

Managerial Roles

Management is commonly described as getting things done through other people to achieve organizational objectives. This view of management is generic and lends itself to different interpretations. The job of the manager is therefore viewed in terms of roles or sets of behaviours that are specific to the position within any tourism and hospitality (T&H) organization. 'Managerial roles' are defined as the essential functions of the manager's job. Managerial roles tell us what managers within a T&H organization actually do. They are a useful tool for setting the expectations for the manager, assessing the manager's overall performance and identifying potential areas for further development.

According to Mintzberg, managerial roles are classified into ten functions, which are divided into three key areas: interpersonal roles, informational roles and decisional roles. As illustrated in the figure, these three areas are interconnected. The formal status and authority of the manager are associated with the development of strong interpersonal relationships and related behaviours. To perform their interpersonal roles, managers need to collect and process information. These informational roles are fundamental in making strategic and operational decisions to ensure the sustained growth of the T&H organization.

Mullins and Dossor (2013) summarize the features of the ten managerial roles:

- *Interpersonal roles*: these emerge from the manager's position of authority and

formal status within the T&H organization. In the figurehead role, the manager is the formal representative of the organization or the unit on formal occasions. They are responsible for a range of actions including signing official legal documents, making decisions regarding customer complaints or considering staff grievances. The leader role is the most critical and supports all other roles. It involves recruitment, planning, management, motivation and development of staff. In the liaison role, the manager is the link with external stakeholders of the organization (e.g., business partners, tour operators or suppliers) or the unit, such as managers of the other units (e.g., marketing, finance, IT, etc.).

- *Informational roles*: the monitor role involves monitoring information necessary to understand the operations of the T&H organization and its environments. Such information in T&H includes bookings, occupancy rates, average daily rates or staff turnover. The disseminator role requires the manager to communicate information to internal and external stakeholders using appropriate channels. In their spokesperson role, the manager is the formal authority in communicating information to individuals and teams outside the unit – for example, senior management, the board of directors, guests or suppliers.
- *Decisional roles*: this set of roles supports the strategic decision making that is a result of the authority and status of the manager and their access to information. The entrepreneurial role involves identifying areas for improvements, assessing opportunities and initiating planned actions, such as developing offers to attract new market segments or increase sales in the low season. The disturbance handler role requires the manager to take responsibility and act in response to unpredicted disturbances. These could include crises and disasters, breakdown of equipment or staff shortages due to sick leave. The resource allocator role is critical for the operation and performance of the organization. It involves decisions around setting priorities and the investment of resources such as money, staffing, time and materials. For example, a hotel

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manager may need to decide between renovating and upgrading the accommodation facilities and improving spa or conference facilities. The negotiator role involves taking part in negotiations with external partners, staff or customer representatives, and acting in the interest of their own organization.

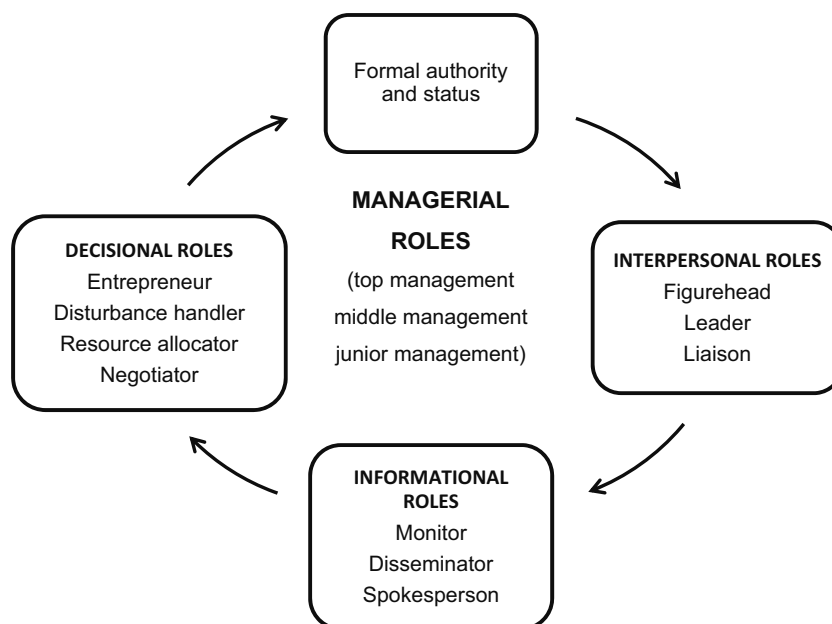
These ten roles are integral to the manager's job at all levels (top/senior, middle or junior level) and all types of T&H organizations (e.g., public, private, not-for-profit or charity).

In the context of fast change and major external developments such as economic crises, pandemics and technological advances, the leader role is becoming increasingly critical for the success of the T&H organization. Whittington et al. (2020) argue that leading strategic change in practice involves managers at different levels in an organization. However, the priorities at each level of management vary. The three key roles for top management include envisioning future strategy, aligning the organization's

resources to deliver the strategy and acting as role models. Middle managers are the implementers of the strategy. Their roles focus on championing of strategic issues, making sense of the strategy, adapting and adjusting the strategy to the new developments and embodying change at local (unit) level.

The complex and diverse nature of the T&H industry requires managers to prioritize their responsibilities depending on the context and often to do the technical work themselves rather than focus on strategic aspects. Kusluvan et al.'s study (2010) reveals that the characteristics of the workforce, employment and labour market add to the complexity of the manager's job and make T&H different from other industries. However, the key principles of management and range of activities remain the same. The application of Mintzberg's ten managerial roles to the hospitality industry showed that hotel general managers assumed all roles, but viewed as crucial the roles of leader, monitor, disseminator and entrepreneur (Arnaldo, 1981).

The Tourism & Hospitality Organization



Source: Based on Mintzberg (1973).

Managerial roles in tourism according to Mintzberg

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Ferguson and Berger (1984) used an alternative approach to understand what restaurant managers actually do based on Kotter's (1982) study of the behavioural patterns of managers. They found that restaurant managers spent most of their time (46%) in scheduled meetings and desk sessions, which was associated with the organizing, planning and deciding functions. However, the study also showed that the planning, organizing, coordinating and controlling functions were far removed from those described by Mintzberg (1973). Instead of planning, restaurant managers appeared to be reacting to developments, and coordinating was more about juggling various tasks rather than undertaking any structured activity. Thus, not only are T&H unique in their nature, but there are also variances in the managerial roles between the different sub-sectors.

Baum's work (2015) on critical aspects of management and human resources in the T&H industries reveal key challenges and opportunities. For example, the trend of continued evidence of blurring of managerial and operational roles within T&H organizations. While this is common for small businesses, it is becoming normal practice for large multinational organizations too. This is driven by the need to cut costs through reducing the levels and numbers of management jobs within the organization. It is further supported by the recognition of the value of staff empowerment that enables front-line staff to take decisions without authorization from the management. Another challenge Baum highlights is the differences in the work and in particular managerial practices across different cultural contexts. For example, the concept of employee empowerment has different interpretation and application in China and in the UK; the work organization in Scandinavia shows higher levels of autonomy and learning than that in the UK. It is critical to take into account these challenges when defining the boundaries of the managerial roles and benchmarking performances across T&H organizations and units.

Future developments in managerial roles should recognize that management increasingly takes place in culturally diverse organizations and new geographical settings. Managers in the T&H industries need to understand the organizational context and staff expectations to perform well in all aspects of their managerial roles. This could present further challenges since the manager's job is

often influenced by conflicting and competing demands emerging from changes within the organization or developments in the macro and industry environment. It is crucial to recognize that job requirements at the top levels of the organization are different from those at lower levels. Middle- and junior-level managers are responsible for linking the decisions of senior management to the often conflicting realities of their subordinates. They are also 'stuck in the middle' and to perform their job, they need strong interpersonal, problem-solving and conflict management skills to successfully manage quality relationships with various stakeholders (Stoyanova-Bozhkova, Paskova and Buhalis, 2020). The knowledge and research in this area has the potential to inform the development of training programmes for T&H managers and define the future of the industry.

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