The Effects of Company Policy on

Overall Satisfaction of Communication

Within Primanti Brothers

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Overview

If you have had the privilege of residing in the Greater Pittsburgh Area, there are two things you have a deep love for: The Pittsburgh Steelers and Primanti Brothers sandwiches. For decades, “Yinzers” (Pittsburgh residents) have reveled in the delicious, slaw-covered, French fry filled, hometown sandwiches created by a local restaurant by the name of Primanti Brothers. The success story of this dynamic restaurant has developed throughout multiple decades and all began in the town of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania during the early 1930s.

The 1930s was a time of great development and progress in the growing city of Pittsburgh despite being in the midst of The Great Depression. At the near peak of its population, the city was housing almost 670,000 people, which is over double the current population. During this time, things were underway that made Pittsburgh a hub for work and recreation. New routes were open to the city, professional sports were developing, and steel companies were booming. With the influx of many labor workers, a man by the name of Joe Primanti saw an opportunity.

With America’s working class working at all hours of day, Joe saw that he could provide workers with a delicious meal after their long days. Therefore, Joe Primanti parked his small sandwich cart in the midst of the Pittsburgh Strip District and sold his delicious sandwiches to hungry workers. Primanti’s sandwiches became a great success and eventually Joe decided to team up with his brothers Dick and Stanley and they established the first official Primanti Brothers in 1933. The height of The Great Depression was hardly a good time to begin a small business, but the Primanti Brothers began to provide delicious food at a fair price.

What has made Primanti Brothers a famous household name for Yinzers is its famous sandwich recipe. With delicious Italian bread, homemade coleslaw, fresh cut friends, crunchy veggies, tasty meat, and cheese, this was a hearty sandwich for a hungry working class. The mere deliciousness of Primanti’s creation was enough to launch the restaurant to expansion. When Jim Patrinos bought the restaurant in 1974, he vowed to continue to serve amazing food to Pittsburgh locals. Changes occurred, such as having 24 hour service in many locations, but the restaurant continued to grow in success and expand to what is 17 locations in Greater Pittsburgh (and 3 additional locations in Florida) in the present day.

The vision of a laid back, fairly priced, and delicious dining experience is something the Primanti Brothers had in mind from the very beginning of the franchise. As the years have gone by, the traditions have kept consistent, which is probably why so many people are such loyal Primanti Brothers lovers. With the success of Primanti Bros., the restaurant has won many awards associated with sports franchises and has been featured on television both on *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and *Man V. Food.*

A very classic model of communication, which is extremely relevant to the time and period in which Primanti Brothers became established, is that of a machine. Machines are extremely predictable in their functionality and rarely deviate from a norm unless a part of it ceases to function correctly or even entirely. If we look at Primanti Brothers as a machine, the workers (servers, supervisors, managers, cooks, etc.) are the parts of the machine which must behave predictably in order for the other “parts” to know what to expect from them. With all organizations, there are expectations, and if a “part” of the organizational machine is not adhering to the expectations well, they will be replaced. There are pros and cons to looking at an organization in this manner, but Primanti Brothers seems to be set up in a way in which functionality is important to the success of the company.

Upholding high expectations and maintaining the original vision of Primanti Brothers is important and great in theory, but how does this classic model of communication actually play out within the restaurant itself? What does it look like for an 82-year-old company, founded in the service of labor workers, to continually provide a quality experience to customers and employees alike? How successful are the relationships among the parts of the Primanti Brothers system? How do managers, servers, and other employees work together in such a chaotic environment and keep everything together? Primanti Brothers has stayed a household name for a reason, so the real question is whether or not its communication is functioning effectively and what improvements can be made.

This assessment will address the communication of Primanti Brothers and analyze its communication practices and the effectiveness of them. The aim is to understand how communication should work at Primanti Brothers and how well that vision of communication is being met. There are many factors, such as the satisfaction of workers and effectiveness of managerial staff, which will be evaluated in order to determine functionality. Upon the assessment of Primanti Brothers, recommendations for improvement concerning communication will be discussed. Primanti Brothers is a very old machine; just how well is it running?

Method

Primanti Brothers is a growing organization, and there are several branches in the surrounding area of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. As an organizational communication consulting team, we decided it would be interesting to evaluate the quality and methods of communication in two different Primanti’s branches: one in Cranberry and the other in Grove City. Due to the fact that we were studying characteristics of their communication, the team decided to utilize the survey method to properly measure the overall satisfaction of employment in the organization. This 13-question survey contained a series of multiple choice questions, open-ended questions, and Likert-scales to measure the interval data. These surveys were completed by the subordinates in both the Cranberry and Grove City branches. The surveys were anonymous to prevent the Hawthorne Effect and to prevent any obstruction to validity by ensuring there would be no bias when answering the stated questions. We also constructed 12 addition questions for face-to-face interviews with management in both of the branches. When Jillian Plummer, our Project Manager, went to ask for approval to interview the employees, she discovered that Grove City just trained new management, so this slightly changed the focus of our research. The research question proposed would be: due to new management, will there be *less* work satisfaction at Grove City as opposed to the Cranberry branch? We believe that there is a causal relationship between new management and the satisfaction and quality of communication.

**H1: There is a positive relationship between new management and subordinate job satisfaction, in regards to communication satisfaction.**

**H0: There is no relationship between new management and subordinate job satisfaction, in regards to communication satisfaction.**

Results

In order to analyze the numerical data contained in the subordinate surveys, an Independent-Sample t Test was run, because the differences between the Cranberry and Grove City branches (the two independent groups) were being examined. To successfully run this test, the number of votes was calculated for the Likert-scale responses, and the average for the questions for the Cranberry and Grove City samples were also found. The next step was to find the deviation and squared deviation scores in order to properly conduct the t-test.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Grove City | Cranberry | Deviation Scores (G.C.) | Deviation Scores (Cran.) | Sum d^2 (Cran.) | Sum d^2 (G.C.) |
| Conflicts with coworkers  | 4 | 3.7 | -0.7 | -1.2 | 1.44 | 0.49 |
| Trust supervisors/coworkers | 3.2 | 3.7 | -1.5 | -1.2 | 1.44 | 2.25 |
| Coworker listening quality | 4.9 | 2.8 | 0.2 | -2.1 | 4.41 | 0.04 |
| Informed on individual progress | 3.2 | 2.8 | -1.5 | -2.1 | 4.41 | 2.25 |
| Opportunities for expression | 3.5 | 2.8 | -1.2 | -2.1 | 4.41 | 1.44 |
| Quality of comm. in work group | 3.1 | 2.8 | -1.6 | -2.1 | 4.41 | 2.56 |
| Comm b/w different areas of company | 2.4 | 1.6 | -2.3 | -3.3 | 10.89 | 5.29 |
| Quality of comm. with upper mgmt. | 2.3 | 2.5 | -2.4 | -2.4 | 5.76 | 5.76 |
| Satisfaction with amount of quality communications | 2.5 | 2.6 | -2.2 | -2.3 | 5.29 | 4.84 |
| My job duties | 4.2 | 3.75 | -0.5 | -1.15 | 1.3225 | 0.25 |
| Available assistance throughout shift | 3.1 | 3.6 | -1.6 | -1.3 | 1.69 | 2.56 |
| Management oversight | 3.1 | 3.4 | -1.6 | -1.5 | 2.25 | 2.56 |
| Overall job satisfaction  | 3.2 | 3.5 | -1.5 | -1.4 | 1.96 | 2.25 |
| total | 4.7 | 4.9 |  |  | 50 | 33 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| \*calculated value does not meet the critical value, accept null hypothesis  |  |  | Calculated value:.02 |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Critical Value: 1.753 |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | p> .05, NS |  |  |  |



The series of questions listed above were related to job satisfaction and evaluations of the communication within each branch of the organization. These questions address the following: conflicts with coworkers, trust, quality of listening among coworkers, progress, opportunities for expression, quality of communication between different parts of the company, quality of communication within that specific branch, job duties, quality of assistance with job tasks and concerns, management oversight, and overall job satisfaction. It was found that Cranberry employees, on average, seem to be more satisfied with their employment than those at Grove City. However, is the correlation between a new management team and job satisfaction significant enough to have an impact on the communication in each of the branches?

***T-Test:***

M1: 4.7

M2: 4.9

T=4.7-4.9

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

√33+50

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

9+8=17-2=15

= -0.2

\_\_\_\_\_\_

83/15 = 5.5

17/9 = 1.8x8 = 15.1

5.5 x 15.1 = √83.5

√83.5 = 9.1

Calculated value: -.2/9.1 = -.02

Degrees of freedom (df): 17-2=15

Critical value: 1.753

**p> .05, NS**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

After running this t-test, it was concluded to reject the one-tailed hypothesis, and accept the null hypothesis: **There is no relationship between new management and subordinate job satisfaction.** Although Cranberry scored slightly higher on their Likert-scale responses, there is no extreme significance between the two branches.

The open-ended responses, both from Cranberry and Grove City, reveal that Primanti Brothers is very strict on corporate policy, as they have a classical approach to communication. When asked if the organization was “by the book”, or if they would consider it to be a more open environment, a Cranberry manager responded by saying, “The corporate managers like to have fun, but we do have a ‘by the book’ environment.” It was also interesting to see what form of communication the managers prefer. When asked to choose between face-to-face, email, phone or text messaging, Cranberry’s management prefers face-to-face communication, while Grove City managers would rather contact their employees via phone call.

In regards to online communication between Primanti Brothers staff and their customers, the communication is lackluster. Jacob Rettig, our Emerging Technologies Expert, in an attempt to contact Primanti Brothers through their website, received absolutely no response. This contact experience seems to contradict the restaurant’s “welcoming feel” that they present. Effective response times and utilization of technology is very important, especially in the current days of the web and social media, and these can make or break an organization. “The development of new technologies has expanded the possibilities of transmitting more information within organizations and faster. Technology has brought greater opportunities for collective communication, as well as greater information management” (Moreno, 2010). Eat’N Park, another locally owned restaurant, is exceeding in their response time as they upkeep a blog and have a statement regarding customer response time (within 72 hours). Primanti Brothers does interact with customers within their Twitter account, but there is not an astounding amount of interaction going on between the restaurant and their customers in the world of social media.

 There are also reports on many restaurant review sites explaining that the Primanti’s service is very low quality and unprofessional, which may very well be a result of the problems within the organizational relationships.We were curious as to how management communicated company policy changes and how they addressed conflict, so we asked if they scheduled regular meetings with the restaurant staff. The responses explain a lot of the miscommunication issues that subordinates from both branches were describing. Cranberry stated that they hold staff meetings “maybe once every six months”, and Grove City said they do not schedule meetings.

High turnover rates are also a strong indication that there needs to be some changes within the organization and how it functions. Cranberry said that only about six of their employees have been there longer than six to eight months, whereas Grove City revealed that nearly 85% of their employees are returning members of the organization. After reviewing these results, it is agreed amongst the consulting team that the communication issues within the organization are not just problematic at the subdivisions of the restaurant, but at the corporate level.

Both branches scored relatively high overall, but they scored low in areas that are concerning. For example, in the Likert-scale regarding the quality of communication with upper-level management, Cranberry scored an average of 2.5, and Grove City scored a 2.3, which means the employees generally disagree that effective communication exists with upper-level management. In the open-ended responses on the crew member surveys, the crew was asked what they personally thought they could improve on, and the quality of communication with management was mentioned in all but two surveys.

Recommendations for Improvement

While there are some glitches in the system, both branches of Primanti Brothers have many great things to say about their communication. It is very apparent that most of the employees seem to be satisfied with their job duties. Also, the data supports that there is good communication and listening skills between the lower level workers, of course not without conflict. The real problem seems to be not between the subordinates as was assumed but between the subordinates and the upper-level managerial staff.

Considering 88% of the employees that were surveyed all agreed that management was an issue, we recommend that the corporate office amends their training procedures for management. There is clearly a problem with how they handle situations at their restaurants that contributes to the overall satisfaction of the employees. We asked the employees how often they “hung out” with their coworkers outside of the workplace, and 43% of the respondents selected “frequently”. Although we think it is beneficial to develop relationships with coworkers, it can get worrisome if there are too many personal relationships being formed, rather than maintaining a strictly professional environment.

If there is a conflict outside of work between these employees, it is a common occurrence that these issues will follow them into their place of employment. In the survey, employees were asked how often they have conflicts with their coworkers, and there were some that said they are involved in conflicts often. To reduce the conflict, we recommend that managers should be trained on how to handle passive aggressive behavior. Also, they should be required to address conflict immediately, rather than avoiding it so that more problems arise due to the frustration among employees. Management should also increase their staff meetings from once every six months to help formulate effective communication. It seems that miscommunication is a common problem, and these meetings would give employees the opportunity to vent their frustrations and for management to update team members on new policies. We recommend a monthly meeting, and if there are any important company updates, a meeting should also be held.

Another issue among the employees was the attitudes in the workplace. A large majority of the respondents at both locations said that another major issue was the negativity. We also recommend enacting a “Project Positivity” policy that restricts employees from making negative comments that bring down the livelihood of their team. If team members and management are caught being negative, they should each get a “strike”, that would be tallied on an employee bulletin board. Crew members would have the authority to tally management and vice versa. This would also help to bring equality into the workplace, reducing the machine aspect of the business, and promote interdependency.

Conclusion

 Overall, it is apparent that the classical model of communication, with the organization as a machine, is extremely outdated and as times moves forward, it is extremely important for organizations to do the same. As a consulting team, we all have had experience with jobs that are more concerned about productivity and efficiency than creativity and diversity. What Primanti Brothers needs is a reboot into the new world order of organizations. While structure is necessary, a hard line between subordinates and managers can be daunting and restricting, as shown in this organization. It is no coincidence that many of the employees felt there was a communication problem between themselves and their managers. Primanti Brothers would greatly benefit if interdependency was valued over hierarchies, quality emphasized over efficiency, and spontaneity practiced over static organization.

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