Organization and Leadership Evaluation

Andrew Scott-Jester

Western Governors University

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Organization and Leadership Evaluation

**Organization Description**

I used to work at a pizza restaurant called Pippo’s Pizza & Pasta as a delivery driver located in San Ramon. The owner and manager’s name was James. Pippo’s mainly sold pizza, however, they also served calzones, pasta, potato skins, wings, beer/wine, ribs, sandwiches, and apple pie. Pippo’s did sit-down restaurant style, pickup, and delivery. The sit-down was a hybrid between fast food style and restaurant style. You would order at the front and then get served your food at your table and servers would come by to make sure you had everything you needed. They would also host parties in a room people could rent out, this would include anything from a work gathering to a little league pizza party. Pippo’s had been open for over 30 years and James was the third owner. The mission was to become the biggest pizzeria in San Ramon. The purpose was to make as much money as possible by providing an enjoyable experience to customers. The goal was to make Pippo’s the go-to pizza parlor in San Ramon.

**Leadership Practices**

James, the owner and manager of Pippo’s had a few different leadership practices. The first was that he would always model the way. James was always extremely friendly when interacting with customers. He would frequently help fill all the roles at the store. He would take orders, make pizzas, and even make deliveries. James was always a role model as to what a good employee should look like. One example of James doing this would be when another delivery driver had to call in sick and I was the only one working. Rush hour came and there were 10 deliveries, he jumped in to help me complete them and took all the farthest ones to help make it easier for me to complete the rest.

Another leadership practice that James did was to promote relationships. He would always encourage the workers to have good relationships with each other. An example of how he would promote relationships is James would joke around with the employees. This showed that he wanted everyone to be friends, this way we would all work better together. This was a contrast to the other pizza shops that I worked at where the manager did not care if people were friends, they just wanted to get the job done. This helped create a more friendly environment where the employees wanted to help each other rather than not care if the other person got stuck at work late.

The third leadership practice that James did was to give real-time feedback. Since James was often working in the store with us he would always give immediate feedback no matter if it was good or bad. This would correct bad behaviors and encourage good behaviors. An example of him doing this is he would praise delivery drivers when they completed their delivery routes quickly. Another is, he would also correct poor customer interaction, when a customer would be rude, he would make sure we were always friendly in response.

**Effect of Leader on Culture**

James pushed for Pippo’s Pizza to always be a family environment. This meant that all employees were extremely friendly with each other and the customers. Employees would go out of their way to help each other and customers. This would be things like helping the dishwasher finish if there were a lot of dishes from a party or comping customers free salads if the pizza was taking longer than normal. James promoted this by always being the shining example. When the owner of the store is willing to help the dishwasher, it sets a good example for everyone to be open to doing anything in the store to help.

James kept this environment going in a couple of different ways. The first was that if there was ever any animosity between two employees, he would talk with those involved to try to resolve the issue. If he could not resolve it through talking to them then he would eventually fire the person causing the issues as they were not good for the work environment. This happened on a few different occasions where the employees would refuse to do certain work and would get into an argument over little things creating a hostile work environment. Another way that James kept the friendly environment going was by encouraging all employees to be willing to help each other if a certain area was backed up. An example of this would be that sometimes there would be no dishes to wash but the kitchen was backed up with a lot of orders. James would have the dishwasher come to help the kitchen make pizzas faster. These examples helped create a culture in the workplace where everyone liked each other and wanted to help each other.

**SWOT Analysis**

**Current Strengths**

Pippo’s first strength is that they have the best pizza in town. Everyone that I knew that had eaten at Pippo’s agreed that they had the best pizza in San Ramon. Having the best pizza is an important strength for a pizzeria because it is the restaurant’s main item they sell. Having good pizza keeps customers coming back and helps it spread through word of mouth and serving the pizzas at parties.

Another strength of Pippo’s Pizza was they had great customer service. The employees were always friendly and created a welcoming environment. Good customer service very often leads to returning customers. Employees would often build relationships with regular customers. This is extremely important because regulars are the backbone of a restaurant since they give a steady income stream you can rely on during the less busy seasons. Deliveries were also always fast, ensuring that the pizza was still hot and the customers weren’t afraid to place an order during dinner hours since it would always be delivered in under an hour.

**Current Weaknesses**

The first weakness of Pippo’s is that they have old technology. The cash registers were over 10 years old and would frequently stop working. This would harm the restaurant because it would cause backups when people were placing orders. At times when it got really bad some people would leave and go to another restaurant. Another piece of old technology that harmed the restaurant was the card readers. They would also stop working sometimes causing us to only be able to accept cash for the day. This led to many customers going somewhere else to eat since not many people carry cash anymore.

Another weakness of Pippo’s was its other menu items were not good. One example was the ribs, they were extremely expensive, and people did not order them very often. Then when people did order the ribs they were always disappointed, which was not surprising since they were frozen, low quality, and months old. Another bad product was all the pasta, they were all bought in the frozen section at the grocery store down the street. Then to make it worse we would serve them in the plastic containers they came in. We had multiple customers return these as they felt ripped off when they bought a frozen dinner from a restaurant. While the pizza was amazing, these other items did not help Pippo’s reputation.

**Current Opportunities**

Pippo’s first major opportunity is that there are still a lot of people that have not heard of it. This means there is the potential for growth through marketing. If more people learn that Pippo’s exists and try the pizza, then it has the opportunity to get a lot more customers. Since the pizza is so good once people try it, they will be likely to return. Part of the reason not many people knew about it is the location was tucked away in the back of a shopping center. If Pippo’s was to move locations it could have a very big effect on the popularity of the restaurant.

Another big opportunity for Pippo’s is the rise of delivery apps like Uber and Doordash. There are a lot of people that use these sites to place orders for dinner or lunch now. This opens the opportunity for more people to learn that the restaurant exists by seeing it on the app while browsing restaurants. It can also reduce the cost of employees as the store would not need as many delivery drivers since the apps have their own drivers.

**Current Threats**

The first threat to Pippo’s is that pizza is a highly competitive industry. Multiple large pizza companies are already household names and are common favorites among families. This includes places like Cosco pizza that people buy for parties, dominos that people like for the crust, Round Table and Mountain Mikes that people consider to be high quality, and there are many more. This is a threat to Pippo’s because they have the potential to squeeze Pippo’s out of the market since they have a lot more capital for things like marketing and better locations.

Another threat to Pippo’s is the trend of people trying to eat healthier. Pizza doesn’t have any healthy options, and the only healthy thing on Pippo’s menu is salads. To make things worse Pippo’s doesn’t have many options for the salads. It is either a salad bar or you can get a prepackaged Caesar salad that is from the grocery store. This threatens Pippo’s to potentially lose customers due to not having any good healthy options.

**Situational Leadership Analysis**

**Leadership Strengths**

James’ first leadership strength is he is a good delegator. He was always good at picking the right person for the job. He would use his strong relationships with the employees to learn what each person was good or bad at and then would use his knowledge to pick the right person for the job. An example of this is he realized I was good at accounting from the way I would do my delivery tips at the end of the night, and how I would never make a mistake. He used this to infer that I would be a good replacement for the person that was closing out the registers at the end of the night, and he was correct. This aligns with situational leadership theory because James used his relationship orientation and task orientation together to produce a good decision. Hersey and Blanchard hypothesized that a manager’s relationship orientation and task orientation are important to be used together for effective leadership (Robbins, 1997, as cited in Aalateeg, 2017).

Another strength of James is that he is an empathetic leader. There was a regular that would order delivery at least once a week. However, they were on the edge of our delivery radius, weren’t near any other deliveries, and would never tip. Despite this making money for him and the restaurant he said we could add them to the do not deliver list because he understood that the drivers were losing money making this delivery. “Situational leadership theory proposes that effective leadership requires a rational understanding of the situation and an appropriate response” (Gareff, 1997; Grint, 2011, as cited in McCleskey, 2014). James’ response matches this because he had a rational understanding of the situation, he did not just view it as the delivery makes money and it is the driver’s job to make a delivery. The regular could still come and pick up the order themselves and the drivers would no longer lose money making the delivery.

A third leadership strength of James is that he communicates effectively. He would always make it very clear what he expected from the employees and how he wanted the job done. An example is that he created an assignment sheet for closing. Dishwashers, cooks, drivers, and people working at the register all had different tasks to accomplish for closing. “Assigning tasks and job roles, specifying procedures, and clarifying follower expectations result in increased job satisfaction” (Arvidsson et al., 2007, as cited in McCleskey, 2014). This is exactly what James did, he gave us tasks and told us how to do them. This job sheet made all the employees much more satisfied with closing procedures as it made us finish closing faster and one person would not get stuck at the end of the night having to do everything.

**Leadership Weaknesses**

James’ first weakness was that he was not consistent in how he handled situations with different employees. He would play favorites often. An example of this would be one time I requested a weekend off for a trip a month in advance. James told me he will see what he can do, then a few days later another coworker asked for the same days off as me. James granted them to my coworker and told me I had to work. I was then able to find another coworker to cover the shift, so he didn’t even really try to find someone to replace me. “Nicholls (1985) described three flaws with situational leadership theory dealing with its consistency, continuity, and conformity.” (Nicholls, 1985, as cited in McCleskey, 2014). This example shows that James confirmed that consistency can be a flaw in situational leadership.

A second weakness that James had would be that he was resistant to change. He would always tell us to come to him with any changes we thought would improve Pippo’s but then would shoot down all our ideas immediately. An example of this would be that we suggested adding a stuffed crust option to the menu. It would be easy to implement with the style of pizza Pippo’s made as I was already able to do it when I made my pizza for lunch. However, he refused to ever try it, despite the trend of all the pizza places doing it at the time. Bass (2008) thought the flaws of situational leadership included conceptual contradictions and ambiguities (Bass, 2008, as cited in McCleskey, 2014). James’ inconsistency in saying he wanted changes but not ever trying anything showed conceptual contradictions and ambiguities that came with his situational leadership style. We also tried suggesting removing some of the less popular items that didn’t taste good, but he also refused to do that.

A third weakness would be that James did not try to improve employees’ weaknesses. Instead of trying to teach someone how to do something properly, he would just assign someone else to that task. It was a good short-term solution but did not help in the long run when the employee would be forced to do that task. An example of this is that I was not good at using the outdated card reading system. When it would act up and not work, I was not able to fix it without help. Whenever it broke and James was in the store, he would just fix it without showing me how to do it. This was good in the moment but when I would be working alone on Sunday mornings, I would not be able to fix it and would be forced to only accept cash. “[Situational leadership] theory lacks the critical element of follower development…inferring instead that organizations seek the right person for the right moment in time and little else.” (Gandolfi, & Stone, 2017). This was exactly what James would do, find the right person for that moment with little regard as to how that would affect the future, which was a problem with his situational leadership style.

**Leadership Recommendations**

My first recommendation for James is to get better at not playing favorites. He could do this by creating a set of standards to follow when dealing with who should get the days off they requested. This could be by seniority or even just making all employees find someone to cover their shift, this way it would be consistent for all employees. “Nicholls (1985) described three flaws with situational leadership theory dealing with its consistency, continuity, and conformity.” (Nicholls, 1985, as cited in McCleskey, 2014). Creating a system for time off would help resolve all three of the flaws that Nicholls described with situational leadership.

The second recommendation I have is to give changes a chance. James wanted to make changes but had too much pride in his previous decisions to change them. If he was willing to give the employees’ suggestions a chance, maybe he could see that they would make Pippo’s even better. If James was willing to try changes that employees suggest it would make him have more internal consistency, less contradictions, and less ambiguity which are all weaknesses of situational leadership. These were all flaws with situational leadership according to Bass (2008), and if James was to address them it would greatly improve him as a leader (Bass, 2008, as cited in McCleskey, 2014).

My last suggestion for James would be to give employees the chance to improve. Rather than avoiding assigning employees to things they are not good at, try having the employees that are good at a certain task train them. This would help employees become more well-rounded so they can be better at more things on the job and not struggle when they are on their own. “[Situational leadership] theory lacks the critical element of follower development…inferring instead that organizations seek the right person for the right moment in time and little else.” (Gandolfi, & Stone, 2017). Having the employees that are good at tasks train the ones that struggle with that task would improve this criticism of situational leadership theory and would help James improve as a leader.

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