

Conflicting Managers at a Local Restaurant

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Introduction

One common issue many restaurants face is the absence of successful, motivating, and well-liked managers (Kusluvan, Kusluvan, Ilhan, & Buyruk, 2010). Once those managers are found, it is easier to motivate a workforce since most employees are willing to pay attention to, learn from, and work for an individual that is respected and will make the business successful. Failing to build quality relationships with employees results in high employee turnover, poor performance, and lack of organizational commitment (e.g., Kim, Lee, & Carlson, 2010). According to a survey by the B2B Marketplace Approved Index of more than 1000 employees in the United Kingdom, 42% of employees left their previous jobs due to managers (Higgingbottom, 2014). Managers are often promoted because of technical capabilities though they do not receive proper training to improve soft skills. Managerial deficiencies include lack of communication and rapport, insufficient work guidance, and injustice in treating employees and evaluating their performance (Kusluvan et al., 2010). The deficiencies exert a more prevalent impact on employees when there are different management styles in the same workplace.

Interpersonal communication skills are one of the major qualities required for successful managers in the hospitality industry (Harkison, Poulston, & Kim, 2011; Lolli, 2013). Communication is "shared understanding of the feelings, thoughts, wants, needs, and intentions of the communicators, which may not be openly expressed in words" (Cheesebro, O'Connor, & Rios, 2010, p. 5). Managers should be good communicators since it significantly influences employees' performance as well as organizational performance (Lolli, 2013). While there are significant needs for training managers and supervisors (Kusluvan et al., 2010), most learning occurs in the workplace through trial and error (Harkison et al., 2011).

Constructive voices from employees become a critical tool to improve managers' capabilities and organizational effectiveness (Hung, Yeh, and Shih, 2012). Employees' voice behavior is one form of employees' organizational citizenship behavior (Hirschman, 1970). It occurs when an employee perceives a problem in the workplace and voluntarily speaks up for improvement (Raub & Robert, 2013). As a

pro-social form of behavior, it is not directly relevant to their job description or their job tasks and thus employees need to be motivated to voice perceived problems. Employees may feel that it is challenging or risky to speak up since it may lead to social losses (Raub & Robert, 2013) and negative performance ratings (Hung, Yeh, and Shih, 2012).

This case study discusses the negative consequences of having conflicting managers in the workplace. Examples include communication errors due to different management styles and conflicts that arise between managers, resulting ultimately in high turnover in the restaurant industry. This study supports our viewpoint that poor management is common in the workplace, and it is difficult to find the proper solutions to handle such situations. In addition, this study provides understanding of the importance of employees' voice behavior to initiate changes within the organization as one possible solution.

Theoretical Backgrounds

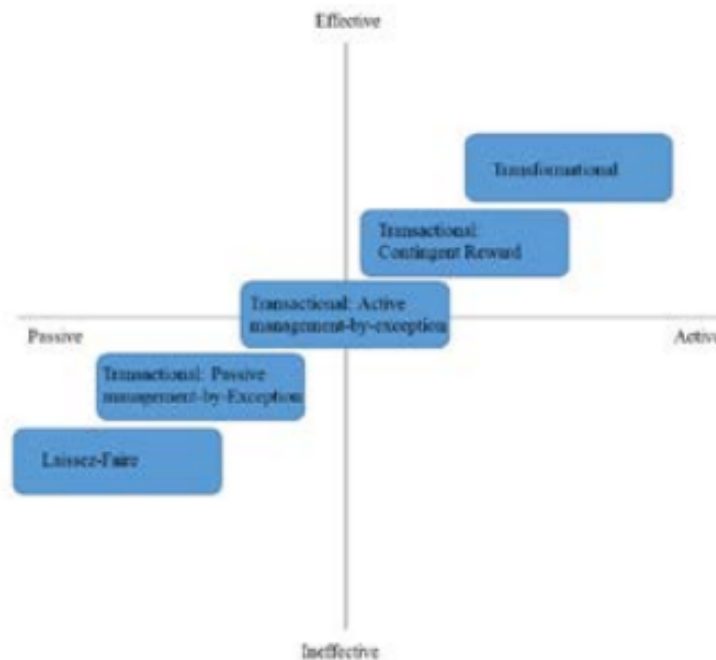
The importance of managers' communication skills

Establishing the line hierarchy and providing direct supervision are two of the recommended approaches to promote effective organizational communications (Klein, 1996). Particularly, management communication plays an essential role in transmitting the information to front-line employees (Klein, 1996). The organization-related information includes organizational policies, procedures, and feedback from customers. Thus, managers' interpersonal communication skills play a significant role in enhancing organization competence through strengthening trusting relationships (Jo & Shim, 2005).

Managerial communication skills become more significant in a local restaurant setting. Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) strive to sustain their business by utilizing their resources more effectively and efficiently since, due to the limited resources, human resources is one of the fewer options that they can focus on (Sheehan, 2013). Thus, owners' and managers' capabilities and expertise on employees' skills training are keys to better performance of SMEs (Chinomona, 2013).

Leadership styles

Leadership, as management's most important role in the workplace, influences employees' behavior in different ways. While the most effective leadership style remains unclear, it is significant to understand the characteristics of each leadership style and each style's effectiveness under specific circumstances (Kara, Uysal, Sirgy, & Lee,



Source: Adapted from B.M. Bass and R.E. Riggio (2006). *Transformational leadership* (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

2013). While there is a broad spectrum to classify the leadership styles, they can be divided into three types depending on leaders' approaches to motivate their employees: Laissez-Faire, transactional leadership, and transformational leadership (Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, 2016). Laissez-Faire leadership represents an overall failure to execute power and take responsibility as a leader. Under the Laissez-Faire leadership, leaders tend to delay important decision-making, avoid responsibility, and not to exert power and influence (Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, 2016). Transactional leadership involves appealing to employees' self-interests based on the exchange relationship with employees, whereas transformational leaders tend to motivate employees to achieve goals by empowering and mentoring them, based on positive relationships built with the employees (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Van Engen, 2003). Thus, transactional leaders are more likely to exercise a more conventional type of leadership behavior such as motivating employees by using extrinsic rewards or correcting them using negative reinforcement depending on whether or not they meet a goal. Failure of leadership can be very costly to a company's budget and reputation due to its effect on employees' behavior and commitment to service quality. The success of leadership requires strong interpersonal skills that build relationships with employees and/or among employees.

Employees' voice behavior in the workplace

Front-line employees are valuable resources for a service organization since they closely work with customers during service encounters and their suggestions, experiences, and concerns are significant sources to increase an organization's functionality and effectiveness (Koyuncu, Burke, Fixenbaum, & Tekin, 2013). Employees'

voice behavior refers to the "discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns or opinions about work-related issues with the intent to improve organizational and unit functioning" (Morrison, 2011, p. 375). Employees' voice behavior occurs when they perceive potential sources of improvement or dissatisfaction to enhance individuals' or their company's overall well-being (Hirschman, 1970).

Many studies identified the factors that trigger employees' voice behavior in the workplace (e.g., Detert & Burris, 2007), and these include job stressors (Ng & Feldman, 2012), organizational and coworker support (Loi, Ao, & Xu, 2014), and leadership style (Detert & Burris, 2007). In particular, employee's voice behavior is closely associated with leadership since they will share their criticism or suggestions with managers and supervisors. Thus, the factors are related to leadership styles and the trust perceived by employees. For example, Detert and Burris (2007) found that as employees perceive the leadership as being open to change, they tend to speak up since they feel psychologically safe.

Employees' voice behavior is considered key to internal communication strategies. It positively influences job satisfaction and work engagement (Koyuncu et al., 2013) while negatively affecting employees' turnover intention (Kim, Knutson, & Han, 2015). Having employees speak up with their own voices contributes to eliminating barriers of communication within the organization and thus activates an exchange of resources, including information and expertise, across the levels of the organization (Kim et al., 2015).

Case: Abby's first work experience at The Cowardly Lion

Abby has been passionate about people for as long as she can remember, so she decided a career in hospitality management would be the perfect fit. She enrolled into the major at a university located in the Northeastern United States and was on her way to fulfilling her dreams. On her first day of classes she realized her peers had a lot more experience in the industry than she did. Panicked at the thought of being behind, she immediately applied to restaurants in the area. Rushing to catch up as quickly as possible, she accepted the first job offer she received, which was a serving position at a locally owned restaurant and bar called The Cowardly Lion.

Her first day of training was a little hectic since everyone seemed to be on edge around Susan, one of the managers. Her next shift was the complete opposite when Don, the second manager, was at the restaurant. Everyone seemed to be relaxed and happy to be working with him. She quickly realized having two different front of the house managers was going to be complicated. Worried about taking on this new position, she looked to her trainer, Joe, for advice after noticing how everyone behaved differently depending on what manager was on duty. Joe explained that Susan ran the front of the house by the books while Don took a more laid-back approach.

The little details at The Cowardly Lion were constantly changing. When Susan was there, employees had to ring in refills. When Don was there, he thought it was a waste of time. Susan enforced that trays must be used to carry two or more drinks, but Don told the team there are more important things to worry about. Settling into a new job and

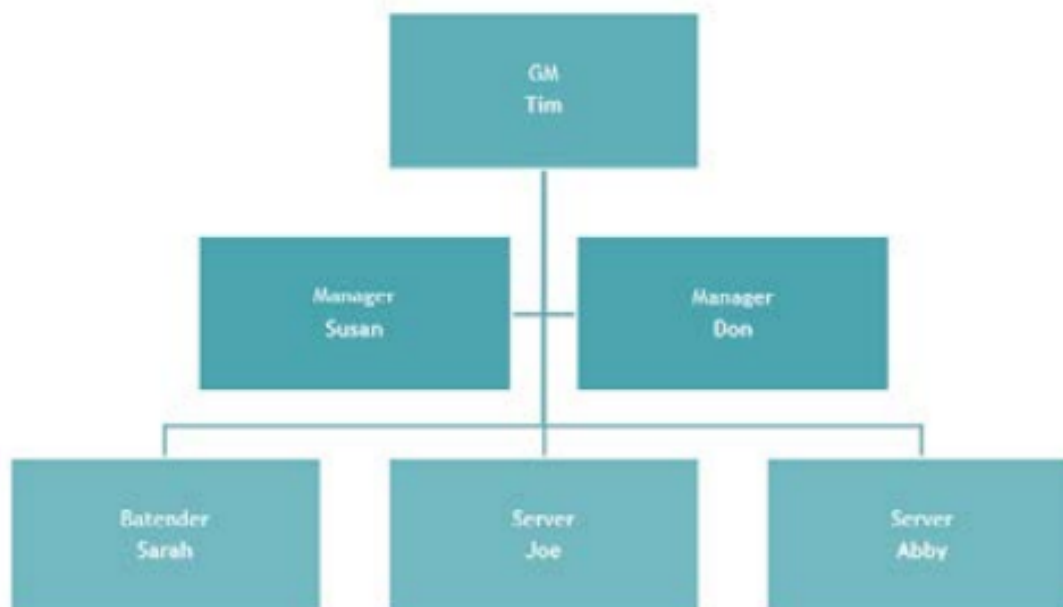
not knowing what rules to follow was frustrating for Abby.

On her last day of training, she was placed in the bar section where she got to know Sarah, one of the bartenders. Sarah also expressed her frustrations about Don and Susan, but told Abby it has been happening for months and there was nothing the employees could do. There was suddenly a rush at the bar, and Sarah asked Abby to assist by cutting limes. Abby was happy to help and went behind the bar, but did not see a pile of ice on the floor from a spilled drink. Abby's foot flew out from under her, and she twisted her ankle. Susan immediately ran over to check on Abby and asked why she was not wearing her non-slip shoes, since it is required in her uniform description. She explained that Don never enforced the rule and directed Susan's attention to a few other servers also wearing sneakers.

Tim, the General Manager of The Cowardly Lion, is not frequently at the restaurant due to his frequent need to travel for the company. However, he is very hands-on when he is there. Whenever Tim is at The Cowardly Lion, both Don and Susan put forth their best efforts and the line-level employees are on their best behavior. The guest satisfaction scores are much higher and every shift runs more smoothly when Tim is present.

Abby is sick of the conflicting rules and managers, especially since it resulted in an injury. She is ready to go to the General Manager, tell him about the issues, and encourage him to make changes to the current training process, which is the same for line-level employees and managers. It is a simple one-week orientation that involves touring the facility, tasting the food and beverage options, and filling out the required paperwork to allow one to work at the establishment. There are

Figure 2
Organizational Chart at The Cowardly Lion



no specific training procedures in place for managers that teach them how to work with and supervise line-level employees. Additionally, managers are not presented with any hypothetical or sample situations that prepare them for settling arguments between employees or handling upset customers while on the job.

Dilemma/Discussion Questions

Abby believes she needs this job as a starting point for experience in the hospitality industry. She has no intentions of getting her managers or peers in trouble, but she believes it is necessary that the restaurant follows set rules for safety purposes to keep employees happy and so the restaurant has an overall consistent and successful performance. So she starts to think about possible solutions and the best approach to solve the problem. She tries to figure out how to share her thoughts with Tom and identify effective ways to solve the problems before going to meet with him.

- a. Think about your previous or current workplace. Have you ever experienced situations like Abby's? What caused different leadership and communication styles between Susan and Don?
- b. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages between the two different leadership and communication styles with regard to employees' performance, their job satisfaction, and restaurant's performance.
- c. As a new line-level employee, how would you begin a discussion with the general manager about retraining those in management positions and emphasizing the importance of communication in the workplace?
- d. If management asks Abby for ways to improve communication and uniformity at The Cowardly Lion, what are two recommendations that will create a more safe and enjoyable work environment?
- e. If you were the general manager, how would you respond to such an inquiry?
- f. What are the ways that the restaurant can develop a management and supervisory training process for new hires? How should this process be adjusted for those already in such position?