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**Incorporating Crisis Management into Hospitality Education:
A Study of Current Curriculum Content Compared to Skills
Essential for Today's Environment**

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Incorporating Crisis Management into Hospitality Education: A Study of Current Curriculum Content Compared to Skills Essential for Today's Environment

Introduction

Today the hospitality industry has an indisputable and unprecedented responsibility for the safety, health, and welfare of guests at any venue. Worldwide, the hospitality industry is facing increasing rates of crises resulting from both naturally occurring disasters, such as the recent earthquake devastation in Haiti or the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia, and man-made disasters, such as the Monte Carlo Hotel fire in Las Vegas, Nevada in 2008, or terrorist attacks, such as the 2008 attack on the hotels in Mumbai, India. Canadian hospitality industry leaders faced monumental security challenges as they successfully avoided any major crises while hosting thousands of participants and guests from many countries of the world for the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver. An organization's survival in a time of crisis may depend on their having a well trained staff and persons in leadership roles who are knowledgeable about effective crisis management. It is the responsibility of hospitality management education programs to provide crisis management education to their students, the industry leaders of tomorrow.

Literature Review

Singh (2008) quoted Selbst's 1978 definition of a crisis by saying that a crisis is:

"any action or failure to act that interferes with an organization's ongoing functions, the acceptable attainment of its objectives, its viability of survival, or that has a detrimental personal effect as perceived by the majority of its employees, clients, or constituents in relation to the hospitality industry." (Singh, 2008, p. 1)

Within the hospitality industry, there has been considerable academic research that has dealt with the theory of crisis management or the development of crisis management plans. This research has pointed out a recurring theme: that there is a need for an educated workforce that has the knowledge and tools for dealing with crisis management. The need for education and crisis management knowledge is particularly true for the leadership within an organization; however, to date, the crisis management research related to the hospitality industry has failed to address a critical component of managing crisis. This component is the need for providing first responders with the knowledge and tools to deal with an incident. How well management of a hospitality property or event responds to any crisis incident depends upon how well they were educated about crisis management and how well they were prepared to deal with any given situation.

Purpose of the study

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate what educational content regarding crises and crisis management is currently incorporated into hospitality management programs. A further purpose is to compare the current educational content with skills and competencies deemed necessary if hospitality industry managers are to be able to effectively manage crises which may impact their operations. Through that comparison, gaps in hospitality management programs' existing educational content which should be addressed by modifying these programs' curricula or the content of courses already incorporated into the curricula of educational programs can be identified.

Methodology

This study is being completed using survey research methodology. Using contact information obtained through the International CHRIE database of hospitality management programs and educators within programs in universities and colleges within the United States, all

programs offering degrees in food and beverage management, hotel administration and management, special events management, convention services management, and recreation/leisure management will be surveyed. The survey instrument contains 22 questions to which respondents will reply using a Likert type scale with one indicating not important and five indicating vitally important. There will also be an option to select six as a response on the scale, and that value will indicate "unknown". Respondents will also be given the opportunity to provide comments regarding those courses currently contained in their curriculum that already address crisis management and to suggest any areas relevant to the management of crisis situations which they feel should be incorporated into hospitality management curricula. Finally, respondents will be asked to provide demographic information. The survey will be administered through the use of Qualtrics Survey Software/Engine via International CHRIE Headquarters. Once collected the data will be analyzed using multiple regression, factor analysis (looking for recurring patterns), and multivariate ANOVA using SPSS 16 software program.

Anticipated Results

As a result of this study, it is anticipated that comprehensive recommendations for curriculum content regarding crisis management skills deemed essential for hospitality management students will be developed. Such recommendations should help hospitality management programs incorporate development of these skills into their curricula, either through modification of courses already in their curricula or by adding a course or courses specifically oriented toward crisis management to their curricula. These recommendations, and any subsequent modification of hospitality management programs' curricula, should significantly improve the industry's preparedness to effectively deal with crises as today's students move into key leadership positions tomorrow.

Reference

Singh, A. (2008, Dec. 3). Disaster management plan for the hospitality industry. Hospitality Net

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