

## WHO WILL STAY AND WHO WILL GO: PREDICTING CLUB GENERAL MANAGER TURNOVER

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*This paper identifies factors that influence the job tenure of general managers of private clubs in Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Descriptive statistics, correlations, analysis of variance, and regression analysis were used for statistical analysis. Fifteen items correlated positively to predict top management tenure in private clubs. Level of conflict between the club general manager and general membership was identified as the one statistically significant negative correlation. Number of years in the club industry, clearly defined job responsibility, satisfaction with compensation, sense of loyalty, and Certified Club Manager certification all had significant relationships with job tenure. Private clubs have been much less researched than other segments of the hospitality industry. The cost of finding, training, and keeping new managers is tremendous. No previous study did a quantitative study of job tenure of general managers. This study focuses on factors influencing the job tenure of general managers in private clubs.*

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JEL Classification: *L83, M1, O1*

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to examine factors that influence the job tenure of general managers at private clubs in Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The study was structured to identify demographic information on club managers, organizational club information, and participant responses to study questions. The focus was to determine



organizational and personal factors that contribute to job tenure. Given the costs and complexity associated with turnover in the top managerial positions in private clubs, a critical question to determine is “who will stay and who will go?”

## **Turnover**

The private club industry is a business best known for its turnover (Sibbald, 1998). The turnover rate of private club managers is higher than any other managerial segment (Hume, 1981). Miller (1998) predicted that one out of three club managers would not even be in the club field in five years and stated that annual turnover in club management ranges from 20-23% annually. The hospitality industry reports some of the highest turnover rates in U.S. business with annual findings sometimes exceeding 100 to 200% (Bidir, 2002; Cho et al., 2006; Fortino and Nimeneier, 1996; Moncarz et al., 2009; Woods and Macaulay, 1989; Woods et al., 1998). Gustafson found a mean turnover rate of 75% in the private club industry with ranges from 0 to 600% (2002). Excessive employee turnover negatively impacts many functions of the business and impacts the bottom line with its adjacent expenses (Dalton, et al., 1999; Waters, 2003). Employee turnover is impacted by the work environment, inadequate compensation, poor direction, and poor supervision (Gustafson, 2002; Hinkin and Tracey, 2008). Low pay levels, poor quality of life, and extensive working hours are recognized in the hospitality industry as leading contributors to turnover and job dissatisfaction (Pavesic and Brymer, 1990). The need to understand turnover and factors which influence the decision of managers to leave a business are increasingly being recognized as an issue important to the success of hospitality businesses.

## **Turnover Costs**

The cost of turnover in the US is estimated to be more than \$11 billion annually with the average cost per job at 10 to 20 times the position's weekly wage rate (Jaffe et al., 1994). Some basic models of turnover costs only look at the annual salary plus benefits, with benefits at roughly 25% of the annual salary (Ettorre, 1997). Most turnover cost models, however, include the costs associated with separation, replacement, training, and loss of productivity as well (Cascio, 2000; Hinkin and Tracey, 2000). These include costs associated with the following: unused sick or vacation pay, exit interview, administrative

costs, advertising and screening of applicants, interviewing, reference and background checks, pre-employment tests, training, co-worker tension, and customer dissatisfaction (Davidson et al., 2010; McKinney et al., 2007).

## **Job Satisfaction**

Early researchers identified factors that affect people working on their jobs (Herzberg, 1966; Hackman et al., 1975). A large number of studies and theories have assessed job satisfaction and employee productivity, job satisfaction and absenteeism, job satisfaction and turnover (Brayfield and Crockett, 1955; Fournet et al., 1966; Herzberg et al., 1957; Vroom, 1964). In the hospitality industry many studies have focused on factors leading to job satisfaction and turnover (Barrows, 1990; Bidir, 2002; Hughes and Rog, 2008; Karatepe et al., 2007; Li and Tse, 1998; Murphy and Williams, 2004; Salazar, et al., 2006). Fewer studies have focused specifically on private clubs.

## **Private Club Research**

In 1994, Barrows found private clubs were much less researched than other segments of the hospitality industry. In his study, academic journals from 1983 to 1993 were reviewed and 11 research articles focusing on the management of private clubs were found. One article examined factors that cause managers to leave their jobs (McBeth and Mondy, 1985). They found 32 items statistically significant between the “shorter tenure” and “longer tenure” groups. Items related to turnover were levels of satisfaction, stress, autonomy, challenge, and skill use, as well as, salary and benefits.

In 2010, Barrows and Ridout found that private club research increased dramatically in the period from 1994-2005 when 45 peer-reviewed journal articles were published. Seven articles specifically examined club managers related to leadership, competencies, and performance criteria (Cichy and Singerling, 1997; Cichy, et al., 2004; Icenogle, et al., 1998; Perdue, et al., 2000; Perdue, et al., 2000/2001; Perdue, et al., 2001; Perdue, et al., 2002). One study surveyed private club financial managers and identified three attributes related to job satisfaction (Schmidgall and DeFranco, 2004). Job security, feeling of self-esteem, and working conditions were the three most important attributes contributing to job satisfaction. Gustafson (2002) examined employee turnover rates in private club and reported that club managers

cited compensation, number of hours worked, and conflict with supervisor as three issues directly linked with increased turnover.

These studies show an increased interest in private club research and yet there is a continuing lack in research examining factors that specifically influence the job tenure of top managers in private clubs.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The population for this study was the membership of the Club Managers Association of America (CMAA). The current 7,000 members represent over 3,000 private clubs (CMAA, (2010a). The sample was the top manager of each of the 217 private clubs in the states of Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The top manager at each club held the title of general manager, chief operating officer, or clubhouse manager.

The pilot tested survey was mailed to each top manager. Subject participation was voluntary. Individual participant responses were anonymous and confidential. One hundred thirty seven usable responses were received for a response rate of 63.1 %.

The survey included demographic data, descriptive data about each club, and participant opinions on factors that contribute to job satisfaction and job tenure of private club upper managers. The data was statistically analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics, correlations, crosstabs, analysis of variance, and regression analysis were used.

Personal demographic information included each manager's gender, age, level of education, number of children, designation as Certified Club Manager through CMAA, number of years in current position, number of clubs managed, total number of years in the club industry, employment based on contract, frequency of contract renewal. Descriptive data about each individual club included type of club, ownership status, number of members, number of committees, and tax status.

Participants were asked to provide responses in the following areas: sense of loyalty to the club, would recommend working here to others, satisfaction with job, enjoy coming to work, plan to look for job outside this club in the near future, would accept a similar job outside this club if offered, work is as important as salary, desire to look for ways to do the job better, willingness to upset some people in order to satisfy others at work, difficult to satisfy everyone at the same time, clear job expectations, responsibilities are clearly defined, enough time to complete tasks at work, enough time to complete all work well, work is too stressful, sense of feeling burned out at work, satisfaction with current salary, satisfaction with current prospects for job advancement, good

working relationship with the board of directors, good working relationship with membership, good working relationship with department heads, good working relationship with employees, sense of appreciation at my job, commitment to the job, job requires use all of personal talents, job is challenging, sense of job autonomy, opportunity to discuss personal performance with the club president, specific club members seek preferential treatment, changing jobs frequently improves individual career path, level of conflict with board members, level of conflict with general membership, level of compensation compared to effort, level of compensation compared to qualifications, level of compensation compared to impact on club effectiveness, and housing or housing allowance provisions.

## **RESULTS**

This study was conducted to examine factors that influence the job satisfaction and job tenure of top managers at private clubs in Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. In this section, findings regarding the demographics and study questions will be presented and discussed.

### **Respondent demographics**

Of the 137 managers who participated in this study, 86% were male and 14% were female. Seventy-six percent were between the ages of 36 and 55 with the highest percentage (21%) between the ages of 41 and 45. Eighty-one percent of the managers had children with the highest percentage (39%) having two children. Forty-seven percent had earned a bachelor's degree, 34% had completed some college work, 15% had done graduate work, and 4% had completed high school only. This finding mirrors the results from Icenogle, Perdue, and Rue (1998) that club managers are increasingly earning college degrees.

The Certified Club Manager (CCM) designation is known as the hallmark of professionalism in club management. This valuable and widely respected mark of a manager's commitment to professional development is earned through satisfying CMAA requirements and testing (CMAA 2010b). Of the respondents, 35% had obtained the CCM designation.

Nearly half (48%) of the respondents had held their current positions for less than four years; whereas, 37% had held their current positions for six or more years. Thirty-eight percent were in their first job as top manager of a club, 27% had held this position in two clubs, 20% in three

clubs, and 15% in four or more clubs. Longevity in the club industry was reflected in the results that 42% had worked in clubs for 16 years or longer, 42% had worked in clubs between 7-15 years, and only 17% had worked six years or less.

Forty-five percent of respondents were working under employment contracts. Forty percent had their contracts renewed on an annual basis, 15% on a semiannual basis, and 45% had contracts that lasted more than two years.

### Club Information

Respondents provided information about their clubs. Sixty-two percent managed country clubs, 16% golf clubs, and 13% city or athletic clubs. Club ownership status was 91% member owned, 5% developer owned, and 4% other. The overwhelming majority (70%) had membership ranging from 201-600 members. These club findings closely reflect CMAA club facts and figures (CMAA 2010a). Fifty percent of the clubs had five to eight governing committees and 74% were tax-exempt private clubs.

### Study Questions

Study participants were asked to respond to factors that could influence private club managers' job satisfaction and job tenure using a Likert-like scale. The scale used was strongly disagree (S.D.), disagree (D.), neutral (N.), agree (A.), and strongly agree (S.A.). The following table (Table 1) lists the study questions and percentage responses.

**Table 1** Study Questions and Categorized Responses

Study Question	S.D. %	D. %	N. %	A. %	S.A. %
I feel a sense of loyalty to this club.	0	2.9	2.9	35.8	58.4
I would recommend working here to others.	0	0.7	7.4	39.0	52.9
I am satisfied with my job.	0.7	4.4	5.8	53.3	35.8
I enjoy coming to work.	2.2	0.7	5.1	49.3	42.6
I plan on looking for work elsewhere in the near future.	34.3	23.4	23.4	11.7	7.3
If offered a similar job outside this club, I would take it.	24.1	30.7	32.8	5.1	5.1
My work is as important to me as the money I earn.	0.7	2.2	17.0	45.2	34.8
I look for ways to do my job better.	0	0	1.5	45.3	53.3
To satisfy some people on my job, I have to upset others.	0.7	2.2	17.0	45.2	34.8
I find it hard to satisfy everyone at the same time.	4.0	10.0	18.0	49.0	19.0
I know what is expected of me at my job.	0.7	2.2	8.8	49.6	38.7
My job responsibilities are clearly defined.	0.7	8.8	22.1	37.5	30.9

I have enough time to get everything done on my job.	7.3	24.8	21.2	37.2	9.5
I have too much work to do everything well on my job.	8.8	43.1	25.5	19.7	2.2
My work is too stressful.	7.0	34.0	44.0	15.0	0
I feel burned out at work.	18.0	42.0	28.0	10.0	2.0
I am satisfied with my current salary.	4.4	22.6	20.4	40.1	11.7
I am satisfied with my prospects for job advancement.	1.5	7.3	32.1	45.3	10.9
I have a good relationship with the board of directors.	0	1.5	8.1	47.1	43.4
I have a good working relationship with the membership.	0	0.7	5.9	55.1	38.2
I have a good relationship with the department heads.	0	0	4.4	53.7	41.9
I have a good working relationship with the employees.	0	0	5.1	54.4	40.4
I feel appreciated at my job	0.7	1.5	3.6	45.3	48.9
I am committed to my job.	0.7	1.5	3.6	45.3	48.9
My job requires me to use all my talents.	1.5	5.8	6.6	50.4	35.8
I find my job challenging.	0	3.7	8.1	52.2	36.0
I have a great deal of job autonomy.	0.7	2.9	12.4	48.2	35.8
I can discuss my performance with the club president.	2.0	8.0	9.0	50.0	30.0
Several members seek preferential treatment.	1.5	5.8	6.6	50.4	35.8
Frequent moves in upper management at different clubs improves one's career.	18.0	32.0	38.0	8.0	4.0

When asked “How much conflict do you encounter with board members?” 46.7 said Very Little, 28.9% said Between Very Little and Some, 20% said Some, 2.2% said Between Some and a Great Deal, and 2.2% said A Great Deal. Respondents were asked “How much conflict do you encounter with the general membership?” 39.4% said Very Little, 36.5% said Between Very Little and Some, 21.2% said Some, 2.2% said Between Some and a Great Deal, and .7% said A Great Deal. When asked “How do you feel about your level of compensation as compared to the effort you put into your job,” 34.3% said they were Under Compensated, 55.5% were Adequately Compensated, 10.7% said Over Compensated. In response to “How do you feel about your level of compensation as compared to your qualifications?” 34% were Under Compensated, 55% Adequately Compensated, and 10.2% Over Compensated. In response to “How do you feel about your level of compensation as compared to your impact on the effectiveness of the club?” 53.3% said Under Compensated, 41.6% Adequately Compensated, and 5.1% Over Compensated.

## Correlations

Table 2 displays the statistically significant correlations using the respondent demographic, club information and study question data. The fifteen items which correlate positively can be used to predict long-tenured top management in the private clubs of Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The statistically significant negative correlation identified is

the level of conflict a club manager has with the general membership. Short-tenured top management experience statistically significant levels of conflict with their general membership as compared to long-tenured top management.

**Table 2** Correlations between Years in Current Position and Relevant Variables

	Mean	SD	N	r Values	Sig.
Number of years in current position	4.74	2.09	137	1.000	.
Age range	5.31	1.70	136	.336**	.000
Number of years in club industry	4.42	1.66	137	.440**	.000
My job responsibilities are clearly defined	3.89	0.97	136	.313**	.000
I am satisfied with my current salary	3.32	1.09	136	.300**	.000
I have a sense of loyalty to this club	4.50	0.70	137	.249**	.003
I know what is expected of me at my job	4.23	0.76	137	.237**	.005
I have a good relationship with department heads	4.38	0.57	136	.229**	.007
I have a good relationship with the membership	4.31	0.61	136	.216*	.012
I have a great deal of job autonomy	4.15	0.80	137	.194*	.023
I would recommend working here to others	4.44	0.66	136	.195*	.023
Are you a CCM (Certified Club Manager)	1.35	0.48	137	.186*	.030
Feel about your compensation compared to effort	2.72	0.72	137	.181*	.034
Feel about your compensation compared to qualifications	2.69	0.77	137	.179*	.036
Conflict you encounter with the membership	1.88	0.87	137	-.179*	.036
How many children do you have	2.84	1.18	137	.174*	.043
Feel about your compensation compared to your impact	2.40	0.79	137	.169*	.048

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

### Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

ANOVA was used to identify factors related to long-tenured club managers and factors related to short-tenured club managers. The job tenure variable identified short-tenure as 48 months or less and long-tenure as more than 48 months. Forty-eight percent of respondents were classified as short-tenured and 52 % as long-tenured club managers. Table 3 displays the 17 statistically significant factors. The observed differences among the mean values of the 17 factors identified in Table 3 are statistically significant using ANOVA.

**Table 3** ANOVA Analysis of Significant Differences between Short-Tenured and Long-Tenured Managers

	N	Mean	S.D.	F	Sig.	Range
Age Range						
Short Tenured	65	4.77	1.74	13.77	.00	1 to 9
Long Tenured	71	5.80	1.51	0	0	
Number of years in club industry						
Short Tenured	66	3.74	1.73	24.57	.00	1 to 6
Long Tenured	71	5.04	1.32	3	0	
My job responsibilities are clearly defined						
Short Tenured	65	3.57	1.00	14.95	.00	1 to 5
Long Tenured	71	4.18	0.85	8	0	
I am satisfied with my current salary						
Short Tenured	66	2.95	1.00	16.43	.00	1 to 5
Long Tenured	70	3.67	1.06	9	0	
I have a sense of loyalty to this club						
Short Tenured	66	4.29	0.82	12.30	.00	1 to 5
Long Tenured	71	4.69	0.50	7	1	
Are you a CCM (Certified Club Manager)						
Short Tenured	66	1.23	0.42	8.905	.00	1 to 2
Long Tenured	71	1.46	0.50		3	
Feel about your compensation compared to the effort you put into your job						
Short Tenured	66	2.55	0.75	8.000	.00	1 to 5
Long Tenured	71	2.89	0.67		5	
I know what is expected of me at my job						
Short Tenured	66	4.05	0.75	8.220	.00	1 to 5
Long Tenured	71	4.41	0.73		5	
I plan on looking for work outside this club in the near future						
Short Tenured	66	2.65	1.18	7.988	.00	1 to 5
Long Tenured	71	2.06	1.27		5	
I would recommend working here to others						
Short Tenured	65	4.28	0.67	8.013	.00	1 to 5
Long Tenured	71	4.59	0.62		5	
On my job, I find it hard to satisfy everyone at the same time						
Short Tenured	66	3.92	0.92	6.921	.01	1 to 5
Long Tenured	71	3.48	1.05		0	
Feel about your compensation compared to your qualifications						
Short Tenured	66	2.53	0.85	5.885	.01	1 to 5
Long Tenured	71	2.85	0.67		7	
I have a good working relationship with the Department heads						
Short Tenured	66	4.26	0.59	5.627	.01	1 to 5
Long Tenured	70	4.49	0.53		9	
I have a great deal of job autonomy						
Short Tenured	66	4.00	0.88	4.764	.03	1 to 5
Long Tenured	71	4.30	0.70		1	

My job requires me to use all of my talents						
Short Tenured	66	3.97	0.98	4.393	.03	1 to 5
Long Tenured	71	4.28	0.76		8	
To satisfy some people at my job, I have to upset others						1 to 5
Short Tenured	65	3.55	1.00	4.376	.03	
Long Tenured	71	3.15	1.20		8	
I have a good working relationship with the membership						
Short Tenured	66	4.20	0.68	4.350	.03	1 to 5
Long Tenured	70	4.41	0.52		9	

## Regression Analysis

To identify the key attributes that predict job tenure of club managers, multiple regression analysis was used with tenure in current job as the dependent variable and all of this study's factors as the independent variables. Each one of the demographic information on club managers, organizational club information, and participant responses to study questions were initially entered into the regression equation. An iterative process was utilized to identify the most powerful predictors, taking into consideration issues of multicollinearity (Table 4). Interestingly, job satisfaction and compensation dropped out as significant variables in this analysis which corresponds to Herzberg's (1966) satisfier and nonsatisfier factors that affect people working on their jobs.

The regression analysis was found to be significant with relatively high predictive power. The variables in the equation were able to predict 26.6% of the variance. The most powerful and significant predictors of job tenure of club managers were the number of years in the club industry, the sense of loyalty to the club, and job responsibilities are clearly defined.

The number of years in the club industry shows that the club managers in this study understand the club industry and its specific nuances and chose this specific section of the hospitality industry as opposed to restaurants or hotels. The sense of loyalty is driven by the atmosphere at the club. The managers are loyal because they are made to feel welcome and secure by members, employees, and committees. Having a clearly defined set of job responsibilities enables the club manager to work with a clear cut set of standards and guidelines. These three are critical factors that determine how long a club manager stays at their position.

**Table 4** Regression Analysis to Determine Predictors of Job Tenure

Predictor Variables	Beta Values
Number of years in club industry	.374***
Sense of loyalty to the club	.237**
My job responsibilities are clearly defined	.227*
I have the opportunity to discuss my performance with the club president	-.252**
Model Statistics	
Degrees of Freedom	134
F-Value	13.170***
Adjusted R Square	.266

*Note: \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$*

## Discussion

Long-tenured managers were found to be older, be CCM certified, have more children, be more satisfied with their salary as compared to their effort and qualifications, have more job autonomy, be less likely to be looking for employment in other clubs, have a greater sense of loyalty toward their club, have more experience in the club industry, be more likely to recommend working at their clubs to others, feel that their job requires them to use more of their talents, have clearly defined job responsibilities, have an easier time satisfying everyone at their job, be more satisfied with their current salary, have a better relationship with the membership and department heads, and have a better understanding of their job expectations.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

High industry turnover is costly financially, in employee morale and satisfaction, in productivity, and ultimately in club membership satisfaction (Davidson, Nimo, and Yang, 2010; Hinkin and Tracey, 2000; Hinkin and Tracey, 2008). The purpose of this study was to identify factors that contribute to job tenure in the private club industry. Statistically significant factors were identified.

Given the costs and complexity associated with turnover in the top managerial positions in private clubs, a critical question to determine is “who will stay and who will go?”

The opportunity now prevails for private clubs to utilize the significant findings of this study to impact the job tenure of their top management. Satisfaction with compensation as compared to effort,

qualifications, and impact on effectiveness were all shown to be significant. Even in today's tight economy, ignoring the opportunity to adequately compensate top management may result in unnecessary and unwanted employee losses. Study respondents also were found to value clearly defined job responsibilities, job expectations, and job autonomy. Mindful structuring of the top management job to include these characteristics may result in increased management satisfaction as well as job tenure. The working relationship between top management and department heads and the general membership is also significant. When the continuing working relationship is positive and good, management feels rewarded and satisfied leading to job tenure. Club leadership has the ability to impact the working relationship with the general membership on that daily and long-term basis. Conflict with the club board was also correlated with short job tenure. Another significant factor found to be related to job tenure was the CCM certification. This certification has been identified as having a profound effect on the level of professionalism in the private club industry. What an opportunity private clubs have to encourage and support their top management's pursuit of this industry credential.

This study identified demographic characteristics of top private club managers which were significantly correlated to job tenure. Statistically significant factors impacting job tenure were also identified. Future research can be conducted to see if the findings of this limited study are shown to hold in other populations. Top management job tenure longevity impacts the continuing success of U.S. private clubs.

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