

case study

Hospitality for the Homeless: The case of Camillu's House

By Charles Thomas, John Buschman and Lisa Cain

Introduction

Camillus House (CH) was founded in 1960 as an initiative of the Little Brothers of the Good Shepherd with the aim of providing essential hospitality services to homeless individuals in Miami, Florida. The institution is affiliated with the Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God (SJD), a nearly 450-year-old Catholic order of charity with a mission to provide health and social services through hospitality and compassion to the most vulnerable and needy of the community (Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God, 2019). CH today provides a wide array of primary medical, dental, behavioral health and social work case-management services in addition to the essential hospitality elements of shelter, security, hygiene and nutrition. It is primarily these traditional and essential hospitality services that attract homeless individuals of the Miami community to seek help at CH and most commonly their first need is the basic human sustenance of food.

Frequently the homeless have greater issues and needs that go well beyond their more-apparent conditions of homelessness and food insecurity, and the issues can include any number of underlying medical or behavioral disorders and diseases. It is through the delivery of the essential hospitality services, however, that the institution can begin a dialog with the individual that can lead to addressing the deeper issues. CH aims at providing not only the many different services needed to meet basic needs but as well to promote the ability of the desolate individuals living on the streets of Miami to emerge from their issues with dignity (Camillus House Inc., 2019).

The purpose of this case study is to identify CH as a benchmark organization that exemplifies best practices for administering traditional hospitality services to the homeless. This paper will identify motivations (both at the personal and organizational level), attributes necessary for leadership in this unique environment, and current and best practices of an organization serving this unique population.

Hospitality and Homelessness

Modern hospitality is most often equated with the services of for-profit businesses such as hotels, restaurants, catering and event planning, meeting and convention facilities and the like. This paper looks instead at the not-for-profit world of traditional and essential hospitality services

that are being delivered every day to millions of individuals and families in need across the U.S., and to thousands by CH in Miami.

Ancient and historic literature is replete with references to the origins and tradition of hospitality. The Ancient Greek author Homer famously included as many as 18 hospitality scenes in his volumes *The Illiad* and *The Odyssey* (Reece, 1993). The Old Testament of the Hebrew and Christian Bibles contains many references to hospitality, most notably that of Abraham and Sarah opening their tent to strangers in need (Genesis, 18:2–8). O’Gorman (2005) suggests however a contrast between Ancient Greek and Roman hospitality and that portrayed in the Bible and other writings of the world’s religions. He points out that the hospitality of the early Christians and Hebrews was considered a covenant with God, a blessing for both host and guest in need, whereas the Greek and Roman practices were more concerned with benefit and reciprocity. The latter form seems not at all dissimilar with our for-profit hospitality industry today. The work of CH, as a Christian charitable institution is more clearly based on the former.

King (1995), and Hepple, Kipps and Thomson (1990) suggest that the modern connotation of hospitality revolves around four key essentials: 1) it is conferred by a host on a guest who is away from home, 2) it is interactive between a provider and a receiver, 3) it represents a combination of tangible and intangible factors, and 4) that the host provides for the guest’s security, psychological, and physiological comfort. These essentials reflect much of the work of the staff at CH, although the first essential must be extended further to the guest that has no home at all. The latter essential includes the provision of security, coming in from the dangers of living on the street, and of psychological and physiological comfort, core services most needed to prepare the formerly-homeless individual to return to society.

Telfer (1996) makes a distinction between two types of hospitality and two types of guest as recipients of hospitality. One type of hospitality is offered for offering pleasurable experiences to friends, neighbors, acquaintances, colleagues and those related to the host. The other is a hospitality that is offered to those in need and that comes from a sense of duty. This latter definition Telfer (1996, p.91) calls “good-Samaritan hospitality,” which may be offered to provide for individuals with a need for food and drink but can also include “a psychological need of a kind which can be met particularly well by hospitality, such as loneliness or the need to feel valued as an indi-

Charles Thomas, John Buschman and Lisa Cain are affiliated with Florida International University.

vidual." It is this second definition that is embraced by the workers at CH. French philosopher Jacques Derrida defines hospitality as inviting and welcoming the stranger who walks among us (Derrida, 2000). He notes that a certain uncomfortableness and uncertainty of hosting a stranger and referred to it "hospitality" (p.13). Derrida's coined term is particularly applicable to the homeless individual as he or she enters CH for a first meal, or shower, or perhaps a change of donated clothing. Finally, Cassee (1983) defines the construct of hospitality as: "a harmonious mixture of tangible and intangible components of food, beverages, beds, ambience and environment, and behaviour of staff" (1983, p. xiv). This combination, with respect to staff attitude and behavior, shall be further explored in this case study through specific queries with member of the CH staff.

The State of the Industry

It is estimated that more than five-hundred thousand individuals in the U.S. suffer from homelessness on a given night (HUD, 2018) and that as many as three million people will experience homelessness at some point during the year (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009). Different humanitarian institutions such as CH have come to their aid through the provision of emergency healthcare response, assistance, as well as telephone, mailing, and case management to try to reduce the prevalence of homelessness. The organization also runs various programs in the continuum of housing that aim at emergency response to aid in the transition processes, and creation of permanent housing programs that would benefit more than one-thousand homeless and impoverished individuals every night.

CH has created 11 programs distributed throughout Miami-Dade County (Camillus House Inc., 2018). The organization also engages in comprehensive healing programs such as those focused on behavioral health therapy and healthcare. It has established comprehensive healing approaches with the objective of resolving the primary factors influencing chronic homelessness, which include alcohol and drug abuse and psychological well-being.

According to Kalesnikaite & Garcia-Zamor (2014), CH's Institute for Social and Personal Adjustment (ISPA) facilitates residential and outpatient attention for mental disorders, addiction, and comorbid disorders. On the other hand, Camillus Health Concern, a related agency, focuses on the primary, palliative, preventive, supplementary, and oral care. Camillus recognizes the importance of the society members, and it strives to avail the necessary means that would guarantee the establishment of desirable family life, and improvements in education. The institution has developed job programs to ensure that individuals are active participants and solicitors of employment opportunities. Camillus has developed plans to promote placement and on-the-job-training that guarantee the acquisition of beneficial employment.

CH advocates for Christian values, respect for life, and the con-

sideration of the desperate, those feeling lonely, and those that the society has isolated (Camillus House, Inc., 2018). It promotes the establishment of unique families and friends that provide hope and support in the long journey involving difficult transitions to a new life of autonomy. CH uses a sliding scale operation model that requires the prospective participant to prove their financial difficulties to acquire free services or a discount. The primary source of funding for the care center is the federal government, meaning that it would include the poor that lack insurance coverage. The organization has adopted unique income-based models for the beneficiaries generating revenue. Some of the care services that the health center can cover include immunizations, pregnancy care, checkups, childcare, prescription drugs, mental disorders, and substance abuse among others (Kalesnikaite & Garcia-Zamor, 2014). CH has adopted a distinct approach such as creating the Institute of Social and Personal Adjustment to promote the treatment and rehabilitation of individuals suffering from comorbid disorders and substance abuse.

Homelessness has a range of harmful physiological effects on the individuals due to living in the streets, as well as the rest of the society that is burdened with the care of such individuals. It is important to address this matter to improve the quality of life for all and ensure that the fundamental necessities of the society members are met. This study aims at analyzing the services and initiatives that CH employees undertake to assist the homeless and needy.

Methods

This research is based on the case study method, which is appropriate when the research questions are exploratory and descriptive in nature (Yin, 2009). The qualitative approach included interviews with leaders and workers at CH from March 15th to April 10th, 2018. The questions that were asked of the workers were open-ended in nature, which allowed them to elaborate on answers to all of the questions, rather than simply agreeing or disagreeing with a statement. During this time, nine staff members were interviewed, and their responses were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The answers were then compared and contrasted and the findings are presented below.

Analysis of the Dilemma

With a staggering number of homeless and people in need of financial, psychological and physiological hospitality in the U.S., there is a need to understand how social welfare organizations like CH operate to be able to best provide hospitality to those in need. Homelessness has a range of adverse effects ranging from psychological to physical health complications, which can lead to a severe reduction in the quality of living. Such results extend to other society members because of the perception that they develop towards such individuals and their obligation of assisting them (Hogeveen & Freistadt, 2013). Because CH has been successful for nearly six decades in its endeavors to provide excellent care to a subset of

the community that needs hospitality, the following questions arose to help understand and describe their success:

Question 1: How do the objectives and focus of the institution, such as the provision of palliative and preventive care as well as emergency response, influence and drive the operations of the organization?

Drawn directly from the responses of its staff, the CH organization meets the unique needs of individuals by tailoring their programs to the needs of each individual and by being “accessible to those in need of help, in the quality environment in which they are served.” It strives to “meet the person where they are” by asking “what can I do for you today?”. The way that this organization can execute its mission is by offering each homeless individual “dental, eye care, mental healthcare, physical health care, hair, clothing, meals, and most importantly, a second chance.” By offering these fundamental hospitality amenities to the homeless, the organization “helps build the individual from the ground up”, and “allows the individuals to live in a better place” by helping them to become “self-sufficient” and “independent.”

The creation of living spaces for the homeless such as CH is a bold move towards the resolution of such issues. Many factors including economic challenges, property disputes, and policies among others contribute to the situation of homelessness. At times, the rates of homelessness exceed the anticipated levels, which calls for the development of practical techniques that would ensure the creation of enough capacity among local social welfare institutions to address their needs (Kleiss, 2010).

Homelessness is a challenging situation, especially considering the negative attitudes and treatment of individuals suffering from the condition (Brooymans, 2010). Hospitality institutions such as CH should, therefore, ensure that they provide their services absolutely and unconditionally. This aspect could be attained through the observation of the laws and conceptions originating from the authorities that would influence the effective functioning of the hospitality institutions.

According to Hogeveen & Freistadt (2013), often, the market forces and social processes disrupt and displace individuals leaving them without secure places for living. The provision of hospitality services comes in handy, especially in the contemporary society with the ethos of social welfare retrenchment, bigotry, and explicit representation of cases. It is essential for CH as well as other social service providers and the public to develop a new ethical perspective towards the hospitality sector. This aspect implies the idea of providing absolute hospitality that would ensure the welcoming of all individuals in need without the imposition of conditions (Bolland & McCallum, 2002). It also alludes to the practices of the administrators who should emphasize the creation of open and welcoming spaces, instead of focusing on bureaucracy and other institutional values such as accountability.

Question 2: Does the leadership and operational design of the institu-

tion have distinctive attributes that promote effective execution of tasks?

The responses provided by the CH personnel explained that it is vital to have “consults with staff to create an environment that is conducive for rehabilitation and enhanced job performance.” They tout the effectiveness of a values-based organization that emphasizes “respect, quality, spirituality and responsibility”. The infrastructure that creates a successful environment is comprised of clear “layers of employees and departments” with the physical “facilities to offer 3-star meals, bathing, clothing distribution, and even a kennel for dogs”. The goal is to be able to accommodate “mothers and children, shell-shocked veterans, aged out of foster care youth, supplied housing to mentally-ill and rehabilitation.” Additionally, they tout the importance of being able to “adapt to changes” to ensure “continued growth”, “longevity and not being left behind”.

Many social welfare organizations use a determination approach that anticipates and identifies the characteristics of individuals asking for help (Lugosi, 2009). This approach has often influenced such organizations to turn down individual soliciting for support, which is inhuman and non-reflective of the objectives. The primary and probably sole role or goal of social welfare organizations is assisting society members to realize decent and happy living (Drake, 2009). It would be baseless to turn down individuals because of their qualities or characteristics. The social welfare organizations should adopt a welcoming perspective where they embrace such individuals and provide the available assistance, which would promote improvement in the quality of living among individuals (Liewicki, 2011). The social welfare and hospitality services have often helped individuals to create a stable foundation and rebuild their lives.

The contemporary use of hospitality encounters tensions between welcoming and showing hostility to the strangers. Often, the hosts consider the needy as the “other,” which creates and entrenches the perception of domination over space (Dikeç, Clark, & Barnett, 2009). This condition is evident especially among the individuals that have ever hosted odious guests, an encounter that promotes understanding of the duality endemic to the provision of hospitality services. This aspect may create a troubling situation for the host as the visitors defy the fixed but unspecified boundaries, such as those of decency. Therefore, it is important to understand how the infrastructure of a hospitality organization may help facilitate a hospitable environment to those in need.

Question 3: What are the unique attributes necessary for serving the homeless?

The attributes that CH employees most-frequently identified as the most important for serving hospitality to the homeless were compassion/empathy, followed by patience, and respecting individuals for who they are and understanding where they came from. One CH employee remarked, it is important to “Respect the individual for who they are, not who they appear to be.” Other important attributes included dedication, love, communication and listening skills, a desire or “heart to help others”, and understanding for why individuals become

homeless, responsibility, and spirituality. Ultimately, they remarked that one's service to this type of hospitality must be "more than a means to a paycheck".

Hospitality research echoes the sentiments of the CH staff. The primary qualities of the non-profit hospitality sector should be high levels of tolerance, understanding, and show of affection to the homeless visitors, which would assist them to feel welcome and blend into the institutional culture and practices easily (Drake, 2009). Although the hospitality sector uses a formal tone of welcoming the guests and making them feel comfortable within the premise, the hosts do not depict the desire to let the guests take such offers seriously (Hogeveen & Freistadt, 2013). This aspect results in the generation of the feelings of alienation among the guests, which would create the perceptions of subjection and loss of freedom. This scenario worsens the situation, as the guest would feel the loss of freedom because of the feeling of subordination by the host. The provision of comprehensive hospitality services should treat their visitors as equals and decent individuals that have only suffered from an unfortunate situation (Brooymans, 2010). The rule of such social welfare services should be based on the perception of creating adequate opportunities for such individuals to stabilize and re-establish their lives. This aspect could be attained through the provision of the necessary, social, economic, intellectual, and health needs that would improve the quality of life among such individuals.

According to Kleiss (2010), tension is an endemic condition and intrinsic when it comes to the provision of conditional hospitality, where the hosts attempt to distance themselves from the visitor because of considering one person the owner of the property and the other a visitor that has restrictions on the benefits that they could derive. Although the creation of clear and informal rules might be helpful, the provision of comprehensive hospitality services would be necessary (Bolland & McCallum, 2002).

The marginalized individuals are the most susceptible to suffering the issues of homelessness in the urban landscapes and disorganized city squares that force them to search for social services. This aspect increases the demand and regulatory measures that the authorities impose on the nonprofit sector, which requires the practices of courtesy, such as lining up outside community kitchens and drop-in centers, waiting for the opportunity to acquire the available services and help. Some institutions create strict restrictions and systems such as a supervisory desk, where the beneficiaries are required to sign-in (Beckett & Herbert, 2010). This aspect could be beneficial as it assists in recording the number of visitors that organization admits, which would be an excellent approach to offering evidence to the donors and the government on the existence of such individuals. However, this approach does not reflect the tenets of absolute hospitality because it assumes the existence of intoxicated and disruptive individuals wishing to acquire the hospitality services. This aspect leads to subjectivity and influences

the hosts to lockout such individuals from obtaining their services. This aspect causes the situation of negotiating access to such spaces, which makes the hosts subjective and judgmental regarding the worth of the guests, which makes such systems and the security screening measures degrading and bureaucratic (Dikeç, Clark, & Barnett, 2009). Such aspects tamper the open and hospitable approaches to ethical hosting as the individuals result in conditional welcome because of the admission rituals aiming at controlling, eliminating, and excluding the homeless.

Question 4: What are the best ways to serve the homeless?

To best serve the homeless, the CH staff remarked that it is pivotal to help individuals "successfully overcome factors (addiction, trauma) that keep them homeless". This may be achieved by "motivating them to improve their quality of life" by "providing education on values (respect, quality, spirituality and responsibility) and implementing them". However, the staff also acknowledge the importance of having the business acumen required to keep the organization running properly, so that there is a place for these individuals in need to seek hospitality. They remarked that it is important to "help the business run in addition to having the compassion needed" and to "create a stable financial environment to allow for the organization to succeed" so that they can help the "client become stable and obtain housing". Without serving the business, you cannot serve the individual. Ultimately, they touted the importance of extending the tenets of hospitality by "creating a welcoming environment for the homeless".

The ethical demands of absolute hospitality require moving past the set limits that influence the development of tensions between the hosts, the visitors, strangers, the poor, and the affluent. It is onerous, involving, and dangerous to undertake the projects involving hospitality. However, if the provision of the social welfare services were challenging or past the current ontological limits, it would be imperative for the hosts to move past the imposed boundaries and ensure welcome without the imposition of reservations or calculations, which would promote the resolution of the issues of homelessness.

Other homeless individuals that manage to access the city agency and social welfare providers encounter a challenging situation involving strict regulation of behavior and the provision of services that are subjective to the observation of rules, repugnant ordinances such as specifying the instances that one could enter or leave their quarters (Lugosi, 2009). In some cases, the guests are forced to attend the counseling sessions and concessions that may compromise their privacy as they allow the supervisors to read their emails and create restrictions on association with other visitors such as friends and family members (George, 2009). This aspect promotes a clear demarcation of the entitlements between the host and the guest, which influences the development of tensions between the marginalized individuals and the resource holders that benefit from the empowerment of the state and the available housing programs. In numerous instances,

guests are formally evicted from the residential homes because of the failure to observe the rules, for example, because of misusing or overusing the institutional resources (Hogeveen & Freistadt, 2013). Such behavioral restrictions and strict surveillance approach significantly differ from the characteristics of open and absolute hospitality.

Question 5: What is the best part of your job?

Finally, it was important to understand the personal takeaways of the individuals offering hospitality to those most in need of it. While some respondents noted that the ability to help with pro-social issues like “solving problems on mental-health, substance abuse and high cost of living” were motivating factors, others remarked that joining an established organization to mitigate commonly made mistakes when serving this population was the most rewarding aspect. Still others commented on the ability to “have an open mind and not judge” and to “assess why people become homeless and help them return to housing and employment status” as the best parts of their job. One respondent offered a poignant remark in that the best part of the job was the ability to be simultaneously ‘soft and hard’ to best help those in need. The staffer remarked that it is important and rewarding to be:

soft when they are too broken, and you need to piece them back together. Hard when they are strong enough to stand and hitting them with the Truth, Encouragement, Self-reliance, That no one owes you anything, stand on your own two feet and letting life know I was DOWN but not OUT and no matter how many times they fall they need to get back up no matter the embarrassment or stigma that they are beyond what people may label them or write them off as. And that I could have easily been them; I’m not immune or excused from LIFE and its challenges. So, let’s travel this road together and make our journeys amazing no matter what intersection we started off on the highway of Life. We are all on the same road, I’m no better than you because we are all human; let’s help each other along the way.

Some of the most exciting aspects of hospitality include the interactions that influence the development of attitudes towards assistance seekers. CH has adopted effective measures to guarantee the implementation of absolute hospitality for acting and determination, mainly when one encounters the marginalized (Beckett & Herbert, 2010). This aspect would ensure adequate evaluation of the methods of interaction with other individuals locked out because of capitalist expansion (Fournier, Perez-Stable, & Greer, 1993). It also would ensure that the individuals develop a new thinking perspective in the provision of hospitality services, which would encourage the use of ethical and just approaches of interacting with the strangers that approach their thresholds.

Problem Statement

CH strives to eliminate the challenges of subordination and subjectivity among the hosts and guests through treating every occupant of the institution as a family. The institution has created in-house policies that would ensure effective governance, operations, scheduling, and interaction between the hosts, staff, and the guests. The issue is to assess how social welfare organizations, and those corporate organizations that wish to align with them, may best dedicate their time and capital towards the provision of high-quality hospitality services to the homeless including accommodation, balanced diets, and other areas of assistance that the homeless might require.

Discussion Questions

- What are the industry’s current methods of best practice addressing the major social issue of homelessness?
- What are the benefits, concerns, keys to success, and situations in which hospitality and tourism companies should utilize these benchmark methods?
- How can individuals and organizations shift their perspectives of the marginalized in order to better accommodate them?
- How does providing hospitality for the homeless align with the corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives of major hospitality organizations?
- Has anyone had to go without a meal or had to receive hospitality from an organization like CH?
- Think about the last person you saw on the corner of a street with a sign asking for a job, food or money. What were your thoughts about that individual?
- For those who have volunteered and served at a homeless shelter or soup kitchen: How did that impact you personally? Do you continue to volunteer? At similar or different types of institutions?

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