In: Experiencing Hospitality ISBN: 978-1-53614-387-4
Editors: B. Rowson and C. Lashley

Chapter 9

THE DIMINISHING ROLE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER FROM A MIDDLE MANAGERS' PERSPECTIVE; SOME GENERIC DRIVERS

Tjeerd Zandberg*
Stenden Hotel Management School, NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences, Leeuwarden, The Netherlands

ABSTRACT

During the past decades the discretionary space and influence of the General Manager has decreased. This chapter describes three generic drivers behind this development. The first driver is the networked nature of hotel organizations, including the symbiotic relation with OTAs. The second driver is the growth of chain organizations, leading to standardization. Both developments have led to a reduced discretionary space for General Managers. The third generic driver, the development of information technology, has led to a decrease of a General Manager's added value.

* Corresponding Author Email: tjeerdzandberg @gmail.com (NHL Stenden, POB 1298, 8900CG Leeuwarden, The Netherlands.)

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history we have seen that due to several factors ranging from technological advancements to shifts in customer demand, specific jobs disappear or develop into new jobs. This can also be seen in the hospitality industry, resulting for example in a strong decline in the number of staff per hotel guest in the past century. The General Manager is not exempted from his evolutionary process. Take for example the Dutch Hotel chain Golden Tulip. At the turn of the century, a typical General Manager in this chain was only held responsible for achieving his monthly GOP-targets. It was to the individual General Manager to decide how to meet these targets. He could hire extra staff to improve guest satisfaction or decide to lay off staff to save costs. He could spend extra money on advertisements or reduce prices to increase occupancy. When in the year 2000 the NH Hotel Group acquired Golden Tulip, it gradually transformed the organizational structure. Functions like HRM, finance, or marketing were centralized and after some years the hotels were managed by a hotel manager who had limited responsibilities and autonomy. Similar transitions have been witnessed throughout the hospitality industry, for example Hodari & Sturman (2014) reported that General Managers in chain hotels had less autonomy than General Managers in independent hotels. As in many respects, the hotel industry is not unique and in most other sectors similar developments have taken place. Delayering and other reorganizations have led to a strong decline in the number of middle managers an often a decrease in responsibilities (Balogun, 2003). To understand some of the generic drivers behind this development, we will approach this from a more general middle manager perspective.

The old-style General Manager of Golden Tulip was a typical middle manager, being responsible for the operations of a business unit (i.e., hotel), and in close contact with both operational levels and top management. Though there are many definitions of middle managers, most of them combine these two elements, being responsible for a business unit and holding a pivotal position between operational levels and senior management. Middle managers have a strong responsibility in presenting

information to top management and in controlling operational activities. During the latter decades of the twentieth century, two opposing views regarding middle managers' contribution have emerged. One view considers middle managers as obstructers of change, who oppose plans of senior management (Meyer, 2006). This perspective has legitimized or at least contributed to a process in which the number of middle management positions has been strongly reduced due to reorganizations, cost-reductions, and business process re-engineering. The second perspective is much more positive and sees middle managers as assets who play a crucial role in innovation, and act as a conduit of information between top management and operational levels (Wooldridge, Schmid & Floyd, 2008). Though this second perspective is much more favorable towards middle managers, we will argue that this perspective also may lead to a reduced role for middle managers.

A General Manager in a hotel chain is a typical example of a middle manager and the general reasons why middle manager positions decline also hold for General Managers. After a discussion of the past and present position of the General Manager in the hotel industry, three generic factors that drive this change in the hospitality industry will be explored: hotels have developed into networked or hybrid organizations, the asset light strategies of hotels, and the informatization of hotel chains. Some of these generic factors will fit the positive view on middle managers, while other will match the negative perspective. But before we turn to these generic drivers, we will first discuss the role of General Manager as middle manager.

THE GENERAL MANAGER AS MIDDLE MANAGER

Hospitality is one of the oldest services we know. In the middle ages, inns and monasteries already offered lodging facilities to guests. These services were not necessarily commercial businesses and often a value driven hospitableness was the primary motivation in offering these services. During the 19th century we see the rise of modern, purpose build

hotels, and in the first half of the 20th century hoteliers like Cesar Ritz and Hilton established the first hotel chains. Hotels were managed as individual independent business units and the General Manager was the executive with overall operational responsibility. The General Manager was also responsible for the implementation of the company's strategy and guiding the management team of the hotel (Nebel & Ghei, 1993).

Enabled by franchising and capital funded by investment funds, the past fifty years showed a strong growth of hotel chains. The General Manager has developed into a middle manager, in charge of an outpost or running a franchise on behalf of a Hotel Management Company. While in the past the General Manager as overseer of all functions was responsible for designing and organizing the operations, this task gradually declined with head offices providing detailed brand standards and Standard Operation Procedures that prescribed how the hotel should be operated. Subsequently the role of the General Manager gradually moved from being responsible for designing and organizing the operations processes in his hotel to more emphasis on overseeing the standardized operations (Martin p 185). In a recent study among Hotel Managers in the Aberdeen area, Martin (2017) found evidence of a modern form of Taylorism in which Hotel Managers specialize in certain behavior, depending on working for an independent, franchised or operated hotel. For example, Hotel Managers in a franchised hotel were more focused on maintaining brand standards than Hotel Managers in non-franchised hotels.

It is clear that though the General Manager is sometimes considered the CEO of a hotel, he is actually a middle manager in a larger company. From this middle managers' perspective, a General Manager has clearly delineated responsibilities in connecting the organization's strategic and operational levels. There is a positive and a negative view on middle managers' value to an organization (Hope, 2009). In the negative perspective, middle managers are seen as a source of inertia and a barrier to change that only add cost to an organization (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1994, 2000). Middle managers are sometimes considered to pursue their own goals even if these are detrimental to the organization (Meyer, 2006) and need to be controlled. In this approach we see traces of the principal-

agency theory in which a manager as agent operates on behalf of his principal, while both may have different objectives (Eisenhardt, 1989).

In the more positive perspective, middle managers are seen as pivot between top management and operational levels. Middle managers play a crucial role in implementing strategies because their familiarity with operational details enables them to translate overall strategies in day-to-day business practices (Balogun, 2003; Huy, 2002). Their involvement in strategic planning and implementing has a direct positive impact on financial performance (Floyd & Wooldridge, 2000) while their experience and their familiarity with market developments facilitates their entrepreneurial role (Huy, 2001). One of the fundamental raisons d'etre for a middle manager is that a top manager is physically not able to digest all available information. Middle managers collect and filter data and convey relevant information to top management, their detailed knowledge enables them to propose new plans to top management or to initiate new actions themselves (Floyd & Wooldridge, 2000). We will come back to this information processing aspect of a middle manager later.

Related to this dual perspective on middle managers is the business model of the hotel organization. The three most common business models are: owner-managed, franchising, and management contracts (deRoos, 2010).

- In the owner-managed hotel, the General Manager is the agent operating on behalf of the owner and has as such a standard middle management position as pivot between owner and operations.
- In a franchise construction, the General Manager not only acts as middle manager with regard to the owner, but to a certain extent also to the franchisor as the General Manager is responsible for maintaining brand standards (Martin, 2017).
- In the management contract setting, the Hotel Management Company is legal employer of the General Manager and the primary principal. However, the General Manager still has a principal-agent relation with the owner and, if relevant, also with the franchisor.

These business models show that a hotel is essentially a kind of joint venture between a number of stakeholders, each with his own objectives (Turner & Guilding, 2010, 2013). Franchisors are primarily interested in the brand value and focus on brand integrity (Detlefsen & Glodz, 213). Operators focus on short-term financial profit, while owners focus on long-term profit (Burgess, 2007).

After discussing these fundamental governance structures, we will discuss what they mean for a General Manager's decision making autonomy. In case a hotel owner contracts a hotel management company to operate the hotel, the General Manager is employed by the operating company. Because the General Manager also acts on behalf of the owner this effectively results in a situation where the General Manager acts as agent for two principals (Hodari & Sturman, 2014). In such a situation, different risk profiles, sources of income, or investment strategies often lead to situations in which operators and owners have different interests (Turner & Guilding, 2013). The General Manager is then caught in the middle of interests, leading to reduced autonomy. This means that a General Manager is as middle manager not only caught between the interests of top management and operational staff but is also often faced with two principals with different interests.

The conclusion so far is that due to the growth of chain hotels, the General Manager as a middle manager, is caught between top management and operational levels, as well as confronted by the different interests of owners and operators. This results in reduced autonomy for the General Manager and hence a reduced role. To understand what might happen next, we will explore some underlying drivers and see how they might influence the General Manager's role in the coming years.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF NETWORKED HOTEL ORGANIZATIONS

In a traditional perspective, a firm is a unified organization in which internal activities and allocation of resources is ultimately governed by a

hierarchical center inside the organization. This firm has clear boundaries, and business with external partners is governed by a market mechanism according to economic theories. In his groundbreaking publication, Williamson (1975) described this as the two fundamental government structures, the market for external coordination and hierarchy for internal coordination. However, in real life besides market and hierarchy a wide spectrum of other governance structures can be observed. Some examples are franchising, subcontracting, outsourcing, joint ventures, and alliances. It is common to call these mixed governance structures hybrid organizations but they are also called a plural form of the organization or networked organizations (Ebers & Oerlemans, 2016; Menard, 2012). (Mind that other authors use these names for concepts with other meanings). In such a hybrid organization several partners cooperate intensely, hand over some control to a certain extent, but remain legally autonomous. Resources, knowledge, services are exchanged and as Ménard (2004, p 348) notes, external hybrids comprise "*a great diversity of agreements among legally autonomous entities doing business together, mutually adjusting with little help from the price system, and sharing or exchanging technologies, capital, products, and services, but without a unified ownership*".

While the boundaries of the traditional firm are clear, boundaries of hybrid organizations are blurred and we see a mix of independence and intertwined structures. The partners are legally autonomous, but investments are interdependent and resources are shared. Hybrid structures are characterized by mutual dependence, a high level of coordination and often extensive controls to prevent abuse or opportunistic behavior of single partners. In the hospitality industry, we see different partners cooperating in different settings. First, we will discuss how internal, hierarchical governance structures have developed into hybrid structures and co-operation structures with external partners, to be followed by a discussion how market-based structures have developed into close co-operations.

The three basic governance structures in the hospitality industry are complete ownership, franchising, and hotel management companies. In

franchise structures, the management of a hotel is the responsibility of the franchisee. In franchise structures, a correct implementation of brand standards is often a crucial part of the franchise contract (Martin, 2017). This means a General Manager is strongly focused on these brand standards in his daily operations, leaving little autonomy. It might also be the explanation that in franchise hotels, business guests are often more satisfied with the level of service offered (Martin, 2017).

When the hotel is operated under a management contract, the General Manager is employed by the Hotel Management Company (HMC). The autonomy a General Manager has, is then restricted by the interests of both the owner of the property, often an investment company, and the HMC. The extent to which the General Manager's autonomy is restricted is then depending on both the characteristics of the General Manager as well as the power of the owner/HMC. In a research among 115 upscale European hotels, Hodari & Sturman (2014) found that the combination of experience and education had a positive influence on the decision autonomy of General Managers. But power also plays a substantial role. Turner and Guilding (2013) found that greater owner power often led to a stronger focus on short term profits, leading to for example less money for furniture, fixtures, and reserve equipment. No need to explain such a policy makes it more difficult to keep up with brand standards and in particular in franchised hotels, this leads to even further reductions in the General Manager's decision autonomy.

Besides these three basic forms of governance, we witness a growth of several other forms of cooperation. It is common to outsource certain tasks like for example housekeeping, payroll administration, or security. This can be a pure form of outsourcing where one company delivers a service, say security, and the hotel company pays for the service delivered. In a contract, service level agreements are specified. Such a form of cooperation is not really a hybrid construction, but a market-governed agreement and at arms' length. When such contracts are negotiated at a corporate level for multiple hotels, the role of the General Manager is limited to oversee its execution. When the contract is negotiated per hotel, the General Manager may also influence the conditions of the contract,

hence leading to some influence. In both cases, the contractual service level agreements lead to a certain standardization and hence reduction of the autonomy of the General Manager.

Next to this form of pure outsourcing we see other mixed forms. Hotels may for example outsource the food & beverage operations to a catering company or the spa services to a dedicated spa operator. In such cases the hotel operations become more intertwined and the cooperation becomes a mixed governance structure instead of only market-based. For the General Manager, this means that next to the existing principals (owner, franchisor, and Hotel Management Company) other powerful stakeholders limit his autonomy. When evaluating the influence of outsourcing on General Manager's decision-making autonomy, we may conclude that while it is not as strong as the influence of franchising or management contract governance structures, this ongoing trend of outsourcing continues to reduce the decision-making autonomy of General Managers.

After looking into the outsourcing of internal activities, we have to look at the development of external market-based relations into hybrid structures. The most visible of these external relations is the cooperation with OTAs. This chapter is not the place to discuss whether OTAs are the friend or foe of hotels, but it is a fact that hotels are cooperating closely with OTAs. Legally the cooperation with OTAs is at arms' length. Still, given the sometimes-overwhelming dependence of hotels on OTAs, we can speak of a certain hybrid structure. This symbiosis affects a General Manager's decision-making autonomy to a large extent. To understand this influence, we have to take a closer look at the underlying economic business model of OTAs. To understand this business model, we will use the ideas of Nobel Prize winner Jean-Paul Tirole on two-side markets.

The two-sided market approach (Rochet and Tirole, 2004, 2005) shows how the distribution channel is used as a source of power. Traditionally travel agents and tour-operators operated in two markets. In one market they dealt with travel suppliers, and in the other market they dealt with consumers. An OTA is different from a traditional travel agent because as a platform it brings two groups of users together (Eisenmann et al., 2006).

Both the hotels and the guests have become customers of OTAs. The network effect exploited by the OTAs is based on connecting these two customer groups. In this construction, the OTA charges the hotel money for services delivered, and it uses this income to subsidize the services delivered to guests. OTAs do this deliberately to achieve massive market share on the guest side, and then using this massive market share to become a "compulsory partner" for hotels. At the same time this cost-structure makes it almost impossible for traditional travel agents and tour operators to compete. Due to their two-sided power, it is for hotels almost impossible to break this power of OTAs. And as in the global market the chances of legislation from the side of national governments are limited, it is most likely OTAs will remain strong and powerful for the years to come.

The consequences for the General Manager's decision-making autonomy are clear. While the traditional General Manager in the example about Golden Tulip had far-reaching autonomy with regard to his marketing, the co-operation with an OTA strongly limits the discretion of the General Manager. The OTA not only charges substantial fees, but also affects the pricing structure of the hotel. It makes the pricing much more transparent and comparable to other hotels, and they often impose rate parity. This means the individual hotel is not allowed to undercut the rates shown by OTAs on their websites. This leaves hardly any space for a General Manager to make decisions on pricing.

THE GROWTH OF THE CHAIN ORGANIZATION

A second underlying driver behind the General Manager's role is the increasing standardization in the hospitality industry. The governance requirements of large corporate organizations combined with institutional pressures has led to a high degree of standardization. We will look at the growth and evolution of chain organizations in the hotel industry first. While in the beginning of the twentieth century the hotel industry was characterized by individual privately owned hotels, the post-World War II era saw a strong growth of multiunit hotel organizations. Growth strategies

depended strong on methods as franchising and management contracts. Real Estate Investment Funds, enjoying significant fiscal benefits in many countries, often provided the investments needed for this expansion. The role of institutionalized shareholders became larger and led to shareholders value as the dominant principle governing the management and control of hotel chains. These hotel chains relied strongly on standardized brand standards to ensure similarity in services around the world, as well as a mechanism to exercise control over internal processes. A major aim of these standards was to provide the head office or franchisor with a tool to exercise control over service quality and costs (Strand, 1996).

A major strategic question for such multiunit organizations is to establish the desired level of uniformity over the different units. On one hand there is the view that local adaptation is crucial for success and survival (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2002) while the opposing view claims that precise replication of the necessary value creating facets of a template is crucial for success (Szulanski, 1996; Winter et al., 2012). From a corporate perspective it is appealing to lean to the precise replication perspective. Not only because it appeals to feelings of control, but there is also substantial evidence. For example, the results of Winter et al. (2012) provide a strong counterexample to proponents of adaptation and suggest the benefits of precise replication. They explain this by showing that small adaptations to local settings often lead to further adaptations as the original adaptation often leads to problems that need further adaptations to be solved. A second reason to favor exact replication is the potential ambiguity about the exact success factors of a successful concept. If it is not clear what determines a winning team, don't change anything, is the phrase to describe this motive.

These motives for exact replication instead of local adaptation are based on general research but clearly apply to the hospitality industry. In particular from a corporate perspective, there is a strong need to ensure a consistent brand image. In particular for international brands, this means that strong brand standards need to be implemented.

Besides the corporate need to control brand standards to ensure a unified profile, there is a strong institutional pressure to standardize. In a

classical paper, DiMaggio & Powell (1983) described the isomorphic powers leading organizations to resemble each other. In their theory they focus on external institutional pressures. The core of their argument is that in order to cope with environmental conditions, organizations respond in similar ways, leading to a constraining process that forces organizations to resemble each other. We see this process in many parts of society, for example shopping streets resembling each other or simply the color of washing machines. DiMaggio & Powell discern three different isomorphic processes. The first one is coercive isomorphism, representing external pressure from the society. One example is the uniforms system of accounts of hospitality, leading to a focus on GOP for operational managers. As a result, hotel organizations have become increasingly resembling each other. The second isomorphic process is mimetic isomorphism. This is the tendency of organizations to copy other organizations and leads to similarity between organizations. Examples are the introduction of loyalty programs, the outsourcing of housekeeping, or the similarities in revenue strategies. The third and last form of isomorphism are normative pressures, reflecting the need to adhere to rules and values that reside in the society as a whole and pressures stemming from the profession in particular. One such pressure is the emphasis on shareholder value. To a certain extent this is due to the influence of REITs who, in exchange for enabling the expansion of the industry by providing the investments needed, demand a return on their investment. A second example is the influence of standardized benchmarking. Benchmarks of e.g., Horwarth or Smith Travel Research lead hotel organizations to compare themselves to industry averages, leading to a pressure to operate according to international standards. A third example is the influence of OTA, who present hotels in standard formats. This leads to a further commoditization of hotel rooms, with an emphasis on price, and reducing the discretionary space of a General Manager.

When we combine these two developments, we see that the strategy of hotel organizations to expand has led to the need for a standardized model. This has been strengthened by the professionalization of the hotel industry which led to strong institutional isomorphic pressures. Both developments

also interacted and strengthened each other. For example, the growth of benchmarking in the industry, did not only have a strong normative isomorphic influence, but also led to internal standardization as it was used to evaluate individual hotel performance as well. As a second example, the outsourcing of housekeeping shows strong institutional mimetic influences. But it also strengthens the internal standardization as the performance levels of the housekeeping are clearly specified in service level agreements.

INFORMATZATION

While the development of hotel organizations into networked organizations and the development of chain organizations are essentially external developments limiting the discretionary space of a General Manager, the third and last generic driver is directly related to the contribution and added value of the general manager and the role he has as middle manager in a large organization. As already described, a major role of a middle manager in a larger organization is to connect top management and operations. A major element of this role is that of being a conduit of information between top management and operations. The advance of information technology strongly influences this role of a General Manager. In this section, the following elements of information technology's influence will be discussed: revenue management, the data driven information, human resource management and the opportunity offered by block chain technology. No attention is giving to a potential influence of Big Data. Big data is often characterized with 3Vs: the extreme Volume, Variety and Velocity of data to be analyzed. It is often used to discover hidden patterns like market trends. However, in this section we focus on the role of a General Manager, which is primarily on operating an operational unit in a hotel organization.

The first role of the General Manager influenced by information technology is the pricing and sale of rooms. The introduction of revenue management into the hospitality industry has also influenced the tasks of

the General Manager. Ferguson & Smith (2014) describe three phases in the role of the revenue manager. Before revenue managers entered the hotels a few decades ago, pricing decisions mainly consisted of distinguishing high, medium and low periods and placing restrictions on very high demand days. These decisions were often made annually in a small committee supervised by the General Manager. When revenue managers entered, in their first phase, they reported to the hotel's director of sales and marketing, often in weekly meeting together with the General Manager. In the second phase, due to an increasing relevance and influence of revenue management, the revenue manager started to report directly to the General Manager. In the third phase, revenue management of several hotels were clustered. This was made possible by computer systems that were capable of efficiently handling room inventories and reservation systems. In this setting the revenue manager was no longer part of the hotel management team, but part of area or corporate staff. This sketchy overview of the evolution of revenue managers' position in hotel organizations shows how the soaring of information technology has led to a development in which a major responsibility, the pricing of the hotel rooms, was taken away and brought under the responsibility of revenue managers overseeing multiple hotels.

The second influence is the informatization of organizations. One task of middle managers such as General Managers is reporting to top management and communicating. But information technology and enterprise software can take over much of these tasks. When a General Manager is a conduit of information, what is the added value of human conduits when technology enables real time availability of this information and makes it accessible to the whole organization? This tendency is supported by a wide body of evidence in a broad range of industries. In a study among 135 organizations in the UK, Hales (2006) found that increasingly routine operational supervision is shifted to first-line supervisor roles. Similarly, in a study among 300 large U.S. firms, Rajan & Wulf (2006) found that the number of staff between operations and top management had reduced strongly. Pinsonneault & Kraemer (1997) found mixed results. According to their study, the role and number of middle

managers in a government organization declined in centralized organizations but increased in decentralized organizations. As hotel organizations are traditionally strongly centralized, it is no surprise to see a decline in the role of General Managers.

Another way technology takes over tasks from a General Manager are bots (Leong, 2017). Within the hospitality industry, average employee turnover is high and consequently much management time is spent on hiring, orientation, and training of new staff. To a large extent these tasks are routine and suited to be automated by using chat bots (Newlands, 2017). Chat bots are based on existing HR-systems but make their usage much more user friendly and hence strongly increase their usability. Chat bots can be used for a variety of tasks. They can provide instant answer to many standard queries, assist in selecting new employees, but also engage in complex tasks such as sentiment-mining. Their ability to scan real time large amount of data can be used to detect emotions like frustration, de-motivation, or anger among employees much more efficiently than human managers can (Sheth, 2018).

Yet another way technology interferes with a General Manager's role are blockchains. A blockchain can be defined as a digitized, decentralized public ledger of transactions and is based on Distributed Ledger Technology. Often blockchains involve currency transactions (e.g., Bitcoins) but other transactions are possible too. Some of the important advantages of blockchains are transparency, trust, and speed of information. If for example in the supply chain of a hotel, a number of parties like the hotel owner, the franchisor, the management company, as well as the manufacturer, the importing company, and the wholesaler participate in a private permissioned blockchain network, complete transparency of the whole supply chain is achieved. As a result, disputes are solved easily and paperwork and process time can be reduced. The head office or the franchisor gets in-depth and instant insight in the suppliers of all franchisees, resulting in perfect and complete information. For the General Manager as pivot between head office and operations, this means again that a part of his role disappears. Perhaps the influence of

blockchain technology will be even more influential in the execution of franchise agreements and management contracts. The data underlying these contracts are perfectly transparent and without interpretation issues. This means the contracts can be carried out without any conflict of interest and with perfect efficiency (Dogru, Mody & Leonardi, 2018).

Revenue management, informatization, chatbots, and blockchains are examples how fast-developing technology has a profound and lasting impact on the role of the General Manager as middle manager by taking away major chunks of his tasks. In particular the role of the middle manager as pivot between top management and operations is affected by these developments.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter the decline of the General Manager's discretionary space has been explored. This decline is caused by several factors. First we see the strong growth of networked organizations, REITs, management companies, franchisors, and OTAs to name a few, together constitute the contemporary hotel organization. The interests and power of these stakeholders strongly affect the discretionary space of the General Manager. In addition the growth of chain organizations has led to isomorphic forces as well as the corporate need to standardize operations. We can classify these developments as externally driven forces reducing the discretionary space of a General Manager. However, it is not only a decreasing discretionary space that affect the influence of the General Manager. Technological advancements directly influence the added value of a General Manager. Some tasks or responsibilities have disappeared like revenue management brought under area corporate supervision. Other tasks like reporting and communication become more system based and can often be done in efficient manners without interference of the General Manager.

REFERENCES

Balogun, Julia. 2003. From blaming the middle to harnessing its potential: Creating change intermediaries. *British Journal of Management* 14 (1): 69-83.

Bartlett, Christopher A., and Sumantra Ghoshal. 2002. *Managing across borders: The transnational solution.* Harvard Business Press.

Burgess, Cathy. 2007. Do hotel managers have sufficient financial skills to help them manage their areas? *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* 19 (3): 188-200.

Deroos, Jan A. 2010. Hotel management contracts—Past and present. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly* 51 (1): 68-80.

Detlefsen, Hans, and Matt Glodz. 2013. *Historical trends, hotel management contracts.* Chicago: HVS Global Hospitality Services.

DiMaggio, Paul J., and Walter W. Powell. 1983. The iron cage revisited, institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review* 48 (2): 147-60.

Dogru, Tarik, Makarand Mody, and Christie Leonardi. 2018. *Blockchain technology & its implications for the hospitality industry*. Boston Hospitality Review, Winter.

Ebers, Mark, and Leon Oerlemans. 2016. The variety of governance structures beyond market and hierarchy. *Journal of Management* 42 (6): 1491-529.

Eisenhardt, Kathleen M. 1989. Agency theory: An assessment and review. *Academy of Management Review* 14 (1): 57-74.

Eisenmann, Thomas, Geoffrey Parker, and Marshall W. Van Alstyne. 2006. Strategies for two-sided markets. *Harvard Business Review* 84 (10): 92.

Ferguson, Mark, and Scott Smith. 2014. The changing landscape of hotel revenue management and the role of the hotel revenue manager. *Journal of Revenue and Pricing Management* 13 (3): 224-32.

Floyd, Steven W., and Bill Wooldridge. 2000. *Building strategy from the middle: Reconceptualizing strategy process*. Foundations for organizational science. Thousand Oaks, Calif etc.: Sage.

—— . 1994. Dinosaurs or dynamos? Recognizing middle management's strategic role. *Academy of Management Executive* 8 (4): 47-57.

Hales, Colin. 2006. Moving down the line? The shifting boundary between middle and first-line management. *Journal of General Management* 32 (2): 31-55.

Hodari, Demian, and Michael C. Sturman. 2014. Who's in charge now? The decision autonomy of hotel general managers. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly* 55 (4): 433-47.

Hope, Ole. 2010. *Essays on middle management responses to change initiatives*. PhD-thesis.

Huy, Quy Nguyen. 2002. Emotional balancing of organizational continuity and radical change: The contribution of middle managers. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 47 (1): 31-69.

Huy, Quy Nguyen. 2001. In praise of middle managers. *Harvard Business Review* 79 (8) (Sep): 72-79.

Leong, Corissa. 2017. Technology & recruiting 101: How it works and where it's going. *Strategic HR Review* (just-accepted): 00-.17 (1): 50-52.

Martin, Andrew Lumsden. 2017. *An investigation into contemporary hotel general managers behaviour and activity in the context of private, franchise and chain ownership/business models.* PhD., Robert Gordon University.

Ménard, Claude. 2012. Hybrid modes of organization. Alliances, joint ventures, networks, and other 'strange' animals. *The Handbook of Organizational Economics*: 1066-108.

Ménard, Claude. 2004. The economics of hybrid organizations. *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 160 (3): 345-76.

Meyer, Christine B. 2006. Destructive dynamics of middle management intervention in postmerger processes. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 42 (4): 397-419.

Morey, Richard C., and David A. Dittman. 2003. Evaluating a hotel GM's performance. A case study in benchmarking. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly* 44 (5-6): 53-9.

Nebel III, Eddystone C., and Ajay Ghei. 1993. A conceptual framework of the hotel general manager's job. *Hospitality Research Journal* 16 (3): 27-38.

Newlands, Murray. 2017. How enterprises are using chatbots in the remote hiring process. *Forbes*. July, 25.

Pinsonneault, Alain, and Kenneth L. Kraemer. 1997. Middle management downsizing: An empirical investigation of the impact of information technology. *Management Science* 43 (5): 659-79.

Rajan, Raghuram G., and Julie Wulf. 2006. The flattening firm: Evidence from panel data on the changing nature of corporate hierarchies. *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 88 (4): 759-73.

Rochet, Jean-Charles, and Jean Tirole. 2004. *Defining Two-Sided Markets*. Mimeo, IDEI, Toulouse.

Rochet, Jean-Charles, and Jean Tirole. 2006. Two-sided markets: A progress report. *The Rand Journal of Economics* 37 (3): 645-67.

Sheth, Beerud. 2018. Chat bots are the new HR managers. *Strategic HR Review* 17 (3): 162-163.

Strand, Curt R. 1996. Lessons of a lifetime: The development of hilton international. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly* 37 (3): 83-95.

Szulanski, Gabriel. 1996. Exploring internal stickiness: Impediments to the transfer of best practice within the firm. *Strategic Management Journal* 17 (S2): 27-43.

Turner, Michael J., and Chris Guilding. 2010. Hotel management contracts and deficiencies in owner-operator capital expenditure goal congruency. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research* 34 (4): 478-511.

Turner, Michael James, and Chris Guilding. 2013. Capital budgeting implications arising from locus of hotel owner/operator power. *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 35: 261-73.

Williamson, Oliver E. 1975. *Markets and hierarchies*. New York, 2630.

Winter, Sidney G., Gabriel Szulanski, Dimo Ringov, and Robert J. Jensen. 2012. Reproducing knowledge: Inaccurate replication and failure in franchise organizations. *Organization Science* 23 (3): 672-85.

Wooldridge, Bill, Torsten Schmid, and Steven W. Floyd. 2008. The middle management perspective on strategy process: Contributions, synthesis, and future research, *Journal of Management* 34 (6): 1190-221.