

**A Construct for Service Leadership in the Casino Industry based on the Leadership
Style of Dennis Gomes**

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Abstract

The gaming industry is comprised of many accomplished senior executives, but some are more successful because of their leadership abilities. This paper investigates characteristics and theories of leadership as well as the leadership style of Dennis Gomes, a long-time CEO in the gaming industry. From personal interviews conducted with Dennis Gomes and casino executives in Atlantic City, a leadership construct was created based on interview findings and literature review. Further, a measurement tool was developed that assesses leadership to help identify potential leaders in the casino industry based on the leadership style, behavior, and attributes of Dennis Gomes.

Keywords: Leadership characteristics in the casino industry

Introduction

There are many talented CEOs at the helms of casino companies in Atlantic City, Las Vegas, and Macao but managing a casino resort, as the senior executive does not necessarily qualify as leadership. No doubt, to become a senior executive takes smarts, experience, and success, but does the skill set to manage, coordinate, and control, qualify as leadership? In recent times leadership has been defined as a unique concept, distinctly different from management; a process of enlisting the talents and energies of people towards achieving a group goal. Management involves the coordination of tasks and resources - in following policy and procedures - to accomplish tasks. Both are important in an organization system however, it is the leader and leadership culture that will harness the collective possibilities and synergistic capabilities of all individuals for maximum productivity. The leader plays an important role in this process and acts as the catalyst in relationship with followers. Leaders inspire the actions of many, to bring about change and improve the growth development prospects of individuals and among teams - in preparation for present and future emergent situations. This paper investigates the contemporary meaning of leadership in the casino industry and posits five constructs for leadership, modeled on the characteristics, behavior, attitude, knowledge, skills, and personal style of Dennis Gomes. The culmination of this project is formation of a Five-construct Paradigm to assess service leadership talent in the casino industry.

Leadership can create the optimal environment for individual motivation and help an organization reach self-actualization. Management alone cannot accomplish this. Leaders interact and influence the direction of the team as well as the group's behavior toward the accomplishment of an objective. High morale is one outcome. Other attributes

come into play that shape and affect the relationships, and success in the process. Leaders come in all shapes in every industry: representing a diversity of profiles in personality, temperament, generation, and gender. Like managers, leaders have many different styles. However, one key distinction between leaders and managers is that leaders are concerned with doing the right thing where managers are concerned with doing things right (Hughes, 2009, p 612).

There are a myriad of definitions and opinions on leadership and multitude of leadership theories. But there are more questions than answers about what makes one a leader such as the link to charisma and personality, and the influence of an extroverted versus an introverted personality type. Leadership can be nurtured yet one can inherently possess certain traits that translate into leadership. One practical way in which leaders are judged is measured by the results of the organization's financial performance and the leader's decision-making success throughout their career ladder- that is reflected in their rank in the company hierarchy. Yet, research also shows that too formal a company structure and hierarchy may actually hinder innovation and stymie leadership development. Many of the best performing organizations in the business of delivering great service are those, which have a flattened pyramid structure – one of less control and more empowerment where all individuals are heard and are encouraged to take risks.

Leadership is interpreted and defined differently, yet for many casino executives it may represent little difference from the notion of management. Leadership is a philosophy as well as a position. As Peter Drucker postulated, management emerged in the 20th century, even though the first manager was identified as an Italian accountant who invented double entry book keeping during the Renaissance period in Florence, Italy.

Management consists of work and task, and is the “organ of leadership...in the business enterprise (Drucker, 1973, P.17, P. 506) and early in history, management was defined as “someone who was responsible for the work of others” (P.390) to which work could be studied and performance outputs increased through improvements. Drucker identified the “new leadership groups” as a “succession of management in the leadership position in society that underlies the demands for social responsibility (P. 319) and gave the example of aristocracy or the priesthood as titles or figureheads. In spite of rapid change and competitive forces in the global business world, many executives persist in “their old ways” of traditional management “Leaders whose repertoires are limited to more traditional authoritarian behaviors of dominating and competing...will be left far behind” (Lipman-Blumen, 1996, P. xiv. P 7). So to succeed in today’s world will require leaders to be connected among followers where inclusion will be championed and opinions of all workers are welcomed. Make no mistake this is not about a ‘warm and fuzzy’ ideology but rather a hypothesis based on the best evidence that points to rigor, discipline, and consistency for developing relationships and networks of supporters.

For these reasons leadership is distinguished as a unique process from management. Leadership is a process and not position, although it can represent a title of authority. One limitation to having authority without representation is that there is an absence of respect. This is a paradox of leadership between authority and influence. Respect –which is what inspires and motivates followers- is something that is earned by the leader. Having a title or authority does not make one a leader. If followers respect and admire the senior executive for their willingness to be a role model and work alongside the team, the natural inclination is for workers to admire and wholeheartedly support the

leader. A leadership culture within the organization has the potential to manifest into a workplace of self-actualization. "One is not a leader-except perhaps in name only-merely because one holds a title or position" (Hughes et al., 2009, P.1).

On the other hand, the concept of management represents a noticeable different ideal and definition described by such terms as "efficiency planning, paperwork, procedures, regulations, and consistency. Leadership is often associated with dynamic, risk-taking, inspiring, and vision" Hughes et al., 2009, P.9). In general terms, Leadership involves the dynamics of influencing the goals of a group (of individuals) toward a common purpose. Whereas management is the supervision of set of specific set of tasks, leadership concerns directing the behaviors of others toward an accomplishment of objectives: both tangible and intangible.

Leadership involves helping create a positive force or momentum inside and throughout the group process. Leaders interact with followers who interact in a particular situation, involving behaviors, personalities, influences of power, and others factors (North, 2004). And many studies have been undertaken to understanding leadership. There have been over 65 classifications for defining leadership in a 50 years span (Fleishman et al., 1991) quantifying some of the theories as trait, contingency, behavior, and many others. An effective Leader is someone who is ethical and makes competent decisions. from which the organization buys into the vision and wisdom of the leader and supports the goals. This paper attempts to shed some light on determining the aptitudes and skill sets of leadership and if some of the characteristics of management are inherent in the DNA of leadership. Further, this paper seeks to explore the question of developing leadership constructs, by

investigating the concept of leadership, to gain an understanding of what constitutes service leadership in the casino industry.

Leadership and the Casino Industry

Gaming has enjoyed a long history in eastern and western civilizations where games of chance - traditionally played for recreation and entertainment – date back to antiquity. The casino resort, however, is a relatively recent innovation that has grown quickly- in size and in geographic location- from the late 20th century. The modern day casino has become a large resort destination combining gambling activities with lodging accommodations of 1000s of rooms, dozens of restaurants, celebrity entertainment, and other major attractions to entice tourists to participate in a unique 21st century destination experience. Though one casino may employ several thousand service workers, the common perception and practice is that a casino property functions in an industry that is typically a top down managerial hierarchy of command and control – more management and less leadership guided. Some casinos have famous personalities serving as the senior executive of their companies, and a few are world famous - larger than life for the self-promotion and personal brands they have become.

What is known from research about emergent leadership theories is the effectiveness of productivity and performance success is directly related to the knowledge, skills, attitudes of the CEO and executive team –not the flamboyance of any one personality. In fact, an executive with a dominant personality managerial style could be perceived to be a threat to an organization’s strategic plan if something were to suddenly happen to that person. So being famous or exuding a magnetic personality is not a determinant of leadership, and having charisma is not a prerequisite for effective leadership performance

results (Collins, 2001). While there are no shortages of successful and famous CEO personalities and many leaders have charisma. Still, questions and confusion exist about management and leadership ideals, over what they purport and between distinguishing the two. The evidence points to the hallmark of great company performance resting with the leadership of the organization directly emanating from the CEO and the executive team – who consistently get the job done in actions, decisions, and behaviors without fanfare and hype.

One senior executive who has accomplished much success in the casino industry for his management and leadership is Dennis Gomes. He has consistently produced superior financial performance for many casino companies throughout his career but it is his leadership skills where he has excelled. Dennis Gomes is respected among his employees and colleagues for his passion, work ethic, and social skills. He has created a culture of high performance through establishing standards, and encouraging employees to reach their full potential, and by leading by example as a personal of high ethical conduct. Employees and executives alike admire him for his accomplishments and personal drive. Said one former human resource executive “Dennis is a class act and a unique individualhe is one of the top casino brands in the world. As the President/ CEO he has integrity and compassion for employees. He understands social intelligence and has the capacity for personal growth, and sharing and caring.” Within executive circles in Atlantic City, Dennis Gomes is most respected for his ability to lead an organization and accomplish stellar performance – proven especially in difficult times and situations of adversity. It is his vision and passion, along with his intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, and ethical treatment of all individuals that make him stand out among his peers and all other casino senior executives.

Biography of Dennis Gomes

Dennis Gomes has built an impressive resume of success. He has worked as the President of Steve Wynn's Golden Nugget and later, Donald Trump's Taj Mahal; he was credited with nearly doubling operating profits at Taj Mahal during his tenure (Baltimore Sun, 2007). Earlier in his career, he served as Senior Vice President of Hilton Hotel Corporation in Nevada overseeing all casino operations in Nevada including the Las Vegas Hilton, the Flamingo Hilton and the Reno Hilton -reporting directly to Baron Hilton himself.

As the son of Portuguese immigrants, he was instilled with the love of family and strong ethical values, which have shaped and influenced his character and leadership style throughout his career. As a businessman he is goal oriented and very competitive – with himself as much as with others. Dennis Gomes exhibits a high degree of relationship behavior and personally coaches and counsels employees with regard to obstacles and challenge in the workplace, and situations in the business environment and life.

Ambitious from an early age, Dennis Gomes worked full time while attending college because of economic necessity. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting and later on an MBA, where he rose to top of his class. Dennis Gomes credits one of his professors in undergraduate accounting course as a mentor for his advice and encouragement. A Certified Public Accountant licensed in Nevada, New Jersey, and Hawaii, Dennis began his career with the established accounting firm of Peat, Marwick, Mitchell and Company and was also a Management Consultant for Coopers and Lybrand.

Presently, Dennis Gomes is President/CEO of a gaming management company, that develops, and operates casinos. His past employment includes directing the transformation of Aztar Corporation's two Tropicana properties in Las Vegas, Nevada and

Atlantic City, New Jersey, and leading the development of the Tropicana's retail, dining, and entertainment project, the Quarter. During his leadership stock value increased from \$5 to \$50 per share and operating profits by over 80%. Dennis Gomes achieved major law enforcement and regulatory positions with the Nevada Gaming Control Board and the New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement (Mook, 2007) and his industry experience started as an investigator and regulator of the casino industry, which launched his 35-year career. The Martin Scorsese film, "Casino," was based on an investigation of the Stardust Casino led by Dennis while serving as a lead investigator with the Nevada Gaming Control Board. Dennis Gomes was Chief of Special Investigations for the New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement where he controlled the investigative responsibilities of that agency and was largely responsible for developing control regulations for New Jersey's casinos. He was also a former President of the Casino Association of New Jersey, where he spearheaded development and expansion initiatives on behalf of the casino industry in Atlantic City. During his two-year term as president he worked closely with legislators on amendments to the Casino Control Act as well as legislation impacting the gaming industry in New Jersey. Dennis Gomes has received numerous awards and citations for recognition of his commitment to raising awareness of responsible gaming and an editorial in The Press of Atlantic City noted that Gomes "was a leader in making the city more competitive" and that he would be "a tough act to follow." As a lifelong student of martial arts and a fitness enthusiast, Mr. Gomes holds advance black belt rankings and instructor designations (Gomes+Cordish, 2008).

Organizational Culture under Dennis Gomes

Motivating employees to be productive is a challenge, but when an organization employs 1000s of full and part-time union and non-union workers in a casino resort it is a bigger challenge. Yet the morale and performance of the Tropicana Resort under Dennis Gomes' leadership was high among executives, supervisors, and employees for his vision, new ideas, decision-making abilities, and communications skills. Dennis Gomes communicates with executives and employees on a personal basis, as much as possible and believes this to be a key attribute in leadership success. He also perceives business suits and desks as impeding effective communications because of the appearance of being "barrier." He is a proponent of Management by Walking around (MBWA), and he communicates personally - speaking with staff, customers, and vendors on many different levels - as much as possible, as practical as possible. In his current position as partner and CEO of a prominent gaming management company, the corporate office staff is lean and streamlined, and the organizational pyramid is flat. The work environment is unpretentious and the low-key nature of the work atmosphere helps bring out the best performance in all people: no noticeable "class distinction" or divisions between and among management and workers. While the positions are different - titles and responsibilities - all people are treated the same. This symbolic action serves to minimize the bureaucracy and authoritarian formal structure inherent in many corporate work environments. This also speaks volumes about the fair and equitable treatment of all - to the degree to which everyone feels valued, respected to be productive, without distractions of artificial protocol and ostentatious authority.

Reflecting back on The Tropicana Casino in Atlantic City - which had very few owners in its 30-year lifetime - it is accurate to say that when Dennis Gomes was at the

helm, he was the best CEO and the Tropicana was the preferred company to work for in Atlantic City because of his leadership style. According to one executive who worked 18 years at the Tropicana property with a few different owners, the Tropicana culture was one of mentoring and helping people to succeed in work and in life. This was evident in that former executives who were mentored by Dennis Gomes eventually left to pursue higher positions among competitors. Losing talent to other organizations was difficult as trained and talented executives resigned, however this was a testament to the respect, admiration, and strength of a leadership personal relationship. Said Dennis Gomes: "I hated losing them but encouraged them to take these positions of greater responsibility, to enable them to reach their highest potential."

Dennis Gomes has strong personal convictions in balancing work demands with a quality family life and strives to inculcate this in the workplace with his employees. He stays healthy –physically, mentally, and emotionally – and encourages healthy living for executives and staff. His physical exercise regimen includes practicing martial arts, meditating as well as maintaining a sense of humor – he has been known to be a practical joker among his executive staff. Humor is also a leadership tool according to some of the research that can help stress management and improve happiness. Classes in karate, yoga, and meditation, were offered on the job at the Tropicana. His philosophy is one where "People must maintain a balance of mind, body and spirit. And that includes family, relationships, and activities outside of work. When they do that, they are better people, better employees and function in a more balanced way" (Mook, 2007).

Methodology and Results

Telephone interviews and in person interviews were conducted with executives from Gomes+Cordish, the Tropicana and other individuals who work in the Atlantic City casino industry. The oral survey consisted of two questions, both open-ended: "What is leadership?" and "Is Dennis Gomes a leader?" and to explain their rationale. The most common responses were: ethical, visionary, effective results, and a genuine people person. Intelligence, ability to make tough decisions and accomplished in industry were other reasons for quantifying his leadership. Other insights provided related to Dennis Gomes' inner drive to succeed as a competitor -with himself as well as for his organization -and in the quality and consistency of his decisions as CEO along with his excellent communication skills.

From the interview findings and literature review emerged four leadership constructs of Vision, Character, Professional Competency, and Emotional & Social Intelligence. The theme for the fifth construct, spirituality, emerged from some of the respondents and became clearer after interviewing Dennis Gomes. Spirituality is the inner force that drives ambition. Spirituality is also about passion and maintaining a life- balance perspective that helps leaders realize that there is a much bigger force at work here, than any one individual. Spirituality may help to keep all of the great accolades and accomplishments grounded in humility. One key aspect of spirituality for Dennis Gomes relates to ancient philosophies- combining west with east and drawing on the strengths of different perspectives that link to a commonality in life. Dennis Gomes as a practitioner of martial arts meditates on the ancient wisdom but this idea could be explored in greater detail. It was not clear what the limitation of spirituality as a construct is, nor be determined if faith or religious beliefs play a role in leadership. Perhaps this also could be

investigated in a future study that looks at spirituality in more depth from a qualitative perspective.

An interview with Dennis Gomes revealed the following leadership attributes that he epitomizes in style and characteristics as a successful leader. These descriptors are derivatives of the five constructs and are in no particular order except where noted:

- 1) Family is number one: with myself and to my fellow workers
- 2) Love of family and fellow workers, and humanity
- 3) Affection toward employees
- 4) Ethical principles and values (from parents), integrity
- 5) Humility and patience
- 6) Fair and open work environment
- 7) Focus on what needs to get done
- 8) Down to earth, approachable person
- 9) Calm demeanor in difficult situations, however rigorous in business approach
- 10) Vision – thinking outside the box, innovativeness, trendsetter, calculated risk taker, big picture, learning organization
- 11) Respect for all individuals
- 12) Empathy
- 13) Sense of humor
- 14) Care for people as human beings
- 15) Open communication – all employees have access to president’s hotline
- 16) Desks and suits can be barriers to communication
- 17) MBWA and talking with all: front line workers, valet, custodial staff doorpersons
- 18) Difference between leader and administrator (manager) – leaders care and people know this
- 19) Compassion and concern
- 20) Mentoring
- 21) Championing and recognizing employees efforts, executive team too
- 22) Genetics and environment

- 23) Natural traits
- 24) Fiercely competitive with self
- 25) Determination and driven
- 26) Mild demeanor, calm
- 27) Technical competency
- 28) Experienced and knowledge resourceful
- 29) Goal oriented
- 30) Delegate tasks – does not micromanage executives
- 31) Persistence and fortitude
- 32) Never give up and turn adversity and into win-win
- 33) Never use fear to motivate – encourage all to try their
- 34) Sandwich Approach to performance critique and counseling
- 35) Mistakes are OK as long as learn from experience, rather than playing it safe all the time – take chances or risks to advance...acts as coach and teacher
- 36) Make work environment fun and exciting
- 37) Empowerment
- 38) Positive Mental Attitude
- 39) Positive Mental Energy
- 40) Emotional & Social intelligence – understanding yourself, your personal style, and others
- 41) Putting people first
- 42) Balance life/work – family and career
- 43) Passion
- 44) Enthusiasm
- 45) Personal character
- 46) Credibility
- 47) Experience
- 48) Education
- 49) Mentor
- 50) Desks and suits as barriers
- 51) Time management

As an executive Dennis Gomes has achieved superior financial results, is high in relationship behavior, and exhibits a few different styles of leadership such as coaching and delegating. He is a visionary who sets realistic goals and does not micromanage executives but expects competent decisions and satisfactory results from executives. Dennis Gomes helps executives set and achieve high goals in developing leadership attitudes and behaviors among senior staff. Passionate about his role as CEO, mission of the organization, and the casino industry, he sometimes lapses into interrogation mode when mistakes occur. He uses a coaching behavior to support executives in their decision making to help them overcome obstacles and find solutions. The hierarchy is a flat management structure that hires new executives with a “complimentary partnering” approach. He personally looks for individuals who fit into culture and characteristics of specific central job -that the person did well – as an indication of future performance results. He has a high expectation level, starting with himself, and leads by example – the same with which he encourages all executives to embody. Above all, he champions accomplishments and celebrates success, as an ethical and compassionate leader. As one executive confided, “Dennis get’s it,” it being empowerment, delegation, and open-minded support for his executives and the workers within the organization. He espouses a people first approach with the well being and interest of his team at the forefront of his decision making in running a casino business.

Another leadership concept that emerged from interviews and literature was that he is a person of principle. This is reminiscent of Steven Covey who believes that “Tomorrow’s successful leaders will value principles more than they value their

Companies” Gibson, 2002, P. 35) in treating people ethically as well as using them well. Gomes, like Covey, practices developing relationships inside and outside of the casino organization that in turn creates a high trust culture network. Gomes strives to help all individuals find meaning and fulfillment around a common purpose in the casino industry - in global economy, around a value system of principled-centered leadership” (P.35).

Having power or authority is one method of gaining control over your followers. But true leadership is about respect and admiration from a natural and genuine position. The difference between control and admiration or management versus leadership is with genuine affection, people continue to respect you and admire you long after you or they have moved. “Butt kissing” may be more subtly encouraged when the power and authority of a senior executive position lacks the respect from followers. One example is a valet attendant in an unnamed competitor casino where the valet knows Dennis Gomes on a first name basis and “saves” the parking spot and designated valet key number for Dennis Gomes, who occasionally parks at this resort property. The valet told Dennis Gomes during an unscheduled visit that his executive parking space and key number is “reserved,” any time. From the interviews and literature review, and further reflection, came a model for leadership ,which was based on more than 50 attributes, characteristics, traits, and behaviors, condensed to five constructs from which a Five Construct Paradigm was created.

Measurement of Constructs

See Appendix P. 30

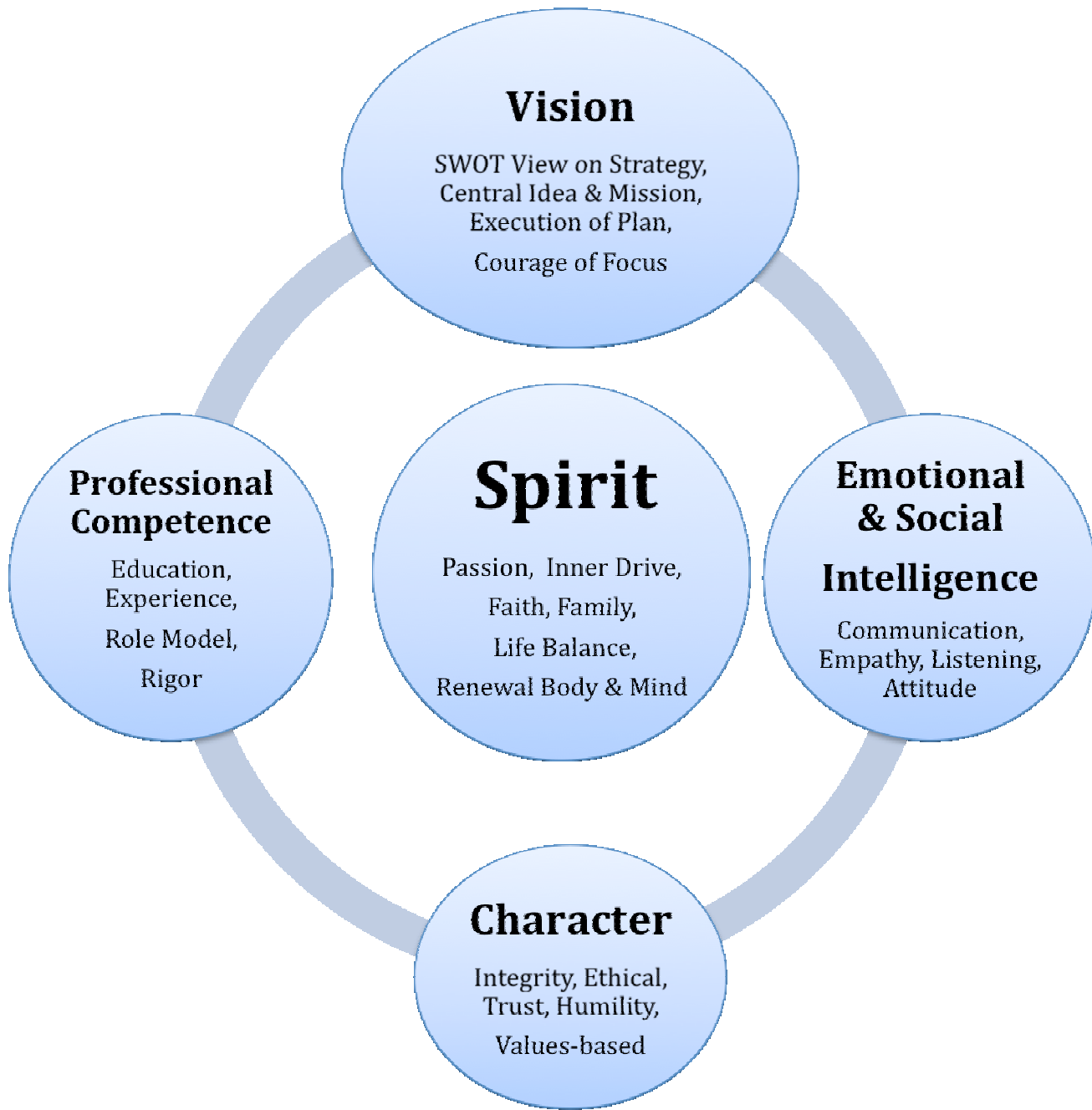
Assessing casino leadership is not just about assessing one person’s style; rather it includes the characteristics of the executive team who collectively embody the attitude and behavior of the CEO as well as the organization culture, which is a manifestation of the

Leader. Therefore this assessment can be taken individually or as a group of executives to compare perspectives to gauge if everyone has expressed similar beliefs. The Five-Construct Leadership Paradigm strives to measure the leadership quotient of casino organization through its CEO, executive team, and attempts to quantify the leadership quotient of the company. This survey tool could be applied for all executives as well as to a lesser degree, to supervisors, and other front line workers with exemplary performance who exhibit leadership tendencies. For senior executives this may be helping for understanding the concept of applied leadership to create mentor opportunities and job-shadowing activities with senior executives and the CEO. The assessment tool for leadership is contained at the end of this paper and is based on the Assessment Leadership Profile of Yaverbaum & Sherman ((2008); Good to Great Diagnostic Tool by Collins (2006); and the Social Intelligence framework posited by Goleman & Boyatzis (2008).

A Five-Construct Paradigm for Service Leadership in the Casino Industry based on the Leadership Style of Dennis Gomes

The five leadership constructs identified are (1) Vision, (2) Character, (3) Spirit, (4) Professional Competence and (5) Emotional & Social Intelligence. These constructs were formulated from interviews and discussions with Dennis Gomes and other executives and individuals from the Atlantic City casino industry, and literature review.

A Five-Construct Paradigm for Service Leadership in the Casino Industry based on the Leadership Style of Dennis Gomes



1. Construct of Vision

Peter Drucker in 1966 defined leadership as “thinking through the organization’s mission, defining it, and establishing it, clearly and visibly”(Murray, 2006). In today’s business environment in the casino industry, Drucker’s definition could be tweaked to include a unique selling point of differentiation as a Brand along with the total buy in of the organization executives and followers who support the vision and mission “clearly and visibly.” Vision represents strategic management and innovative ideas. As CEO, delegating to key executives is also about reflecting on direction and initiatives of the company while focusing on the “big picture.” This includes the foresight to monitor and maintain progress: to feel the heartbeat, with a finger on the pulse of the organization to stay focused and stay on track. Building a superior team and network within an organization will produce superior performance – if management and workers are nurtured and challenged.

Managing from a high executive position in an organization with a title of authority can be a barrier for effective communication and performance. The construct of Vision includes a succinct message of where the organization should grow and for fostering a work culture where management and workers are respected as individuals and are not separated by rank or barriers of executive privilege. Reducing frivolous distractions can create optimal motivation environments -hence performance results. Dennis Gomes is typical of what Jim Collins (2001) calls a Hedgehog leader for his “big picture” vision and daily focus through others. He excels in his leadership role and is “best at” being a CEO. Dennis Gomes is focused on superior execution of operations through people relationships and the above average financial results for his workers, customers, and shareholders.

2. Construct of Character

Professional conduct is modeled in the leader identity and the identity of the organization that is based on ethical beliefs, behaviors, and personal value system of the leader. Ethical relates to personal code of conduct, and culture of the organization, which is created on trust. Trust is a foundation of loyalty. Steve Covey says that the most successful leadership style for the information age is a leader who "...makes decisions based on principles over the performance of the company." The leader's behavior, attitudes, and actions are embodiments of this leadership culture. Yet leaders make mistakes and enact wrong decisions. The making of mistakes is an opportunity for discovery and recovery. Leaders know that mistakes are opportunities to gain respect, as long as followers know that your sincere efforts are at work. Someone once said that "people are human lie detectors," which sounds silly to even consider this example. However, many people, especially leaders, upon making the wrong decisions can not pull themselves away from the "I did not make a mistake" persona perhaps due to inferiority complex or perceived perception that followers will find the leader "weak" and feeble-minded. That was a mistake that Abraham Lincoln's opponents made about him . Today more than ever, information about decisions making performance with social media and technology has made information transparent in business/society and available 24/7. Followers are savvy enough to accept a leader making a mistake. What they would loose respect and admiration for is when a leader is caught in a lie trying to manipulate a situation.

3. Construct of Spirit

Dennis Gomes is driven in determination and inner spirit in life and in work. He is a compassionate individual who holds all other individuals in high esteem and is also

passionate in his life and work. Passion comes from doing something you that personally love and excel at, such as CEO of a labor-intensive casino resort. Love is a component of passion . Love is described as love of work and love of people since “as human beings, we are all linked together as part of the universe.” Leaders who enjoy what they do, “own” the vision; it shows among followers and is contagious within the culture. Dennis Gomes is especially motivated by people relationships and in connecting to people. He does not work for money alone. He works for the intrinsic value of building a business enterprise among people he truly enjoys being with. Motivation and morale are important for optimal personal performance and collectively, to achieve the best results of the group. Followers want to respect a leader whom they report to and this may originate from followers own feelings of self-respect. Affection and personal regard for the leader is the ultimate indication of esprit de corp or productivity effort of a company. Respect and likability are not easy to attain, and this is not always the case in reality with leaders and followers. Spirit helps leaders work hard at earning respect from employees for the energy they possess. Followers may look for guidance from a leader because of their accomplishments and past decision making success, however they do not necessarily have to like that that person. Followers are human beings after all and while they prefer to like the leader, it may be difficult for leaders to make decisions that followers believe should be made. After all, leaders are entrusted with the vision and seeing the mission develop toward the success of that vision. Leadership is not a popularity contest with the primary goal of being liked by all followers. Still, many leaders would prefer to make decisions that all people understand and support. But since there are obligations and invisible forces – big picture dynamics of the organization- most followers do not comprehend the cause and effect because of the

scope of work- from the limited vantage point of the front lines of operation. Lastly, balance is very important as is maximum effort work and care should be taken to rest and renew the body, mind, and spirit.

4. Construct of Professional Competence

Executive experience, formal education, continuing professional education, mettle, proven abilities under stress and confidence are determinants of this construct. Working with executives and employees, towards organizational objectives set forth through the vision statement help to develop a sense of belonging, confidence in their abilities, and productivity. The goals should be realistic and attainable, and an environment suitable for working and learning should be designed to allow for producing the optimal results.

Employee buy-in is an outcome of this competency that is based on allowing individuals contribute in this planning process through focus groups and peer collaboration.

Professional Competence is defined as higher education, professional improvement - intelligence to learn and grow intellectually- curiosity, experience in business & industry – previous history of success and ability for effective decision-making. Competence includes understanding and learning from adversity and from others. Confidence comes from experience and includes surrounding yourself with individuals who may be smarter and more talented than you are.

5. Construct of Emotional & Social Intelligence

Emotional intelligence relates to intrapersonal skills in being to understand and manage one's moods and emotions. Social Intelligence concerns the interpersonal skills or having the ability to listen, understand, and communicate effectively with all others. One example would be to develop a "genuine interest in and talent for fostering positive feelings in the

people whose cooperation and support you need” (Goleman & Boyatzkis, 2008, P.76). The connection between emotional quotient and leadership was first posited in 1998. New studies show that leaders can improve group performance through empathy and self-knowledge. Social intelligence is a relatively new breakthrough in brain science according to Golemen & Boyatzis and a recent study shows that “followers literally mirror their leaders” (p.76). Genuine respect can be gauged beyond the power or authority and tile of position. This is the true test of someone’s feelings and affection long after you are gone or no longer with the organization. Social Intelligence is based on making employees’ interests seem important: putting family first and striving to maintain a balance between life and work. Leaders love all customers: internal (employees) and external (customers). Showing care and compassion for individuals and spending time speaking and listening to your staff, especially those on the front lines interacting with customers, as much as possible is how social intelligence is applied. Listening to their stories and hearing them is one key ingredient to learning to be understood. Communication is a conduit for linking many of the actions emotional & social Intelligence – moods, emotions, empathy, listening. Communication includes a clearly articulating the vision including monitoring the mission and execution to see it through – no mater how difficult. Communication involves more than e-mail, telephone, or in writing. It also occurs in action and in thought and words, affecting the flow of information at all levels of the organization. An advantage for communication occurs within the flattened organization since there are fewer layers to penetrate. Being aware of diversity and differences of cultures, ages, and generational spans along with those specific attributes for each different group to clearly articulate the

message and solicit feedback. Listening is as much a part of the communication process to refine and accuracy of the message.

Ramifications and Implications for the Casino industry

Leadership development based on the five constructs can improve the talent prospects and succession planning in a casino company. It can also help executives to be better managers towards building meaningful people relationships. New ideas and innovations will contribute to perpetuating the performance and longevity of an organization but how many organizations actually consider this? Creating a leadership culture of trust where calculated risk taking can bring out the best performance in individuals. Assembling a diverse executive team of unique complimentary differences- from in and outside the casino industry- is one way to foster a leadership culture of new ideas. The five constructs are presented as cornerstones to building a leadership culture for a learning organization. Mentoring is part of the succession training that highlights workplace challenges and obstacles as teachable moments. Problems are embraced as opportunities to help executives improve problem-solving skills for personal growth and organization succession experience – without embarrassment or negativity. Effective communication with all employees is a great way to connect on a personal level and solicit input for strategic threats and opportunities from front-line worker suggestions. More importantly, this will create an organizational attitude were all are valued in reaching peak performance. This mission statement at Gomes + Cordish Gaming illustrates this point succinctly “To help every individual within my purview to reach their highest potential.”

This statement summarizes what service leadership should strive to attain in the affirmation of a unitary coherent goal for the organization.

Conclusion

This paper used autobiographical, biographical, historical information and the personal interviews to understanding the breadth of leadership. The limitation of this information is the lack of depth of information. In the future a qualitative study with interviews of casino CEOs and senior executives as well as a quantitative study with a questionnaire survey instrument based on the five leadership constructs could be administered among mid-level executives as well.

Leadership can be learned and executives have the potential to become better decision makers, and leaders. However, leadership is not an exact science and there are other concerns. After all, leaders are human beings and as such make mistakes. One study of management -outside of the casino industry- shows that "50 -90 % of all new businesses fail within the first three years because of managerial incompetence" and that "fifty percent of Fortune 500 CEO's will be dismissed for poor performance over the next three years" (Hughes et al., 2009, P. 88-89). While these numbers may seem high, it does highlight an important and potentially overlooked point. Mistakes happen on a frequent basis and leaders, like managers, can make the wrong decisions. Still, organizations can foster the development of leadership attitudes and habits, and improve the decision-making odds. One step is to determine if managers care; do they like people and are they open to critical coaching? Care can be described in the following way - as an interest to see themselves and other individuals succeed in life, not only in the job. Assessing leadership talent begins with an environment of open communication and dissention. After all, how

much can an organization learn or leaders grow in hearing the same old patronizing things?

Casino resorts, as labor intensive properties, stand to benefit significantly from a workforce culture where individuals are energized and encouraged to reach their full potential: to express exactly what they feel towards higher performance and self-actualization. Criticism, like progressive punishment in disciplinary actions, is meant as a positive action (with an uncomfortable consequence). And like discipline, criticism can be effective and long lasting if administered positively -not punitively. If individuals are open to receive "growth" criticism, sparingly – not something that appears on an annual performance evaluation or that will ruffle feathers or hurt feelings – they may be more apt to make real changes in attitude or behavior for personal and professional growth. An organization's leadership emanates from the behaviors and attitudes of its corporate executives, and managers who aspire to become leaders must be willing to be open-minded and learn from their weaknesses to improve their performance to act as role models within the organization.

The 21st century is a society of information and rapid change, pressured by competitive forces and interconnected business markets. The quality of any casino service experience will be gauged by the happy attitudes and productivity quotients of its workers - which directly correlate to leadership- and the satisfaction of the customers. The service advantage today lies in knowledge worker attitudes, behaviors, and skills that can best adapt to change in this information age. We are living in an age of synthesis where reaching the full potential of humanity relates to applying everything learned to emergent situations, in work and life. A leadership style rather than a management style, based on the five-

construct paradigm, may be one model that encourages executives and workers to reach their full potential as individuals. The casino resort is comprised of human resources, an amalgam of diversity, cultures, and different internal guests. It is a multi generational workforce of boomers, generation X and Y, millennial, native born, immigrants, and the external guests who come from diverse socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. By leveraging the wisdom from eastern and western philosophies, the five-constructs paradigm will teach leadership, which might prove beneficial to all casino companies - whether in Atlantic City, Las Vegas, or Macao.

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Appendix

The following assessment contains questions that are not in any particular order in which a number score should be affixed after reading the question. Score the answers in the following way: Strongly Agree - 4 points, Agree - 2 points, Neutral - 1 point, No - 0 points. Add the total number of points for corresponding letter grade at the end of assessment.

Casino Leadership Assessment

Vision

1. Our organization has a simple, coherent strategic concept
2. I can articulate our mission in a few sentences
3. The vision incorporates utilization of the organization's strengths which may or may not be related our core competencies
4. The organization's vision aligns with the mission as a consistent message
5. I can envision events long-term and understand the daily process on how to make things better
6. Success is achieved with people rather than over rigid processes
7. I believe that time spent on finding and selecting the best people for my organization is more important than personally managing and carrying out the strategy of the company
8. My ambition and aspirations are similar to the goals and ideals of the organization
9. My executive team and I share these traits: individuals with disciplined minds, thoughts, and actions
10. I believe in creating a climate of opportunity where everyone's ideas could be heard
11. Dialogue is important - mistakes are examined without blame so all can learn
12. Creating a leadership culture is more about substance over style
13. Leadership is greater than any one personality

Character

14. My actions and behaviors model the professional standards of the organization and are just as important outside of the workplace
15. I hold myself to the highest ethical standards
16. Respect is important for teamwork and cooperation
17. Trust is the foundation of loyalty and personal growth
18. Integrity of actions and ethical treatment of all employees is important
19. Culture of trust - people are valued and wrong answers are not penalized nor are people publicly embarrassed

Spirit

20. I am driven to achieve
21. I love people
22. I am passionate in my position and organizational mission
23. I am intrinsically motivated by challenges
24. Executive motivation - I spend little time motivating executives

25. Organizational motivation – the work climate and company culture is conducive to supporting people, not de-motivating them
26. Spirituality - faith or beliefs are a guiding force in life and career
27. Family is number one and work/life balance is important
28. Bureaucracy is minimal
29. Praise and recognition is a natural part of the company culture

Professional Competency

30. A college education and/or continuing education is important
31. I have an accomplished record of success as an executive
32. Achievement through industry networking and service on advisory boards is important to career: knowledge, contacts, executive recruitment
33. Proven ability to handle complex situations
34. Committed to an environment where mistakes become learning experiences
35. Positive communication- foster openness, a dialogue of listening and discussion
36. Encourage my staff to express and disagree if they object
37. I like being around smart people
38. I believe in hiring those with complimentary skill set
39. I surround myself with the right people on the executive team
40. It is important to have the right people in the right position on executive team
41. Executives don't need to be managed
42. I act as a mentor to senior staff
43. Value spending more time selecting and mentoring the executives instead of personally managing details
44. Company culture of opportunity for everyone to be heard
45. Ability to articulate abstract ideas in a few sentences
46. I am consistent in my actions: rigorous but not ruthless
47. My executive team know what's expected of them

Emotional & Social Intelligence

48. I have an awareness for understanding what motivates people
49. I can listen attentively and understand the moods of others
50. Understanding the culture and values of group are important
51. Consensus building among executive and staff is necessary
52. Giving feedback to people helps their professional development
53. Inspiration can be articulated through a positive emotional tone
54. I solicit input from everyone and support all team members
55. Praise in public and reprimand in private
56. Advocate using the "sandwich" approach of coaching: positive / critical / positive counseling

Assessment Rubric:

200-224 Outstanding

Scores in this range indicate that you are a superior leader and embody characteristics and behaviors of leadership: passionate, ethical, competent, and successful for your personal style and for your professional achievements. Hopefully you work for an organization that appreciates your time and value your talent – in the way work is professionally challenging and personally satisfying.

165-199 Good

This range indicates that you are a good leader and are successful based on your attitudes, behaviors, and leadership but not quite superior. You embody most of the characteristics and behaviors of leadership but perhaps, need to reflect upon the areas that your performance was assessed as neutral or moderately agreeable.

165 or less Satisfactory

You may be more managerial-oriented than leadership driven. Perhaps, you are open to continuing your professional development to improve your leadership style - to becoming a leader. This score indicates that you have some leadership skills however, the results confirm that based on your responses to questions, the development of leadership attitudes, behaviors, and understanding but perhaps, need more experience, practice, and education.