



Fellows Broadsheet

The Institute of Hospitality Fellows Broadsheet is a monthly thought-leadership article written by a member of our esteemed College of Fellows. Celebrating the wealth of professionalism, knowledge and expertise within our diverse, worldwide hospitality family. The Fellows Broadsheet is published on the first Sunday of every month, exclusively for members.

Leadership – Knowing your staff

Tej Walia FIH MI has been a member of the IoH for over 10 years, with a hospitality career that spans over 25 years in India and across the UK. He received a Master Innholder's scholarship to attend the GM program at Cornell University 2017 as a St Julian's Scholar and is currently Resort General Manager at the award-winning, 450-acre, Foxhills Country Club & Resort, near London, UK.

Looking after 300+ hospitality professionals and over 5,000 private and corporate members, in this month's Fellows Broadsheet Tej looks at **Leadership – Knowing your staff.**

Exploring the styles of leadership that have worked best for him and his team, as proven by the increased staff retention rate from 60% to 87% that he's achieved during his tenure at Foxhills.

Right framework

There is no one-right way to lead; there is no one-size-fits-all approach. In over two decades in the hospitality industry, I have worked under numerous different leaders with varying leadership techniques. It is the beauty of our industry that one way of management, or leadership, does not work for all.

Therefore, trying to find the right framework that works for yourself, and your team can be difficult, especially in a changing world. As times have changed, leadership styles have also.

Gone are the days where an old-style approach to management, an intimidating unapproachable way of leading whereby the leader takes an almost dictatorship style, is seen as the best way forward. In today's society, that way of leading is ineffective in the long term and could not be further away from what we all expect.

Leadership styles

Writing in Forbes in 2021, contributor Kara Dennison explained how an authoritarian leadership style, although effective at times, cannot be a strategy implemented for the long run. This 'I lead, you follow' approach does not allow for creativity within the team and in fact contributes toward high turnover rates of staff.

At Foxhills Club & Resort, an alternate leadership technique, far from the authoritarian style, of being approachable and able to speak with different levels of staff, could not have been more beneficial for myself over recent months.

To try to get to know all staff here at the resort as best I can, I have been spending one full working day a month with various departments. This has allowed me to see how they operate and how changes, that myself and other senior leaders have made, have impacted them.





Communication

Days like this are a key reminder that to lead you must be able to communicate in a different way to different levels of staff and, at a resort as wide and varied as Foxhills Club & Resort, across different departments.

What communication works with a greenkeeper may not work with a front of house team member. What works for a restaurant manager may not work with a reception supervisor. It is only when you get to know them, their background, how their generation views things and what motivates them, that you can be an effective leader for everyone.

This is exactly how the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development defines leadership. In a factsheet released earlier this year, they said leadership is “the process of understanding people’s motivation and leveraging it to achieve a common goal.”

Therefore, you must get to know every individual. Only then will your team of staff be comfortable in feeding back up the line what they feel could help business operations.

Post-Covid this is exactly what we must do. We must look to develop our staff through effective leadership.

Post pandemic

I’d like to share an extract from a recent article I read from Campbell Macpherson from the executive education department at Henley Business School.

Writing about leadership in a post-pandemic world for People Management, he said we “need to focus on developing our people – treat them as individuals and show them that being happy and healthy are not the outcomes from, but the ingredients of success.

“As leaders in tomorrow’s world, we have to instil in them the confidence to use their ingenuity, wisdom and compassion to shape a glorious future. We need to give them the skills to accept uncertainty and embrace the inevitable changes that lie ahead.”

I could not agree more. It is important to treat all employees as individuals. It is our job, as leaders in the industry, to ensure they feel this way.





Coaching Leadership

Perhaps the closest leadership style to this approach is the Coaching Leadership Style (CLS).

Returning to the Forbes article from 2021, this style is defined as striving to help employees grow via a truly give-and-take relationship. Here managers and team members are open to feedback and receptive to this.

My own leadership style has of course changed over the years. If it had not, I would most certainly be questioning myself. I am far from perfect – no manager or leader can ever be perfect.

But what they can be is adaptable, and able to learn new ways of leading no matter what point in their career they are at.

Having the right mentor is also a massive help. You can change these throughout your career as your career path changes, but the advice they can pass on to you can only help you progress and help others in your company.

Learn leadership techniques off each other, be adaptable. We've got a pool of knowledge that we have to share.

Mentorship was known very differently when I was younger and coming up the line of the industry. It was not that prominent, but today it is.

Writing in the Fellows Broadsheet recently, Monica Or FIH ended her excellent piece on wellness and mental health by pushing home the point that our people are our most precise asset. I cannot agree more.

As hospitality leaders, it is our responsibility to be approachable to them to ensure that the diverse, extremely talented workforce remains within the industry.





About the author

Tej has been in the hospitality industry for over 25 years and received the Master Innholder's scholarship to attend the GM program at Cornell University, USA in 2017 as a St Julian's Scholar.

He started his career as F&B Assistant and quickly became Restaurant Manager working at The Oberoi's, Grand Hyatt and Kempinski hotels in India and Guernsey before being appointed F&B Manager and then promoted to Deputy General Manager (Cluster Lead Deputy Manager) for Hilton Worldwide.

In 2011 he joined Fawsley Hall Hotel, Northampton, UK as General Manager, later moving to Devon, to become GM at Dartington Hall. His achievements in post included, initiating a partnership with South Devon Community College to deliver cultural diversity training, he became Patron of Plymouth University Hotel School and set up a rehabilitation programme for Channing Woods Prison to clean the hotel's laundry.

He joined Macdonald Hotels in Scotland as GM in 2017 before joining MGM Muthu Hotels as Area Manager, where he oversaw the successful acquisition, refurbishment and opening of their hotels in Scotland, with revenues of over £10 million.



Tej Walia FIH MIH

Tej has been GM at Foxhills Country Club & Resort, near London since 2018 and has notably driven highly effective online sales strategies increasing ARR by 25%, occupancy by 15%, weddings by 75% and members' auxiliary spend by over 20% over 3 years. He oversaw all aspects of an £8 million project to deliver a leisure facility of over 1700 sqm, in 18 months and has increased staff retention from 60% to 87%.

References

Forbes

Why traditional leadership styles may become irrelevant with the rise of the coaching leadership style

CIPD

Leadership in the workplace

People Management

Change leadership in a post-pandemic world

Connect with Tej on LinkedIn