

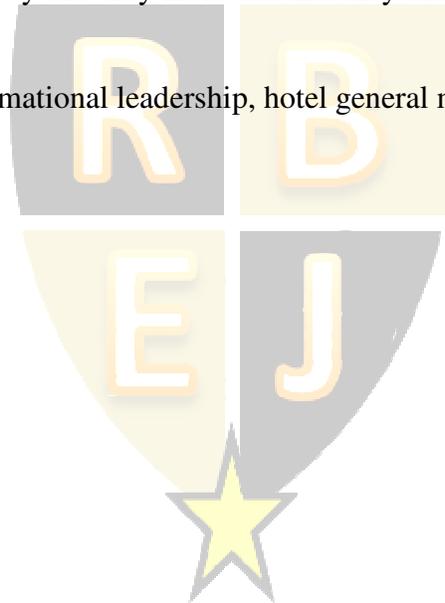
Hotel general managers and transformational leadership: a complementary relationship

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ABSTRACT

Transformational leadership has extensively researched and is considered as one of the most effective types of leadership in increasing performance. In the hotel industry, specifically, transformational leadership is essential in this progressive and ever-changing industry is crucial to the success of the hotel. This study sought to identify a complementary relationship between transformational leadership and hotel general managers. The general managers were randomly selected from across the United States and were survey about their transformational leadership qualities. The results indicate that general managers are utilizing transformational leadership qualities during their working day and they indicated that they use the qualities often and regularly.

Keywords: leadership, transformational leadership, hotel general managers



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INTRODUCTION

Research on leadership has been conducted for decades and remains an important topic of theorists regarding which leadership type is most effective and which traits are more desirable. According to Northouse (2004), leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Good leadership performance essentially depends as much on the organization as on the leader. Fiedler (1969) states that the organization has a culture that is ultimately changed by the leader, and that the organization reflects how he or she leads. Transformational leadership can and does have profound effects on organizations that have effective leaders who understand business, themselves, and their subordinates.

Changes in the marketplace and workforce over the past few decades have resulted in the need for leaders to become more transformational and less transactional if they are to remain effective (Bass, 1999). The changes have been dramatic and hospitality organizations seek leaders who are able to lead their businesses efficiently and effectively. Hospitality leadership has groundings in transformational leadership in regard to specific aspects such as inspiring followers, assisting them in developing skills, encouraging them to use an entrepreneurial focus, and recognizing and utilizing change by adversarial means. Transformational leadership has had an immense impact on the hospitality industry, especially in the formation of vision and the future of the industry.

Hotel general managers (GMs) hold a leadership position that is paramount to the success of the property. Their leadership skills are integral in the overall operation and execution of the business plan and financial goals. Transformational leadership has been the subject of continued study and research for several decades. According to Bass (1999) “the transformational leader inspires, intellectually stimulates and is individually considerate of them [followers]” (p. 9). Clark, Hartline, and Jones (2009) conclude that “the appropriate leadership style for hotel managers is one that increases their ability to translate their own commitment to service quality into employee actions that are conducive to excellent service. As a result, the most appropriate leadership style in the context of managing hotel employees is likely to be transformational” (p. 211).

Researchers have indicated that transformational leadership is considered one of the most effective in increasing performance of subordinates in an organization. Piccolo and Colquitt (2006) stated that “by appealing to followers’ ideals and values, transformational leaders enhance commitment to a well-articulated vision and inspire followers to develop new ways of thinking about problems” (p. 327). Bass (1985) contends that transformational leaders provide constructive feedback to their followers, convince followers to exhibit extra effort, and encourage followers to think creatively about complex problems. As a result, followers tend to behave in ways that facilitate high levels of task performance. Dvir, Eden, Avolio, and Shamir (2002) stated that “There is evidence that shows a positive relationship between transformational leadership and performance” (p. 737). Knowing what encompasses transformational leadership and how it affects organizations and their success is paramount in the ever-changing and competitive world of business and industry.

Utilizing this information, in the fall of 2018, 14 different hotel brands, 214 of each brand for a total of 3000 midscale hotels were selected from a listing of North America Hotel Guest Satisfaction Index Study (JD Power, 2018). The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), designed by Avolio and Bass (2004) in 1989, an instrument used to study of transformational leadership was emailed to each hotel GM. The MLQ seeks to determine transformational and

transactional leadership qualities in leaders who are surveyed. For this research, only transformational leadership was the focus for the utilization of the MLQ. The information in the email explained the nature of the survey and the purpose of the research being conducted. The short 20-question online survey contained questions that were targeted to their leadership skills, specifically their transformational leadership skills and on a scale of 0 – 4 they would rate how frequently they engaged in the specific behaviors measured by the MLQ 5X, a shortened and condensed version of the larger MLQ.

The purpose of the study was to identify a complementary relationship that inherently exists in the hospitality industry, specifically transformational leadership and hotel general managers. The findings would be utilized to support previous research in the hospitality field and other business fields and be used as examples in education and in industry when teaching and training leadership. Hotel GMs need to be aware of their transformational leadership abilities and knowing this can be a great asset to them, their subordinates, and their entire organization. This would assist hotel GMs by identifying their common transformational leadership traits. This study, in the end, is a resource for GM's and other managers in understanding more about their transformational leadership abilities and knowledge, or lack thereof, and their leadership style. Identifying the commonalities between transformational leadership will assist GM's in focusing their leadership styles on transformational leadership as it has proven to be the most effective for the hospitality industry and Clark et al. (2009), contends that transformational leadership is the most appropriate for most hotel employees.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Northouse (2004) posits that the concept of leadership suggests that leaders can create networks of partnerships throughout the organization that will benefit the organization's goals as well as their own career progress. Organizations stand to gain much from having leaders who can create good working relationships. When leaders and followers have good exchanges, both feel better, accomplish more, and the organization prospers (Dvir et al., 2002). Leadership involves both leaders and followers where one needs the other. Followers can become leaders and leaders can become followers (Wren, 1995). The relationship of leaders and followers begins with the leader creating and fostering the relationship and assuming responsibility for the process, the influence, the follower(s), and the goal(s).

Leadership styles vary among the many different organizations and businesses. Some styles are thought to be unique and specific, but others are viewed as being a combination of styles that already exist. Effective leadership at all levels of the organization has long been recognized as essential to continued growth and profitability (Gumpert & Hambleton, 1979). Many types of leadership styles exist with each having distinct aspects that make it plausible to be utilized. The key for managers is to decide which leadership approach best suits their knowledge, skills, and abilities and will correlate well with a specific organization and its goals, members and stakeholders.

In an organization, the leader's focus is on the business, maintaining its effectiveness, attaining goals, and keeping the stakeholders content with the current state of the organization, financially speaking. Leadership is very much a subjective phenomenon; there really is no one right answer, but there are more effective ways of leading in given situations. The challenge is to find leaders who are able to effectively lead the stakeholders of the organization in a positive

direction. Transformational leadership is one type of leadership that researchers generally agree on as being effective in organizations.

Woods and King (2002) posited that “transformational leaders involve their staff members in collaborative goal-setting and share leadership with others by delegating power” (p. 22). Transformational leadership can and does have a profound effect on organizations that have effective leaders who understand the business, themselves, and their subordinates. Transformational leaders create a culture in their organizations that instill respect and trust from upper management down to the front-line workers.

According to Northouse (2004) “transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms individuals” (p. 169). Transformational leadership seeks to enhance a follower’s morale, values, self-esteem, and worth by creating an environment that is conducive to open exchanges, shared information, and mutual respect. Bass (1999) contends that transformational leaders inspire, intellectually stimulate and are individually considerate of their followers. Transformational leaders are continuously aware of their own environment and the environment of their followers to ensure that there is continuity in how they lead and are aware of its effect.

Transformational leadership has the following four distinctive characteristics: individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence (Bass, 1999). Individualized consideration encompasses paying close attention to the individual employee and to his or her needs rather than treating all followers alike as having the same needs. Avolio, Waldman, and Yammarino (1991) stated that a key assumption of individualized consideration is that each employee has different needs, and that, for a specific employee, those needs will change over time partially based on the influence of the leader. Intellectual stimulation is part of what helps to change the ways in which employees think about solving problems, whether technical, human relations, or personal. These leaders focus on the followers and how they can help themselves with issues using reasoning and evidence rather than with opinions (Avolio et al., 1991).

Inspirational motivation is concerned with past personal accomplishments that are utilized to motivate followers. Avolio and Bass (2004) contend that inspiration can occur without the need for identification of associates with the leader. Inspirational leaders articulate, in simple ways, shared goals and mutual understanding of what is right and important. They help develop communication skills in their followers with the use of role modeling of other inspirational leaders. Gooty, Gavin, Johnson, Frazier, and Snow (2009) that transformational leader behaviors act in tandem toward achieving followers’ increased effort via higher motivation and a belief in a more positive future. Idealized influence occurs when followers observe their leaders achieving desired results, they are more likely to want to emulate the leader’s behavior, attitude, and values (Avolio et al., 1991). Leaders create followers that have the ability to lead when necessary and desired. This is when followers begin to understand their own leadership attributes, raising confidence in them and in their abilities (Avolio et al., 1991). Bono and Judge (2003) postulated that followers of transformational leaders find their work more meaningful, and thus, are more self-engaged and those followers are consistently willing to perform exceptionally well.

Transformational leaders are aware that the greatest asset the business has is the employees and it is the leader’s goal to make certain that the culture of the business is one where employees are proud of their positions and the work that they do and are willing to go the extra mile. Employees, when connected with the leader and the company, grasp the culture and assist in cultivating it through the work they do. Dvir et al. (2002) concluded that there is evidence that

shows a positive relationship between transformational leadership and performance. This association between positive relationships and performance is due to the employees having a vested interest in doing a good job and helping the leaders attain their goals.

Parry and Proctor-Thomson (2002) sought to address the ethical nature of transformational leadership, specifically a statistical relationship between perceived leaders integrity and transformational leadership. Surveying 1,354 managers utilizing the MLQ, they found a strong, positive relationship was found between perceived integrity and the demonstration of transformational leadership behaviors. The relationship indicates that transformational leaders are viewed as leaders who are trustworthy and honest and seek to better those around them and their organizations to ensure the successful completion of stated objectives. In other words, transformational leaders impact the bottom line of organizations.

Transformational leaders have a clear vision of the future state of their organizations (Northouse, 2004). Their technical skills paired with their conceptual skills will assist them in understanding the changes that may occur. Avolio et al. (1991) believed that transformational leaders help to realign the values and norms of their organization, and when necessary, accommodate and promote both internal and external change. Tracey and Hinkin (1994) seemingly asked the question “Can transformational leadership be effective in the hospitality industry?” With the use of the MLQ, they surveyed one successful hotel management firm that included five principle partners and 45 corporate staff. They found that the behavior most frequently exhibited by the effective leader was transformational. They posited that management for adaptation, rather than control, requires a new form of leadership: transformational leadership (p. 24). Tracey and Hinkin conclude that “We believe that the external environment will remain turbulent and that transformational leadership will be in important for enhancing individuals and organizational effectiveness” (p. 24).

The management of a hotel depends largely on its size, scope, and its offerings. For the purpose of this research, the hotel segment that was utilized is that of a mid-scale hotel that only offers sleeping rooms along with a breakfast area with continental or extended continental breakfast. They are defined by the room rate and the services and amenities offered. The GM oversees the entire effective operation of the hotel and its departments and is considered the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the hotel. The GMs main responsibilities include the financial well-being and performance of the hotel in the areas of front desk, housekeeping, and building maintenance. Leadership of the hotel is essential in garnering all parameters that GMs are accountable for, mostly the financial parameters directly affecting its shareholders and stakeholders.

Leadership occurs when a leader engages in a relationship with an employee and the need for engagement with employees as well as constant communication is vital. In other words, leadership is fundamentally based on human interaction (Rouhiainen, 2007), an interaction that is the foundation on which to connect with employees and begin a relationship of trust. Transformational leadership is an effective form of leadership for increasing employee morale. The foundation of this type of leadership is based on connection, inclusiveness and trust throughout the leadership relationship with the followers. The leader continues to foster a trusting exchange through communication and remains an advocate for the followers in performing at a higher level (Bass, 1999).

Transformational leaders are the mentors for the followers and this exchange in communication fosters a relationship of trust (Bass, 1999). Transformational leadership is an active, time-consuming process in which a substantial amount of time is initially devoted to

followers' personal development (Avolio et al., 1991). Essentially, it is leaders developing leaders and individualized consideration of transformational leadership.

Perhaps the key payoff of transformational leadership in the hospitality industry is that followers do not resist self-development and frequently demonstrate, through personal sacrifice, an enhanced commitment to their job, co-workers, and the organization. Here, employee morale is heightened and strengthened and their commitment to increased performance is evident as transformational leadership is an integral part of ensuring a committed workforce focused on cooperation and innovation (Avolio et al., 1991).

Leadership is just not a position; it is a way of doing business and is the culture of the organization. Managing systems and resources is technical but managing and leading those who are responsible for them is the ingredient for success or failure. Tracey and Hinkin (1994) posit that transformational leadership requires that a leader's vision, values, and behavior be consistent and focused on the future (p. 20). Leaders who are transformational are those able to see the intricacies of the organization and the employees and meld the two together to create a place where employees want to work and guests want to patronize, thus being an employer and business of choice (Northouse, 2004).

METHOD

In the fall of 2018, 14 different hotel brands, 214 of each brand for a total of 3000 midscale hotels were selected from a listing of North America Hotel Guest Satisfaction Index Study (JD Power, 2018). The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), designed by Avolio and Bass (2004) in 1989, an instrument used to study of transformational leadership was emailed to each hotel GM. The MLQ seeks to determine transformational and transactional leadership qualities in leaders who are surveyed. For this research, only transformational leadership was the focus for the utilization of the MLQ. The information in the email explained the nature of the survey and the purpose of the research being conducted. The short 20-question online survey contained questions that were targeted to their leadership skills, specifically their transformational leadership skills and on a scale of 1 – 5 they would rate how frequently they engaged in the specific behaviors measured by the MLQ 5X, a shortened and condensed version of the larger MLQ.

This study sought to identify a complementary relationship between transformational leadership and hotel general managers (GM's). The survey was purchased from Mind Garden, Inc. with permission to use the MLQ and it was presented to hotel GMs in the form of a web-based, Internet survey. The questionnaires included 20 questions for the self-rating form, where leaders rate themselves about their transformational leadership attributes. Bass and Avolio's MLQ is considered the most researched measure of organizational leadership in use and consequently the most widely accepted tool for investigating transformational and transactional leadership styles (Parry & Proctor-Thompson, 2002.). Clark et al. (2009) have concluded that transformational leadership is the most appropriate style of leadership for hotel managers, one that increases employee actions to deliver excellent quality service.

A simple, random sample for the survey consisted of hotel general managers of 3000 mid-scale hotels from a listing of those hotels that were surveyed for the North America Hotel Guest Satisfaction Index Study (JD Power, 2018). 14 different hotel brands, consisting of a total population of more than 10,000 mid-scale hotels. Hotels from each brand were randomly selected by choosing hotels from an alphabetical listing of cities in the United States as listed on

the specific hotel brand's website. From the listings, 214 hotels were selected by choosing one hotel from the first alphabetically listed cities for the specific brand, starting from A and continuing on until 214 were chosen.

Data was collected by utilizing a web-based Internet survey administered by Mind Garden, Inc., the company that houses the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). The MLQ is a short comprehensive survey of 45 items, of which 20 items were utilized, that measures a full range of leadership styles. The 20 questions there were selected and utilized from the MLQ were all of the transformational leadership questions. The classic form (MLQ 5X Short) of the MLQ includes the self form that measures self perception of leadership behaviors. Hotel properties were selected from each of the 14 respective hotels' websites and an email containing an explanation and purpose of the survey along with the MLQ link was attached. The respondents completed survey was electronically submitted to Mind Garden, the company the houses the MLQ, at the conclusion of each survey.

Individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and idealized influences are each characteristics of transformational leadership and each has survey questions that address each of these areas. Using a 5-point Likert scale, GMs rated how frequently they engage in specific behaviors measured by the MLQ 5X. The responses range from "not at all" to "frequently, if not always" (Avolio & Bass, 2004). The MLQ scale scores are average scores for the items on the scale. The score can be derived by summing the items and dividing by the number of items that make up the scale.

The MLQ is widely accepted as the primary instrument in measuring transformational leadership, though it does measure a full range of leadership styles (Avolio & Bass, 2004). It has proven to be accurate for both genders at different organizational levels and has positive correlations when correlated with different measures of effectiveness. The MLQ has been modified several times to ensure that the validity of its content represents the areas in which it purports to measure. The reliability of the MLQ has proven to be one of its greatest assets. It has been utilized across many different organizations and cultures and continues to assist researchers and management in improving organizations through its use and the information gleaned from it.

RESULTS

A response of 980 GMs out of the 3000 properties emailed resulted in a response rate of 32.6%. Additional questions were included with the MLQ as respondents were asked four additional demographic questions that were added to the survey regarding age, gender, education level and years with their respective hotel. The age range of respondents was vast as GMs had a range of 23 to 60 years, with a mean age of 44.

Table 1 shows that the data indicated that there was slight more men than women who participated in the study. Males accounted for 54.3 % and females, 45.7 % respectively for total respondents. There were more male leaders than female leaders from the survey hotels.

Table 1

Gender - Leader

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	532	54.3
Female	448	45.7
Total	980	100.0

Table 2 indicates the education level of GMs. It is no surprise that more than half of the respondents indicated that they had an advanced degree, 651 (66.4%). This is expected as leading a hotel requires a great deal of business and technical knowledge along with industry experience. Approximately one-third of the respondents indicated that they had at least an undergrad degree, 322 (32.9%). Given that the hotels surveyed were limited-service properties, most would require a minimum of an undergrad degree to attain the level of a general manager. An associate degree is sometimes allowable and a very low number of respondents, 7 (.7%) indicated that they hold this type of degree. This is appropriate when an individual has a number of years of experience and have been at the location for a great deal of time and a vast amount of knowledge about a specific property and type of hotel.

Table 2

Education Levels – Leader

Degree	Number	Percentage
Associate Degree	7	.7
Undergrad Degree	322	32.9
Advanced Degree	651	66.4
Total	980	100.0

Responses to the number of years employed with the current or same hotel had a wide range. The minimum number of years was one, while the maximum number of years was 30, with a mean of six years.

The modified MLQ details the five attributes of transformational leadership. From the means (Table 3), there is a consistent rating throughout the five attributes. The mean for transformational leadership as a whole is 3.342, which is a, “fairly often” rating by all respondents. The MLQ measured transformational leadership through 20 distinct questions. Each was summed and averaged for each leader to garner a transformational leadership score and the range of scores determines the strength or weakness of the leaders’ transformational leadership.

Table 3 shows that leaders rated themselves high in each of the five attributes that is over the 3.0 “fairly often” rating. Leaders see themselves as having a high rate of occurrences when answering the questions related to each of the five areas of transformational leadership. Individual consideration (3.370) was rated highest among the five attributes while idealized influence (behavior) received the lowest mean (3.279). Each of the mean scores was relatively close with their standard deviations following suit.

Table 3

MLQ Description – Leader

Transformational Leadership	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	St. Dev.
Idealized Influence (Attributed)	980	2.0	4.0	3.353	.3920
Idealized Influence (Behavior)	980	2.3	4.0	3.279	.4515
Inspirational Motivation	980	1.8	4.0	3.372	.3952
Intellectual Stimulation	980	1.8	4.0	3.338	.4038
Individual Consideration	980	2.0	4.0	3.370	.4140
Transformational Leadership	980			3.342	.3919

DISCUSSION

The results of the MLQ survey indicate that leaders rated themselves high which indicates that leaders have a sense of confidence in who they are and what they do. According to Bennis (1984) the factor that empowers the work force and ultimately determines which organizations succeed or fail is the leadership of those organizations. Leadership at a hotel, specifically from the GM, but also from all followers, is crucial in the success or failure of the hotel. The participants were leaders that indicated that they felt their transformational leadership was strong. The data indicated that leaders rated their transformational leadership high. This is not surprising given their positions and the authority they hold.

According to Northouse (2004) “transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms individuals” (p. 169); the leader is the vehicle for change, and influencing and educating followers continuously has many rewards that can assist both parties in achieving their self-actualization goals. Transformational leadership seeks to enhance a follower’s morale, values, self-esteem, and worth by creating an environment that is conducive to open exchanges, shared information, and mutual respect. This type of leadership offers its followers a sense of accomplishment. Transformational leaders are aware that the greatest asset the business has is the employees and it is the leader’s goal to make certain that the culture of the business is one where employees are proud of their positions and the work that they do and are willing to go the extra mile. Employees, when connected with the leader and the company, grasp the culture and assist in cultivating it through the work they do.

Good leadership performance essentially depends as much on the organization as on the leader. Fiedler (1969) states that the organization has a culture that is ultimately changed by the leader, and that the organization reflects how he or she leads. Transformational leadership can and does have profound effects on organizations that have effective leaders who understand business, themselves, and their subordinates. The relationship of leaders and followers begins with the leader creating and fostering the relationship and assuming responsibility for the process, the influence, the follower(s), and the goal(s).

The current research on leadership, specifically transformational leadership, and the subsequent results are explained from the vantage point of leadership and management. Effective leadership at all levels of the organization has long been recognized as essential to continued growth and profitability (Gumpert & Hambleton, 1979). Changes in the marketplace and workforce over the past two decades have resulted in the need for leaders to become more transformational (Bass, 1999).

Hotel GM's have an ultimate responsibility to manage and lead their organization or property in a progressive manner that results in positive customer/guest satisfaction of their hotels (Clark et al., 2009). Tracey and Hinkin conclude that "We believe that the external environment will remain turbulent and that transformational leadership will be important for enhancing individuals and organizational effectiveness" (p. 24). Leaders are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that their organization and stakeholders are being led by an individual who is keenly aware of the affects that their leadership has on the efficiency and effectiveness of the entire organization as well as how other perceive it.

LIMITATIONS

A number of factors need to be considered as limitations when referring to this specific study. The use of the hotel listing from JD Power and Associates would not include all limited-service properties as only the top rated were survey. The aim of the study was to capture a management perspective and thus is not conclusive of the entire hotel nor is it representative of all employees or the hotel chain. A web-based survey was utilized as opposed to other forms of gathering data and it is possible that this may be a weakness. The study concentrated only on transformational leadership and not all leadership styles that would have been more all-inclusive. The MLQ was the survey instrument, one that is not common to the general public, may have been a deterrent for some possible respondents. A response rate of 32.6 percent is plausible but the results are not necessarily generalizable to the entire population.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to identify a complementary relationship between transformational leadership and hotel general managers. The results from this study suggest that GMs are utilizing transformational leadership regularly. Respondents indicated that each of the five areas of transformational leadership (individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and idealized influence) were part of their daily work repertoire as the mean responses were "fairly often". These results show that GMs are keenly aware of their ultimate responsibility as a leader in their respective hotels. The regularity with which they indicated that they are utilizing each of the area of transformational leadership shows that they find great importance in what they do and that how they lead is part of the overall story of the entire hotel.

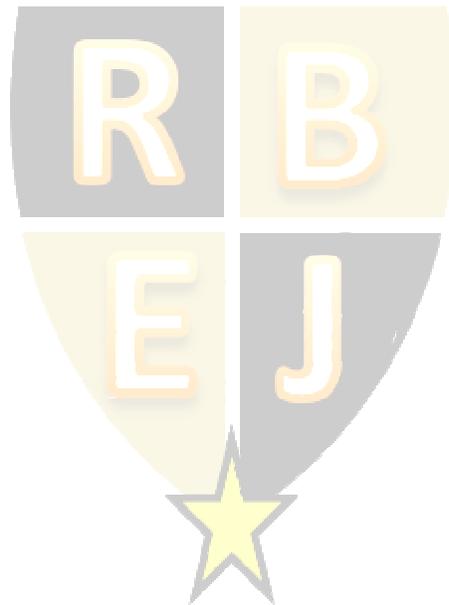
This research was conducted to garner information to encourage future research into the study of leadership in the hospitality industry. It can be of benefit to management staff and organizations, as well as researchers in that it specifically examines hotel industry leadership. Transformational leadership is one type of leadership that researchers generally agree on as being effective in organizations. Whether it is the lack of leadership style, abilities or knowledge, the GM's awareness of the way in which he/she leads his/her hotels correlates to the success of the hotel and its profitability, which directly affects all stakeholders in the organization. Decisions that are made by front-line employees, supervisors and assistant managers as well as department managers are a reflection of the leadership or lack of leadership from the GM. Thus, the effects of these decisions can affect stakeholders either directly or indirectly. Hospitality leadership has groundings in transformational leadership in regards to specific aspects such as inspiring followers, assisting them in developing skills, encouraging them to use an

entrepreneurial focus and recognizing and utilizing change as adversarial means (Abbey, 2003). Leadership is essential in the progressive industry of hotels and having acute awareness of those attributes is paramount to the ultimate success of the hotel.

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APPENDIX I

LEADER FORM - SAMPLE

This questionnaire is to describe your leadership style as you perceive it. Please answer all items on this answer sheet.

Twenty descriptive statements are listed on the following pages. Judge how frequently each statement fits you. The word “others” means your peers, clients, direct reports, supervisors, and/or all of these individuals.

Use the following rating scale:

Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly often	Frequently, if not always
0	1	2	3	4

- 1. I re-examine critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate. 0 1 2 3 4
- 2. I talk about my most important values and beliefs. 0 1 2 3 4
- 3. I seek differing perspectives when solving problems. 0 1 2 3 4
- 4. I talk optimistically about the future. 0 1 2 3 4
- 5. I instill pride in others for being associated with me. 0 1 2 3 4

