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**Article**

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# Investigating chef-leader behaviour impacts on subordinate work team identification: A pitch

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**Abstract:** This pitch letter outlines my personal experience applying Faff's (2015a) two-page pitching template to my PhD research plan. It discusses how the process of completing the pitching template has enabled me to better organise and articulate my research plan. This letter provides support for the use of the pitching template to evaluate and assess research which is beyond the initial stages of development. This letter describes how the pitching process systematically enables a researcher to not only conceptualize a research plan, but also enables a researcher to critically evaluate and assess an already established research plan for greater clarity.

**Keywords:** pitching research, leadership, team identification, chefs

**JEL Codes:** M10, M11, M54

## 1. Introduction

This letter reviews the process of applying the pitching template proposed by Faff (2015a) to my PhD research topic of investigating chef-leader behaviour impacts on subordinate work team identification. I am currently a full-time PhD student at the University of Queensland and was introduced to this tool in a course I recently completed with its creator, Robert Faff. The application of the pitching research template is encouraged for individuals during the early stages of their research process (Faff, 2015b: 3). This recommendation I believe is completely warranted in that the pitching template provides a plan for a researcher to conceptualize, structure, and evaluate a potential research idea in relation to guiding parameters of

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the pitching template. The structure of the template provides an invaluable resource for the novice researcher to approach this often overwhelming and daunting process with a bit more confidence.

As a student who is approaching the mid-point of my PhD candidacy, I would consider myself still novice researcher, though one who is slightly more advanced than a recently commenced PhD student. It is from this perspective that I write this letter about my experience using the pitching template proposed by Faff (2015a). An experience which I believe has enabled me to better both organise and articulate my research plan. The template provided the parameters for me to more critically evaluate the different structural aspects of my research plan. It challenged me to reassess how I was constructing my research argument. It enabled me to better articulate this argument in relation to both my primary motivation for undertaking the project and the theoretical perspective chosen to guide the research process. It is from this perspective that this letter has two purposes; one to reflect on the process of designing my pitching template, and two to review the impact the application of the pitching template has made on my research plan. The reminder of this letter is structured as follows; section 2 provides a short background about my topic and discusses the application of my research to the template, section 3 reflects on the impacts of applying my research plan to the template, while section 4 concludes with some final thoughts on the pitching process. The completed pitch template is illustrated in table 1.

## **2. Background of topic and application to template**

In this section I will review the process of applying my research to the pitching template, and how this exercise helped me both better organise and articulate my research plan. As with many who have undertaken this process in the past, my completion of the template did not always follow the prescribed categorical flow of the instrument (Beaumont, 2015; Rad, 2016; Ratiu, 2015; Rekker, 2016; Unda, 2015). For this reason I will begin with (Item D) my *motivation/puzzle* and describe how this category which was derived from a larger motivation to explore chefs and leadership is incorporated into the theoretical approach I chose to investigate the topic. In order to do this I will first discuss how my PhD journey informed this decision. I entered the PhD program with a general idea of what I wanted to research, it being the work environment of professional kitchens. In particular I wanted to study how chefs successfully lead and manage effective kitchen teams. From this broad starting point I primarily focused my readings around two streams of literature, that of leadership and that of the work environment of professional kitchens. This process informed me in two ways; one that the literature about leadership within professional kitchens is very limited, and two that the literature about leadership in a more general context is quite vast and diverse. Thankfully

though it was through this reading process, that I uncovered what I considered to be an interesting and relevant perspective to examine the leadership process within the unique group context of a professional kitchen. This perspective was proposed by Hogg & van Knippenberg (2003) in which they argue that in order to fully understand the leadership process within groups, leadership needs to be examined in relation to the group process and not solely investigated as a relational property between a leader and individual group member. In light of this perspective I chose to examine how chefs as members of a kitchen team gain influence within the team and use this influence to impact the collective actions of the group. In particular I am interested in examining how the behaviours of a leader (head chef) are cognitively perceived by the subordinate members of kitchen team, and how this perception impacts the subordinate member's psychological attachment or social identification with the kitchen team. The basis of this objective is reflected in both (Item A) my *working title* and (Item B) my *basic research question*.

After establishing the platform of social identity to explore leadership within kitchen teams, the next part of my journey relates to (Item C) the *key papers*. At this point I felt I had a theoretical lens to explore the context of professional kitchens. I now needed a more complete understanding of the research which developed this lens, as well as what potential contribution my research could have within this stream of literature. As noted by Faff (2015b: 8) your *key papers* should provide "important and critical foundation stones for your research topic" as you narrow the parameters of its focus. I would have to say that before applying the pitching template to my research, I had probably six or seven key papers. The parameters of this section challenged me to narrow this list down by requiring me to make a determination of what I believed were the three most influential articles in regards to the direction of my research. Though this was difficult decision to make, I believe this requirement encouraged me better clarify my research objectives in light of the three papers I chose. The first article I chose was written by a guru in the field and provides a broad overview of the literature of identity and leadership (Hogg *et al.*, 2012). The second article I chose provides an example of a study which utilised a qualitative approach which I felt was very relevant to my own (Huettermann *et al.*, 2014). The third and final article I chose provides the primary measure I have incorporated into my research plan for both my qualitative and quantitative studies (Steffens *et al.*, 2014).

The next section of the pitch template is the three core aspects referred to by Faff (2015a; 315) in the template as the "**IDioTs** guide", the *idea*, the *data*, and the *tools*. I would consider these three sections to be kind of the nuts and bolts of your pitch in that these template components require the researcher to articulate their research topic, define its parameters, propose an approach to examine the topic, and lastly denote the tools you will use in its exploration. The first of the three components (Item E) the *idea* section is closely related to the *motivation/puzzle*

*section* in that it requires you to describe how you will approach the project in relation to your *motivation/puzzle*. My challenge in this section was to design the *idea* in relation to my overall context specific interest of chefs and leadership, while at same time having this *idea* contribute to the literature of social identity. To confront this challenge I relied heavily on the literature to help me construct an appropriate and relevant approach to explore my *motivation/puzzle*. Before applying my research plan to the pitching template I often had a difficult time properly articulating the marriage of my theoretical perspective, social identity, as a relevant lens to investigate the basis of effective leadership within professional kitchens. Through the template process I now feel I have a stronger theoretical and conceptual foundation to argue why and how my *idea* is a relevant way to explore the overriding *motivation/puzzle* of my research.

The second core aspect noted in the “**IDioTs** guide” is (Item F) the *data* section. The *data* section was fairly easy for me to complete based on where I am currently along my PhD journey, though this was not always the case. It took me a fairly long time to determine an appropriate approach to access relevant data needed to explore my *idea*. The information contained in the *data* section, like the *idea* section, became more evident as I explored the literature. With my research design being a multi-method approach, the use of the template to complete the *data* section enabled me to be better articulate and defend my basis and reasoning for this approach. This section of the template also enabled me better clarify the relationship the data has in relation to my overriding *motivation/puzzle* and *idea*.

The final of the three core aspects noted in the “**IDioTs** guide” is (Item G) the *tools* section. In this section my primary concern was how I could best evaluate the *data* in relation to my *idea*. This process was more troublesome than I initially had envisioned. In particular the analysis approach for my second study is still somewhat uncertain. My uncertainty stems from the fact that this approach is very dependent on my ability to collect individual team data from a particular number of teams, which are comprised of a particular number of team members. With this said by completing the template *tools* section I was encouraged to reassess and consider several potential statistical analysis methods which may be warranted due to the structural nature of the data I am able to collect. As I stated earlier the three sections which make up the “**IDioTs** guide” provide the nuts and bolts of your research due to how interconnected and structurally important each of the sections are to your overall research plan. I believe the process of applying my research plan to the sections of the “**IDioTs** guide” has encouraged me further assess the factors which will greatly determine the perceived validity and reliability of my research.

As I continued with the process of completing the template I came to the two key questions section. This part of the template focuses on what could be considered

two of the most important components of the pitching process in relation to the merits of your research. The questions are (Item H) “*What’s new?*” and (Item I) “*So What?*”. Reflecting on the whole process of completing the template, I found these two sections the most time consuming to complete. I believe this was primarily due to the importance these sections place on showcasing the novelty and merits of one’s proposed research. In these sections I felt the merits and novelty of my research stemmed from the synthesis of the theoretical approach and contextual implications in relation to my *motivation/puzzle*. To illustrate the “*What’s new?*” component I refer you to the “Mickey Mouse” diagram in figure 1. The “Mickey Mouse” format was recommended by Faff (2015a: 317) to illustrate the potential novelty of one’s research. The diagram in figure 1 proposes the novelty of my research lies within the intersection of the professional kitchen context, the measure of specific chef leader behaviours, and the effect these behaviours have on subordinate identification with the kitchen team. The “*So What?*” section of the template asks the question; why does this research matter. My perspective on this question primarily relates to the insights I believe this research will provide for practitioners within the hospitality industry.

The most important section of the pitching template concerns what Faff (2015a: 317) terms the “holy grail” (Item J), the *contribution*. In preparing my template I perceived the *contribution* of my research to be twofold; the first being its impact on the development of theory within framework of identity leadership and teams, while the second relates to the “*So What?*”, the contextual implications of this research in relation to effectiveness of leadership of chefs within the team dynamic of professional kitchens. The last section I completed in the pitching template is (Item K) labelled *other considerations*. For me this section raised many relevant items which needed to be considered including any potential issues which might initially be overlooked by the researcher. The items that particularly resonated with me included the consideration of competitor risk, the scope of my research, and my perceived target journals.



**Figure 1. Mickey Mouse diagram illustrating the novelty of a research idea**

### **3. Reflection on the application of my research to the pitching template**

The pitching process is recommended for researchers in the early phases of their research planning. This recommendation I believe is completely warranted in that the template provides a framework for a researcher to conceptualize, structure, and ultimately evaluate a potential research idea in relation to guiding parameters of the pitching template. The structure of the template provides an invaluable resource for a novice researcher to approach this often overwhelming and daunting process with a bit more confidence. Though I am quickly approaching the mid-point of my PhD journey, I still found completing the template exercise an extremely helpful and valuable experience. I have had many challenges in developing my own PhD research plan from properly synthesising the many of elements captured in the pitching template to eloquently articulating this plan when required. Drawing from my experience with this tool I believe I am now in a better position to do both. The template simplifies the research planning process by dividing the different interconnected elements of a plan into more manageable focused sections. It provided me a defined framework to critically evaluate the different structural aspects of my research plan. It challenged me to reassess how I was constructing my research argument. The pitching process improved my ability to verbally communicate this plan in a more concise and confident manner. It also made me more aware of how to structure and present my research in light of my target audience and journal.

### **4. Concluding remarks**

This letter is written to document my experience using the pitching template. This letter outlines my completed pitch template and reflects on my experience constructing this document. This letter reports the benefits of its application to researchers who are a little more advanced in the research process. Constructing this pitch at a more advanced stage in the research process has allowed me to better conceptualise and articulate the core elements of my research plan. For this reason this letter supports the merits of using the Faff (2015a) pitching research template not only in the early stages of the research process, but also in the more advanced stages of the research process. Its application as noted by my personal experience can assist a slightly more advanced researcher in both illuminating and clarifying any potential structural issues within their own research plan.

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**Table 1. Completed 2-page pitch template on investigating chef-leader behaviour impacts on subordinate work team identification**

Pitcher's Name	Matt Brenner	FoR category	Hospitality	Date Completed	01/06/2016
(A) Working Title	Investigating chef-leader behaviour impacts on subordinate work team identification				
(B) Basic Research Question	How do the perceived behaviours of a head chef impact a subordinate's identification with the kitchen team?				
(C) Key paper(s)	<p>Hogg, M. A., van Knippenberg, D. &amp; Rast, D. E. (2012) "The social identity theory of leadership: Theoretical origins, research findings, and conceptual developments", <i>European Review of Social Psychology</i>, vol. 23, no. 1: 258-304</p> <p>Huettermann, H., Doering, S. &amp; Sabine, B. (2014) "Leadership and team identification: Exploring the followers' perspective", <i>The Leadership Quarterly</i>, vol. 25, no. 3: 413-432</p> <p>Steffens, N. K., Haslam, S. A., Reicher, S. D., Platow, M. J., Fransen, K., Yang, J., Ryan, M. K., Jetten, J., Peters, K. &amp; Boen, F. (2014) "Leadership as social identity management: Introducing the Identity Leadership Inventory (ILI) to assess and validate a four-dimensional model", <i>The Leadership Quarterly</i>, vol. 25, no. 1: 1001-1024</p>				
(D) Motivation/Puzzle	<p>A professional kitchen is a work environment highly dependent on the coordinated activities of its staff. A chef's role as the leader of the kitchen team is to oversee this work process. This responsibility generally occurs in a in a low paying work environment which can be both physically taxing and emotionally exhausting. Traditionally kitchens require its employees to work long and unsociable hours to meet large workloads in generally hot and cramped conditions. Interestingly though in this often difficult work environment so dependent on the team process, very little research has examined the impact of leadership within this unique context. It is from this basis that this research pitch proposes to examine this impact from the perspective of both leaders (chefs) and their subordinates (culinary staff). The impact to be examined will focus on how behaviours of a chef are perceived by their staff and how this perception influences a staff member's relationship with the kitchen team. The relationship being examined in this study is a subordinates psychological attachment or social identification with the kitchen team.</p>				
THREE	Three core aspects of any empirical research project i.e. the "IDioTs" guide				
(E) Idea?	<p>To examine the behavioural (IV) impact of a leader (head chef) on the social identification (DV) of subordinates (culinary staff) with the work team. Research which has investigated the behavioural influence of a leader within a non-kitchen based work team environment has primarily focused on how a particular leadership style (charismatic or transformational) subsequently impacts a follower's identification with the work team. Only two studies have deviated from this dominant approach by inductively investigating this influence from the sole perspective of either a leader or follower, though both studies never examined whether the determined leader behaviours actually promoted subordinate identification with the work team. Therefore a more extensive accounting for the variance in team identification, and thus a more comprehensive theoretical conceptualisation of the factors which contribute to follower's social identification with the work team is needed.</p>				
(F) Data?	<p>Data will be gathered from two studies. Study 1 will encompass semi-structured interviews within eight kitchen work team environments. The interviews will explore the perspective of both leaders (head chefs) and subordinates (culinary staff members) to investigate the leader behaviours they perceive to foster subordinate identification with the work team. The interview protocol design for study one will be underpinned by Steffens <i>et al.</i> (2014) Identity Leadership Inventory. The interviews will be conducted with the staff of eight professional kitchen work teams within casinos, hotels and resorts of Australia. Study 2 will utilize questionnaires administered to 350 subordinates to quantitatively examine the relationship of the behaviours determined in study one in relation to</p>				

(G) Tools?	<p>Steffens <i>et al.</i> (2014) Identity Leadership Inventory. It will also examine the relationship of these behaviours with the reported measure of subordinate's team identification. The questionnaire in study 2 will be administered to subordinates within the kitchen teams of Australia, Canada and the United States.</p> <p>The research plan will include two studies. Study 1 will utilise NVivo to examine the semi-structured interviews and assist in determining the behavioural themes which emerge from the dimensional framework of the interview protocol. Study 2 will utilise SPSS to examine the relationships between questionnaire data generated through individual and group level analysis using multi-level modelling.</p>
<b>TWO</b>	<b>Two key questions</b>
(H) What's New?	<p>Theoretically team identification is a motivational influence which plays an important role in facilitating cooperation, efficiency and cohesion within work groups. Research indicates that work team member identification contributes to improved group performance and increased employee job satisfaction. Factors which contribute to group member identification with the work team include a team's perceived status; a team's level of communication and interaction, and most pertinent to this research pitch, leadership. Interestingly, research in how a leader behaviourally influences and promotes subordinates identification with the team is very limited. Research has primarily focused on how a particular leadership style (charismatic or transformational) impacts a follower's identification with the team. Though this research has provided much insight into the behavioural impact of a leader on subordinate identification with the work team, it has provided only a limited understanding of how the specific behaviours of a leader's impact on the social identification of subordinates with the work team. The proposed research will investigate team identification for the first time from the perspective of both leaders and subordinates. The proposed research will also expand the theoretical understanding of the perceived leader behaviours underpinning the four dimensions of Steffens <i>et al.</i> (2014) Identity Leadership Inventory. Similarly the proposed research will examine how different perceived leader behaviours impact a subordinate's degree of social identification with the work team.</p>
(I) So What?	<p>This research is expected to further the understanding of the behavioural leadership factors which impact subordinate identification within a work team setting. It is also expected to contribute more specifically to a greater understanding of the relationship between a chef (leader) and his or her staff (subordinates). In particular, the research will be the first study to investigate and quantify the leadership process within professional kitchens from the perspective of both a leader (head chef) and his or her subordinates (culinary staff).</p>
<b>ONE</b>	
(J) Contribution?	<p>The research will expand the theoretical understanding of a behavioural impact a leader has on subordinate social identification within work team settings. In particular by focusing on the specific perceived behaviours of a leader the research is expected to provide a more thorough accounting for the variance in subordinate team identification, and thus expand the understanding of a leader's impact beyond that of a particular leadership style.</p>
<b>(K) Other Considerations</b>	<p>-Collaborations? No collaborations will be pursued.</p> <p>-External advice? The researcher will seek the advice of my PhD supervisors throughout the research process.</p> <p>-Target journals? Leadership Quarterly, The Journal of Applied Social Psychology, International Journal of Hospitality Management</p> <p>-Research risks? Competitor and obsolescence risks are low based on the unique setting/participants.</p> <p>-Scope? Fairly limited based on the defined theoretical parameters and target group/setting of study.</p> <p>-Funding? RHD research funding will be utilised to support the research process.</p> <p>-Ethical? Ethical clearance is needed based on human participants in both studies.</p>