Summary

This case study briefly discusses the negative consequences of having managers who present different leadership and communication styles in the workplace. Examples include communication errors due to different management styles and conflicts that arise between managers that lead to employees' low job performance, lack of organizational commitment, and high turnover. Abby is a hospitality management major student who just started a first job at a local restaurant called The Cowardly Lion. She quickly noticed that managers at the restaurant had different communication and leadership styles and thus employees feel confused in performing their jobs and fulfilling the different expectations from two managers. More importantly, the conflict between the managers resulted in compromising employees' work safety in the restaurant. 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. Particularly, this study provides employees' voice behavior as one of the solutions to initiate changes in a local restaurant setting.

Target Audiences

Since the case study addresses a common problem in the everyday workplace in the hospitality industry, it can benefit managers and line-level employees as a warm-up exercise in their orientation and trainings. Middle managers will be able to reevaluate the significance of their communication skills and leadership on line employees' performance as well as business performance. In addition, for general managers, it provides an opportunity to think about ways to develop management training for middle managers and to promote a safe climate for employees' voice behavior.

More importantly, it will best fit undergraduate students who are currently working in the hospitality industry as they earn their undergraduate degrees. The topic is particularly relevant to an introductory hospitality management course, human resource management, and organizational behavior. The themes and examples used in the case study will certainly appear in the operations where college students work; students will benefit from learning how to communicate effectively in the workplace and how to think critically about ways to handle different management viewpoints.

Learning Objectives

By completing this case study, students will be able to:

- Explain the importance and knowledge of leadership styles, interpersonal communication skills, management training, and employees' voice behavior.
- Contrast the pros and cons of each leadership style and each style's effectiveness with regard to employees' performance, job satisfaction, and the company's performance.
- Identify factors affecting the facilitation of employees' voice behavior in the workplace.
- Create solutions to best handle working in an environment where management has different leadership styles and expectations for employees.

Recommended Teaching Approach

It is recommended to teach the case study in a classroom setting through a combination of multiple forms: role-playing, group discussion, and class discussion. The length of the class ranges between 50 minutes to 75 minutes, depending on the time spent in group discussion. The outline below is based on a 50-minute lecture.

Phase 1: Debriefing (5 minutes)

Students are asked to read the case study before coming to the class. In the class, students will be assigned to a group of five students. They will debrief each character's role, personality, attitude, and behavior in the workplace. It is recommended to ask them to visualize the organizational structure by creating an organizational chart. Students will respond to the following questions to build a common understanding of the case study:

- Who are the major characters in the case study?
- What are the characteristics of their personalities, and how do their personalities influence their attitude and behavior in the workplace?
- Where are the weak links with regard to communication on the organizational chart?
- What are the observable scenes of actual or potential problems in the case study?
- What causes difficulties for Abby and the employees at the restaurant in their everyday work?
- What is the each manager's leadership style, and what are the differences in the leadership styles between them?
- What were the consequences of the problem that the restaurant had?
- What are the options that Abby can use to solve the problems at her workplace?

Phase 2: Role-Playing (15 minutes)

The instructor will prepare name tags with each major character's name: Abby (new line employee), Sarah (Bartender), Susan (manager), Don (manager), and Tim (general manager). Students will randomly select the name tags, and each group will contain each character. Stu-

dents will play the role of the character assigned to them. The major scenes include:

- Abby's orientation with Susan and Don,
- Abby's injuries while working with Sarah and Abby at the bar and Susan's comments, and
- Tom being hands-on at the restaurant and Susan and Don working hard.

Students can create their own situations based on their observations in the case study. The instructor will invite two groups to present role-plays in front of the class and ask the audience to evaluate the situations.

Phase 3: Class discussion & class activity (25 minutes)

The entire class will be divided into groups again based on their assigned acting roles. Each group will discuss the questions from their own perspectives. In particular, discussion questions D and F require students to create action plans. The instructor will provide supplies (e.g., poster board and basic markers) to students to create a poster. Students will visualize their answers by creating a poster, and each poster will be displayed on the wall. Each team will share their answers and present their poster. Each poster will be evaluated by peers in terms of its significance and feasibility. The instructor will give students stickers, and students will be asked to put a sticker on the poster that they like the most.

The discussion questions are as follows:

- 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?
- What are some 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?

In addition to the discussion on the case study, instructors may want to expand the discussion by including the following questions regarding the leadership styles.

Discuss the leadership style between Don and Susan. Instructors can use the table below to make it easy for students to discuss the leadership in four aspects.

- **Leadership styles:** Based on the table 1, students can choose the leadership style after reviewing the case study, particularly the descriptions of Don and Susan as leaders. Students' answers

may be Laissez-Faire leadership for Don and Transactional leadership for Susan.

- **Effectiveness:** Students' answers for leadership effectiveness can vary considering the circumstances that the restaurant has. For example, based on able 1, students might answer that Susan's leadership style is more effective than Don's. On the other hand, since it is a local restaurant, which needs more flexibility due to the lack of standardized structure and the resources that the restaurant has, students may argue that employees may feel that it is difficult to communicate with Susan in daily operations.

- **Problem solving, communication, and decision making:** Based on the characteristics of each leadership style in the theoretical background, students can easily picture Susan's and Don's problem solving, communication, and decision-making styles. Students can apply the examples in their daily workplace to each leadership style in terms of problem solving, communication, and decision making.

Phase 4: Discussion and conclusion (5 minutes)

The instructor will briefly summarize the importance of communication skills, the need for management training, leadership styles, and employees' voice behavior at workplace.

The instructors may want to consider discussing the following key concepts.

1) Leadership styles

- Leadership can be divided into three types depending on leaders' approaches to motivate their employees.
- Laissez-Faire: "Hands-off approach", delaying important decision making and actions, avoiding responsibility, not utilizing power and influences
- Transactional leadership: appealing to employees' self-interests (e.g., using extrinsic rewards or negative reinforcement)
- Transformational leadership: motivating employees to achieve goals by empowering and mentoring them

2) Interpersonal communication skills

Managers' interpersonal communication skills play a significant role in enhancing organizational competence through strengthening trusting relationships.

	Don	Susan
Leadership styles		
Effectiveness		
Problem solving		
Communication		
Decision making		

3) Employee voice behavior
- Voluntary communication of ideas, suggestions, or concerns about work-related issues with the intent to enhance organizational and unit functioning.
- One form of employees' organizational behavior
- Triggers of employees' voice behavior: job stressors, organizational and coworker support, and leadership style, safe climate at workplace
- Benefits of promoting employees' voice behavior at work: increasing job satisfaction and work engagement, lowering employees' turnover intention

Recommended Readings

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