

MINNESOTA HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY EXPECTATIONS OF GRADUATES FROM THE
HOTEL-RESTAURANT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM AT ALEXANDRIA TECHNICAL
COLLEGE

by

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A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Master of Science Degree
With a Major in

Hospitality & Tourism Administration

Approved: 3 Semester Credits

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ABSTRACT

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(Title)

<u>Hospitality and Tourism</u>	<u>Robert Davies</u>	<u>7/01</u>	<u>61</u>
(Graduate Major)	(Research Advisor)	(Mo./Yr.)	(# pages)

American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual

(Name of Style Manual used in this Study)

This study examined Minnesota Hospitality Industry expectations of graduates from the two-year Hotel-Restaurant Management Program (HRM) at Alexandria Technical College in Alexandria, Minnesota. The study investigated industry management perceptions of the general business, general education, and industry specific skills and personal traits needed by graduates as they leave college and accept entry-level management positions.

A questionnaire was given to a sampling of Minnesota's lodging and foodservice industry. The questionnaire addressed demographic data, importance of general education and industry specific skills, skills best learned in industry or in the college setting, and a prioritization of personal traits expected of graduates.

It was found that the highest ranking skills were delivering quality customer service, employee relations, motivating employees, problem solving, managing diversity, planning and conducting training, interpersonal speaking, sanitation, and food and beverage controls. General business skills were most valued, with general education and technical skills following. Traits that ranked the highest included positive attitude, honesty, and hardworking. The skills perceived to be best learned on the job included delivering quality customer service, housekeeping management, facilities and maintenance management, front office management, and employee relations. Skills found to be best learned in the classroom included writing skills, computer skills, hospitality law, accounting, math, and public speaking.

The HRM program should strongly consider analyzing its current curriculum to include study in these priority areas, with future studies conducted bi-annually.

Acknowledgements

I heartily thank Bob Davies for his superb coaching, mentoring and advising. Bob went the extra mile to help make this study possible. I also wish to thank Harlan Karlstad for his support in creating and completing this study, and Larry Shellito for the resources that helped to make the study possible.

Many thanks go to my wife Kay and my daughter Libby, who encouraged me to continue my education and for the support and listening ear they provided. You two are the greatest!

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CHAPTER 1

Study Introduction

Significance of the Study

The instructors in the Hotel-Restaurant Management (HRM) Program at Alexandria Technical College (ATC) are attempting to determine the relevance of the program curriculum, leading to revisions in curriculum. To provide direction for these potential revisions, a determination of the needs of the potential employers in Minnesota's hospitality industry is needed. Minnesota will be the target since ATC receives most of its funding from the state of Minnesota and most graduates seek employment within the state. Minnesota lodging and restaurant facilities will be asked to participate in the study. This study, through the use of secondary and primary data, will attempt to determine what the industry expects of ATC HRM graduates.

To express the significance of the study in a simplistic view, a basic premise in marketing can be looked at. This basic premise is to determine needs of the consumer, then develop and deliver need-satisfying products and services. The mission of the HRM program at ATC reflects this.

Up to this point, the needs of the employer customers of the program have been determined through a program advisory council. The council is made up of ten to twelve industry leaders from Minnesota who meet once per year with the HRM program instructors. A primary function of the council is to review and make curriculum recommendations for the program, and make recommendations for program budget, field trips, and other program activities.

The board has served its purpose well. But a limitation is that it is a rather small, unscientific sample population who may or may not reflect the industry as a whole. For that reason, the program was looking to a larger population, then using random and non-random sampling to obtain a response that stands much more chance of reflecting the industry as a whole. The study will attempt to provide the board with findings from a broader base, enabling curriculum recommendations to be more encompassing.

The Alexandria Technical College is undergoing a major strategic planning initiative, which serves as another internal influence on HRM graduate expectations. Unlike previous strategic planning models used, the planning process specifically involves program areas of study in the tactical portion of the planning model. The tactical portion of the strategic planning model is referred to as Program Management.

The Program Management model is a method of program evaluation with a primary goal of attempting to keep ATC academic programs current with the needs of the industries the programs serves. This study attempts to define regional needs of the hospitality industry and assist in justifying program curriculum choices.

An important external influence that affects the program and is a driving force behind this study is the North Central Association of Colleges and Universities (NCA) Criteria Three (NCA, 2000). This mandates assessment of student academic achievement. In order to assess student learning, student outcomes need to be determined. The HRM program is looking to use the findings of this study to assist in determining the skills and learning that needs assessment.

The NCA assessment mandate is rooted in a 1988 Federal Department of Education directive to regional accrediting bodies, with NCA being one of the larger of

these. This directive asks the regional accrediting bodies to require assessment in their member schools. The roots of this directive came from the U.S. Congress in the mid-1990's (Mauriello, 1995). The Federal Government was concerned with the accountability of funding that higher education institutions receive. In essence, the Federal Government wants "proof" that the funding received is producing a "result." With the conservative shift in congressional control, the general consensus was that standards and accountability were needed in higher education. While the Congress may not presently be as conservative, the issue of accountability is still there.

NCA has also established another requirement that all college programs have a coherent general education requirement (NCA, 2000). This could have presented a problem to the HRM program as Minnesota Statute 136F.32 does not allow general education in diploma programs without approval from the program's advisory council. The HRM Advisory Council approved a general education component, so a conflict does not exist.

ATC has taken these mandates seriously and has developed a comprehensive academic assessment plan. At ATC, each academic program develops outcomes for the respective programs. The program must then identify and implement methods for assessing student performance related to these outcomes (ATC Assessment Plan, 1998). These outcomes are classified under the following headings:

- 1) Demonstrate computer proficiency at a level compatible with job demands
- 2) Exhibit positive attitudes and work habits
- 3) Demonstrate proper sanitation techniques
- 4) Understand financial reports
- 5) Display a working knowledge of hospitality marketing functions
- 6) Apply work skills appropriate to the industry
- 7) Develop a business plan
- 8) Practice effective supervision, leadership and human relations skills

These program-specific outcomes are in addition to seven outcomes that are expected of every ATC graduate:

- 1) Demonstrate effective communication skills
- 2) Display responsible and ethical behavior
- 3) Demonstrate professional attitude
- 4) Demonstrate problem-solving skills
- 5) Demonstrate the ability to work in teams
- 6) Be sensitive to issues of equity and social needs
- 7) Balance work and family

The assessments of these outcomes are used in a continuous improvement cycle to help in making curriculum and delivery adjustments for program courses.

The U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Outlook Handbook (Department of Labor, 2000) also provides direction for setting expectations of graduates. The handbook states that lodging managers must possess several technical and general skills. Examples of technical skills include housekeeping, foodservice administration and catering, and maintenance and engineering. Similarly, the Handbook identifies nutrition and food planning, culinary skills and sanitation as needed skills for restaurant managers (Department of Labor, 2000). These reports also show a strong relationship in the similarity of the non-technical skills that both lodging and restaurant managers should possess.

Several factors affect the priority of technical skills needed by restaurant and lodging managers. One factor affecting this priority is the level of the position a graduate accepts. Graduates of a hospitality graduate program are more likely to need upper-level skills that may not be technically oriented (Keiser, 2000). It is assumed that graduate-level students have experience in the technical aspects of hospitality

management and can relate to the lower-level management positions. More global, strategic skills would be expected from this group.

The importance of non-technical skills was also noted in a Canadian study (Rossing, 1997). The top expectations of a Manitoba sampling of small to medium sized hotels and restaurants were of a non-technical nature. The expectation areas with the highest ranking were personal behavior, teamwork and academic. The lowest ranking were of a technical nature.

From a U.S. industry perspective, widely mentioned research came from the National Restaurant Association's research report entitled Foodservice Manager 2000 (1992). The report was designed to show what the educational priorities of hospitality graduates in the year 2000 should be. The report identifies the top priorities as (in order from most important to least), communication, leadership, customer relations, training and motivation. Again, the importance of non-technical skills is noted.

The proposed study will attempt to determine if Minnesota's hospitality industry has similar expectations of ATC HRM graduates. The study will examine technical and non-technical expectations, the priority of these expectations, and other factors that the industry deems important to graduates.

Statement of the Problem

The stated problem is, "What are Minnesota Hospitality Industry expectations of graduates from the Hotel-Restaurant Management Program at Alexandria Technical College?"

This study attempted to determine several objectives related to industry

expectations of HRM graduates. The four major objectives of this study were to examine:

1. The industry-specific technical skill expectations of HRM graduates.
2. The industry general business and general education expectations of HRM graduates.
3. The personal traits and other skills that are expected of HRM graduates.
4. Where the learning for the various skills should take place.

KEY WORDS AND PHRASES

Alexandria Technical College (ATC)

Bar/Night Club

Curriculum

General Business Expectations

General Education Expectations

Hospitality Industry

Hotel-Restaurant Management Program (HRM)

Industry/Technical Expectations

Lodging

Minnesota Hotel and Lodging Association (MHLA)

Minnesota Restaurant Association (MRA)

North Central Association of Colleges and Universities (NCA)

Personal Traits

Program Management

Resort

Restaurant

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

Overview

To provide direction for the study, this literature review focused on secondary data that indicated employer expectations of hospitality graduates. The review looked not only at the industry, but started with a review of governmental, accrediting organizations, and other stakeholder expectations of the graduates.

Minnesota Agency and Statutory Expectations

The state agency that directs Alexandria Technical College is the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU). MnSCU has a set of Board Policies that must be followed. Although most of these policies relate to the overall operation of the college, there are some that affect the program level. The first policy, MnSCU Board Policy 3.17 (2000), establishes the type of awards that can be offered to graduating students. The HRM program currently offers the degree and the diploma. The degree must have a minimum of 18 credits in general education, while the diploma has no general education criteria. The HRM degree currently has the minimum 18 credits of general education while the diploma has 12. In fact, there are only two classes that are different between the two. Of the 40 students currently in the program, 33 are on the diploma track and 7 are on the degree track.

In addition to MnSCU guidelines, Minnesota Statute 136F.32 (1999) mandates that technical colleges must offer diploma programs unless MnSCU has determined that the only acceptable credential is a degree for that program. The statute further indicates that diploma programs cannot have a general education component unless

there is an articulation agreement requiring it, a trade or industry requires it, or a program advisory board requires it.

The maximum credit total of the diploma or degree allowed by MnSCU is seventy-two credits. A waiver for the HRM program could be applied for to possibly obtain an increase to the credit total. However, based on previous experience, the likelihood of being granted an increase by MnSCU is minimal so the program will stay at the seventy-two-credit threshold.

At the 2000 HRM advisory board meeting, it was agreed that 12 credits of general education are needed in the current diploma track. Findings from this study may lead to new recommendations to raise or lower that limit.

An Overview of Industry Expectations of College Graduates

While the expectations of government and accreditation stakeholders are important to college programs, the most important set of expectations for the HRM program at ATC are those of its graduates' potential employers. This study attempted to determine more closely the expectations of these stakeholders. These expectations were expressed in the form of skills and traits that the industry expected from graduates of the HRM program.

Previous research of expectations of college graduates is not available in large quantities. Specific research to hospitality industry expectations is in even shorter supply. The review of literature that follows highlighted findings of some of this research, which served as a guide to the study. These findings were broken down into two categories. These categories were 1) Technical Expectations of Industry, and,

2) Industry General Business and General Education Expectations. Technical expectations included those skills that were specific to hotel and restaurant management. Since there were many similarities between restaurant and lodging technical skills, these expectations were not separated, but listed together. Industry General Business and General Education Expectations included those skills that are more general and not specific to the hospitality industry.

An argument that exists among college faculty is the importance of technical skills versus the importance of general business skills and general education requirements. Many faculty are reluctant to replace industry-specific training with more general, non-industry specific curricula (Bach, Milman, 1996). This study found that part of this reluctance may be due to issues regarding job security. If a program incorporates curriculum that is not specific to industry, program instructors may not be qualified to teach this subject matter. Fewer courses raise concerns of job cuts.

The order of the topic headings for this literature review didn't necessarily reflect the priority of the areas covered. It is generally regarded that graduates of hospitality programs have received proper instruction and possess adequate technical skills. On the other hand, some studies indicate that while technical skills of graduates are adequate, interpersonal skills possessed by graduates of hospitality programs are not adequate (Smith, 1991).

Technical Expectations of Industry

Most of the literature reviewed focuses on technical and non-technical expectations. The terms technical and non-technical are not used in the same context by all researchers. Information technology (computer skills) can have both technical

and non-technical implications. In either case, the expectation that the industry has for these skills is middle or higher in comparison to other expectations. A study (Breiter, Hort, 2000) attempted to prioritize this broad area. The findings of their study show that the use of inventory, point of sale, scheduling, accounting and purchasing software rank highest. These are obviously technically related expectations. Payroll, word processing and spreadsheet software were ranked as the next important areas. These could be considered non-technical. The results of this study show that broad topic headings for expectations will give only limited direction to redefining the curriculum of a hospitality program. If the proposed study cannot determine specific expectations, a follow-up study may be needed for further clarification of the expectations.

A 1999 study (Rudolph) was intended to identify the highest technical competencies expected of hospitality graduates. Computer skills and human resources were ranked as high priorities as were cost concept understanding, time management, understanding of marketing, and understanding technological applications. Some of these skills could be identified as non-technical.

Several limitations seem apparent in this study. All of the expectations identified in this study were expressed at a basic knowledge or an understanding level of learning, versus an application level as many other studies did. The expectations were also not just from current industry sources. This was a Delphi study using educators from “prestigious institutions” such as Michigan State, UNLV, and the University of Delaware, with many of the respondents holding the positions of department chair or dean. The industry experts were made up of company presidents, property general managers and human resources leaders. It is unknown as to how many of the

respondents in this study had actually been involved in the hiring process of an individual in the last five years.

The Educational Institute (EI) of the American Hotel and Motel Association (AH&MA) conducted a survey (1996) to determine the departments of lodging properties with the highest priority of training need. The findings of this study reveal that the front office department had the greatest need, followed by food and beverage service departments, housekeeping, food and beverage production and maintenance. The most pressing need in front office was for guest service training, with supervision and leadership skills also ranking high.

The study also indicated that achieving the certifications currently offered by the EI were not a high priority. Skills, not recognition was the key to making the training meaningful. This was apparent to the faculty of the HRM program. Students in the program at one time could earn up to 14 certifications from EI. The HRM program then shifted away from the certification focus to an outcome focus, with only 3 EI certification opportunities left in the program. This has allowed the program to assess industry expectations, instead of being tied to assessing EI text expectations.

Once again, another national study has shown that the while technical skills are important, the non-technical skills are at a higher priority. While there are shortcomings to this study, the results are comparable to other studies of industry expectations.

Industry General Business and General Education Expectations

Most research available for this review suggests that non-technical expectations are a higher priority for the industry than technical. This may be a misnomer, in that

many employers expect the technical skills to be there, and may look past these skills to the non-technical areas. An attempt of this study was to prioritize technical versus non-technical. Given the limitations of credits, resources and other variables, the content and priority of these expectations was important to the recommendations made to the HRM program from the study.

Both lodging and restaurant industry non-technical expectations abound. Graduates of hospitality programs should be able to handle stress, deal with a diverse workforce, solve problems and pay attention to details. Written, verbal and non-verbal communication skills are essential along with personal qualities such as initiative, self-discipline, organization, motivation, delegation and leadership (Department of Labor, 2000).

The expectations cited above are of a very general nature and are best suited to provide a broad framework. Much of the information acquired for the report came from information provided by the National Restaurant Association and the American Hotel & Motel Association. This information may be based more on opinion rather than research based, as no specific sources are identified in the report.

Further review of current literature finds three non-technical areas of industry expectation coming to the forefront. These areas include human resource management, dealing with a culturally diverse workforce, and the practice of ethic behavior in the workplace. This is also reflected on the ATC campus, as these three areas are among the eight expected outcomes of all ATC graduates (ATC General Advisory Council, 2000).

Ethics is an important business discussion, especially for the hospitality industry, as noted by Khan and McCleary in their 1996 study of the hospitality industry. A study on teaching ethics to hospitality program students identifies several ethical concerns for hospitality industry managers. With access to supplies such as food, linens, cleaning products, etc., employee pilferage is an emerging concern. When the stress of working long, odd hours sets in, some managers may be able to justify stealing these items as they see themselves as deserving. This also makes it easier to become involved with alcohol and drug abuse, and the misuse of food, beverage and room products and services. Stress could also lead to sexual harassment and inappropriate relationships with customers and guests.

Leadership skills are highly valued by the hospitality industry. In a 1996 study of hospitality industry leaders, (Breiter & Clements), leadership was ranked as the highest priority. Managerial communication, employee relations and training were ranked second, third and fourth, respectively. Technical skills such as hospitality law, food and beverage management and rooms division management were ranked toward the bottom of twenty skills cited. The importance of human resource skills is driven home again by the results of this study. This study also had the closest resemblance to the proposed study, so the findings here took on added meaning.

A study completed by Hubbard and Popovich (1996) also echoes the importance of leadership. An important distinction is made between learning what leadership is to actually teaching students how to manage.

In another view, research completed by Campbell and Muller (1995) shows that different levels of management have different expectations. Area managers considered

human resources as a higher priority than store managers. This poses some new questions. Is the curriculum of the program designed to prepare employees for entry-level employment, for upper level management responsibility, both or more?

A 1994 study (Gardner, Sciarini) looked at factors that hospitality industry recruiters considered important in the selection process. Their findings indicate that a willingness to relocate was their most important selection factor, followed by extra-curricular activities and major grade point average. These findings may not fit directly into the topical headings of this literature review, but they can be interpreted as personal traits (willingness to relocate), evidence of leadership qualities (extra-curricular), and technical skills (major gpa).

Another important finding of the Gardner and Sciarini study (1994) was that computer and foreign language skills ranked lowest. This may be due to the notion that recruiters just hire graduates and may have no additional contact after the graduate begins work. A study of the operation managers of the companies that the recruiters work for may yield a far different set of expectations.

The Gardner & Sciarini study (1994) also found that recruiters might not have an awareness of factors they use in making decisions. A study of this nature may make them more conscious of their decision factors and expectations.

The Enz and Fulford study (1993) site the most important issues to a chain's success as increasing profitability, delivering quality, service, cleanliness and atmosphere, reducing turnover, determining customer needs, attracting and retaining employees, and name recognition and positive climate. From the surface it would seem that only a few of these issues are human resource related. In addition to the affect on

operational areas, all of these are human resource oriented. For example, organizations that have chosen to attach costs to the staffing process (hiring, training, orienting, etc.) find a staggering effect on the income statement. With an increasing shortage in labor supply and stable consumer demand of industry products, the concern for this is likely to continue. Delivering quality service, cleanliness and atmosphere is also human resource related, as is determining customer needs. The selection and training processes are a key to hiring persons who possess these skills or to provide training to instill and reinforce them. The same holds true with image and reputation.

This study (Enz, Fulford, 1993) also found that selection and retention of staff, and the reduction of employee turnover were important skills to possess. Given the labor intensive nature of the hospitality industry the importance of selection and retention continues to be a concern.

The study of cultural diversity is an issue that the hospitality industry finds important. Since the geographic locations of jobs secured by HRM program graduates have seen a marked change in population demographics and socio-economics, graduates must be able to deal with a more diverse work force, customer base, and ownership of their respective operations. A 1992 study by Gamio and Sneed suggests that hospitality graduates will face a very diverse workforce in the three fore-mentioned areas. While greater Minnesota may face this to a lesser extent, graduates of the HRM program who work in metropolitan areas have provided informal testimonials on the importance of being ready to work with people from many backgrounds, and to serve a culturally diverse customer base. Similarly, the Alexandria area has recently welcomed owners of three existing lodging operations who are relatively new residents of the

United States. Current students who work at these operations have experienced the opportunities presented when working with people from other cultures. As many of the HRM program students come from rural areas with little or no diversity, this has been an “eye-opener” to many of them, with the experience being largely positive.

Among hospitality recruiters, human resource management skills possessed by job candidates are a high priority in the selection process (Van Hoof, 1991). Although human resource management is a broad subject area, specific areas are identified.

Finally, an earlier study supports the notion that leadership is an important skill. A 1990 study found that leadership and motivation are important expectations for hospitality programs to consider. Getting the job done as a hospitality manager requires successful management and leadership skills to administer a service staff (Tanke, 1990).

The review of literature showed that there are several expectations of college graduates. The expectations come from government, accrediting bodies, and the industry. These expectations were of a technical and a non-technical nature. The study attempted to determine which of these expectations were most important, and to place priority on these important areas.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This chapter discusses the methods and procedures utilized in this study including the population, research design and procedures, data analysis procedures and the limitations of the methodology. The purpose of this study was to examine the Minnesota hospitality industry's expectations of graduates from the Hotel-Restaurant Management Program (HRM) at Alexandria Technical College. The study investigated the perceptions of various levels of management in lodging, food and beverage, and other areas of the industry where HRM graduates were typically employed. A questionnaire was used to collect data from the population. This questionnaire was based on the study objectives and also referenced a 1997 questionnaire developed by the Department of Hospitality and Tourism at the University of Wisconsin-Stout.

Subjects

The population of this study was the membership list of the Minnesota Hotel and Lodging Association and the Minnesota Restaurant Association. These associations are part of Hospitality Minnesota, the largest hospitality trade organization in Minnesota. HRM graduates typically go to work in lodging and restaurant operations in Minnesota, and these associations represent the vast majority of the employers of HRM graduates.

Sampling

The typical dispersion of HRM graduate employment positions is fifty percent restaurant and fifty percent lodging. Based on this trend a stratified random sampling process was used. One hundred eight (108) companies were selected from each of the two associations listed above for a total sample population of 216. The total population is

2,787. Approximately two-thirds of the total population was restaurants, with the remainder classified as lodging.

Survey Instrument

The four-page questionnaire used for this study was divided into four areas. The survey is found in the appendix. The first area attempted to gather general business and respondent demographic data. This included the type and location of the business, the number of establishments owned and/or operated by the respondent's company, sales volume and affiliation, position, longevity in position and education level of respondents, and the number of graduates hired by the respondent's company and the colleges or other sources used for hiring.

The second area of the questionnaire used a common Likert Scale with a 1 – 5 (1=least important; 5=most important) rating scale. This area attempted to determine the priorities of skills from a list of 26 identified skill sets. These skills were divided into three general areas: General education skills; general business skills; and industry specific skills. The individual skills were randomly dispersed on the page.

The third area asked respondents to identify the top six personal traits most desired in graduates. A list of 28 personal traits developed by the researcher was used, and respondents were asked to check the six traits perceived to be most important in graduates.

The fourth area asked respondents to determine whether the 26 skill areas were best learned in a college classroom environment or on the job.

Survey Procedures

The surveys were mailed on March 15, 2001. The questionnaire included a cover letter asking the respondent to mail the survey back in a self-addressed, stamped envelope by March 31, 2001.

Limitations

The respondents in this study were owners and/or management of establishments that were identified as members of either the Minnesota Hotel and Lodging Association, or the Minnesota Restaurant Association. Although the majority of potential employers of HRM graduates are members of one or both associations, not all are. It is therefore unknown if the data can be generalized to represent all employers of HRM graduates. Since some HRM graduates leave the state, it is unknown if the data can be generalized for employers in other states. The research is also limited to use by the HRM program at Alexandria Technical College.

CHAPTER 4

Results

The purpose of this study was to determine what the industry expects of ATC HRM graduates. This chapter will present the results with background information first, with demographic and general data next. The next sections will present the results of the respondents' expectations of graduate skills, graduate personal traits, and where these skills are best learned. The last section will show relationships between the independent variables. The results were examined and analyzed by using SPSS (Statistical Program for the Social Sciences).

Frequencies and percentages were run on the demographic and general data provided by the respondents. The questionnaire was mailed to a sample of 216 industry businesses. Sixty-six (66) surveys were returned, resulting in a 30.7% return rate.

Of the respondents, 53% indicated they worked for lodging establishments, 30% worked for restaurants, and 17% represented other types of establishments such as bars and resorts. The placement of the respondent varies from 41% in Twin Cities Metropolitan locations, 86% in Greater Minnesota locations, and 8% located outside Minnesota. The totals do not equal 100% because some businesses have multiple locations. Businesses with one establishment represented 24% of the total respondents, while 43% indicated their company had two to ten outlets, and 33% had 11 or more outlets.

The study found that businesses with average establishment sales of less than two million dollars in sales equaled 34% of the respondents, businesses with two million to six million dollars represented 37%, and 29% had average establishment sales of over six

million dollars. With regard to affiliation or operation type, 58% of the businesses were franchises, 35% were independent, and 7% categorized their business as other. Analysis of the age grouping indicated that respondents varied from 43% between 18-34 years old, 39% between 35-49 years old, and 18% older than 49 years of age.

The respondents were also asked to identify their position within the firm, with 21% of the respondents identifying themselves as owners or corporate or multi-unit managers, 42% identifying themselves as general managers, and 37% indicating they were department managers. Six percent of the respondents were in their positions for less than one year, 24% were 1-2 years, 30% were 2-5 years, and 40% were over 5 years in their current position.

Respondents were asked to identify the highest level of education completed. Those citing high school were 8% of the total, 17% had some college, 17% had a two-year degree, 53% had a four-year degree, 4 percent had a graduate degree, and 1% indicated they had other training/education.

With regard to the average number of managers the respondents hired per year 9% hired 0, 57% hired 1-3, 23% hired 4-7, and 11% hired 8 or more. When citing which colleges the respondents hired management candidates from, 39% indicated Alexandria Technical College, 5% indicated Iowa State University, 28% indicated Normandale Community College, 5% identified North Dakota State University, 14% listed University of Minnesota-Crookston, 52% listed UW-Stout, 40% indicated other hospitality/culinary programs, 32% cited other non-hospitality programs, and 25% used none of the above. It should be noted that percentages do not equal 100% as the respondents could select more than one response.

The respondents were asked if they had hired ATC graduates, with 41% indicating they had and 59% indicating they had not, or were unsure if they had.

The second area of the survey asked respondents to identify the importance of various skills. A Likert Scale was used for this question. Tables 1 through 4 identify the results of this area.

Table 1

Rank	Skill Areas – Question 13	Mean	Std. Dev.	1 (n)	2 (n)	3 (n)	4 (n)	5 (n)	Omits (n)
1	Delivering Quality Cust. Service	4.78	.79	2	0	2	2	57	3
2	Employee Relations	4.70	.59	0	1	1	14	47	3
3	Motivating Employees	4.62	.71	0	2	2	14	45	3
4	Problem Solving	4.46	.89	1	3	2	17	40	3
5	Ethics	4.38	.85	0	3	6	18	36	3
6	Managing Diversity	4.25	.80	0	1	11	22	29	3

1=least important, 2=somewhat important, 3=moderately important, 4=important, 5=very important

For item #1, 86% of the respondents felt it was most important, with 9% rating it lesser. The mean score of 4.78 ranks as the highest score for this skill set. Employee diversity, item #2 ranked very high as well, with 3% ranking it lower than important, while 21.2% felt it was important and 71.2% felt it was very important. A mean score of 4.70 ranked 2nd.

Motivating employees, item #3 also ranked in the top three skill sets with a mean score of 4.62. 6% of the respondents found it to be less than important, while 89.4% felt it was important or very important. For item #4, problem solving, 9% felt it was moderately important or less, 25.8% felt it was important, and 60.6% felt it was very important. The mean score of 4.46 also ranks it among the top five skill sets.

For item #5, ethics, 0 felt it was least important, 4.5% felt it was somewhat important, 9.1% felt it was moderately important, 27.3% felt it was important, and 54.5% felt it was very important. The mean of 4.38 ranks just below problem solving.

For item #6, managing diversity, 1.5% scored it as least important, or somewhat important, 16.7% felt it was moderately important, 33.3% felt it was important, and 43.9% felt it was very important. The mean score was 4.26

Table 2

Rank	Skill Areas – Question 13	Mean	Std. Dev.	1 (n)	2 (n)	3 (n)	4 (n)	5 (n)	Omits (n)
7	Planning/Conducting Training	4.24	.80	0	1	11	23	28	3
8	Interpersonal Speaking Skills	4.21	.83	1	0	10	26	26	3
9	Sanitation	4.16	1.04	2	3	8	19	30	4
10	Food and Beverage Controls	4.10	1.01	3	1	7	26	24	5
11	Human Resource Management	3.98	.83	0	2	16	26	19	3
12	Writing Skills	3.87	.99	2	3	14	26	18	3

1=least important, 2=somewhat important, 3=moderately important, 4=important, 5=very important

Table 2 ranks the skill sets in mean order from 7th to 12th place. For item #7, planning and conducting training, 0 felt it was least important, 1.5% felt it was somewhat important, 16.7% felt it was moderately important, 34.8% felt it was important, and 42.4% ranked it as very important. The mean score of 4.24 was .02 less than managing diversity. For item #8, interpersonal speaking skills, 1.5% felt it was least important, 0 felt it was somewhat important, 15.2% felt it was moderately important, 39.4% felt it was important, and 39.4% felt it was very important. The mean was just .03 behind the next highest ranking skill set (4.21 vs. 4.24)

Sanitation, item #9 and food and beverage controls, item #10 were the final skill sets to have means higher than 4. For sanitation, 3% felt it was least important, 4.5% felt

it was somewhat important, 12.1% felt it was moderately important, 28.8% felt it was important, and 45.5% felt it was very important. Food and beverage controls scores ranged from 4.5% feeling it was least important, 1.5% felt it was somewhat important, 10.6% felt it was moderately important, 39.4% felt it was important, and 36.4% felt it was very important.

For item #11, human resource management, 0 felt it was least important, 3% felt it was somewhat important, 24.2% felt it was moderately important, 39.4% felt it was important, and 28.8% felt it was very important. For item #12, writing skills, 3% felt it was least important, 4.5% felt it was somewhat important, 21.2% felt it was moderately important, 39.4% felt it was important, and 27.3% felt it was very important.

Table 3

Rank	Skill Areas – Question 13	Mean	Std. Dev.	1 (n)	2 (n)	3 (n)	4 (n)	5 (n)	Omits (n)
13	Marketing, Advertising, Sales	3.85	1.13	2	6	14	17	23	4
14	Front Office Management	3.75	.95	2	3	17	28	13	3
15	Bar and Beverage Management	3.74	1.20	6	1	14	22	18	5
16	Public Speaking Skills	3.70	.93	1	4	21	24	13	3
17	Facilities/Maintenance Mgmt.	3.67	1.08	4	2	20	22	15	3
18	Hospitality Law	3.67	1.12	4	4	17	22	16	3
19	Hospitality Industry Math Skills	3.67	1.03	2	4	23	18	16	3

1=least important, 2=somewhat important, 3=moderately important, 4=important, 5=very important

Table 3 ranks skill sets 13 through 18. For item #13, marketing, 3% felt it was least important, 9.1% felt it was somewhat important, 21.2% felt it was moderately important, 25.8% felt it was important, and 34.8% felt it was very important. For item #14, front office, 3% felt it was least important, 4.5% felt it was somewhat important,

25.8% felt it was moderately important, 42.4% felt it was important, and 19.7% felt it was very important.

For item #15, bar and beverage management, 9.1% felt it was least important, 1.5% felt it was somewhat important, 21.2% felt it was moderately important, 33.3% felt it was important, and 27.3% felt it was very important. For item #16, public speaking, 1.5% felt it was least important, 6.1% felt it was somewhat important, 31.8% felt it was moderately important, 36.4% felt it was important, and 19.7% felt it was very important. For item #17, facilities management, 6.1% felt it was least important, 3% felt it was somewhat important, 30.3% felt it was moderately important, 33.3% felt it was important, and 22.7% felt it was very important.

For item #18, hospitality law, 6.1% felt it was least important, 6.1% felt it was somewhat important, 25.8% felt it was moderately important, 33.3% felt it was important, and 24.2% felt it was very important. For item #19, math skills, 3% felt it was least important, 6.1% felt it was somewhat important, 34.8% felt it was moderately important, 27.3% felt it was important, and 24.2% felt it was very important.

Table 4

Rank	Skill Areas – Question 13	Mean	Std. Dev.	1 (n)	2 (n)	3 (n)	4 (n)	5 (n)	Omits (n)
20	Accounting	3.60	1.14	4	5	19	19	16	3
21	Current Industry Issues/Trends	3.60	.93	1	6	20	25	10	4
22	Computer: Word Processing, Spreadsheets, etc	3.57	.98	2	6	19	26	10	3
23	Housekeeping Management	3.41	1.24	7	7	12	24	11	5
24	Culinary Skills	3.35	1.31	7	9	16	15	15	4
25	Menu Planning	3.27	1.19	6	10	16	21	9	4
26	Nutrition and Food Planning	3.02	1.07	7	10	22	19	3	5

1=least important, 2=somewhat important, 3=moderately important, 4=important, 5=very important

The final table (table 4) for the skill sets ranks items 20 through 26. This grouping hide the widest mean score range, from 3.60 in accounting and current issues, to item 26, nutrition. For item #20, accounting, 6.1% felt it was least important, 7.6% felt it was somewhat important, 28.8% felt it was moderately important, 28.8% felt it was important, and 24.2% felt it was very important. For item #21, current issues, 1.5% felt it was least important, 9.1% felt it was somewhat important, 30.3% felt it was moderately important, 37.9% felt it was important, and 15.2% felt it was very important. For item #22, computer skills, 3% felt it was least important, 9.1% felt it was somewhat important, 28.8% felt it was moderately important, 39.4% felt it was important, and 15.2% felt it was very important.

For item #23, housekeeping management, 10.6% felt it was least important, 10.6% felt it was somewhat important, 18.2% felt it was moderately important, 36.4% felt it was important, and 16.7% felt it was very important. For item #24, culinary skills, 10.6% felt it was least important, 13.6% felt it was somewhat important, 24.2% felt it was moderately important, 22.7% felt it was important, and 22.7% felt it was very important.

For item #25, menu planning, 9.1% felt it was least important, 15.2% felt it was somewhat important, 24.2% felt it was moderately important, 31.8% felt it was important, and 13.6% felt it was very important. For the last item, nutrition, 10.6% felt it was least important, 15.2% felt it was somewhat important, 33.3% felt it was moderately important, 28.8% felt it was important, and 4.5% felt it was very important.

The findings for the skill areas were also categorized into three areas. The first area was lodging, including full and limited service. Restaurants made up the second area, including establishments that do and do not serve liquor. The third area included

respondents classifying their establishments as bars and nightclubs, resorts, and other.

Using the mean as a basis for ranking, the following ranks were established for each of

the 3 areas. The first area is lodging, shown below, in table 5.

Table 5

Skill Area – Question 13 Lodging (n=34)	Total Mean	Lodg. Mean	Lodg. Rank
Delivering Quality Customer Service	4.78	4.76	1
Employee Relations	4.70	4.56	2
Motivating Employees	4.62	4.50	3
Problem Solving	4.46	4.50	4
Ethics	4.38	4.32	5
Managing Diversity	4.25	4.18	6
Marketing, Advertising, Sales, Strategic Plan.	3.85	4.09	7
Sanitation	4.16	4.03	8
Planning and Conducting Training	4.24	3.97	9
Human Resource Management	3.98	3.97	10
Front Office Management	3.75	3.94	11
Interpersonal Speaking Skills	4.21	3.91	12
Writing Skills	3.87	3.88	13
Hospitality Law	3.67	3.85	14
Facilities and Maintenance Management	3.67	3.82	15
Computer: Word Processing, Spreadsheets, etc	3.57	3.76	16
Food and Beverage Controls	4.10	3.75	17
Housekeeping Management	3.41	3.74	18
Hospitality Industry Math Skills	3.67	3.68	19
Accounting	3.60	3.68	20
Public Speaking Skills	3.70	3.62	21
Current Industry Issues and Trends	3.60	3.61	22
Bar and Beverage Management	3.74	3.56	23
Culinary Skills	3.35	3.36	24
Menu Planning	3.27	3.33	25
Nutrition and Food Planning	3.02	3.18	26

The same format was used for displaying the restaurant rankings for mean scores of the skill areas. This is shown in table 6.

Table 6

Skill Area – Question 13 Restaurants (n = 20)	Total Mean	Rest. Mean	Rest. Rank
Employee Relations	4.70	4.95	1
Motivating Employees	4.62	4.80	2
Delivering Quality Customer Service	4.78	4.70	3
Planning and Conducting Training	4.24	4.55	4
Interpersonal Speaking Skills	4.21	4.50	5
Food and Beverage Controls	4.10	4.45	6
Ethics	4.38	4.40	7
Managing Diversity	4.25	4.35	8
Problem Solving	4.46	4.30	9
Sanitation	4.16	4.10	10
Human Resource Management	3.98	3.85	11
Writing Skills	3.87	3.75	12
Public Speaking Skills	3.70	3.75	13
Bar and Beverage Management	3.74	3.65	14
Hospitality Industry Math Skills	3.67	3.50	15
Current Industry Issues and Trends	3.60	3.45	16
Marketing, Advertising, Sales, Strategic Plan.	3.85	3.35	17
Front Office Management	3.75	3.25	18
Facilities and Maintenance Management	3.67	3.20	19
Accounting	3.60	3.20	20
Hospitality Law	3.67	3.15	21
Computer: Word Processing, Spreadsheets, etc	3.57	3.10	22
Culinary Skills	3.35	2.95	23
Menu Planning	3.27	2.75	24
Nutrition and Food Planning	3.02	2.47	25
Housekeeping Management	3.41	2.44	26

Last, bars, resorts and other establishment mean rankings for skills are shown in table 7.

Table 7

Skill Area – Question 13 Bars, Resorts & Other	Total Mean	Bar, Resort Other Mean	Bar, Resort Other Rank
Delivering Quality Customer Service	4.78	5.00	1
Sanitation	4.16	4.78	2
Employee Relations	4.70	4.67	3(t)
Motivating Employees	4.62	4.67	3(t)
Problem Solving	4.46	4.67	3(t)
Interpersonal Speaking Skills	4.21	4.67	3(t)
Ethics	4.38	4.56	7(t)
Planning and Conducting Training	4.24	4.56	7(t)
Food and Beverage Controls	4.10	4.56	7(t)
Bar and Beverage Management	3.74	4.56	7(t)
Managing Diversity	4.25	4.33	11(t)
Human Resource Management	3.98	4.33	11(t)
Accounting	3.60	4.22	13(t)
Culinary Skills	3.35	4.22	13(t)
Menu Planning	3.27	4.22	13(t)
Writing Skills	3.87	4.11	16(t)
Marketing, Advertising, Sales, Plan.	3.85	4.11	16(t)
Front Office Management	3.75	4.11	16(t)
Public Speaking Skills	3.70	4.11	16(t)
Facilities and Maintenance Mgmt.	3.67	4.11	16(t)
Hospitality Law	3.67	4.11	21(t)
Housekeeping Management	3.41	4.11	21(t)
Hospitality Industry Math Skills	3.67	4.00	23
Current Industry Issues and Trends	3.60	3.89	24(t)
Computer: Word Processing, etc	3.57	3.89	24(t)
Nutrition and Food Planning	3.02	3.56	26

The next area of the survey asked respondents to identify the top six personal traits they valued in graduates. Twenty-eight personal traits were listed, and respondents were asked to check what they perceived to be the six most important traits from the list. Table 8 displays the top 9 traits.

Table 8

Rank total	Question 14 - Personal Traits	Frequency total	Lodging Frequency	Restaurant Frequency	Bar, Resort, Other Freq.
1	Positive Attitude	44	25	13	6
2	Honest	34	18	9	7
3	Hardworking	33	19	9	5
4	Practices Teamwork	27	15	8	4
5	Willingness to Learn	26	16	6	4
6	Takes Pride in Job	25	13	9	3
7(t)	Trustworthy	17	10	6	4
7(t)	Prof. Appearance	17	9	5	3
7(t)	Flexible	17	10	3	4

(t) = tie

Positive attitude was the highest ranking trait. Over 70% (71.4%) of lodging checked yes, 65% of restaurants checked yes, 54.5% of other checked yes, and 66.7% of the total checking yes. Honesty ranked 2nd, with 51.4% of lodging checked yes, 45.0% of restaurants checked yes, 63.6% of other checked yes, and 51.5% of the total checking yes. Hardworking scored a close third, with 54.3% of lodging checked yes, 45.0% of restaurants checked yes, 45.5% of other checked yes, and 50.0% of the total checking yes.

Scores for the remaining traits dip a bit. With practices teamwork, 42.9% of lodging checked yes, 40.0% of restaurants checked yes, 36.4% of other checked yes, with 40.9% of the total checking yes. For willingness to learn it followed closely behind

teamwork. Over 45% (45.7%) of lodging checked yes, 30.0% of restaurants checked yes, 36.4% of other checked yes, with 39.4% of the total checking yes. For takes pride in job, 37.1% of lodging checked yes, 45.0% of restaurants checked yes, 27.3% of other checked yes, with 37.9% of the total checking yes. For trustworthy, 28.6% of lodging checked yes, 30.0% of restaurants checked yes, 36.4% of other checked yes, with 30.3% of the total checking yes. For professional appearance, 25.7% of lodging checked yes, 25.0% of restaurants checked yes, 27.3% of other checked yes, with 25.8% of the total checking yes. For flexible, 28.6% of lodging checked yes, 115.0% of restaurants checked yes, 36.4% of other checked yes, with 25.8% of the total checking yes.

Table 9

Rank total	Question 14 - Personal Traits	Frequency total	Lodging Frequency	Restaurant Frequency	Bar, Resort, Other Freq.
10	Self-Starter	16	11	3	2
11	Dependable	15	9	4	2
12	Responsible	14	7	5	2
13	Adapts Easily to Change	13	6	3	4
14(t)	Courteous/Considerate	12	6	3	3
14(t)	Likes Job	12	4	7	1
14(t)	Dedicated	12	7	3	2
17(t)	Pleasant & Cheerful	11	6	0	5
17(t)	Able to Work Ind.	11	3	5	3

(t) = tie

Table 9 identifies the next highest ranking (by total score) traits. For self-starter, 31.4% of lodging checked yes, 15.0% of restaurants checked yes, 18.2% of other checked yes, with 24.2% of the total checking yes. For dependable, 25.7% of lodging checked yes, 20.0% of restaurants checked yes, 18.2% of other checked yes, with 22.7% of the total checking yes.

For responsible, 20.0% of lodging checked yes, 25.0% of restaurants checked yes, 18.2% of other checked yes, with 21.2% of the total checking yes. For adapts easily to change, 17.1% of lodging checked yes, 15.0% of restaurants checked yes, 36.4% of other checked yes, with 19.7% of the total checking yes. For courteous and considerate, 17.1% of lodging checked yes, 15.0% of restaurants checked yes, 27.3% of other checked yes, with 18.2% of the total checking yes. For likes job, 11.4% of lodging checked yes, 35.0% of restaurants checked yes, 9.1% of other checked yes, with 18.2% of the total checking yes. For dedicated, 20.0% of lodging checked yes, 15.0% of restaurants checked yes, 18.2% of other checked yes, with 18.2% of the total checking yes.

For pleasant and cheerful, 17.1% of lodging checked yes, 0 restaurants checked yes, 45.5% of other checked yes, with 16.7% of the total checking yes. For able to work independently, 8.6% of lodging checked yes, 35.0% of restaurants checked yes, 27.3% of other checked yes, with 16.7% of the total checking yes.

Table 10

Rank total	Question 14 - Personal Traits	Frequency total	Lodging Frequency	Restaurant Frequency	Bar, Resort, Other Freq.
19	Good Listener	9	3	6	0
20	Follows Instructions	7	3	3	1
21	Understands Others	6	3	2	1
22	Confident	4	3	1	0
23(t)	Asks Appr. Questions	3	1	1	1
23(t)	Prompt	3	1	2	0
23(t)	Creative	3	2	1	0
26	Not Easily Distracted	1	0	1	0
27(t)	Shows Gratitude	0	0	0	0

(t) = tie

Table 10 identifies the lowest ranking personal traits. For good listener, 8.6% of lodging checked yes, 30.0% of restaurants checked yes, 0 other checked yes, with 13.6% of the total checking yes. For follows instructions, 8.6% of lodging checked yes, 15.0% of restaurants checked yes, 9.1% of other checked yes, with 10.6% of the total checking yes. For empathy, 8.6% of lodging checked yes, 10.0% of restaurants checked yes, 9.1% of other checked yes, with 9.1% of the total checking yes. For the remaining traits, a total of 4 or less yes checkmarks were tallied.

The last area covered in the survey asked respondents to indicate where the 26 skills are best learned. The choices were on the job or in college. Some respondents checked both. The results were tallied but were not broken down according to types of establishments. Tables 11 through 13 show the results of this area.

Table 11

Skill Area	On the Job Frequency	In College Frequency	Both Frequency	Total Frequency	Omits
Delivering Quality Cust. Service	49	11	4	64	2
Housekeeping Management	45	12	3	60	6
Facilities/Maintenance Mgmt.	43	15	4	62	4
Front Office Management	42	18	2	62	4
Employee Relations	42	12	10	64	2
Motivating Employees	38	18	8	64	2
Bar & Beverage Management	36	21	3	60	6
Managing Diversity	36	23	5	64	2

Table 11 identifies the skills respondents felt would be best learned on the job. For customer service, 74.2% identified on the job as the best place to learn this skill, 16.7% identified college, 6.1% said both, and 3.0% were omits. For housekeeping management, 68.2% identified college as the best, 18.2% said college, 4.5% said, both,

with 9.1% omits. For facilities and maintenance, 65.2% identified on the job, 22.7% said college, 6.1% said both, with 6.1% omits. For front office, 63.6% identified in the job, 27.3% said college, 3.0% said both, with 6.1% omits. For employee relations, 63.6% said on the job, 18.2% said college, 15.2% said both, with 3% omits. For motivating employees, 57.6% said on the job, 27.3% said college, 12.1% identified both, with 3.0% omits. For bar and beverage, 54.5% identified on the job, 31.8% said college, 4.5% said both, with 9.1% omits. For managing diversity, 54.5% identified on the job, 34.8% said college, 7.6% said both, with 3.0% omits.

Table 12

Skill Area	On the Job Frequency	In College Frequency	Both Frequency	Total Frequency	Omits
Sanitation	34	25	4	63	3
Planning and Conducting Training	32	28	3	63	3
Problem Solving	31	24	9	64	2
Current Industry Issues/Trends	30	30	4	64	2
Food and Beverage Controls	27	31	5	63	3
Interpersonal Speaking	24	37	3	64	2
Menu Planning	23	34	5	62	4
Human Resource Management	20	40	4	64	2
Culinary Skills	19	38	4	61	5

Table 12 shows the skill sets that respondents felt needed both on the job and in college training. For sanitation, 51.5% said on the job, 37.9% said college, 6.1% said both, with 4.5% omits. For training, 48.5% said on the job, 42.4% said college, 4.5% said both, with 4.5% omits. For problem solving, 47.0% said on the job, 36.4% said college, 13.6% said both, with 3.0% omits. For issues and trends, 45.5% were tallied for both on the job and college, 6.1% said both, with 3.0% omits. For food and beverage

controls, 40.9% said on the job, 47.0% said college, 7.6% said both, with 4.5% omits. For interpersonal speaking, 36.4% said on the job, 56.1% said college, 4.5% said both, with 3.0% omits. For menu planning, 34.8% said on the job, 51.5% said college, 7.6% said both, with 6.1% omits. For human resource management, 30.3% said on the job, 60.6% said college, 6.1% said both, with 3.0 omits. For culinary skills, 28.8% said on the job, 57.6% said college, 6.1% said both, with 7.6% omits.

Table 13

Skill Area	On the Job Frequency	In College Frequency	Both Frequency	Total Frequency	Omits
Marketing, Advertising, Sales	18	41	2	61	5
Ethics	18	38	7	63	3
Public Speaking	8	53	1	62	4
Hospitality Industry Math	7	54	2	63	3
Accounting	6	54	3	63	3
Nutrition & Food Planning	6	52	2	60	6
Computer Skills	3	58	2	63	3
Writing Skills	3	59	1	63	3
Hospitality Law	3	57	3	63	3

Table 13 shows the skill sets that respondents felt were learned best on the job. For marketing, 27.3% said on the job, 62.1% said college, 3.0% said both, with 7.6% omits. For ethics, 27.3% said on the job, 57.6% identified college, 10.6% said both, with 4.5% omits. For public speaking, 12.1% said on the job, 80.3% said college, 1.5% said both, with 6.1% omits. For math, 10.6% said on the job, 81.8% said college, 3.0% said both, with 4.5% omits. For accounting, 9.1% said on the job, 81.8% identified college, 4.5% said both, with 4.5% omits. For nutrition, 9.1% said on the job, 78.8% said college, 3.0% said both, with 9.1% omits. For computer skills, 4.5% said on the job, 87.9%

identified college, 3.0% said both, with 4.5% omits. For writing skills, 4.5% said on the job, 89.4% said college, 1.5% said both, with 4.5% omits. Finally, for hospitality law, 4.5% said on the job, 86.4% said college, 4.5% said both, with 4.5% omits.

The data analysis indicated that there are specific content items and concepts that need to be addressed in curriculum. Chapter five will discuss the findings and how ATC can utilize the results of this study.

CHAPTER 5

Summary and Conclusions

Summary

The purpose of this study was to gather data to help determine the relevance of the program curriculum, leading to revisions in the Alexandria Technical College Hotel-Restaurant Management program curriculum. This study investigated industry respondents' perceptions of skill areas, personal traits, where the training should take place, and general demographic data of the respondents. The four major objectives of this study were to examine:

1. The industry-specific technical skill expectations of HRM graduates.
2. The industry general business and general education expectations of HRM graduates.
3. The personal traits and other skills that are expected of HRM graduates.
4. Where the learning for the various skills should take place.

The review of literature provided an overview of the expectations of the HRM program and of its graduates. The expectations of government, accrediting organizations, industry, and other stakeholders were examined. The literature identified the forces that curriculum managers must consider as curriculum is developed and changed, as well as a move away from a program with mostly technical components to a mixed program that includes general education, general business courses, while maintaining a pertinent technical base.

The population for the study was the 2,787 members of the Minnesota Hotel and Lodging Association and the Minnesota Restaurant Association. A stratified random

sampling was done using the membership lists, with 108 members randomly selected from each association, for a total sample population of 216 establishments.

The questionnaire used for this study was divided into four areas. The first area attempted to gather general business and respondent demographic data. This included the type and location of the business, the number of establishments owned and/or operated by the respondent's company, sales volume and affiliation, position, longevity in position and education level of respondents, and the number of graduates hired by the respondent's company and the colleges or other sources used for hiring.

The second area of the questionnaire used a common Likert Scale with a 1 – 5 (1=least important; 5=most important) rating scale. This area attempted to determine the priorities of skills from a list of 26 skills. These skills were divided into three general areas: General education skills; general business skills; and industry specific skills. The individual skills were randomly dispersed on the page.

The third area asked respondents to identify the top six personal traits most desired in graduates. A list of 28 personal traits developed by the researcher was used, and respondents were asked to check the six traits perceived to be most important in graduates.

The fourth area asked respondents to determine whether the 26 skill areas were best learned in a college classroom environment or on the job.

The questionnaires were tabulated and analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Program for the Social Sciences).

Discussion of Study Objectives

The first objective was to examine which skills in industry specific technical areas were most important. Delivering quality customer service had the highest overall mean score, followed by employee relations and motivating employees. However, these skills were not categorized as industry specific. Sanitation scored highest in the overall industry specific skill set area with a mean of 4.16. Food and beverage controls was a close second, at 4.16 mean average. Front office management along with bar and beverage management ranked third and fourth, at 3.75 and 3.74 respectively. Facilities management, hospitality law and hospitality math tied at 3.67, followed closely by current industry issues and trends at 3.60. Housekeeping, culinary, menu planning and nutrition were the lowest ranking technical skills, but the mean scores for each were still above 3.0, indicating a moderate importance.

The highest ranking industry skill set, sanitation, finished in ninth place overall, with a mean score of 4.16. The ranking of this skill set and the other industry specific skill sets is consistent with previous research identified in the literature review. Non-industry skills were ranked higher than industry specific skills.

The second objective was to examine the industry general business and general education expectations of HRM graduates. Delivering quality customer service had the highest overall ranking with a mean score of 4.78. Employee relations and motivating employees were a close second and third. Problem solving and ethics ranked fourth and fifth, with managing diversity, planning/conducting training and interpersonal speaking skills next. All of these skills had an mean average Likert score of important or higher. These eight highest overall ranking skill sets were of a non-technical nature.

The third objective was to examine personal trait expectations. Overall, respondents cited possessing a positive attitude most often. Honesty and hardworking were a distant second and third, but were cited by at least half of the respondents. Practices teamwork, willingness to learn, and takes pride in job were cited by at least 38% of the respondents.

These six traits were also ranked in the top six by both the lodging and restaurant subcategories, indicating their importance across various components of the industry.

The fourth objective was to determine which setting for learning the skill sets would be best. The respondents indicated that 11 of the skill sets would be best learned on the job, while 15 of the skill sets would be best learned in college. The skill sets with the highest frequency of scores for on the job included delivering quality customer service, housekeeping management, facilities/maintenance management, front office management and employee relations. The skill sets with the highest frequency scores for in college were hospitality law, writing skills, computer skills, nutrition, accounting, math and public speaking.

Discussion/Analysis of Results

The response rate for the study was rather low, at 30.7%. It was hoped that a response rate of at least 70% would be achieved. However, the number of responses (66) is far greater than any previous survey conducted for the HRM program.

Analysis shows that over half (53%) of the respondents were classified as lodging, and only 30% were restaurants. This does not match the mix of HRM graduates, currently at nearly 50% for each area.

After examination of the general and demographic data the following conclusions

can be derived. It was found that the majority of the respondents (53%) were classified as lodging establishments and that the majority of respondents were from locations in greater Minnesota (59.1%). Most of the establishments (43.0%) were part of a multi-unit operation and over half were franchises (57.6%). 81.8% of the respondents were under the age of 50 and 79% were in property level positions. Over two-thirds (69.7%) of the respondents were in their current position for more than two years and over half (57.0%) had at least a 4-year degree. Almost all (91%) of the respondents hired at least 1 management candidate each year and over one-third (38.5%) had hired an Alexandria Technical College HRM program graduate, ranking second only to UW-Stout Hospitality and Tourism graduates (51.5%). A large majority (66.7%) of the respondents did not hire graduates from non-hospitality programs.

Examination of the skill priority area for all establishments revealed that the highest ranking skills valued by respondents were delivering quality customer service (mean = 4.78), followed by employee relations (mean = 4.70), motivating employees (mean = 4.62), problem solving (mean = 4.38), managing diversity (mean = 4.25), planning and conducting training (mean = 4.24) interpersonal speaking skills (mean = 4.21), sanitation (mean = 4.16), and food and beverage controls (mean = 4.10). None of the skill areas had a mean score of less than 3.0, with nutrition and food planning ranking lowest (mean = 3.02). The top three overall skill rankings were also the top three ranked skill areas for the lodging category and the restaurant category, with lodging matching the overall rankings. When the skill areas are categorized into three areas, general business ranks as the highest priority (mean = 4.28), general education is next (3.95), followed closely by industry specific skills (mean = 3.62)

The overall personal trait findings indicate that a positive attitude is the most desired trait in graduates (61.7% checked), followed by honest (51.5% checked), and hardworking (50% checked). All three categories of establishments (lodging, restaurant and other) ranked these as the top three traits as well.

Respondents identified delivering quality customer service as the skill best learned on the job (74.2% checked), with housekeeping management (68.2%), facilities and maintenance management (65.2%), and front office and employee relations ranked next (63.6%). The skills that the respondents ranked as best learned in college included writing skills (89.4%), computer skills (87.9%), hospitality law (86.4%), accounting and math tied (81.8%), public speaking (80.3%), and nutrition (78.8%).

Recommendations

This study attempted to determine what industry expects of hospitality graduates. The study focused on four areas, demographics and general information, skills, personal traits, and the best setting for learning skills. The study found that all of the skill areas were at least moderately important. Six traits were identified as most important, and the majority of skills were best learned on the job.

The Hotel-Restaurant Management Program at Alexandria Technical College should consider the following as curriculum recommendations are made:

- Examine the current work experiences, and include assignments that are related to delivering quality customer service, housekeeping, facilities management and front office management (for lodging sites), motivating employees, bar and beverage management (for applicable sites), and managing diversity.

- Make quality customer service management a larger portion of the issues class, renaming the course to reflect this.
- Create a segment in supervision courses for employee relations and motivating employees, updating the current problem-solving unit.
- Discuss the findings of this study with the advisory board to clarify skill area expectations in ethics, motivating employees, employee relations, and other areas ranked high by respondents.
- Examine the ethics course in the general education area and compare to the ethics unit in the issues course.
- Add a unit in diversity management to the second supervision course.
- Add a human resource component to the training course, clarifying the specific needs in this area with the advisory board.
- Discuss combining the bar and beverage course with menu planning, to free up credits for general business courses in human resources, managing diversity, and others.
- Bring in industry guest speakers to discuss traits that are important in hiring graduates, focusing on how graduates can show they have a positive attitude, be honest, hardworking, practice teamwork, show a willingness to learn, and taking pride in their job.
- Have student references complete a rating sheet in the work experiences that rates their performance in the top skill areas and the top trait areas.
- Have advisory board members discuss the survey instrument and change accordingly. Remove those general and demographic questions that are of less

importance, and examine the traits list, reducing duplication and confusion in the traits. Adding a brief explanation of the trait would be helpful. This will increase the likelihood of a higher response rate for future studies.

- Make the survey a bi-annual event, with more follow-up using post cards and reminder calls. The response rate must be increased to increase the validity of the data generated. The mix of establishment classifications should more closely match the dispersion of graduates.
- Document the recommendations in the program annual report along with corresponding changes.

It is strongly recommended that the HRM program continue to work with industry to meet the expectations they have of graduates. The HRM program must also examine the training content of companies that hire graduates. Common training content should be examined to determine if the curriculum needs to include particular subject areas, if industry doesn't have expectations for training in these areas. The work experiences currently in the HRM program could become more formalized to match the expectations for a graduate, especially if the graduate has a specific area of interest. This examination of expectations does not stop with this study. Instead, this study provides a framework for ongoing examination of the program's customers.

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APPENDICES

Table 1
Skills needed by graduates

Rank	Skill Areas – Question 13	Mean	Std. Dev.	1 (n)	2 (n)	3 (n)	4 (n)	5 (n)	Omits (n)
1	Delivering Quality Customer Service	4.78	.79	2	0	2	2	57	3
2	Employee Relations	4.70	.59	0	1	1	14	47	3
3	Motivating Employees	4.62	.71	0	2	2	14	45	3
4	Problem Solving	4.46	.89	1	3	2	17	40	3
5	Ethics	4.38	.85	0	3	6	18	36	3
6	Managing Diversity	4.25	.80	0	1	11	22	29	3
7	Planning and Conducting Training	4.24	.80	0	1	11	23	28	3
8	Interpersonal Speaking Skills	4.21	.83	1	0	10	26	26	3
9	Sanitation	4.16	1.04	2	3	8	19	30	4
10	Food and Beverage Controls	4.10	1.01	3	1	7	26	24	5
11	Human Resource Management	3.98	.83	0	2	16	26	19	3
12	Writing Skills	3.87	.99	2	3	14	26	18	3
13	Marketing, Advertising, Sales, Plan.	3.85	1.13	2	6	14	17	23	4
14	Front Office Management	3.75	.95	2	3	17	28	13	3
15	Bar and Beverage Management	3.74	1.20	6	1	14	22	18	5
16	Public Speaking Skills	3.70	.93	1	4	21	24	13	3
17	Facilities and Maintenance Mgmt.	3.67	1.08	4	2	20	22	15	3
18	Hospitality Law	3.67	1.12	4	4	17	22	16	3
19	Hospitality Industry Math Skills	3.67	1.03	2	4	23	18	16	3
20	Accounting	3.60	1.14	4	5	19	19	16	3
21	Current Industry Issues and Trends	3.60	.93	1	6	20	25	10	4
22	Computer: Word Proc., Spr.sheets, etc	3.57	.98	2	6	19	26	10	3
23	Housekeeping Management	3.41	1.24	7	7	12	24	11	5
24	Culinary Skills	3.35	1.31	7	9	16	15	15	4
25	Menu Planning	3.27	1.19	6	10	16	21	9	4
26	Nutrition and Food Planning	3.02	1.07	7	10	22	19	3	5

1=least important, 2=somewhat important, 3=moderately important, 4=important, 5=very important

Table 2
Ranking of Skills needed by Graduates – by industry type category

<u>Skill Area – Question 13</u>	Total Mean	Lodg. Mean N=34	Lodg. Rank	Rest. Mean N=20	Rest. Rank	Bar, Resort Other Mean N=9	Bar, Resort Other Rank
Delivering Quality Customer Service	4.78	4.76	1	4.70	3	5.00	1
Employee Relations	4.70	4.56	2	4.95	1	4.67	3
Motivating Employees	4.62	4.50	3	4.80	2	4.67	4
Problem Solving	4.46	4.50	4	4.30	9	4.67	6
Ethics	4.38	4.32	5	4.40	7	4.56	9
Managing Diversity	4.25	4.18	6	4.35	8	4.33	11
Planning and Conducting Training	4.24	3.97	9	4.55	4	4.56	7
Interpersonal Speaking Skills	4.21	3.91	12	4.50	5	4.67	5
Sanitation	4.16	4.03	8	4.10	10	4.78	2
Food and Beverage Controls	4.10	3.75	17	4.45	6	4.56	8
Human Resource Management	3.98	3.97	10	3.85	11	4.33	12
Writing Skills	3.87	3.88	13	3.75	12	4.11	16
Marketing, Advertising, Sales, Plan.	3.85	4.09	7	3.35	17	4.11	18
Front Office Management	3.75	3.94	11	3.25	18	4.11	19
Bar and Beverage Management	3.74	3.56	23	3.65	14	4.56	10
Public Speaking Skills	3.70	3.62	21	3.75	13	4.11	17
Facilities and Maintenance Management	3.67	3.82	15	3.20	19	4.11	20
Hospitality Law	3.67	3.85	14	3.15	21	4.11	21
Hospitality Industry Math Skills	3.67	3.68	19	3.50	15	4.00	23
Accounting	3.60	3.68	20	3.20	20	4.22	13
Current Industry Issues and Trends	3.60	3.61	22	3.45	16	3.89	24
Computer: Word Proc., Spr. sheets, etc	3.57	3.76	16	3.10	22	3.89	25
Housekeeping Management	3.41	3.74	18	2.44	26	4.11	22
Culinary Skills	3.35	3.36	24	2.95	23	4.22	14
Menu Planning	3.27	3.33	25	2.75	24	4.22	15
Nutrition and Food Planning	3.02	3.18	26	2.47	25	3.56	26

**Table 3
Personal Traits needed by Graduates**

Rank total	Question 14 - Personal Traits	Frequency total	Lodging Frequency	Restaurant Frequency	Bar, Resort, Other Freq.
1	Positive Attitude	44	25	13	6
2	Honest	34	18	9	7
3	Hardworking	33	19	9	5
4	Practices Teamwork	27	15	8	4
5	Willingness to Learn	26	16	6	4
6	Takes Pride in Job	25	13	9	3
7(t)	Trustworthy	17	10	6	4
7(t)	Professional Appearance	17	9	5	3
7(t)	Flexible	17	10	3	4
10	Self-Starter	16	11	3	2
11	Dependable	15	9	4	2
12	Responsible	14	7	5	2
13	Adapts Easily to Change	13	6	3	4
14(t)	Courteous & Considerate	12	6	3	3
14(t)	Likes Job	12	4	7	1
14(t)	Dedicated	12	7	3	2
17(t)	Pleasant & Cheerful	11	6	0	5
17(t)	Able to Work Ind.	11	3	5	3
19	Good Listener	9	3	6	0
20	Follows Instructions	7	3	3	1
21	Understands Others/Empathy	6	3	2	1
22	Confident	4	3	1	0
23(t)	Asks Appropriate Ques.	3	1	1	1
23(t)	Prompt	3	1	2	0
23(t)	Creative	3	2	1	0
26	Not Easily Distracted	1	0	1	0
27(t)	Shows Gratitude	0	0	0	0
27(t)	Understanding/ Accepting	0	0	0	0

(t) = tie

Table 4
Where Skills are best learned

<u>Skill Area</u>	On the Job Frequency	In College Frequency	Both Frequency	Total Frequency	Omits
Delivering Quality Cust. Service	49	11	4	64	2
Housekeeping Management	45	12	3	60	6
Facilities and Maintenance Mgmt.	43	15	4	62	4
Front Office Management	42	18	2	62	4
Employee Relations	42	12	10	64	2
Motivating Employees	38	18	8	64	2
Bar & Beverage Management	36	21	3	60	6
Managing Diversity	36	23	5	64	2
Sanitation	34	25	4	63	3
Planning and Conducting Training	32	28	3	63	3
Problem Solving	31	24	9	64	2
Current Industry Issues/Trends	30	30	4	64	2
Food and Beverage Management	27	31	5	63	3
Interpersonal Speaking	24	37	3	64	2
Menu Planning	23	34	5	62	4
Human Resource Management	20	40	4	64	2
Culinary Skills	19	38	4	61	5
Marketing, Advertising, Sales	18	41	2	61	5
Ethics	18	38	7	63	3
Public Speaking	8	53	1	62	4
Hospitality Industry Math	7	54	2	63	3
Accounting	6	54	3	63	3
Nutrition & Food Planning	6	52	2	60	6
Computer Skills	3	58	2	63	3
Writing Skills	3	59	1	63	3
Hospitality Law	3	57	3	63	3

Survey

**Alexandria Technical College
Hotel-Restaurant Management Program
Survey of Hospitality Industry Expectations**

Consent

The following survey is being conducted to help the HRM faculty at Alex Tech better understand the needs of the hospitality industry. The study also fulfills a requirement in the M.S. in Hospitality and Tourism Administration at UW-Stout. I understand that by returning this questionnaire, I am giving my informed consent as a participating volunteer in this study. I understand the basic nature of the study and agree that any potential risks are exceedingly small. I also understand the potential benefits that might be realized from the successful completion of this study. I am aware that the information is being sought in a specific manner so that no identifiers are needed and so that confidentiality is guaranteed.

NOTE: Questions or concerns about participating in the research or subsequent complaints should be addressed first to the researcher or research advisor and second to Dr. Ted Knous, Chair, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11HH, UW-Stout, Menomonie, WI 54751, phone (715)232-1126.

1. Type of business: (please check one)

- a. Lodging, rooms only
- b. Lodging, with food and beverage
- c. Restaurant, no liquor service
- d. Restaurant, with liquor
- e. Bar/night club establishment
- f. Resort, lodging only
- g. Resort, with food and beverage
- h. Other: _____

2. Location of business (for multi-unit operations, check all that apply)

- a. Twin Cities Metropolitan Area
- b. Greater Minnesota Area with Population of more than 50,000
- c. Greater Minnesota Area with population of more than 20,001 – 50,000
- d. Greater Minnesota Area with population of more than 5,001 – 20,000
- e. Greater Minnesota Area with population of 5,000 or less
- f. Other: _____

3. Number of establishments owned or operated by your company

- a. 1
- b. 2-5
- c. 6-10
- d. 11-20
- e. More than 20

4. Annual sales volume (for multi-unit operations, list the average sales per unit)

- a. \$0 – \$500,000
- b. \$500,000 – \$1,000,000
- c. \$1,000,000 – \$2,000,000
- d. \$2,000,000 – \$4,000,000
- e. \$4,000,000 – \$6,000,000
- f. More than \$6,000,000

5. Type of affiliation

- a. National/regional brand, franchise b. Independent c. Other: _____

6. Your age

a. 18-34 b. 35-49 c. 50-64 d. 65 & older

7. Your position – Check the title that best represents your current position

- a. Owner/President/CEO
- b. Vice president/Multi-unit manager, district or area manager, etc.
- c. General manager
- d. Assistant manager
- e. Human resource manager
- f. Front office or guest service manager
- g. Executive housekeeper
- h. Food & beverage director
- i. Assistant food & beverage manager
- j. Lounge, bar, or beverage manager
- k. Chef or kitchen manager
- l. Assistant kitchen manager
- m. Dining room manager
- n. Sales director
- o. Shift supervisor
- p. Recruiter
- q. Other: _____

8. Years in current position

a. Less than 1 b. 1-2 years c. 2-5 years d. More than 5 years

9. Your highest level of education completed:

- a. High school
- b. Some college
- c. Two-year diploma or degree
- d. Four-year degree
- e. Graduate degree
- f. Other: _____

10. In your current position, identify the number of managers per year that you hire, on average:

a. 0 b. 1-3 c. 4-7 d. 8 or more

11. Identify the college programs that you have hired graduates from. **Check all that apply**

- a. Alexandria Technical College Hospitality Management Program
- b. Iowa State University Hospitality Management Program
- c. Normandale Community College Hospitality Management Program
- d. North Dakota State Hospitality Management Program
- e. University of Minnesota-Crookston Hospitality Management Program
- f. University of Wisconsin-Stout Hospitality Management Program
- g. Other hospitality programs
- h. Other non-hospitality programs
- i. None of the above

12. Number of HRM graduates from ATC that are currently working or have worked for your company

a. 0 b. 1 c. 2 – 3 d. 4 – 6 e. More than 6 f. Unsure

13. **Part 1:** For each of the following skill areas, circle the number 1 through 5 that identifies the level of importance you attach to it. Use the following scale:

1=least important 2=somewhat important 3=moderately important 4=important 5=most important

Part 2: In the last two columns on the right margin of this page there are two responses; “On the job,” and “In college.” For the corresponding skill, identify whether this skill is best learned on the job after graduation, or best learned in college. Please circle either response for each skill category.

	Part 1					Part 2	
	(circle 1)					(circle 1)	
	<u>least important</u>				<u>most important</u>		
a. Marketing, Advertising, Sales, Strategic Planning	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
b. Delivering Quality Customer Service	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
c. Front Office Management	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
d. Bar & Beverage Management	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
e. Computer: Word Processing, Spreadsheets, Database	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
f. Writing Skills	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
g. Public Speaking Skills	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
h. Interpersonal Speaking Skills	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
i. Planning & Conducting Training	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
j. Accounting	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
k. Sanitation	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
l. Housekeeping Management	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
m. Facilities & Maintenance Management	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
n. Food & Beverage Controls	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
o. Current Industry Issues & Trends	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
p. Ethics	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
q. Menu Planning	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
r. Hospitality Law	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
s. Hospitality Industry Math Skills	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
t. Nutrition & Food Planning	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
u. Culinary Skills	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
v. Human Resource Management	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
w. Motivating Employees	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
x. Managing Diversity	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
y. Employee Relations	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college
z. Problem Solving	1	2	3	4	5	On the job	In college

14. The following are a list of traits that may be desired of hospitality graduates. From the list below, check the **top six** traits that you feel are most desired in hospitality graduates. **Please check only six.**

- a. Honest
- b. Trustworthy
- c. Confident
- d. Positive Attitude
- e. Hardworking
- f. Courteous & Considerate
- g. Pleasant and cheerful
- h. Asks appropriate questions
- i. Self-starter
- j. Adapts easily to change
- k. Professional appearance
- l. Practices teamwork
- m. Prompt
- n. Takes pride in job
- o. Creative
- p. Likes job
- q. Willingness to learn
- r. Understanding of others - Empathy
- s. Not easily distracted
- t. Flexible
- u. Able to work independently
- v. Dedicated
- w. Follows instructions
- x. Good listener
- y. Responsible
- z. Dependable
- aa. Shows gratitude
- bb. Understanding and accepting

Comments:

By completing this survey you are providing valuable information for the Hotel-Restaurant Management Program at Alexandria Technical College. Your assistance is greatly appreciated. Thank you!