

The River Walk Cafe

The River Walk Café is a casual, 250-seat restaurant located in down-town San Antonio, Texas. The café serves three meals and has a brisk bar business at night. Although there are some slow periods during the year, business is steady due to a loyal local customer base, and a constant supply of tourist and convention customers.

The general manager is Gary MacAfee. He's been with the café a little over six months. The previous general manager left for another business opportunity. After finishing his undergraduate degree in business administration, Gary spent seven years working his way up the front-of-house and back-of-house management ranks in a large national restaurant chain. This is his first general manager position.

Gary took a very conservative approach when he began his new position. He knew he could improve the overall quality of operations and increase revenues. However, he also knew that if he acted too quickly and made a lot of changes early on, his staff and customers may be resentful and resist.

The first item on Gary's agenda was get a sense of the café's operating procedures and general work climate. To do this, Gary worked directly with the kitchen and wait staffs, performing the same tasks, duties, and responsibilities that they performed. He felt it was important to gain the employees' respect by showing that he wasn't afraid to get his hands dirty. In addition, Gary would learn firsthand about the café's operations. He also started a file that contained a lot of customer and staff comments, interactions among the staff and customers, sales and revenue figures, and any information he could use to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current working conditions and use subsequently as a basis for making necessary changes. After a couple of months, Gary had compiled a long list of items he thought he could use as a basis for improvement.

One of Gary's biggest concerns was the relationship between the kitchen staff and the wait staff. He recorded numerous problems and tensions. To begin, Gary noticed that the servers spent a great deal of time interacting intensively with the guests. However, he also noticed that the wait staff were quite terse and demanding of the kitchen staff. Servers complained that it took too long for food to come out because the cooks wasted their time garnishing plates. However, the cooks complained that many times the food waited too long on the hot counter and "died" before it was picked up by the wait staff because the waiters and waitresses were "schmoozing" with the customers. Gary also found that when the wait staff did occasionally bus tables, they returned the dish and glass trays without stacking them in their proper places. The kitchen staff complained bitterly, noting that the kitchen was crowded

enough without trays of dishes and glassware carelessly stacked in valuable prep space.

To address this problem, Gary decided to conduct a meeting with the wait staff and inform them of his findings. Gary felt that it was appropriate to discuss his concerns with the front-of-house employees first, then determine how to involve the back-of-house employees. Initially, the meeting was not very insightful. Needless to say, the wait staff were not happy about being told of Gary's "perceived problems" with the operations. In fact, they felt that he was pointing the finger at them. As such, they did not provide Gary with much information to identify the true nature of the problems, let alone determine ways of making the situation better.

However, when Gary asked the wait staff about their satisfaction with specific aspects of work, particularly pay, they became very vocal. Sarah, a full-timer who had been with the café for two years, stated that in comparison to other waiters and waitresses in the area, the café wait staff made considerably less. As the discussion ensued, it became clear that this issue was a really big sore spot among all of the wait staff. They suggested that the primary problem was that the River Walk Café is one of only two casual restaurants in the downtown convention district. Because most of the other restaurants are upscale, the wait staff at the other establishments earn considerably more in tips because they have higher check totals.

Sarah also affirmed Gary's observation concerning the "extensive" time spent with customers and stated that the wait staff felt it was important to "get to know your table." However, Sarah said that the time is necessary in order to upsell the guest to increase the check total. Steve, a part-time server, concurred: "It's important to understand your customers. If we didn't spend as much time as we do, we couldn't provide the kind of service they expect. Besides, upselling and providing good service makes you happy and brings the customers back. Isn't that what you want?"

After much thought and consideration, Gary decided it was necessary to revise the compensation system for the wait staff. He felt that it was necessary to provide some additional monetary incentives for the wait staff, but not at the expense of the café's overall profitability. The new system must provide a mechanism for increasing the café's overall revenues. In addition, the wait staff must take on some additional responsibilities so that the kitchen staff could accommodate the need for an increase in table service efficiency. As such, the wait staff were required to garnish their own plates and bus their own tables.

Gary increased the wait staff's base wage 25 percent, from \$2.90 an hour to \$3.60 an hour. In addition, he developed incentives for outstanding individual and group performance. Free end-of-shift meals would be awarded to the waiter or waitress who turned the most tables, and to the person who had the highest sales for the shift. In addition, the entire wait staff would receive a biweekly bonus if the café's overall sales reached specified levels. Gary felt that

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this new system would alleviate the pay-inequity problem and promote a more cohesive, motivated front-of-house staff. Moreover, Gary believed that this new system would have a positive impact on the bottom line.

The wait staff were very pleased with the new system. They openly expressed their appreciation about receiving a wage increase. In addition, they realized that they didn't have to "schmooze" with the guests to increase their individual and overall sales—simply turning more tables by providing more efficient service had a positive net result. Finally, the wait staff seemed to enjoy their new responsibilities, and they even had informal contests to see who could come up with the most creative garnishing designs.

However, while the wait staff were happy with the new system, the kitchen staff expressed a great deal of anger and resentment. The kitchen staff felt betrayed. Henry, one of the line cooks, summed it up by stating, "We work just as hard as they do, but you've ignored our efforts. It's not fair!" Gary realized that his new system had perhaps created more problems than it solved.

請回答下述問題：

1. Did Gary's new incentive system solve his primary problem (20 分) ?
2. Will it help the café achieve its goal of high-quality customer service (30 分) ?
3. What advice might you have for Gary (50 分) ?

參考字彙：

1. Agenda 待辦事項
2. Interaction 互動
3. Comprehensive 全面性
4. Schmoozing 道長論短
5. Vocal 積極發言
6. Concurred 同意
7. Mechanism 機制
8. Alleviate 減輕
9. Cohesive 凝聚力的
10. Betrayed 被背叛