

## HIRING SKILLED SERVICE MANAGERS

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The Service Industry is a fast growing employment sector of the American economy and offers growing employment needs. Service companies seeking to find the best talent may not always know the difference between an effective service manager and a solid general business manager. Even though the two types of managers have similarities in skill, there are important distinctions that should be considered when recruiting the right person to run a service operation.

### **Needed Service Skills**

According to the U.S. Department of Labor Statistics the hospitality and food industry employs approximately 14.7 and 12.6 million people respectively (U.S. DOL, 2014). The service industry expected to continue to grow into the future making hiring the right manager even more important. Despite its size, a firm definition of the skills used in service management, has yet to emerge. A manager in one industry may have only some of the skills required for optimal functioning in the service fields.

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Hiring managers that have the right skills is beneficial for long-term viability of the organization. The very profitability of a service business is impacted by recruiting active staff, maintaining customer and staff loyalty, and enhancing best recruitment practices (Abomeh, Blessing & Iheabunike, 2013). Because the hospitality and the service industry rely heavily on human interaction selecting the right job applicant with interpersonal communication skills is important.

### Matching Skills to Functions

Before discussing the recruitment of active service managers, it is beneficial to have a thorough understanding of the functions of the service industry. The core purpose of service in any business will define the type of skills needed to manage daily activities. The closer the alignment of management skill set with functional output of the company the better the human capital alignment.

Functional definitions of service management are unique to each organization but do have complementary skills that have broad industry relevance. Some companies will have objectives that include raising customer satisfaction rates while in other companies the service functions more closely tied to sales goals. The most important function (s) will determine the skill sets managers should develop to achieve organizational objectives.

The service function helps managers understand how essential elements of service activities assist the organization in achieving its objectives (Kowalkowski, 2011). Essential elements are the core functions of the service department and how it enhances the profitability of the entire business. Identifying these core functions is helpful when matching candidate skills to

organizational needs. The process of breaking down jobs into their specific functions and then reflecting them on the job descriptions is common practice.

Simplifying complex concepts into individual elements is an essential function of science that is part of the recruitment process to create better results. Applying the process to service management helps gain greater insight into the different components of the service system, its purpose within the organization and its success in fulfilling that purpose. Understanding the functions of the position also helps in understanding who to recruit.

For example, service management programs rely on knowledge management, technology, company variables, customer flow, knowledge management, and positive relationships (Hasanzadeth & Mahaleh, 2013). Programs have various functions within an organization that requires particular skill sets to compete. Management recruitment should be based on finding those skills that enhance the likelihood of achieving organizational goals.

To match skill requirements to departmental functions requires a strong understanding of how service contributes to organizational success. It will then require breaking down of that strategic objective to specific operational functions of the department. This will lead to better defining the of skills needed to manage the day-to-day affairs of those services to ensure they continue unimpeded.

### **When Skills and Functions Don't Match**

Hiring the wrong service manager can cost business significant amounts of money that could better be used growing the company. Service managers should be adaptable and capable of working on projects that improve the functioning of their department that leads to better overall organizational performance. The skills needed to complete department functions successfully

and effectively manage service management systems should be in direct alignment to the actual needs of the department and organization.

For example, a majority of management failures are caused by poor project definitions, scope, budgeting, risk management and hiring the wrong manager for the task (Harding, 2012).

The right service managers will have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to effectively oversee daily operations in the service department but also be able to look objectively at the office and design enhancing strategies.

Organizations seek to hire managers with skills that are easily transferable to their business operations. Education is seen as one of the long-lasting and decisive factors that influence an organization's long term success (Chaudhary, et. al., 2012). Hiring Service Managers with concrete and unique skills to the service industry, versus general management, will be important in achieving this goal.

### **General vs. Service Management Knowledge**

Service operations will have different skill needs than those from other industries. For example, a manager at a hotel that relies heavily on customer service will have different skills that help them be successful when compared to manufacturing managers. Each industry has their operational needs that will allow some skills to succeed and others fail.

The same concept applies to general managers and service managers. When recruiting service managers it is important to ensure that candidates have those skills and abilities that will help them function at their optimal level of performance. The very criteria by which organizations select new managers will have an impact on the performance of the department.

Consider the table below and the slightly similar but somewhat different skills for general

management vs. hospitality management. You will find that hospitality management needs more focused skill set than public management. This occurs because industry specific knowledge is more narrowly applied to hospitality work requirements.

Broader skills can be used across multiple industries and provide a platform of knowledge that can be narrowed for each workplace. The specific knowledge gained on the job fits within this broader framework. Practical experience can enhance general knowledge and visa versa creating higher levels of performance.

In hospitality, knowledge and skills in interpersonal behavior, problem-solving, service systems, communication, leading, self-management, industry knowledge, strategic planning and critical/creative thinking are designated as important. Skills are applied to everyday service management operations that include customer relations management databases, handling customer complaints, solving customer complaints, directing others, improving processes and developing strategies.

Service managers must balance the needs of customers with the organization in day-to-day interactions that require a higher level of interpersonal skills than general managers. Within minutes they are expected to find a solution to customer complaints, seek alternative services, and rectify problems. Knowledge must be precise enough to ensure better performance outcomes.

Citations	Hospitality Management Skills
Raybould & Wilkins, 2006; Johanson, et. al, 2011; Everson, 2014; Kay & Russette, 2000	Interpersonal Knowledge
Raybould & Wilkins, 2006; Johanson, et. al, 2011	Problem-solving Skills
Jeou-Shyan & Hsin-Yi, 2006	Service Systems/CRM

	Understanding
Johanson, et. al, 2011; Cheung, Law, & He, 2010; Everson, 2014	Communication (written and verbal) Skills
Cheung, Law, & He, 2010; Kay & Russette, 2000	Leadership Abilities
Raybould & Wilkins, 2006	Self-Management Abilities
Cheung, Law, & He, 2010; Jeou-Shyan & Hsin-Yi, 2006	Service Industry Knowledge
Jeou-Shyan & Hsin-Yi, 2006; Kay & Russette, 2000	Strategic Planning Abilities
Everson, 2014; Kay & Russette, 2000	Critical/Creative Thinking Skills
<b>Citations</b>	<b>General Management Skills</b>
Shuayto, 2013; Yu, et. al., 2005	Responsibility/Accountability
Shuayto, 2013; Tewari & Sharma, 2011	Interpersonal Knowledge
Shuayto, 2013; Yu, et. al., 2005	Communication (written and verbal) Skills
Shuayto, 2013; Tewari & Sharma, 2011	Teamwork
Shuayto, 2013; Yu, et. al., 2005	Ethical Values
Shuayto, 2013; Tewari & Sharma, 2011	Strategic Planning Abilities
Shuayto, 2013; Tewari & Sharma, 2011	Critical/Creative Thinking
Mor, et. al., 2013	Cultural Knowledge
Tewari & Sharma, 2011	Leadership

### Conclusion

Successful recruitment has a profound impact on organizational success. The right people should be placed in positions to better manage the daily operations of the business. Proper recruiting methods include a fair evaluation of candidate's skills and comparison to organizational needs. When a successful hire occurs, organizations, have selected a candidate that fits with the necessary job functions.

Breaking down and defining the service functions within an organization can be beneficial in selecting specific skills of service management applicants. General functions should be narrowed down to specific duties and the required skills to complete those daily duties. Senior managers should consider differentiating the specific skills needed for placement in job descriptions that act as guidelines for recruitment.

Service management skills differ from general management skills by being more focused on industry related knowledge and more applicable to the businesses that hire them. In addition to broad skills service managers need higher abilities in interpersonal communication, leadership, creative/critical thinking, problem-solving and customer relationship management systems.

Understanding which skills are oriented more towards general management and those focused on service management can make a difference in successful recruitment. Companies should specifically seek out and encourage closer alignment of skills to job functions to cut down on cost and learning delay times. A proper placement starts with adequate assessment of organizational needs.

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