartend, cook, wait tables, wash dishes, expedite, or bus tables as the result of someone quitting or not reporting to work. Lodging professionals perform a wide variety of management duties including front desk, housekeeping, banquets and catering, accounting, food and beverage, and sales. Acquiring a working knowledge of these positions and having an appreciation for each position's importance should be the goal of your college work experience. Recruiters look for managers whose experience is reflected in their career goals. Getting experience during college in one area of hospitality and then suddenly wanting to do something different upon graduation raises a red flag with recruiters. Experience reflecting desire demonstrates your understanding, commitment, and sustained interest in a particular area of hospitality.

Getting the Job

Your senior year is the time to begin interviewing in preparation for starting your career. One of the first items of business is to make sure that you understand the importance of a conservative appearance and an investment in clothes for your interviews. Hospitality professionals are judged based upon their appearance by customers and employers who are acutely aware of the role appearance plays in customers' perceptions. Recruiters will spend only about a half-hour to an hour

interviewing you, but they will start forming an opinion from the first moment that they see you. Your appearance and behavior will determine how other people view you and the seriousness of your job search. Conveying a professional appearance is something that you need to work on during your last year of college. Professionalism is not something that you decide to acquire overnight. Grooming and appearance are things that you have to work at and develop. Often, the interview process itself includes attending dinners, presentations, and meeting industry professionals in an informal setting. A conservative and well-manicured look will give you a great deal of added confidence in the job search process.

Two very significant parts of preparing to interview are focus and frequency. Focusing involves being dedicated to and patient with the job search process, knowing your basic career expectations, researching companies, and customizing your resume. Frequency requires setting aside the time to do multiple interviews. This requires that you take a course load your last semester that will allow you to attend presentations, career fairs, and to interview. A common mistake of graduating seniors is to take a heavy load in order to graduate. Though this may seem necessary, such students simply cheat themselves. Carefully choosing the right company requires time, thought, and several interviews. The process is never easy but is critical to a successful job search.

In order to interview effectively, you must know what you want from your career. Ask yourself, "What is the *one non-negotiable* item upon which I will base my first career choice?" Your non-negotiable item is the one thing that you **MUST** have to be happy in a job. Examples of non-negotiable items might include salary, quality of life, where you want to live, number of hours you want to work, or even your spouse's career. Identifying the one thing that is most important to you will help match yourself with compatible companies.

Determining which organizations match your interests requires researching companies. Research can be done by using the Internet, library, placement office, or visiting the business and talking with industry professionals. Researching companies will provide you with basic information about the company. During an interview it will prompt you to ask intelligent questions. You should have a list of three to five specific questions about a company ready before you start an interview.

Remember to take one final hard look at your resume before you start the interviewing process. Ask yourself if your resume matches your skills and abilities with the needs of the companies with which you will be

interviewing. An important consideration would be to prepare two or three versions of your resume tailored to fit a particular company or segment of the industry. Be assured, no work history is perfect. It is important to look for the weak spots in your resume, as every resume has them. There may be a job that you left after a short period of time, or your experience may not directly apply to the job you want. Be prepared to explain questionable areas on your resume. It is important to be honest, so think about positive answers to possible negative questions that may be asked in the interview.

Graduating seniors are usually frightened about their first interview, largely because they don't know what to expect. Part of your job search strategy should be to pick two or three companies that are secondary on your "potential employer list" to interview with first for practice. As you interview with these first companies, you will become more familiar with the process, and your skills will improve. Recruiters use the first interview to determine if you are a possible management candidate. Their intent is to determine your level of desire to work for their company along with your potential for success. They are going to focus on your experience, flexibility, positive attitude, and enthusiasm. Experience is definitely important, but it is not the only element for success. Being flexible about relocation and being able to travel make you a much more appealing candidate. A positive attitude is critical to a successful interview. A good rule is to avoid negative comments in an interview. Conveying a genuine, enthusiastic desire to work for a company is vital. If a choice must be made between experience and enthusiasm, most recruiters will take enthusiasm. It is that important!

First interviews are usually unstructured, and recruiters will use the time to ask you questions that acquaint them with you. Although there is no way to know exactly what questions a company will ask, it is important to find examples of common interview questions and practice them aloud prior to interviewing. Acquainting yourself with these questions will help you recall experiences from your past and allow you to be more specific in answering questions. Practicing questions aloud will improve your confidence and reduce your anxiety about interviewing.

Upon successful completion of a first interview, you may be invited for a second interview. Second interviews may be done by phone or in person, but in either case, this is where the tone gets more serious and the questions get tougher. Phone interviews differ greatly from a face-to-face interview because the interviewee

is more susceptible to distractions. It is important to eliminate distractions so that you can concentrate exclusively on the phone. Also, since the interviewer can't see you, it is even more important to carry enthusiasm in your words. Second interviews in person may take on a very different form as well. Interviewers may ask you talk to several people, take a personality profile test, or even work for a day (job preview). Personality profile tests are usually designed to see how closely your traits match those of successful managers in the company. A job preview allows you to work with a manager and have your performance evaluated. This part of the interview process gives you the opportunity to really promote yourself by showing the company what you can do. It is also a good time for you to take a look around and see if this is where you want to start your career. Remember that you should evaluate the company's fit for you, as much as the recruiter is evaluating you for the company.

Follow-up thank you letters are very important, yet are frequently neglected. Make sure that you get the interviewer's business card during the interview and write a thank you letter the same day. Most recruiters enjoy getting a personalized, handwritten card that thanks them for their time and emphasizes your interest in the company. The card is another opportunity to remind the recruiter of who you are and to convey your seriousness about getting the job.

There is no period of time that is more uncertain or nerve-racking for a graduating senior than when the interviews are over. Most companies will respond within two weeks of the final interview to let you know where you stand. If a company is going to extend you an offer, they will usually do it verbally, but they should always follow up the offer in writing. The written formal offer will discuss the position, salary, location, and starting date. It will also include a date of acceptance. (If you need a time extension, you should contact the company and explain to them why you need more time to consider the offer.) When you accept or decline an offer, do it in writing. Remember also that if you turn a company down, you cannot expect them to make the offer again. Your decision is important and should be final. A big mistake made by graduating seniors is to accept an offer as insurance with the plan to turn it down if something better comes along. Imagine the negative impression this leaves with recruiters about you and your school. Your actions reflect on all the graduates who follow you!

I GOT THE JOB! NOW WHAT?

What You Will Enjoy

Once you go to work in the hospitality industry, many things about your job will be rewarding and exciting. Job variety, an interesting work environment, working with people, and high levels of responsibility are part of the exhilarating world of hospitality.

Regardless of what segment of the hospitality industry you have chosen, you will be working in a dynamic, busy environment. The immediacy of all activities will demand your concentration and best efforts. Each day, guests need to efficiently check in and out of a hotel. Food must be served in a timely and appealing manner in a restaurant. Reservations must be coordinated for transportation and lodging in a travel agency. Tournaments are to be scheduled and run for country club members. Details of meetings must be finalized at a convention center. And a myriad of other activities must be completed. This hectic, chaotic, and totally engrossing industry offers such a variety of activities that you will never be bored.

The atmosphere of the hospitality industry provides an interesting work environment. Some positions are considered glamorous. Working at the front-desk at a first-class hotel, supervising the dining room at a top-flight restaurant, managing a nightclub and bar, or working on a cruise ship appeal to most beginning hospitality managers. Spending their days in such exciting activities can be dazzling. These sorts of places are wonderful career choices. However, the glamour positions do not necessarily provide a better career than other areas of the hospitality industry. Front desk activities are pretty much the same at any hotel; dining rooms operate in the same general way regardless of check average; nightclubs and bars require odd hours and often difficult working conditions; and cruise line work includes lengthy days, seven-day workweeks, and long periods of time away from home. Quality of life issues have led many to appreciate working conditions in perhaps less glamorous but equally challenging and rewarding areas of the industry. Graduates, who have worked a few years, often comment that they found the most important part of job satisfaction was not the glamour or prestige of a job, but the working environment and relationships with other employees. Unfortunately, some graduates have to go through more than one employer before they learn this important lesson, sometimes slowing their advancement.

The hospitality industry is people and service-oriented.² In order to be successful, managers must like working with people. For most individuals choosing a hospitality career, the idea of meeting and working with a variety of guests in a variety of settings is the most attractive part of the career. The challenges of guest interaction can be both stimulating and energizing. Hospitality managers take pride in finding creative solutions to problems, providing guests with enjoyable experiences, and offering employees a satisfying place to work. Their dedication to the customer results in satisfied guests, employees, and employers.

In the hospitality industry, hard work and success are rewarded with more responsibility. You may think at first that more responsibility is no reward. However, as a hospitality manager matures and becomes more capable, he or she is ready for a more demanding job. The challenges of a new position keep the workplace interesting and foster growth in the manager. An added bonus is money. A new and more demanding position usually carries a new and more generous paycheck. In addition, more responsible positions offer the opportunity for more control over work schedules and travel requirements.

What May Be Hard for You

Even though you really like your new job in the hospitality industry, there will be things about it that you may find hard to deal with. Relocation, work hours, travel, and people are some of the more common sources of discontentment. When you take your first job, it is very unlikely that you will be working in your hometown or in the town where you went to school. Moving itself requires overcoming several obstacles. You must find a place to live, make it into a relatively comfortable home, pay deposits and related expenses, and learn your way around town—all while beginning a new and demanding job. You may have a roommate that can add to the adjustment. Moving and beginning a new job can be a stressful and expensive time. It may seem an eternity until that first paycheck arrives. If possible, give yourself enough time to make the move and get settled before you begin work. Plan for adequate funding to tide you over until you get paid.

After you have worked for a while, you may find that your employer wants you to move to a new location. This is not uncommon. Many companies have operations in several different cities and move employees among them as needed. You may need to move in order

to help the company with personnel shortages or with problem situations. The most likely reason to move is for a promotion. When you are ready for that more responsible (and more lucrative) position, the only one available may be in another city. Even long-term hospitality managers may need to move to accept a very desirable position. Most companies will not force you to move. However, your advancement will be slowed while they search for a suitable position for you locally.

As a hospitality professional, one of the most important factors to consider are the hours you will be working. All professionals (doctors, lawyers, teachers, etc.) work more than a standard 40-hour week. They work until the job is done. The same is true in hospitality management. You will typically be paid by the month rather than by the hour. You will have a job to complete each day and will usually need to stay until it is done. As you become more experienced, you will become more efficient. While the 40-hour week is not typical, neither should you work 80–90 hours a week. You should find a company that expects a reasonable commitment on your part. There may be emergencies that require short periods of long work weeks. However, if this type of demand is regular, perhaps you should begin looking for another position.

The number of hours may be a problem for some, but the arrangement of hours may be troublesome for others. Hospitality managers work while other people play. You may have two days a week off but they will almost never be Saturday and Sunday. You may work Friday nights and holidays. You will need to coordinate with your family and friends to develop alternate arrangements for holidays and other social activities.

Another issue dealing with hours is the long workday. Some employers may not require a long work week, but the hours will be arranged in three or four very long days. Some managers work three 15-hour days and four hours on two other days. You may think that long days will not bother you. After all, you have gone to school full-time and worked many hours a week and still had time to party with your friends and even study. New graduates report that one of their hardest adjustments was to get up and go to work every day. Just knowing that they had no choice was very trying, at least at first. You must have a realistic understanding about what your new job will require. It is one thing to listen to your teachers discuss the issue or read in your textbook about it, but it is another thing altogether when it is you having to work long days or long weeks.

Some hospitality positions require that you travel as a part of your job. Employers are usually very clear about

this requirement before you are hired. At first, travel seems glamorous and interesting. You may really enjoy the opportunity to see new places and meet many new people. However, many hospitality managers quickly tire of travel and seek employment that does not entail so much mobility. If you are considering accepting a position that will often take you away from home, seriously consider the implications. It is extremely unfair to your employer and bad for your career to quickly leave a job because you decide you don't like the travel.

An important part of a hospitality manager's position is working with people. While it is often the most enjoyable part of the job, it can also be difficult. Often, the manager's interaction with people is when they are at their worst—hungry and tired. While most guests are pleasant and interesting, some can be tiresome and demanding. It requires a great deal of patience to work in these situations. You may feel that you have answered the same questions one hundred times in one day. However, it is important to remember that you are answering the question for the first time for each person. They don't know (or care) that you have had to say the same thing or answer the same question repeatedly. They just want their needs met. The successful hospitality manager finds a way to make interaction with his/her guests enjoyable under the most demanding circumstances.

Another important, but often overlooked, constituency is your employees. Most hospitality operations are labor intensive. You will interact with professional peers and with hourly staff. It will be important to appreciate the contribution made by each group. The hospitality industry is a large employer of entry-level workers. Motivating and supervising these employees is a challenge. Turnover is very high—perhaps as high as 300 percent in some positions.³ Consequently, hiring and training can consume a large part of your time. It is in the best interest of all concerned to find a way to retain employees. An additional challenge for new hospitality managers is supervising older workers. This often seems like asking your grandparents to do a job. Most new managers find themselves uncomfortable in this position. However, it is important to see the overall picture. Older workers are very capable and do not wish to be troublesome to the new manager. Appreciate their contributions and respect them as persons; you will likely find them very desirable employees.

Special Considerations of Females and Minorities

The hospitality industry has traditionally been the domain of mainstream males. In the United States, this has meant that Caucasian men have filled managerial positions. More recently, cultural and political changes have made the hospitality industry more attractive to females and minorities. Change in any form is a challenge. However, the growth of the hospitality industry has provided many opportunities for females and minorities to excel. Most organizations are making a concerted effort to recruit, retain, and promote members of these impacted groups. They have been rewarded with talented and valuable employees. In spite of their acceptance into the ranks of hospitality managers, females and minorities often face special problems.

In spite of advances in equality between genders, women still typically find themselves the designated caretakers of the family. Sick children, school problems, childcare responsibility, household chores, and family errands typically fall to the woman. They often are called on to miss work to deal with family issues. Often, women are single parents with few or no family resources to fall back on. (Men, too, are single parents; however, the great majority are women.) Women find themselves torn between demands of the job and demands of the family. This conflict generates terrible stress and interferes with professional acceptance and advancement.

Another important impediment to women's success is the difficulty in functioning within a largely male occupational field. For many years, women in the hospitality industry held lower-level positions. Older male managers may find it difficult to consider women their professional peers. In their minds, they habitually relegate women to second class status and don't take them seriously. This problem is resolving itself as younger managers, products of co-educational hospitality education programs, move into positions of leadership. The new groups understand and respect the abilities of their female colleagues. A continuing problem is that of networking in male-only environments. Many relationships and beneficial contacts are still developed at the club or in the golf course locker room. Systematic exclusion of women may not be intentional; however, it still presents an obstacle to women's professional advancement. This "glass ceiling" will disappear only when hospitality managers and their organizations ac-

knowledge the importance of women as a resource and structure employment opportunities to meet their special needs.⁴

A serious problem can develop based on the interaction of men and women in the workplace. As more and more women have moved into management positions, their presence has complicated and changed acceptable behavior. Sexual harassment may become a problem. (Sexual harassment can be committed by either gender; however, males do most sexual harassment.) Most men do not intend to commit sexual harassment, and most women are not overly sensitive to the issue. It is important to know what is considered proper behavior to avoid any potential problems. It is also a bad idea to date co-workers. The relationship may compromise the ability to work together and may lead to sexual harassment charges if it ends badly. It is also unacceptable to fraternize with employees. It unduly complicates the managerial relationship by confusing employees regarding expectations and demands.

Minorities, like women, for years filled less responsible positions in the hospitality industry. As more minority managers have entered the workforce, they have faced special problems. They may find themselves the only person in the workplace of their racial or ethnic group. They may be singled out for special treatment, or they may be ignored. Co-workers might not have an understanding of cultural activities, holidays, or special occasions. There may be no one with which to share common experiences. This may make the minority manager uncomfortable, feeling that they have nothing in common or that they “stick out.” The only minority companions available may be people the manager supervises. Establishing a social relationship with employees may complicate the professional relationship. This problem will lessen as more minorities enter the hospitality managerial ranks.

GETTING AHEAD ON THE JOB

Deciding on and securing a job in the hospitality industry takes effort and concentration, utilizing a specific set of skills discussed earlier in this chapter. Issues that will facilitate your staying on the job have also been presented. However, just doing your job is not enough; you will want to excel in your position in a timely manner toward your career goal. Becoming a professional is essential for your future success. As a professional, you will have absolute confidence in your ability to deliver superb service and excellent products. Professionalism does not happen overnight but is the

result of hard work and dedication. Two separate but related components, appearance and behavior, are also important.

Professional appearance entails making the most of what you have. Learning about the corporate culture in which you work will give you valuable clues. How do others in the company dress and look? You do not need to slavishly copy others, but being radically different will cause you to be noticed in a way that you probably do not want. While in school, most students dress casually in jeans, sweatshirts, and athletic shoes. Hair, makeup, and general appearance range from casual to careless. After entering the professional world, few companies would find this style acceptable. It is necessary to invest in a basic, well-coordinated wardrobe containing good quality garments that can be mixed and matched for a variety of uses. You probably purchased a suit or other business attire for use during your interviews. These clothes can serve as the foundation of your new wardrobe. Good quality, comfortable shoes are important because you will likely be on your feet for many hours a day. Keep your wardrobe cleaned, pressed, and well repaired. Keep shoes shined and in good condition. Take care of this investment, as it is your first impression in the business world. An attractive wardrobe will do you little good if other aspects of your appearance are not appropriate. Hair should be styled in an attractive, conservative manner that is suitable for your face and body. Men with facial hair must keep it trimmed and neat. Women's makeup must be attractive and flattering but subdued. A makeup consultant may be useful in choosing affordable cosmetics appropriate to the business world. A minimal amount of simple jewelry is acceptable. Attention to detail regarding your appearance is vital.

Now that you look the part of a professional, it is time to act the part. Your behavior in the workplace is the major contributor to your success.

ATTITUDE. Having a good attitude is critical. No matter how well you have been prepared, no matter how attractive you look, if your mental state is not positive, you will not succeed. No one likes to work around someone with a bad attitude. Co-workers and supervisors will not appreciate a person's ability and contributions if a negative demeanor accompanies them. Be willing to take instructions and criticism. No one likes to be criticized, but often it is necessary to adjust behavior and develop new skills. Understand that professional criticism is not personal criticism.

DEPENDABLE. Be on the job everyday on time without fail. Your co-workers and supervisors must be sure they can count on you. Ongoing tardiness and absenteeism is a certain detriment to your career.

COOPERATIVE. The hospitality industry is labor intensive. Consequently you will work in an environment with many people. You may be in a crowded office, busy lobby, or hectic kitchen. You may be surrounded with people and even be in close physical contact. Being able to work cooperatively is imperative.

WILLING TO WORK. Come to work each day ready to work hard. That means you must be well rested and clear-headed. Lifestyle adjustments might be necessary to accommodate very early and very late schedules. Social activities might need to be curtailed during the work week. When you arrive at the workplace, be industrious and productive. No prodding to complete assignments should be needed.

INITIATIVE. Be in charge of your own work habits. Understand what is required of you and be certain that it is done. Within the scope of your abilities, complete tasks without being told. If you are caught up with your own job, look for other things that need doing.

CLEANLINESS. The traditional proverb states that "Cleanliness is next to Godliness." In the professional world, cleanliness is next to successfulness. You are the representative of your operation. If you are clean and neat, customers will assume that your operation is clean. This is a large issue in the hospitality industry because your customers are eating and sleeping in your establishments. Cleanliness is important in your relationship with your co-workers, as close contact is inevitable in the workplace.

INTEREST. You will be spending many hours and many years in your profession. In order for your career activities to be enjoyable, you must be interested in what goes on around you. Try to learn why certain policies or procedures are used; learn from your co-workers about their positions and the skills involved; and try to understand the larger picture. You will become a more valuable employee, and you will enjoy what you do.

HEALTH. Because hours are long and stress can be high, the hospitality industry can be demanding. You must be prepared to meet these demands physically and emotionally. This entails taking care of yourself. As a

young person you can function with little sleep, not eating properly, and ignoring your health. As you get older or work in a demanding career, your body and mind demand more care. Regular sleep, a reasonable diet, moderate socializing, and time for yourself are important. You cannot afford to be chronically in marginal to poor health if you expect to get ahead. The hospitality industry has the highest incidence of substance and alcohol abuse in the country.⁵ You must take care to avoid the pitfalls inherent in such behavior.

STICK TO IT. There will be days or even weeks when you think that your job is terrible. You will probably wonder whatever possessed you to let yourself in for such misery. Everyone has times when they feel the same way. Especially if the job is new to you, the demands may seem overwhelming. Perhaps after a time you will become more proficient and will develop a routine that will become very comfortable. As much as you can, give the job and yourself a chance. Most companies see managers as liabilities their first year of employment because new managers are inexperienced and likely to make mistakes. Also, training costs involved with preparing you to be a productive manager range from \$20,000 to \$25,000. Most of this expense is incurred in the first few months of your time with the company. You should seriously consider this investment in you when making a career change decision. If you still do not like your position after a fair trial (usually at least one year), speak with your supervisor about the possibility of a transfer. You may also look at other companies. Just be sure not to make a hasty decision.

CREATIVITY. A valued trait of successful professionals is creativity. Being creative does not mean changing carefully formulated policies and procedures just because you want to do something a different way. Instead it involves thinking strategically and in the long term. Developing new ways of completing a task or planning an activity will likely be appreciated by your organization. Be certain to share your ideas with them and seek approval before implementing any new activity. Often, choice promotions are the result of a history of creative thinking.

After a time, you will begin to think about moving up your professional career ladder. When making a career decision, many graduates consider the time it takes to become a general manager with a particular organization. Becoming a general manager results in more responsibility, more income, and more prestige. It is a worthy goal. It is important to understand that it

takes time to build the skills needed to be a general manager. The time from entry to general manager will vary among segments of the hospitality industry and within each segment. The typical time frame is from two to seven years. Every organization has its own timeline. The shorter time to general manager is usually in a less complex organization that may pay general managers a relatively lower salary. In a more complex organization, it takes longer to become general manager, but the pay is often much higher. A good rule of thumb is the higher the pay for a general manager, the longer it takes to achieve that status. A typical progression to general manager for selected industry segments is presented in Figure 1.1.

A hospitality manager can enhance his or her progress toward general manager by finding a mentor. A mentor is an influential member of the organization who takes special interest in your career. This person can introduce you to the right people and impact assignments and promotions. Often it is the people you know, as well as what you know, that affects your success. Spend some time getting acquainted with other members of your company and identify those who might be willing to work with you. If you want to be successful, associate with successful people.

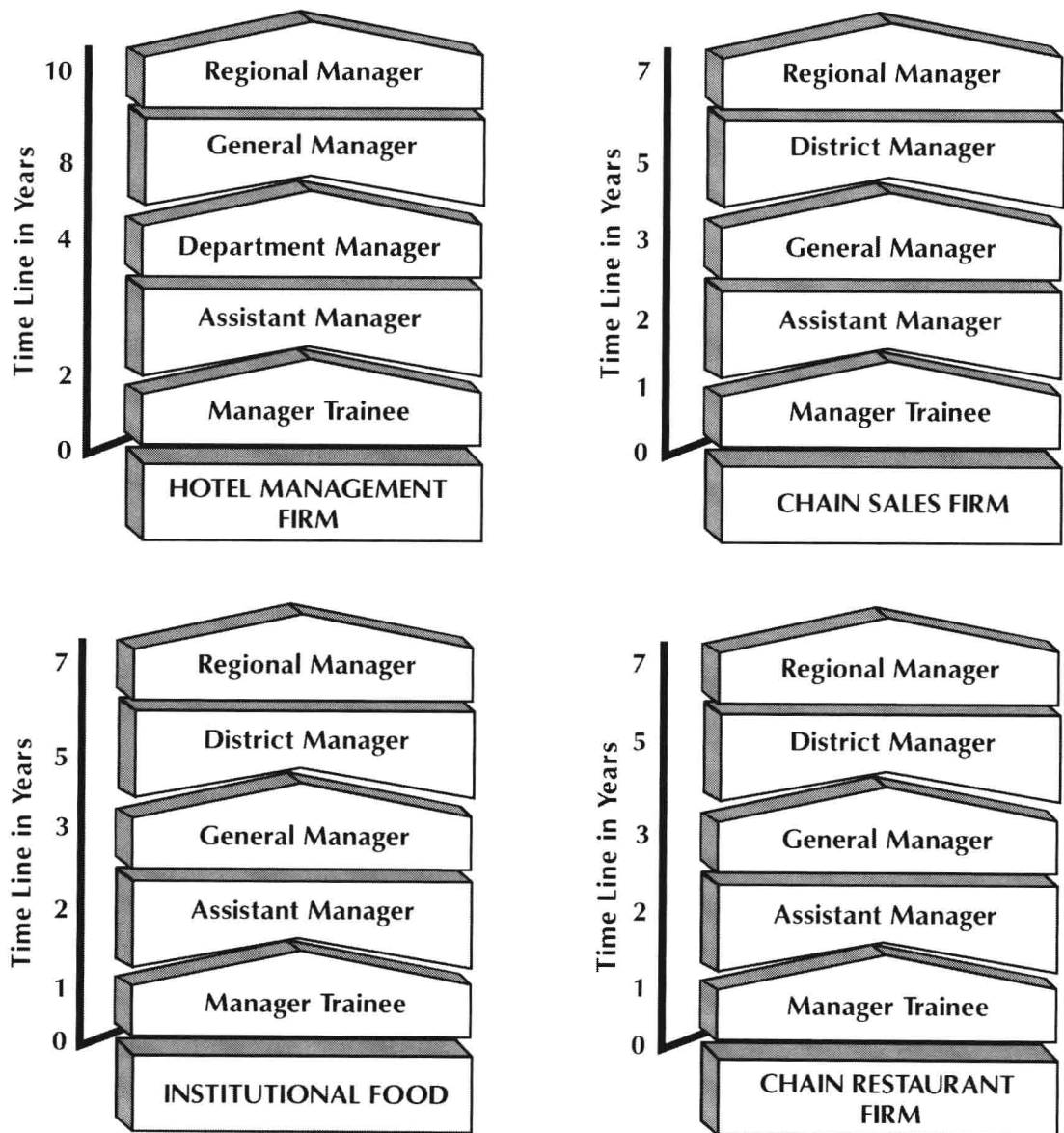


Figure 1.1 Career progression sequence example for possible hospitality careers.

SUMMARY

The hospitality industry offers dynamic and exciting careers. As with any profession, there are activities that are important for you to do in order to be prepared for seeking a job. After you secure a position and begin work, there will be things that you like about the job and things that you might not like. How you cope with the challenges of the new position will impact your willingness and ability to continue with the job. Becoming a professional is vital to becoming successful in your career. Your ability to do what it takes in the workplace will take you toward the goal of success in the hospitality industry.

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Service in the Hospitality Industry

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While details differ, the tangible side of the hospitality industry is surprisingly similar. Fast-food operations resemble one another within food categories, one budget motel offers pretty much the same as another, and so forth. Whether it's Big Mac vs. the Whopper, or Hampton Inns vs. Fairfield Inns, company offerings look a lot alike. Increasingly, companies are realizing that *service* is the best way to achieve differentiation and is what can give an operation a competitive edge. This chapter examines service as a process, considers the work of rendering service as a personal experience, and, finally, considers how companies manage service.

"Dear Mr. Wilson," the letter from Mortimer Andrews to the company president began. "Yesterday I arrived at your hotel in Chicago with a confirmed reservation guaranteed by my credit card only to be told that no room was available. I was furious and let the desk clerk know how I felt in no uncertain terms. The clerk, John Boyles, handled the situation so well that I wanted to write and tell you about it.

"John responded to my very angry tirade about my reservation by admitting the mistake was the hotel's. He said that he had made reservations for me at a nearby Sheraton and that your hotel would take care of the difference in the room rate. When I reluctantly agreed, he called a cab—after letting me know your hotel would pay the cab fare, too.

"What struck me was John's real concern for my situation, his professional manner, and the fact that he didn't give me any excuses. 'It was our mistake and we're anxious to do everything we can to make it right.' John carried my bags

out and put me in the cab, convincing me that somebody really cared about this weary traveler.

"I travel a lot and it's hard work without the extra hassles and foul-ups. On the other hand, everybody makes mistakes. John's concern and assistance make a big difference in the way it feels when one of them happens to you. I thought you should know about this young man's superior performance. He is a real asset to your company. He restored my faith in your hotel and I'll be back."

This incident may not seem like a major event, but consider for a moment just what the stakes are. Mr. Andrews is a frequent traveler. If we assume that he is on the road an average of two days a week, at the end of the year his business would be the equivalent of a meeting for 100 people. If we assume an average rate (in all cities he visits, large and small) of \$65 per night, the room revenue involved is \$6500. Using industry averages, he is likely to spend an additional \$3250 on food and beverage. In other words, the receipts from this one guest amount to a \$10,000 piece of business—and there is no shortage of other hotels he could stay at if he doesn't like yours.

The rule of thumb, moreover, is that a dissatisfied customer will tell the story of his or her problem to 10 others. The possibility for bad word of mouth and potential loss of other sales makes the problem of the dissatisfied guest even more serious.

In fact, a study of 2600 business units in all kinds of industries, conducted by the Strategic Planning Institute, has been summarized in this way: "In all industries, when competitors are roughly matched, those that stress customer service will win."¹ If this is