

Colonial Inn

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Abstract

This paper will examine leadership practice at the Colonial Inn, a bed and breakfast in North Carolina. It will review the leadership style and practice by reviewing actions and how those actions relate to contemporary leadership theory.

Colonial Inn

Background

The Colonial Inn is a bed and breakfast in rural North Carolina very close to the border of South Carolina it takes its name and features from the location of a Revolutionary War battlefield nearby. The Battle of Kings Mountain is highlighted due to location and impact on the local identity. It has operated for over ten years; the objective of the organization is to provide not only a place to stay but a way to connect to the local area as an experience. Unique offerings are afforded by the owners who had previously worked in the White House and Camp David by offering insight into working with Presidents, including daily guided tours that interpret memorabilia and museum displays. The Colonial Inn also offers cooking classes led by a former White House chef, offering very hands-on instruction to the students, along with direct interaction with an award-winning chef. One of the future objectives is to expand into a larger location in facilitating more rooms and space for guests staying overnight or for day trip activities.

Leadership Practice

The leader of the Colonial Inn, Joseph Christopher is the owner and runs the day to day operation, many of his leadership practices that were learned in his time as a senior enlisted person in the Navy. While one leadership practice is planning for the long-term success of the Inn this includes matching the goals with the viability of local talent understanding the ambition may not match what he can accomplish with the talent in the current budget. Making the most of the talent pool that is available by encouraging growth with his team from education and adding skills. Hosting Serve Safe (food safety certification) classes on site and paying for employee's courses and testing fees are meeting both employees professional and personal goals while

enhancing the work environment. Leadership practice two is daily communication with employees on each guest needs and preferences adjusting to specialty diets or travel needs by offering custom to go bags for business travelers. Relationship building with the team is also an essential part of the Inn in my role competing ideas are sometimes tempered by balancing what is good for the business as to what is suitable for family life. The Inn also employees other distant family members, so relationships with employees overall are one of the essential leadership practices. Leadership practice three is networking with local leaders to improve the surrounding town by being a part of the tourism board, expanding community events to draw more engagement for the citizens of the town which attracts tourism when events are held.

Organizational Culture

The current leadership affects the organizational culture first by applying a military structure by giving the employees a chance to rise in based off strengths and applying leadership practices that focus on teamwork and the feeling of being part of a family business but maintain professionalism in coworker and guest interaction. Leadership is also affected due to the work-life balance in running a small business is further complicated by the living arrangements and the laws of North Carolina, because someone is required to be on site twenty-four hours per day, seven days a week the owners maintain the residence in the same building as the Inn.

The servant style of leadership is key to the service industry to maintain the customer focus, by being a servant leader to the staff it enables them to have the tools they need to provide service to the guests. Guest satisfaction is the goal in any hospitality venture, in today's culture of online reviews the leadership and example set by everyone involved make a difference in how the Inn is seen from the outside.

SWOT Analysis.

Strengths

One of the organization's strengths is the capabilities of the owner, with more than 30 years of military experience in the hospitality field rising to the highest levels with experience of operating 1500+ room resorts and providing the highest level of service to the President of the United States. The capability to manage large properties adapted into a small facility of only a five-room bed and breakfast, knowing how to utilize affinity techniques of having a large staff makes many of the day-to-day operations run on autopilot. Performing specific service standards learned when working in the house of a world leader, the contrast between high volume and personal service is merged into this venture. This highlights the reputation of the Inn and is a level of knowledge that gives a competitive advantage over less experienced persons in the bed and breakfast industry.

The location is the second distinct strength, located about halfway between Charlotte, NC and Greenville/Spartanburg, SC metro regions, it is close enough for a small trip but far enough that it feels like you are getting away for an interesting stay. Being two counties over from each significant metro area provides a change of scenery and the feel of getting away from the urban areas. The Inn is located only a few minutes off the Interstate-85 making travel easy and from a business standpoint by gaining some one-night stays from travelers just passing through on their way to another destination. This location was a factor in deciding on this building, that was formerly a private home, the access to a major highway but having a small town feel of tree-lined streets, and for guests to be able to locate the Inn quickly when arriving for a stay. Other

locations felt too removed from surrounding areas not offering the balance of being away but not so far you feel isolated.

Weaknesses

The weaknesses of the organization currently are that we are not able to serve dinner to outside guests and that we lack the funding or cash infusion to expand to include more rooms or move to a more significant property. The first internal weakness of not having the space to offer dinner to guests not staying at the inn due to not being able to meet health regulations to acquire a restaurant license. More kitchen space and additional upgrades to electrical and plumbing systems would be required along with more seating in addition to our current seating arrangements and additional food storage. Many locals in our county have expressed interest in being able to eat without staying the night but don't feel staying in their town feels enough like a getaway.

Having a small cash reserve is the second internal weakness, much of the profit of the Inn has been reinvested on making improvements to the building, bathrooms, have been added. With the focus on reinvestment, it has hampered the ability to expand either on-site or at another location, many loan opportunities require cash down/equity infusion that ownership is not able to produce, maintaining a building that dates back to 1879 requires more maintenance funds than a newer property.

Opportunity

There is one opportunity to tap into the historical aspects of the Inn even further by hosting more events here focused on the Revolutionary War and Colonial tie-in since there is renewed interest every year due to Anniversary celebrations. We have hosted smaller scale events, but the opportunity to expand could draw more customers from a wider area with

exposure to organizations such as Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution. The second opportunity is there is now grant provided by our county to have part of our investment credited back to us if specific goals are met, by showing our investment as we can go we can qualify for this new incentive for our property tax bill.

Threats

Threats to the business include the focus being on the owners, with so much of the success of the Inn being driven by one person if illness or injury would befall the owners. It would be hard to maintain the level of outside interest in the destination, much of the identity of the Inn is having a White House chef as an owner, leading classes, tours and cooking breakfast for guests. If he was not able to work the Inn could not sustain long-term for the guest who wants the White House Chef experience.

The fast-changing environment of the hospitality industry, with sites like Air B and B, being allowed to operate without regulation and restriction. Unregulated stays are condoned by our local county because they do not have enough hotel rooms to accommodate an annual event, and private homes can be temporary Bed and Breakfasts including serving meals without strict health department regulation/licenses this impacts us directly by not gaining bookings.

Leadership Evaluation

Leadership Theory

In observance of the leader of the Colonial Inn, the method used the most is the servant leader (Daft, 2014). (Buchanan, 2007) The concept of servant leadership, first described by Robert Greenleaf in 1970, has gained renewed interest in recent years as companies recover from ethical scandals and compete to attract and retain the best human talent. Servant leaders

accomplish performance by helping subordinates fulfill their goals and that in turn benefits the entire company.

Leadership Strength

In my observation Joseph demonstrates this by showing his first strength of giving, his knowledge, offering recognition to his team in awards and bonuses. The second positive of his demonstrating servant leadership is his desire and goal of lifting the town. While participation on the tourism board is an action; the theory behind it is through the accomplishment of the Inn the whole town can be lifted with a social impact of making the area more attractive to not only to tourist but other businesses. Money from occupancy tax is used to enhance the town appearance, his example of being a servant leader to benefit others not only in our organization but all around him. The third positive trait (Lacroix, 2017) observed about his servant leadership is that he inspires his team to be leaders, just by his example and encouragement I have gained appreciation from his style. I did not away from looking at leadership roles as I have advanced through my career, by seeing him as an ideal leader it has shown me how I can evolve into a leadership style.

Weaknesses

In the various observations over the years, there have been negative aspects of servant leadership. The first is that the leader is seen as weaker by followers who may only see the position at the Inn as a financial endeavor, putting it plainly seeing it as 'just a job' and not a platform for improvement of the organization or themselves. This attitude can be attributed to a bad hire which all organizations go through. The second negative can be taking failures too personally being invested in the development of the team, and when they fail, it is taken on as a personal failure. Leadership failure is more personal with a smaller staff who work closely,

understanding, not every follower response well to this style of leadership is so focused on the human can get in the way of making tough business decisions. The third weakness is by working side by side with employees as well as management duties has led to burnout where the leader is overwhelmed and is taking on too much of the front-line work.

Recommendations

The first recommendation in following the first Servant based leadership theory is to formalize the training and job duties further have a written plan for each employee to meet their development needs, so they are clear in what the expectations are. The outcome for this would be ensuring the employee is getting the training needed and benefiting their personal development goals. The second recommendation is to clarify how those goals relate to the business, so the employees understand them and tie in the rewards based on the accomplishment of the personal and organizational goals. This is recommended to motivate the employees while having a clear understanding of how their part affects the company. The third recommendation is to build some boundaries around the work-life balance while running a small business as a servant leader is demanding, to carve out time to be off duty will enhance the leader's mindset and avoid burn out. I am recommending this in order to allow free time; the outcome will be a more balanced leader who will not burn out and perform the best for their team and organization.

(The Pitfalls of Servant Leadership, 2018)

References

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