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### ROLE OF MANAGEMENT IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY DURING A COVID-19 OUTBREAK

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**Dr. Saddam Rateb Darawsheh: Role of Management in the Hospitality Industry during a  
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#### ABSTRACT

It is essential to strengthening the hospitality industry infrastructure and management during the lockdown to stabilize the hospitality business and to move forward to make customers more comfortable. This paper presents the specific current situation where customers are

becoming more cautious and the prospects of winning customer trust, based on a randomized survey of research papers. The broader management perspectives and clear vision for the economic future of this industry are emphasized. There is a need to take several quick, creative, and effective management steps responsibly to deal with the situation arising out of this health crisis. The hospitality industry can run with a minimum workforce adhering to safety, sanitization, and physical distancing norms, recognizing the lessons of this corona crisis. The consideration of consolidated recommendations on the strategic management of hotels and a people-oriented working strategy is a more sustainable exercise. It will be an opportunity for enterprises to leverage technology to create differentiation. The data connectivity and digital tools will become more critical in the practicality of this management solution in the post-pandemic period.

## 1. Introduction

The art of cooking is one of the more profound aspects of the hospitality industry, and good food is essential for healthy living. Today, the hospitality industry has important roles like customer service and care, hospitality education, and research [1,2]. An additional crucial function is the provision of boarding rooms providing public boarding-house services for the customers while maintaining quality, cleanliness, and value. The staff, chefs, waiters, cleaners, residents, customers, internal partners, upper management, engineers, and the working team are crucial in making the hotel function. In most countries today, hotels are run as either private established hotel chains (EHCs) or directly managed units (DMUs) or public institutions [3]. In emergencies like COVID-19 outbreak and corona curfew, management of hotels becomes complicated because of execution of preventive measures, use of personal protective equipment, following standard operating procedures, a change and time management, high-speed internet, digital payments, workout space (aerobics, strength, and flexibility activities) isolation beds, and in extreme cases, transforming the hotel into an emergency hospital with adequate health care facilities [4]. Likewise, a kitchen garden could supply fresh ingredients (spinach, coriander leaves) that help a chef cook a day's meal. Incidentally, canned/frozen food, probiotic drinks, fortified food products, ready-to-eat foods, and dry fruit could be of great help. A hotel room can be converted into isolation wards on a pilot basis and, if necessary, emergency wards [5]. A top priority in this adverse situation is to learn new skills in addition to the fundamental skills of management and leadership. The essential preferences include the implementation process, acceleration value, and institutionalization of change in a dedicated team. Finally, crisis management is a collective and coordinated effort to undertake multiple activities in such situations at this critical juncture in human civilization.

Hotels are the first stop destination for tourists when they travel to a new place. Hotels may help provide an additional option of screening and aid as a protective shield against pandemic diseases, when travel occurs during the incubation period, and might not have been detected during entry screening

processes [6,7]. Hence, the hotel industry plays a crucial role in providing the initial response and support the critical healthcare system during a pandemic outbreak [11]. Several studies reveal that the psychological impact of COVID-19 and government travel restrictions have a significant impact on tourism well beyond the COVID-19 affected regions [8,9]. The number of hotel guests is dropped drastically to almost nil, and the lockdown announced in many countries has completely shut down the business for months together. The previous studies emphasized the strategies to be adopted to sustain their business in the future. There is a need for better preparedness plans for crisis management for the hotel industry in a pandemic outbreak [10-12]. The COVID-19 is forcing us to rethink and take a relook at life while the hospitality industry is struggling to stay afloat in the lockdown.

This article is an attempt to synthesize and present useful behavioral concepts and aids for personal development in the changed scenario. It includes personal qualities, interpersonal skills, problem-solving, and communication skills. It will prove useful to the general readers familiar with necessary managerial skills, educators, and those supervising management degree programs. The paper is divided into the following sections; introduction, managing a change and time by achieving specific organizational goals, a paradigm shift in the approach to crisis management, preventive measures for staff and residents, do the right things through better teamwork, systematic mind training for better service, manager's philosophy and strategy for converting a hotel into a hospital, and conclusions.

## **2. Time and Change Management**

Time and change are both critical parameters in urgent or important hospitality business activities to help people lower their stress levels from “fight and flight” mode to “rest and digest” state [13]. The contemporary activities in hotels range from a casual date night to formal business meetings. The active managers of restaurants need to manage people in their organizations and produce excellent results/profit from their presence. Much depends on how these institutions are run and managed to profit and welfare motives. If they can provide more prompt and efficient service to people in times of crisis, they make a significant contribution as an instrument of social change [14].

### **Time management**

One of the useful management principles is to get good results without taking much time. The negative consequences of a catastrophic situation are apparent when we look at the current status of a lack of extensive testing infrastructure and preparation for the worst-case scenario. The procurement of necessary equipment, including COVID-testing kits, personal protective equipment, medical gloves, isolation beds, oxygen-flow masks, and ventilators, is essential [15]. Hospitality industry personnel, workers, and professionals must prepare for the eventual onslaught in the coming weeks and get ready to do its job, despite the hardships of the pandemic [16]. Time management involves our ability to plan, delegate, organize, direct, and control, with suitable precautions in place, minimizing the chances of COVID-19 transmission [17]. The

manager should be engaged in various productive activities through proper planning as time is money. We have to understand the importance of time management skills, particularly in a corona emergency, to get better results and the maximum monetary benefits. Scientific goal setting, action plan, effective delegation, and working with deadlines help maintain a healthy balance between the various areas of hospitality through efficient time management. Effective time management demands to develop a time strategy involving a shortlist of priorities, and scheduling and managing time wisely is an essential aspect of the work culture. Careful management of high productive tasks within a timeframe and organizing our work on a priority basis forms an integral part of better time management and to handle interruptions and unplanned "emergencies" during the COVID-19 outbreak [18,19]. Doing the right things right, managing updated information (advisories, COVID updates, factual information, crisis management), and concentrating our time and energy on the high payoff tasks- all have goal-related implications and if managed well, will make a real difference [7]. Thus, we can improve productivity and be more successful in achieving specific hospitality goals through effective and efficient time management skills. Unprecedented times like these call for unique change management.

### **Change Management**

The current coronavirus-induced situation is a substantial medical crisis, and the hospitality sector is instantly struck hard because of a sudden lockdown around the world [20-22]. When an unexpected change affects a hospitality organization, the leaders need to demonstrate leadership and management skills as never before. The manager has to understand the dynamics and implications of the change and become a change champion in leading employees through the dramatic change process. The organization can execute new meaningful business ideas, and maintain its customers while retaining the employees. The logic, business rationale, creativity, planning, and strategies associated with significant organizational change has a powerful impact on employees [22]. The top management should spend more time and money on maintaining buildings and equipment as well as building human resources. The managers should lead the team with a proper direction about the change process, a degree of clarity on the change message, and a sense of progress involving the benefits of change. All the residents and any unannounced visitor should be screened adequately and ensure that they follow social distancing norms or sanitizing formalities as part of the COVID-19 protocol [15,23]. Emergency care and basic life-saving techniques should be made available within the hotel premises. In an emergency, modern equipment like delivery robots or micro-drones is crucial in hotels. We have to ensure that emergency problems are detected in time to take corrective action, develop innovative approaches, regular monitoring of progress, and implementation new government regulations. Further, coordination, motivation, teamwork, and leadership qualities play a pivotal role in the extraordinary change situation and can affect customer relations. Some reorientation programs include teaching new customer service skills in the work unit in times of change. It is essential to

incorporate the original vision, values, and roles of employees that change represents in close alignment with the hospitality function. It is necessary to obtain the correct information and rely on authentic news sources, as staying aware is incredible to cope with the current pandemic-induced stress.

### **3. Safety Protocols**

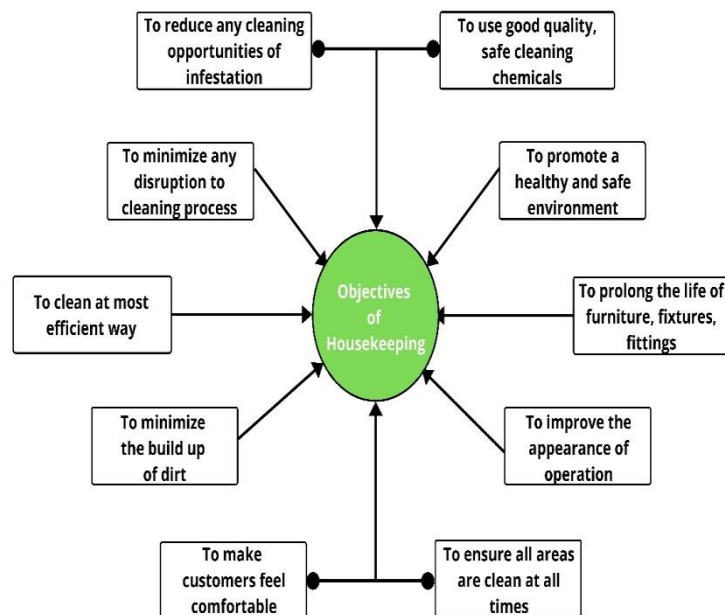
Amidst the fear, anxiety, and panic of the recent amplification breakdown of COVID-19 and it being declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) [24], hotels and restaurants have issued hygiene and safety advisories along with enforcement of precautionary measures for guests. Guests are monitored as they enter hotels for fever and respiratory complications. If suspected of any such symptoms, members are restricted in their movements. A proper record is maintained that helps in tracing individuals in contact with an infected person. These records are reviewed and retained for around 90 days to analyze guests and staff movements. Maintenance of guest registration records, employee work assignments, documentation of crucial control procedures, including electronic lock records, and security camera closed circuit tapes. Public areas and surfaces frequently touched by guests and team members such as a lobby area, lift buttons, water fountains, ice, vending machines, pens at reception, room keys, key cards, guest rooms, health care areas, meeting rooms are cleaned regularly [25,26]. Proper alcohol-based disinfection of door handles, elevator control panels, and credit card terminals are followed. US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved disinfectant products are advised to be used against the emerging COVID-19 [15]. Additional stocks of controlling hand infection with an increased focus on proper hand hygiene procedures have been provided. Linen clothes, towels, bed scarves, and bedspreads are changed frequently [30]. Hotels have facilitated guests who intend to have their food in hotel rooms. Buffet services are now excluded because of situational awareness. However, self-service takeaway procedures can be followed. Tissues must be made available, and every sink should be stocked with soap and hand drying materials for hand washing. Trashes are positioned near an exit to make it easy for employees and members to discard tissues and paper towels. Gym and health club personnel from hotels have been issued instructions to suspend any form of social gathering [25-28]. Public health officials at state, federal, and local levels have the legal authority of implementing control measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by isolation, quarantine, travel restrictions, and medical treatment [27, 28]. Staying in hotels that follow safety protocols strictly make a guest feel secure and safe in these uncertain times.

Guests are instructed to have frequent washing of hands with soap and water, usage of alcohol-based hand sanitizing gel, and a proper head bath is essential [30,31]. A social distance of around 1 meter is ensured, especially around people who are coughing or sneezing. Touching of eyes, nose, and mouth is to be avoided. If a person reaches these organs, prior cleaning of hands is essential. Respiratory hygiene is necessary that includes covering the mouth and nose with a bent elbow or a tissue when one sneeze or cough, followed by

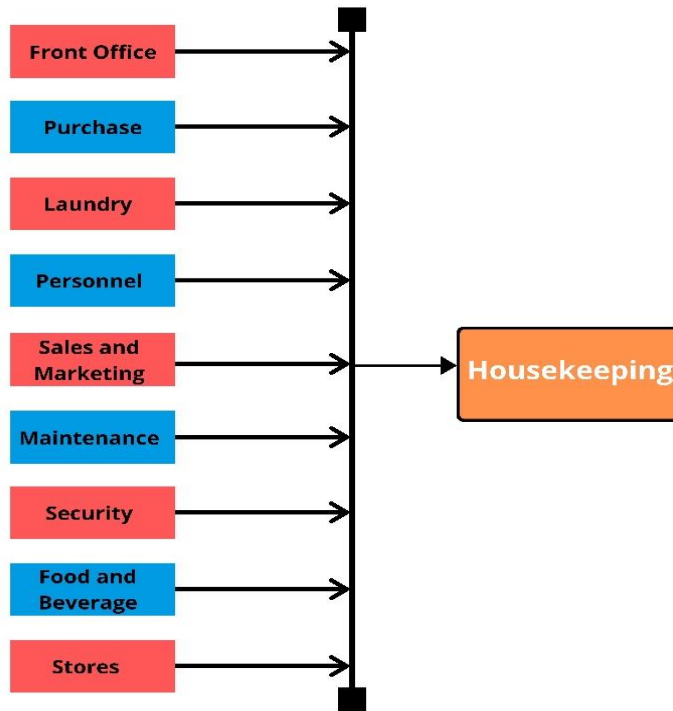
proper disposal of used tissue. Restrictions on the number of visitors entering the workplace and implementation of teleworking and limited travel are necessary [32]. Signboards and information posters are displayed throughout the facility, describing ways to prevent the virus. Early symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, and difficulty in breathing. It is imperative to ensure people with such symptoms and their family members self-quarantine for 14 days. In such cases, immediate consultation from a health care provider is required. Patients must follow the safety instructions mentioned by medical professionals, national and local public health authorities [33].

#### 4. Housekeeping during COVID-19

Unsanitary conditions would go a long way in adversely affecting the health of people in a hotel. Therefore, improving the sanitary conditions everywhere in the hotel premises should be a top priority [30]. There is a significant fatality associated with COVID-19 infection due to extensive microvascular thrombosis (MVT). The main routes of transmission of coronavirus include droplet transmission, contact with a contaminated surface, and airborne transmission [34-36]. It has created a fear psychosis among people as health and safety remain primary concerns [34]. The objectives of housekeeping are outlined in **Figure 1**. Proper management steps should be taken in making hotel rooms dust-free, dirt-free, and disease-free [37]. The sweepers should be directed to clean the toilets regularly and adequately with disinfectant phenyl and other cleaning agents. Even the corridors and steps should be broomed, disinfected, and cleaned daily.

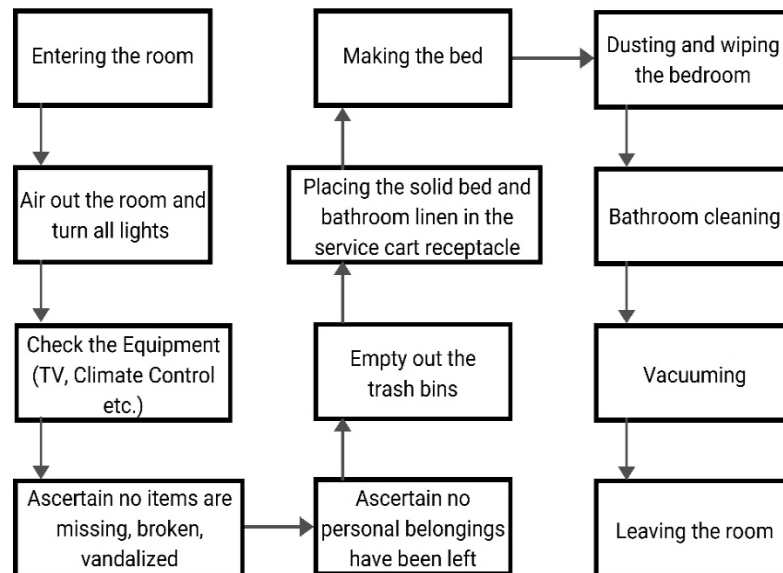


*Figure 1. Outline of objectives of housekeeping [38].*



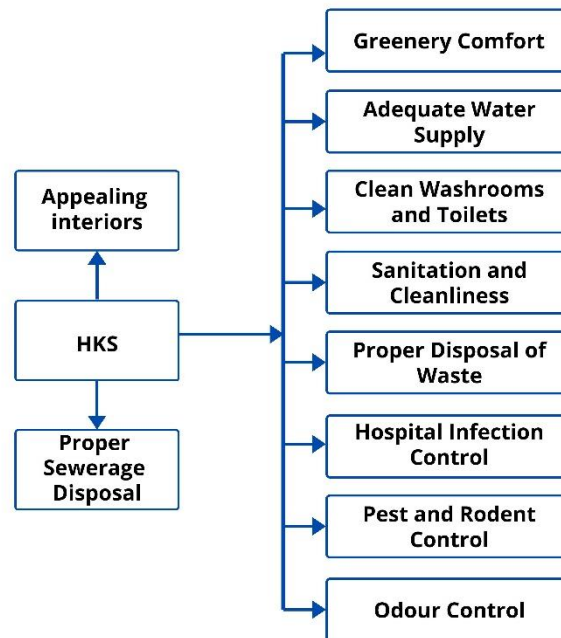
**Figure 2.** Different aspects of housekeeping in a hotel [39]

The housekeeping department in a hotel is responsible for cleanliness, maintenance, aesthetic upkeep of the rooms, washing floors, removing stains, vacuuming, and disinfecting surfaces [38,39]. The different aspects of housekeeping are depicted in **Figure 2**.



**Figure 3.** Housekeeping cleaning functions – guest room cleaning procedures [37].

Guest room cleaning procedures are outlined in **Figure 3**. General housekeeping operational procedures to maintain cleanliness on hotel premises are represented in **Figure 4**.



*Figure 4. General housekeeping operational procedures to maintain cleanliness [39].*

## 5. Preventive Measures for Staff and Residents

Hospitality industries are a critical component in the evolution of a local outbreak into a global pandemic. Because of their congregative nature and guests served, hospitality staffs and residents are at higher risk of being infected by COVID-19. With the expansion of global travel and tourism, it has become crucial to address public health aspects of their illness, as guests might be disease carriers promoting the spread of COVID-19 on a potentially global scale. Hence, there are preventive health measures specified for them to ensure preparedness and response to this global pandemic. International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005 represent an agreement between 196 countries that includes WHO member states to work together for global health security [40]. They have agreed to build their capacities to detect, assess and report public health events in response to the international spread of disease in ways that are commensurate with and restricted to public health risks that avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade [41].

The WHO pandemic COVID risk management recommended preparedness, response, and among the public [42]. The hotel workers are monitored for fever and respiratory symptoms as they enter for their shifts. If found with any such symptoms, they are restricted from work and technical guidance to confirm COVID-19 is followed [29,39]. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines, residents are instructed to clean their hands, which include



washing before and after contact with members, avoiding shaking hands as a social greeting, supporting hand, and respiratory hygiene, and coughing etiquette. The cleaning staff is provided with Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) that includes gloves, disposable gowns, and closed shoes. Facial protection with face shield and impermeable aprons are to be used while washing surfaces [43]. However, they are trained on immediate hand hygiene after removing the PPE and when cleaning and disinfection work is completed. Additional training is provided in the preparation, handling, application, and storage of disinfectant products and bleach at a higher concentration than usual. They are trained to ensure that the bleach is not disintegrated and to rinse it off after 10 minutes.

## **6. Do the Right Things through better Teamwork**

### **Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and guidelines for operations**

Guidelines developed for travel include asymptomatic travelers suspected of COVID-19 to undergo a health assessment, quarantine, or treatment [33]. Guidelines are made available at the reception area about how to clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and bathrooms. It is instructed to clean all surfaces three times a day with a bar of regular household soap or detergent. After that, they are rinsed with a regular household disinfectant containing 0.5 % sodium hypochlorite equivalent to 5000 ppm. The Center has laid down standard operating procedures for control rooms [25,31]. Surfaces like a toilet, hand washing basins, and baths that are contaminated with respiratory or other body fluid secretions of the ill person should be cleaned with a regular disinfectant solution containing 0.1 % sodium hypochlorite equivalent to 1000 ppm. After 10 minutes of contact with chlorine, the surface should be rinsed with clean water. 70 % alcohol is used when bleach is not suitable, for example in the telephone, remote control equipment, door handlings, and buttons in the elevator. Only disposable cleaning materials should be used. Cleaning equipment made of clothes and absorbent materials, like those that mop head and wiping clothes, should be discarded. Nonporous cleaning materials should be adequately disinfected with a 0.5 % sodium hypochlorite solution or according to the guidelines provided by the manufacturer. Textiles, linens, and clothes are put in specially marked laundry bags to prevent raising dust that could contaminate surrounding surfaces or people. They are washed in hot cycles of 70 °C or more with usual detergents. Disposable items like hand towels, gloves, masks, and tissues should be placed in a container with a lid. National regulations for waste management should be followed along with the hotel action plan for disposal. Rooms and common areas must be ventilated daily. In case a COVID-19 suspected patient passes through or spends minimal time in corridors, immediate cleaning and disinfection of that place are required [44]. A potential designated staff sufficiently trained in infection prevention and control, policies, and measures should be allotted to care for the isolated suspected patient in the hotel. One specific bathroom should be designated only for the ill patient [44]. Offering a variety of culture-related virtual events help people connect at a time of social isolation.

### **Hotel Operations during the COVID-19 Outbreak**

The COVID-19 is forcing introspection on the links that bond people, economy, and ecology. The new guidelines are aimed at enhancing customer satisfaction while taking precautionary measures. Operational recommendations for hospitality clients include the following;

- Clean surfaces and artifacts routinely and often affected areas like a front office desk, travel desk, and elevators.
- Provide multi-lingual resources for educating customers about the proper hygiene of the hand and cough etiquette.
- Advise guests to restrict face-to-face interaction and seek medical assistance.
- Safety protocols to be followed for events at the hotel property.
- Routine review of the communications and preparedness plan to ensure hotel employees are well versed with protocols.
- The employer must provide a safe and healthy work environment and mandate to follow the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) requirements outlined in Sections 13 and 14 of OSHA No. 1 of 2006 [45].
- Screening of the staff must be carried out and quarantine the persons with travel history to the infected areas.
- Conduct risk analysis and predict disruption of supply chains
- Explore any hotel privileges or remedies under insurance plans that might provide provision for business vacations in pandemic conditions.
- Consult counsel regarding the impact of coronaviruses on hotel, contract, and business activities, including the management of significant events and cancellation policies

### **Control Measures to Reduce Spread of COVID-19**

Several control measures are to be adopted by the hotels so-termed as 'pandemic transmission hubs' to contain the spread of pandemic like COVID-19 during outbreaks. Since such places come in contact with transiting travelers, it often becomes the entry point for infections. Coordination of hotels and public administration is essential to minimize the spread of the pandemic. Hotels must prepare a plan of action and shall include sanitation of common areas and rooms, identification, medical treatment, and containment of any guest infected, tracing any contacts made by employees with infected guests. Another step is sealing off the hotel to prevent the spread of the disease from the hotel. The hotels must be sanitized routinely, especially surfaces which come in contact with people frequently, including but not limited to front desk areas, elevator banks, and coffee stations. Employers in the hotel industry must prepare a plan of action for the safety and protection of its employees. This plan must be along the lines of OSHA [45,26]. Some of the steps that the employer must take include the following;

- Provide employees training on sanitation and personal hygiene practices
- Give employees access to soap or hand sanitizer
- Equip employees with PPE's
- Appoint a coordinator to address the concerns regarding COVID-19
- Effectuate flexible leave and other supportive policies

- Carry out a ‘sanity’ audit of the workplace frequently
- Collaborate with local authorities for sharing of authentic information and strategies
- Follow all applicable federal regulations and public health agency guidelines.
- 

## **7. Systematic Mind Training for Better Service**

The virus scare has set an example for how to run a hospitality business reasonably and responsibly via a collaboration of minds and efforts. The positive benefits of staying in hotels on a person’s overall emotional and mental health are one area of wellbeing that cannot be overlooked. We must work together to save both lives and livelihoods. Smart management techniques help maintain ‘full operational readiness,’ and systematic mind training will have much positive impact on the quality of service. It is crucial to conduct sessions on the management of pandemic-induced anxiety, stress, irritability, fearfulness, loss of interest, and hopelessness [46,47]. We must feed the right management principles, concepts, and thoughts to our subconscious mind to bring out the changes required for the hospitality industry’s effective management to serve humanity using the conscious mind. It is crucial to develop the spirit of innovation to develop solutions and new business models for the post-pandemic world [48]. It is necessary to promote the mental balance of an individual by addressing mental health crises, trauma, and mental agony associated with the pandemic and maintain social interconnections that keep the system stable [8, 46].

In uncertain times, we have to accept unconventional management methods involving reinventing, reskilling, and rediscovering ourselves. Once the upper management makes rapid changes required mandatory, middle management will execute by absorbing the changes and inculcating the self-discipline the virus has imposed upon us. We have to take collective responsibility in providing specialized training to managers on new management principles that enable them to find the best way forward and to perform to accomplish specific goals. Systematic mind training and the mindful general civic responsibility of each individual becomes essential in facing uncertain challenges. As part of the lockdown-induced learning curve, it would be advisable for the upper-level management to go the extra mile to build bridges with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and stakeholders and facilitate the smooth functioning of the system.

## **8. Strategies to Convert Hotels to Hospitals**

‘Shared hospitality, shared responsibility’ is the theme that resonates with the citizens across the continents during a crisis [49]. In these trying times, the hotels can double up as temporary hospitals and shelters. During a pandemic, it is pertinent to use all the possible physical and economic resources to face the situation [50]. One of the essential requirements to meet the crisis is to have adequate healthcare facilities (HCF). HCF includes screening hospitals,

specialized medical centers, and quarantine facilities [51,52]. Various authorities have to either build new HCFs or convert the existing non-medical facilities into HCFs to fill the void. Converting the hotels and other hospitality industry establishments that provide accommodation is one of the simplest ways to meet HCF demands. The restaurants can be at the frontline of the COVID-19 response [53]. Many of these establishments remain underutilized spaces during pandemics. The following rearrangements can be made to convert the hotel facilities to a hospital is shown in **Table 1**.

**Table 1.** Transformation of the existing physical structure of a hotel into a hospital facility in the hotel to hospital conversion strategy [52].

<b>Hotel Facility</b>	<b>Hospital Requirement</b>
Security area, Lobby	Screening for patients, Triage area
Lobby, Reception	Reception, Billing
Coffee shop	Laboratory, Pharmacy
Restaurants on the ground floor	Divided into outpatient departments
Ballroom	General wards/ Quarantine units
Guest Rooms (depending on the size/units/floors)	Patient rooms, Isolation rooms*, Nursing stations, Staff accommodation, Administrative units
Basement	Medical equipment storage area, Materials supply,
Restaurant/ Ballroom on top floors	Divided into procedure units/ Operating theatres/post- operative wards/ ICUs

\*An entire floor can be used to convert into an isolation room/independent units

To convert the existing physical infrastructure facility, the following additional requirements should be met to have a fully functional hospital unit [52-54].

- Stretcher trolley capable, wheelchair capable high-speed elevators
- Emergency exit ramp/passage
- Fire extinguishers and escape plan
- Oxygen line and supply
- Heating, Ventilating, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) should be coupled with High-Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters with appropriate pressures for isolation wards/COVID-19 wards
- Provision for waste disposal
- Provision for a mortuary
- Intercom SOS facility
- Ambulance
- Adequate ventilation and lighting
- 

## 9. Conclusions

This paper summarizes the crisis management aspects and impacts of the hospitality industry during a COVID-19 outbreak. Adopting a 7P's strategy: proactive precautions, preparations, protective gear, physical distancing norms, planning, process execution, and protecting public health to tackle the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is essential in these troubled times. A concerted and coordinated management effort by the hotel staff is urgently required to maintain the hospitality service industry. A balanced and pragmatic management approach is needed because of medical and travel restrictions in many countries. Proper management of hotel and transportation depots can help in controlling the spread of Covid19. Employers must ensure the safety of workers and restrict entry to COVID-19 patient areas [26,45]. Sanitization and operating procedures shall be carried as per OSHA guidelines that must be prepared and implemented [44,54]. Collaboration with local authorities is crucial. This new alignment through the drastic changes will orient the hotel services post-lock down in the right direction. The outcome of the use of strategic management tools has a significant role for the greater good of society and the planetary ecosystem. The hospitality industry can play a part in people's well-being and enhance the quality of life during the period of distress [46,47]. We must strive to protect our generation by sharing responsibility at present and host people during the reconstruction phase of the economy. A paradigm shift in hotel management techniques and modern technology usage often catalyze the strategic management processes as we go through the new normal in the future.

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