THE HOTEL WORK AND WELL-BEING PROJECT
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Persons interested in learning more about the network should go to www.WorkFamilyHealthNetwork.org.

Report prepared by W. Benjamin Goodman, Amy Snead, Michelle Harrison, and Kelly D. Davis

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No industry can thrive without dependable, motivated employees. Hotels operate on a twenty-four-hours-a-day/seven-days-a-week basis, including holidays. Around-the-clock service is necessary to accommodate guests, but the schedules can be taxing for employees working at nonstandard times of the day. Customer service is one of the main objectives of hotel companies. Hotel employees have the opportunity to meet a lot of interesting people, but also, employees should react professionally and courteously to unexpected, negative reactions from guests. Also, due to the current state of the U.S. economy, leaner staffing at hotels means that employees are often being asked to do more with less. Add to the equation life outside of work—including family, community, and personal commitments—and employees may become overextended. Health, family relationships, and job performance may be affected.
For these reasons, our team designed this project to answer the following questions:

• How do hotel employees manage the requirements and challenges of their jobs?

• How are hotel job demands related to various work outcomes (e.g., job performance, satisfaction, turnover)?

• How are characteristics of hotel jobs related to employees’ health and well-being?

• How do experiences at work spill over into family life and vice versa?

Our goal was to identify ways that hotel companies can tailor workplace policies and practices to protect and/or promote employee health, family relationships, retention, and productivity.

Hotel organizations may find that offering innovative work-life balance programs gives them a strategic advantage in the industry and helps them retain talent.
EXPRESS CHECKOUT
SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Work Demands and Control
Both managers and hourly employees rated their jobs as highly demanding; however, only managers reported also having high levels of authority to make decisions and a high degree of control over their work.

Work-Family Support
Work-family support was an issue for both managers and hourly employees. Only 29 percent of managers and 2 percent of hourly employees perceived their hotel as being supportive of families.

Leadership
General managers (GMs) and managers had conflicting views of the GMs’ leadership style: GMs rated their leadership style as active and positive; managers rated their GM’s leadership as passive.

JOB SATISFACTION, COMMITMENT, TURNOVER, AND PRODUCTIVITY

Satisfaction
Hotel employees were more satisfied with their jobs when there was more effective leadership, a high-quality job climate (e.g., co-workers take their jobs seriously and are enthusiastic about their jobs), and appropriate job demands.

Commitment
Managers reported greater commitment to their jobs when their GM supported employees’ work-family balance or had children, as well as when there was a high-quality job environment.

Turnover Intentions
Employees were less likely to consider leaving their jobs when the leadership was effective, their GM supported work-family balance, the quality of the job climate was high, and the job demands were appropriate.

Work Productivity
Hourly employees who experienced more overload stressors and a greater total number of workplace stressors were more likely to report cutting back on work responsibilities.
STRESS AND HEALTH

Emotional Exhaustion

Half of managers and hourly employees reported feeling emotionally drained from work. Emotional exhaustion from work was linked to lower job satisfaction, greater turnover intentions, and less organizational commitment.

Overall Health

Hourly employees reported experiencing more negative physical health symptoms than managers. The most common types of physical health symptoms experienced by both hourly employees and managers were muscle soreness, headaches, and backaches.

Daily Stress and Health

Negative physical health symptoms varied depending on daily work experiences. On days when hotel employees experienced an argument at work, felt overloaded at work, or felt stressed due to interpersonal relations, they reported experiencing more negative physical health symptoms that day, as compared to days when they did not experience these stressors.

Daily Stress and Substance Use

Daily stressors were also linked to increases in tobacco, alcohol, and caffeine use. For example, managers and employees reported an increase in smoking on days when they experienced negative reactions with guests and co-workers, compared to days when they did not experience these stressors.

WORK-TO-FAMILY SPILLOVER

Positive Work-to-Family Spillover

General managers reported the highest levels of positive work-to-family spillover (e.g., having a good day at work and coming home in a good mood). Additionally, 52 percent of managers and 42 percent of hourly employees reported experiencing positive spillover “sometimes” or “all the time.”

Negative Work-to-Family Spillover

On average, 44 percent of managers experienced negative spillover “sometimes” or “all the time,” compared to only 29 percent of hourly employees. GMs with children also experienced significantly more negative work-to-family spillover on average than GMs without children.
Seventy-seven hotels participated in our nationwide project (information on data collection methods and the research team can be found in the appendix at the end of this report). On average, the hotels had approximately 700 rooms, 475 employees, and sixty-five managers. All of our hotels were high-quality establishments, with 55 percent receiving a Three-Diamond rating from AAA and 45 percent receiving a Four-Diamond rating.

LOCATIONS OF PARTICIPATING HOTELS

Almost half of our hotels were located in cities (48 percent), 22 percent were located in resort areas, 15 percent were located in the suburbs, and 15 percent were located near major airports. Cities with participating hotels included New York City, NY, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, GA, Tampa, FL, Orlando, FL, Chicago, IL, St. Louis, MO, Kansas City, KS, Denver, CO, Los Angeles, CA, San Francisco, CA, State College, PA, Pocono Manor, PA, Tannersville, PA, Pittsburgh, PA, Harrisburg, PA, Philadelphia, PA, Baltimore, MD.
THE NATURE OF THE WORKFORCE

HOTEL EXECUTIVES

Twenty-four hotel executives—including presidents, executive vice presidents, and senior vice presidents—provided insights into overall challenges and opportunities for their hotels, as well as hotel financial and human resources. Executives were experienced, averaging twenty-one years in the industry and four years in their current position. Executives were predominantly female (75 percent), were 45 years old, on average, and were the most educated workers in our project, having typically completed some postgraduate studies beyond college.

GENERAL MANAGERS

A total of fifty-six general managers (GMs) participated in our project. General managers were the most experienced group of individuals participating in our project, with an average tenure of twenty-five years in the industry and over five years at their current position. They also put in long work hours, averaging over fifty-six hours per week on the job. GMs were 48 years old on average, and were predominantly male (82 percent), White (77 percent), married (84 percent), and had an average education level equivalent to a four-year college degree. Although the majority of GMs were married, less than half reported having children (43 percent).

MANAGERS

Managers in our project were a diverse group, holding a wide range of job titles, including front desk managers, catering and food services managers, sales managers, account executives, and human resources managers. The 588 hotel managers who participated in our project averaged thirteen years of experience in the hotel industry, and four years of experience in their current position. Similar to GMs, they also reported working long hours (fifty-six hours/week on average), and although over half of managers in our project (64 percent) reported working day shifts (e.g., 8:00 or 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 or 6:00 p.m.), 21 percent reported working additional hours on nights or weekends. Managers averaged 38 years of age, were equally likely to be men or women (51 percent male), and had an average education level equivalent to three years of college. Overall, 67 percent were White, while 9 percent were African American and 11 percent were Hispanic or Latino. Although the majority of managers were married or co-habiting (65 percent), less than half reported having children (44 percent).

HOURLY HOTEL WORKERS

The seventy-seven hourly employees who participated in our project provided a wide range of services, including housekeeping, maintenance, front desk assistance, and food preparation. The average industry tenure of hourly employees was ten years; hourly employees had been in their current position for an average of five years. They worked fewer hours per week than managers (thirty-six hours, on average), and 10 percent reported working a second job outside the industry. Although most (66 percent) reported working day shifts, 18 percent worked rotating shifts, with hours that could change from week to week. Hourly employees averaged 40 years of age, were significantly more likely to be female (80 percent), and had an average education level equivalent to a high school degree plus one year of additional training. In total, 64 percent of hourly employees were African American, 20 percent were White, and 10 percent were Hispanic. Approximately half (52 percent) were married. All of the hourly employees in our sample had at least one child living at home, reflecting our interest in the experiences of hourly hotel workers and their children.
Hotel jobs are often demanding. In light of the current economic recession, however, hotel employees are being asked to do more with less, as hotels reduce staff to maintain profitability during a time when business and leisure travel are down substantially. Employees reported sometimes feeling that they have an excessive amount of work, that they do not have enough time to complete all the work that needs to be done, and that they are faced with conflicting job demands.

**JOB DEMANDS AND DECISION LATITUDE**

Our research shows that 67 percent of managers and 42 percent of hourly employees rated their jobs as highly demanding. Female managers reported experiencing greater demands than male managers, but reports of demands for hourly employees did not differ by gender.

One tool for combating high job demands is to allow employees to have greater control over how work is organized and to make some decisions on their own in the workplace. This tool is called decision latitude.

When it comes to decision latitude among hotel workers, 69 percent of managers reported they had high levels of latitude to make decisions and control their work. However, hourly employees reported that they were much less likely to be able to make independent decisions and control their work; only 22 percent indicated that they had high levels of decision latitude in the workplace.
WORK-FAMILY CULTURE

We also asked managers and hourly employees about the work-family culture in their hotel, that is, whether supervisors were supportive of work-family balance, whether there were negative career consequences associated with using work-family benefits, and whether there were organizational time expectations that interfered with family responsibilities. Overall, 29 percent of hotel managers perceived their workplace as being supportive of families, although managers with children were more likely to view their workplace as supportive (34 percent). Maintaining work-family balance may be particularly challenging for hourly employees, as only 2 percent of hourly employees in our sample reported viewing their workplace as generally supportive of their family responsibilities.

LEADERSHIP: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER

Leadership is vital to a successful hotel operation. In our project, hotel managers discussed the importance of the GM in facilitating a positive work environment and helping employees balance work and family responsibilities. In face-to-face interviews, we found that GMs recognized the importance of their personal involvement in the hotel, as well as the example they set for their management teams.

Recognizing that general managers vary in their overall leadership styles, we asked GMs to report how often they displayed three different types of leadership:

- **Transformational**: Goes beyond his/her own self-interest for the good of the group; brings about major changes in the way employees view themselves and the organization
- **Transactional**: Makes clear what employees need to do to receive rewards or avoid reprimands
- **Passive**: Does not actively participate as a leader and is not readily available

We also asked managers at the same hotels as the GMs to report on the extent to which they felt GMs exhibited each leadership style. Overall, our results show that GMs rated themselves significantly higher in both transformational and transactional leadership, compared to passive leadership. Managers, however, rated GMs lower on both transformational and transactional leadership and higher on passive leadership.

### GMS’ REPORTS OF THEIR OWN LEADERSHIP STYLES (AVERAGE SCORES)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Average Score</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Transactional</td>
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<td>Passive</td>
<td>1.73</td>
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### MANAGERS’ REPORTS OF GMS’ LEADERSHIP STYLES (AVERAGE SCORES)

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<th>Average Score</th>
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<td>Transactional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Passive</td>
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</table>
EARLY DEPARTURES AND EXTENDED STAYS
JOB SATISFACTION, COMMITMENT, TURNOVER, AND PRODUCTIVITY

Hotel organizations want to build an upbeat, committed, and loyal workforce. Employee turnover, however, is one of the most prevalent concerns in the industry. The industry has been frequently characterized as having a “turnover culture.” High turnover rates have a significant impact on the industry’s bottom line. Marriott, for example, estimated that for each 1 percent increase in its employee turnover rate, the company loses $5-15 million in annual revenue.

With this point in mind, we surveyed managers and hourly employees to determine their overall job satisfaction (e.g., “You are satisfied with your current job situation”) and turnover intentions (e.g., “You think a lot about leaving this hotel”). We also asked managers about their levels of commitment to their hotel (e.g., “You are willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this company be successful”).

Overall, hotel managers indicated they were highly committed to their jobs and unlikely to leave their current position; most hotel managers (75 percent) indicated that they were highly committed to their jobs and very few (10 percent) were likely to consider leaving their current position. Managers were less satisfied with their positions, however, as only 45 percent reported high or very high levels of satisfaction. Satisfaction and turnover intentions did not vary by gender or partner status, but managers with children were significantly more likely to be satisfied and committed to their jobs compared to managers without children. It may be the case that when managers are more satisfied with their jobs, they show a greater willingness to start a family.
MANAGERS’ JOB SATISFACTION, COMMITMENT, AND TURNOVER INTENTIONS (AVERAGE SCORES)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>Organizational Commitment</th>
<th>Turnover Intentions</th>
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<td>4.26</td>
<td>1.92</td>
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<td>1 = Never</td>
<td>5 = All the Time</td>
<td>5 = All the Time</td>
<td>5 = All the Time</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Compared to managers, hourly employees reported lower levels of satisfaction and a greater willingness to leave their current job. Specifically, 38 percent of hourly employees reported high or very high levels of satisfaction, with men reporting significantly higher levels of satisfaction than women. Additionally, 17 percent reported that they were likely to consider leaving their current position.

HOURLY EMPLOYEES’ JOB SATISFACTION, AND TURNOVER INTENTIONS (AVERAGE SCORES)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>Turnover Intentions</th>
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<tr>
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<td>3.34</td>
<td>2.43</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 = Never</td>
<td>5 = All the Time</td>
<td>5 = All the Time</td>
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</table>
WHICH HOTEL CHARACTERISTICS PROMOTE SATISFACTION, COMMITMENT, AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION?

Although the hotel industry is often noted for its high levels of employee turnover, our project found that several characteristics of the work climate and of the general manager predicted higher employee satisfaction and commitment and lower turnover intentions.

JOB SATISFACTION

Results from our project highlight the importance of both workplace characteristics and managerial styles in predicting job satisfaction for both managers and hourly employees.

What predicts greater employee satisfaction?

- **Effective Managerial Leadership**
  When managers and hourly employees perceived that their supervisor used transformational (e.g., going beyond one’s self-interests) and transactional (e.g., making expectations clear) leadership styles more frequently and a passive leadership style less frequently, they reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction. Thus, supervisors who go beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group and make clear what employees need to do to receive rewards or avoid reprimands were more likely to have employees who reported high levels of satisfaction. Supervisors who did not actively participate as leaders and were not readily available were more likely to have employees who reported low levels of satisfaction.

- **High-Quality Job Climate**
  When the overall quality of the job climate was high—such as when workers took work quality seriously, when co-workers were enthusiastic about their jobs, and when workers consistently tried to perform to the best of their abilities—managers and hourly employees reported greater job satisfaction.

- **Appropriate Job Demands**
  When employee jobs were not characterized by high demands, such as excessive work and frequent time pressure, managers and hourly employees reported higher levels of job satisfaction.
ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Our findings identified several characteristics of general managers, as well as the overall climate of the workplace, that may promote hotel managers’ commitment to their hotels.

What predicts higher levels of organizational commitment from hotel managers?

• **General Manager Support for Work-Family Balance**
  Managers reported significantly higher levels of commitment to their hotel when GMs were more supportive and sensitive toward managers trying to balance their work and family responsibilities and when GMs were more accommodating in allowing hotel managers to attend to family needs.

• **General Manager Had Children**
  Managers reported being significantly more committed to their hotel when GMs reported that they had children. Although it is not immediately clear why managers are more committed to their jobs when GMs have children, it is possible that GMs who are parents are more supportive toward managers’ efforts to balance work and family responsibilities. This support from GMs may, in turn, result in managers feeling more committed to their organization.

• **High-Quality Job Climate**
  When the overall quality of the job climate was high, managers reported higher levels of organizational commitment.

“If you really give them what they want, it makes them a better long-term associate. I have a bartender who lost his home and is staying in the hotel. Fifteen year ago I never would have done it. If I help him, he’s going to be a little more loyal to the team.”

– a general manager
TURNOVER INTENTIONS

In examining factors within the workplace that may contribute to a “turnover culture,” our project identified several workplace and managerial characteristics that predicted lower employee intentions to leave their current job. Importantly, many of these were the same characteristics that also contributed to greater job satisfaction, as well as to greater managerial organizational commitment.

What predicts lower employee intentions to leave their current job?

- **Effective Managerial Leadership**
  When employees perceived that their supervisor used transformational (e.g., going beyond one’s self-interests) and transactional (e.g., making expectations clear) leadership styles more frequently, as well as a passive leadership style less frequently, employees were less likely to consider leaving their current job.

- **General Manager Support for Work-Family Balance**
  When GMs were more supportive and sensitive toward managers trying to balance their work and family responsibilities, managers reported significantly lower turnover intentions.

- **High-Quality Job Climate**
  When the overall quality of the job climate was high (e.g., workers took work quality seriously, workers consistently tried to perform to the best of their abilities), employees reported lower turnover intentions.

- **Appropriate Job Demands**
  When employee jobs were not characterized by excessively high job demands, such as frequent time pressures, employees were less likely to consider leaving their current position.

- **Fewer GM Experiences of Negative Work-to-Family Spillover**
  When GMs reported that their work experiences did not frequently interfere with their family responsibilities, managers reported significantly lower turnover intentions. Fewer GM experiences of negative work-to-family spillover may reflect a high overall support for work-family balance within an organization, increasing the likelihood that managers would wish to remain in their current position.
WORK PRODUCTIVITY

Beyond employee turnover, hotel organizations may also suffer declines in performance and efficiency when employees cut back on their normal job responsibilities. In our project, we examined how experiences of daily workplace stress were related to same-day work productivity among hotel employees. Productivity was measured by whether or not employees cut back on work (i.e., got less work done than usual).

Our results show that managers rarely cut back on work, reporting cutbacks on only 4 percent of work days. Further, managers were not more likely to cut back on work on days when they experienced a wide range of work stressors, including arguments, interpersonal stressors, employee and guest stressors, or work overload.

Similarly, hourly employees also indicated they rarely cut back on work responsibilities, reporting cutbacks on only 5 percent of work days. Unlike managers, however, hourly worker experiences of stress were associated with their workplace productivity. Specifically, when hourly employees experienced more work stressors, they were significantly more likely to report cutting back on work responsibilities. Further, on days when hourly employees worked longer than usual, they were more likely to report work cutbacks that same day.

“…we haven’t really done anything great to help the family and personal lives of our employees to get them to stay here longer and we keep spending a whole lot of money on turnover and hiring. It’s just a vicious cycle.”

– a general manager
OVERBOOKED
STRESS AND HEALTH IN THE INDUSTRY

Long days of meeting guest demands and dealing with unhappy customers can result in hotel employees feeling emotionally exhausted and burned-out by their work experiences. We asked hotel employees about their experiences of work-related emotional exhaustion and burnout and examined the implications of exhaustion for employee job commitment. Finally, we considered workplace characteristics that could potentially reduce experiences of exhaustion and burnout for workers.

EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION

Our research found that half of all managers and hourly employees agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “I feel emotionally drained from work.” This suggests that burnout is a real possibility for employees in the industry.

Further, we found that higher levels of emotional exhaustion had implications for employee job performance, including:

- Lower job satisfaction
- Greater turnover intentions
- Less organizational commitment

How can organizations reduce burnout and emotional exhaustion among industry employees?

- Establish Appropriate Levels for Job Demands
  Employees reported significantly lower levels of emotional exhaustion when employee jobs were not characterized by excessively high job demands, such as frequent time pressures.

- Reduce Levels of Face Time for Hotel Managers
  Managers reported significantly lower levels of exhaustion when organizations valued job performance quality over total time on the job (“face time”).

- Increase the Quality of the Job Climate
  Employees reported lower emotional exhaustion when people took work quality seriously, when co-workers were enthusiastic about their jobs, and when people consistently tried to perform to the best of their abilities.

“At some point the individual and/or good manager will realize that there are some balance issues. You can only work so many fourteen-hour days in a row. It’s impressive when you say it’s been twenty-eight days since you had a day off, but you can only run the engine so hard. You have to balance things better.”

– a general manager
PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

The hectic pace of hotel work can take a physical and an emotional toll on employees. We asked participants to tell us about any physical symptoms they experienced in the two weeks prior to our speaking with them.

On average, hourly employees reported experiencing more total negative physical symptoms than managers. For all employees, women reported significantly more total negative physical symptoms than men. The most common physical symptoms experienced by both hourly employees and managers were:

MANAGERS’ PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

- Muscle Soreness: 55%
- Headaches: 53%
- Backaches: 43%

HOURLY EMPLOYEES’ PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

- Muscle Soreness: 69%
- Headaches: 65%
- Backaches: 60%
We also explored how experiences of daily workplace stressors were associated with experiences of same-day negative physical symptoms. We found that multiple work stressors predicted a same-day increase in the total number of physical symptoms reported by both hourly employees and managers, including:

- **Work Arguments**
  On days when hotel employees experienced a workplace argument, they reported significantly more physical symptoms compared to days when they did not experience a workplace argument.

- **Work Overload**
  On days when hourly employees and managers experienced work overload (e.g., too much to do and not enough time), they reported significantly more physical symptoms compared to days when they did not experience overload.

- **Interpersonal Stressors**
  On days when employees experienced an interpersonal stressor, such as a negative interaction with a co-worker or hotel guest, they reported significantly more physical symptoms compared to days when they did not experience an interpersonal stressor.

- **Total Number of Work Stressors**
  On days when employees experienced more workplace stressors than normal, they reported significantly more same-day physical symptoms.

**SUBSTANCE USE**

Caffeine, alcohol, and tobacco are three of the most widely used substances in our society. We asked managers and hourly employees about their use of these substances, and examined how daily experiences of workplace stress were linked to same-day substance use.

Approximately 25 percent of managers and hourly employees reported using cigarettes in the past month. Over half of hotel managers reported using alcohol; the vast majority of both managers and hourly employees reporting drinking caffeinated beverages.
MANAGERS’ SUBSTANCE USAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
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<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caffeine</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>9</td>
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HOURLY EMPLOYEES’ SUBSTANCE USAGE

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<tr>
<th>Substance</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Cigarettes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
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<td>51</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caffeine</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
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</table>

DAILY WORK STRESS AND SUBSTANCE USE

We found that multiple work stressors predicted a same-day increase in the amounts of tobacco, alcohol, and caffeine consumed by hotel employees, including:

• **Interpersonal Tension**
  On days when hotel employees experienced a personal tension with their boss or a co-worker, they reported smoking significantly more cigarettes, compared to days when they did not experience a personal tension. Experiencing personal tension at work was also associated with consuming more alcohol that same day among managers, but not hourly employees.

• **Longer Work Hours**
  On days when hotel employees worked more hours than normal, they reported more smoking that same day. Hourly employees also reported drinking more on days when they worked more hours than usual.

• **Interpersonal Stressors**
  On days when managers and hourly employees reported experiencing a negative interaction with a guest or co-worker, they reported smoking more that same day.

• **Total Number of Work Stressors**
  On days when hourly employees reported experiencing more work stressors than usual, they reported drinking more that same day.
FAMILY FRIENDLY HOTELS
HOTEL WORK AND WORK-TO-FAMILY SPILLOVER

We asked GMs, managers, and hourly employees about how their workplace experiences affected their family life in both positive and negative ways. This effect of work experiences on family life is referred to as spillover. For example, having greater flexibility in the workplace may make it easier for employees to attend to family needs that may occur during working hours. In contrast, experiencing an argument with a guest or co-worker may leave an employee in a bad mood, which in turn could lead to negative interactions with family members at home. We found that several characteristics of work predicted both positive and negative work-to-family spillover.

**POSITIVE WORK-TO-FAMILY SPILLOVER**

General managers reported the highest levels of positive spillover, with 80 percent reporting that work experiences benefited them in their home life “sometimes” or “all the time,” on average. Although less prevalent among other hotel employees, 52 percent of managers and 42 percent of hourly employees reported experiences of positive spillover from work “sometimes” or “all the time.” Experiences of positive spillover did not vary significantly by employee gender or family status (partner or parental status).

**POSITIVE WORK-TO-FAMILY SPILLOVER (AVERAGE SCORES)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Positive Work-to-Family Spillover (Average Scores)</th>
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</table>
NEGATIVE WORK-TO-FAMILY SPILLOVER

Managers experienced negative work-to-family spillover more frequently than GMs or hourly employees: 44 percent of managers experienced negative spillover “sometimes” or “all the time,” on average, compared to 29 percent and 31 percent for GMs and hourly employees, respectively. Although GMs experienced less frequent negative spillover overall, we found meaningful differences in levels of negative work-to-family spillover for GMs who had children, compared to those who did not. GMs with children experienced significantly higher levels of negative work-to-family spillover compared to those who did not have children.

NEGATIVE WORK-TO-FAMILY SPILLOVER (AVERAGE SCORES)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Work-to-Family Spillover (Children)</th>
<th>1 = Never</th>
<th>5 = All the Time</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.21</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Work-to-Family Spillover (No Children)</th>
<th>1 = Never</th>
<th>5 = All the Time</th>
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In talking to hotel executives, we found that the work culture created by the hotel industry may make it difficult for GMs to separate their work experiences from their home responsibilities, increasing the likelihood that the workplace could negatively impact home life.

“I look forward to being at home with my kids and my family, but then I’ll check my BlackBerry, jump on the computer, listen to voicemail before going to bed, which is kind of sick, but that’s the culture I think we create.”

– a hotel executive
The following recommendations are based on the results of our project. They are intended to help hotel organizations develop workplace policies and practices that promote employee health, retention, and productivity. Implementing these recommendations may provide companies with a strategic advantage in the industry by helping them attract and retain top talent.

**PROVIDE FLEXIBILITY AS COMPENSATION TO EMPLOYEES**

Although traditional pay and benefits are important components of employee compensation packages, we discovered that hotel workers are increasingly citing work-family flexibility as important. Further, our research suggests that GMs who support work-family balance have employees who are more committed to their work and less likely to leave their current position.

Because hotels are twenty-four-hours-a-day/seven-days-a-week operations, every associate cannot have an equal amount of flexibility, and some employees may require higher levels of flexibility than others. Hotel companies should experiment with letting their employees earn flexibility as they earn pay and other forms of compensation. Additionally, implementing job-sharing programs may increase workplace flexibility by allowing employees to share responsibilities when personal or family needs arise, while still maintaining or improving workplace productivity. Our experience suggests that most hotel operations are underutilizing this important option that could be a valuable tool in both attracting and retaining valued employees.

“There’s the question of working every day until midnight, and being back at 6:00 a.m. and never seeing your family. I was lucky enough that I worked for a GM that was very, very good. He was never here after 6:00 p.m., he was never here on weekends, and he was one of the best GMs I’ve ever worked for. I was lucky enough to see that I can be successful and still do these sorts of things.”

– a general manager
REDUCE STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE

Our research shows that hotel workers’ well-being is better on stress-free days than on stressful days. Making hotel workers aware of the negative implications of work stress, as well as promoting positive coping strategies (e.g., conflict management), may improve employee well-being. Furthermore, when employee health is improved, job performance is likely improved as well.

SUPPORT WORK-FAMILY BALANCE FOR GENERAL MANAGERS

Stress is contagious. In our project, we found that GMs with children experienced significantly more work-to-family stress than GMs without children. Further, we found that the GM’s work and family stress can be felt throughout the entire hotel. Specifically, managers were less likely to think about leaving their jobs when their GM experienced less negative work-to-family spillover. Further, when GMs were more supportive of manager needs to balance work and family responsibilities, managers reported that they were more committed to their organization and less likely to consider leaving their organization for another job. Providing more support to GMs to help balance work and family responsibilities can not only reduce GM levels of negative work-to-family spillover, but these supports may also help to create a culture in which all employees are supported in balancing work and family responsibilities.

ENSURE THAT GMs SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE TO EMPLOYEES

We found that work culture was linked to employee well-being, job performance, and intentions to leave the company. Leaders play a significant role in creating the work culture. Through messages they send and behaviors they reward and encourage, leaders can influence employees’ perceptions of organizational culture. It is important for GMs and other organizational leaders to send clear messages that let employees know the organization is supportive of employees’ responsibilities both within and outside of the workplace and committed to helping employees at all levels within the organization achieve better work-family balance.
We used several methods to learn more about life inside and outside the hotel. Each method below provided us unique information.

- **Written Surveys and Face-to-Face Interviews**
  We conducted written surveys and face-to-face interviews with hotel industry executives and general managers before interviewing other hotel employees and family members. These interviews provided us with information about key opportunities and challenges as well as the family-friendly culture of various hotel organizations.

- **Telephone Surveys**
  We interviewed managers, their spouses/partners, and hourly employees over the phone to learn about various dimensions of their jobs, health, and family relationships.

- **Daily Diary Interviews**
  A subset of managers and their spouses/partners who completed a telephone survey agreed to also participate in daily diary interviews via telephone. The majority of the hourly employees and one of their children aged 10 to 18 also participated in daily diary interviews. The daily diary involved each person spending about fifteen minutes reporting what happened to them and how they felt each day for eight consecutive days. Each pair (hotel managers and spouses/partners or hourly employees and their children) reported on the same days so that we could see how experiences at work one day are related to family members’ experiences on that same day.

- **Saliva Collection**
  Hotel employees and family members who participated in the daily diary could also help us learn how people react physiologically to what they experienced that day by providing saliva samples. On four days during the daily diary, participants rolled a cotton swab around their mouths four times a day—when they woke up, thirty minutes after they got out of bed, before lunch, and before bed. We collected the saliva to analyze the hormone cortisol, which helps the body mobilize energy and is affected by stress. Our research team is currently exploring how daily experiences at work and at home are related to cortisol levels in the body.
THE RESEARCH TEAM

**JOHN W. O’NEILL**  
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*Research Interests:* Dr. O’Neill’s interests include strategic management, lodging management and development, and work-life balance in the lodging industry. Prior to joining the faculty at Penn State, he was a professor in the International Hotel School at Johnson and Wales University in Rhode Island. Previously, he was the director of market planning for Holiday Inn at its Eastern Regional Office in Boston, Massachusetts, and he has held unit-, regional-, and corporate-level management positions with Hyatt and Marriott.

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*Research Interests:* Dr. Almeida’s research examines processes of stress and coping during adulthood, with a specific interest in the influence of daily stressful experiences on individual health and well-being. He is the principal investigator of the National Study of Daily Experiences, exploring the implications of daily stressful experiences for 1,484 individuals across the United States.

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Research Interests: Dr. McHale’s research focuses on children’s and adolescents’ family relationships, roles, and everyday activities. Together with Ann Crouter, she co-directs the Penn State Family Relationships Project, a longitudinal study examining experiences of mothers, fathers, and siblings, and changes in their relationships over time. Her most recent research examines the cultural contexts of gender dynamics in families.

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ADVISORY COUNCIL

We would like to extend a special thanks to the members of our advisory council, who served as a direct line of contact to the hotel industry. In our meetings, the council provided valuable insight and ideas as to how the research project should proceed.

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