

## **CASE STUDY – Organizational Alignment Analysis**

# **Sweet Crumbs Bakery: Organizational Alignment and the 9-S Framework**

### **Organizational Alignment through Strategic Analysis**

#### **Synopsis**

In early 2023, Sweet Crumbs Bakery opened its first boutique cake shop in Rosebank, Johannesburg, aiming to combine European patisserie design with locally inspired flavors. After a successful launch, sales began to decline within a year due to weak internal structure, supply issues, and cultural misalignment within the team. This analysis applies the 9-S Framework to uncover systemic weaknesses and propose sustainable solutions for growth and alignment.

#### **Challenge**

Despite early success, the bakery experienced a 28% drop in revenue, a 35% staff turnover rate, and inconsistent product quality. Manual inventory tracking, leadership bottlenecks, and supplier volatility disrupted daily operations. Founders' over-centralized control and unclear roles further limited scalability and staff engagement.

#### **Solution / Analysis**

Using the 9-S Framework (Strategy, Structure, Systems, Shared Values, Style, Staff, Skills, Surroundings, and Stakeholders), Sweet Crumbs Bakery's misalignments were traced to poor system integration, unclear leadership structure, and lack of local partnerships. Each "S" demonstrates how uncoordinated decisions in a small business can ripple across operations, affecting quality, morale, and customer satisfaction.

#### **Key Findings**

- **Strategy:** Overreliance on short-term social media trends without a scalability roadmap.
- **Structure:** Flat hierarchy with overlapping roles and no defined manager.
- **Systems:** Manual inventory and disconnected POS tools caused frequent stockouts.
- **Shared Values:** Informal culture discouraged accountability and alignment.
- **Style:** Micromanagement by founders slowed decision-making.
- **Staff:** High turnover due to unclear job expectations and limited growth.
- **Skills:** Dependence on one senior pastry chef created quality inconsistency.
- **Surroundings:** Unreliable suppliers increased costs and product variation.
- **Stakeholders:** Weak online engagement and customer retention strategies.

#### **Recommendations / Benefits**

- Develop a 12-month expansion and digital strategy with focus on catering and online delivery.
- Appoint an operations manager to oversee daily processes and supplier relationships.
- Implement integrated POS and inventory software for real-time tracking.
- Define and document brand values around "Creativity, Quality, and Community."
- Delegate operational authority and empower senior staff to make quick decisions.
- Launch staff training and incentive programs to reduce turnover.
- Establish long-term contracts with regional suppliers to stabilize costs.
- Introduce a loyalty rewards app and feedback system to improve retention.

These measures would improve efficiency, profitability, and readiness for a second store expansion by 2025.

#### **Conclusion**

Sweet Crumbs Bakery's journey reflects a common challenge among small businesses: early popularity masking structural fragility. By formalizing roles, digitizing systems, and balancing creativity with operational discipline, the

bakery can achieve sustainable growth while maintaining its artisanal identity.

## ***About the Study***

**Authored by Deven**

GitHub: <https://github.com/Sibusiso08>

**Disclaimer:** This case study is a fictional educational exercise created for portfolio use. Any resemblance to real businesses is purely coincidental.