SUMMARIES - Journal of Critical Incidents, Volume 8

# August First Bakery & Café Pulls the Plug on Laptop and iPad Use Paul E. Olsen, Saint Michael's College

**Abstract**

This critical incident describes Jodi Whalen and Phil Merrick’s decision to go “screen free” by prohibiting use of laptops, iPads, and electronic reading devices at their restaurant, August First Bakery & Café. Whalen and Merrick made the decision to address the problem of Wi-Fi squatters, customers who spent hours at the café working on electronic devices while purchasing little food. Whalen and Merrick estimated that Wi-Fi squatters cost them $15,000 annually in lost business. Customer response to the new policy was mixed. While some customers welcomed the ban, others said they would not return to August First Bakery & Café. The wisdom of the decision, the policy’s impact on customer service at August First Bakery & Café, the “screen free” movement, and the issue of Wi-Fi squatters are central to the critical incident.

# Learning Outcomes

In completing this assignment, students should be able to:

1. Identify the issue of Wi-Fi squatters;
2. Describe the “screen free” movement and evaluate the arguments for and against adopting a screen free policy;
3. Analyze the challenges small business owners face from multiple stakeholders; and
4. Evaluate how policy decisions (e.g. prohibiting laptops, iPads, and other electronic reading devices) impact customer service.

# Application

This critical incident is designed for use in undergraduate Marketing, Management, Hospitality Management, or Introduction to Business courses.

# Key Words

customer service, hospitality management, small business management

# Contact

Paul E. Olsen, Saint Michael’s College, Department of Business Administration and Accounting, One Winooski Park, Colchester, VT 05439. Emai[l polsen@smcvt.edu.](mailto:polsen@smcvt.edu) Phone 802.654.2661.

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