

Abstract

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Title: Leadership and Team Performance in Agile Seasonal Teams in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry	

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Seasonality in tourism and hospitality industry leads to a high staff turnover from season to season. This means that leaders must start fresh with a new team each season, a team with high diversity in experience, nationality, motivation, and culture. The leaders have the challenge to make the new team members familiar with their new working environment and develop a group of strangers to a cohesive team within a short time, as the teams get together just shortly before season begin. The team cohesion can affect the team effectiveness. The performance of the team has a direct correlation to the service quality, customer satisfaction and customer retention. This sounds like an impossible task but, nevertheless each seasonal organisation seem to succeed every season. How do they do it?

This research investigates the relation between leadership in agile seasonal teams and team performance. Through qualitative research, in the form of in-depth-interviews held with followers with experience from seasonal organisations, the aim was to get inside knowledge on how leaders behave and operate to influence the team's performance and to assure the service quality needed.

The experiences and narratives from the followers showed both similarities and differences within the industry. Acclimatisation, socialisation and training differ largely in every organisation. Where some organisations invest three weeks to get new employees up to speed, other new employees will only get a quick show around before getting thrown into the running business. Most of the followers mentioned management being present in the daily business, a stressful working environment and having team members from all over the world. Tasks are commonly given by team supervisors or by the boss and are often demonstrated by more experienced employees. The organisations offer little to no empowerment to the employees themselves. Even though the approach of the management seems task-orientated most followers spoke about high levels of trust in their leaders, employees being motivated to take on more responsibilities additionally to their everyday work and feeling encouraged to go the extra mile to satisfy their customers. This all indicates a people-orientated leadership style. A leadership approach adjusted to the situation and the motivation of the individual employee seems to be necessary in the context of seasonal agile teams.

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