



Proposal to Improve Customer Experience

*Buffalo Wild Wings
Ames, Iowa*

Prepared for:

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Executive Summary

For Buffalo Wild Wings to continue to grow and compete as a restaurant, our team has conducted research to determine specific ways Buffalo Wild Wings can improve its customer service, which will increase customer satisfaction. Buffalo Wild Wings can accomplish this by moving the hosting stand to expand the waiting area for incoming customers. Expanding the waiting area will help clear the congestion that frequently builds up, allowing more seating to be provided in the frequently packed waiting area. Having customers wait long periods in a congested space, while standing, does not increase customer satisfaction. We recommend combining the hosting area with the payment desk, adding more benches to the waiting area, and better managing the flow of movement among the employees in the restaurant.

The research we have done indicates that implementing our recommendations will help increase customer satisfaction at Buffalo Wild Wings. Combining the hosting stand will provide more room for the waiting area, allowing more benches for customers to use as they are waiting to be seated. Managing the flow of the employees will help facilitate the congestion away from the waiting area.

To increase customer satisfaction at Buffalo Wild Wings, Group 5 recommends Buffalo Wild Wings to do the following:

- 1. Combine the hosting area with the payment area**
 - 1.1. Remove the current hosting stand that is in front of the waiting area
 - 1.2. Clear space on the right side of the hosting stand. Have the employees only use the left side for the payment area
 - 1.3. Create a sign that makes the new hosting area location clear
 - 1.4. Add the supplies needed for the hosting stand to the right side of the payment area
- 2. Adding new benches to the open waiting area**
 - 2.1. Move the current two benches two feet towards the entrance door
 - 2.2. Purchase two new benches similar to the current two
 - 2.3. Add the two new benches between the end of the payment area and the two moved benches
- 3. Adjust the movement of the employees near the waiting and payment area**
 - 3.1. Have the servers walk through the path between the bar and dining area during busy hours only, rather than using the path between the dining area and waiting area. This new route is to improve the safety of the customers waiting

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- 3.2. Have employees seating customers to only use the path between the dining and waiting area when seating customers in the dining area, otherwise use the path between the dining and bar area
 - 3.3. Have employees seating customers to only use seating and waiting area path to walk into the dining area. Employees will only use the path between the dining and bar area as a way to return to the entrance area. This method will allow a single-directional flow of workers at the entrance area
4. **After one year, Buffalo Wild Wings should evaluate the effectiveness of the above recommendations**
- 4.1. Conduct a customer satisfaction survey so that customers can express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the above recommendations

Introduction

Buffalo Wild Wings has long been one of the most well-known, preferred casual dining restaurants in the industry. To keep Buffalo Wild Wings as a restaurant of choice in the future, our team has analyzed the restaurant to improve ratings and customer experience. Our research and recommendations will determine the success of Buffalo Wild Wings as a restaurant of choice. The following proposal contains further details regarding, specifically, what we will be recommending.

Purpose

Buffalo Wild Wings is a restaurant in a highly competitive industry. Recent research has shown Buffalo Wild Wings decreasing in customer experience, and we want to improve customer satisfaction, enhancing their overall experience.

The entrance being the first thing that customers encounter, we are recommending that Buffalo Wild Wings change its entrance; we want the positive experience to begin in this area. By alleviating the problematic issues immediately at the beginning of the dining experience, customers will feel happier throughout the duration of their stay at Buffalo Wild Wings.

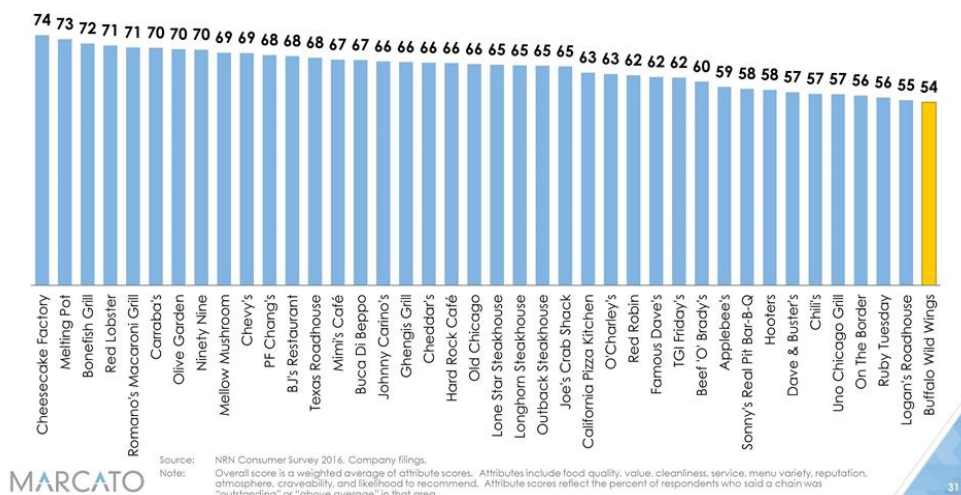
Figure 1: Ratings of Guest Experience in Casual Dining Restaurants

BUFFALO WILD WINGS' OVERALL GUEST EXPERIENCE IS RATED THE WORST IN ALL OF CASUAL DINING

"If there is one way to sum up our past and future success...what it really comes down to [is] the Buffalo Wild Wings fan experience. All other value creation opportunities flow from brand strength"

— James Schmidt, COO, 8/16/16

OVERALL SCORE | NRN CONSUMER SURVEY 2016 – CASUAL DINING RESTAURANTS



Assumptions

The recommendations that we have planned are in assumption that customer satisfaction will increase due to a welcoming entrance. As a team, we are assuming that our recommendations for a minor floor change will help smooth the flow of the restaurant. Also, we have assumed that customers and employees are dissatisfied with the current layout at the entrance due to a high influx of customers where they first walk in. We expect that these ideas can improve the overall satisfaction of both the employees' and the customers' experience, allowing Buffalo Wild Wings to remain a competing restaurant.

Methods

To alleviate congestion at the entrance area, Group 5 proposes to combine the hosting stand with the payment area. This improvement will give more space to allow new benches to be added. Adjusting the movements of employees will also be made to relieve congestion in the store.

Limitations

The research that we have conducted is only specific to the Ames, Iowa, location. We have not completed research regarding how well other locations are doing in the welcoming area or conducted surveys for customers about dissatisfaction. Without knowing the layout of other locations and the success of the flow for other restaurant locations, we cannot compare and contrast them with the Ames store.

Moving the Hosting Stand

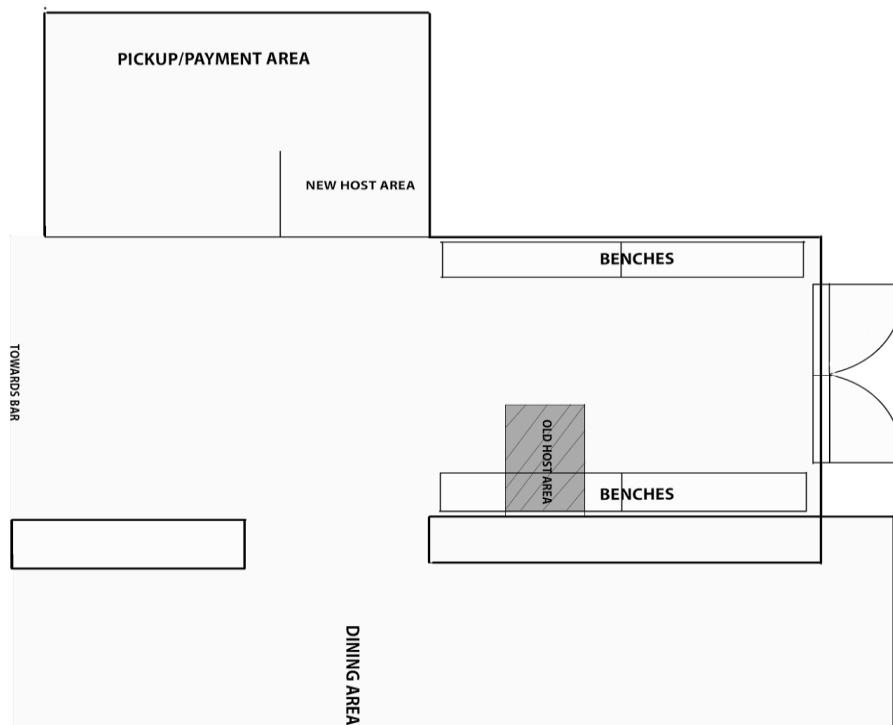
First, we recommend combining the hosting area with the payment area.

The entrance of the restaurant is a hotspot for congestion; the traffic flow of customers and employees is impeded by the small-sized area with a large volume of people, which does not allow much flux. By removing the current hosting stand that is in the front of the waiting area, the entrance will be more open, allowing customers and employers to move more easily throughout this space.

The payment area will be separated, and those looking to go there will need only to go past the hosting area. The payment area closest to the entrance will be reserved for the hosts to interact with customers without blocking the area.

To inform customers of the change of the hosting area, a sign should be created and displayed where the old hosting area was located, facing the door, and including an arrow towards the new area. Any supplies needed by the hosts will then be located to the right side of the payment area which will be the new hosting area.

Figure 2: Floor layout with hosting area combined with pickup/payment area



Adding New Benches

Our second recommendation is to add new benches in the waiting area.

Adding more seating in this area will allow customers to be comfortable while they wait to be seated. Additional seating will also allow for a smoother flow of customers and employees. When there is not enough seating in the waiting area, customers are usually forced to stand while they wait, which backs up the area very quickly during a busy night and can lead to a line of customers that extends out the door. With more area for customers to sit, more customers will be able to enter the building and reserve a table, as well as customers will have an easier time leaving after their meal without weaving through people. We propose that two new benches, that are similar to the current two, be placed between the end of the payment area and the two benches that have been moved.

We could not find a specific provider that sells to Buffalo Wild Wings. An affordable option is the Windham Wood Bench, and we recommend purchasing two of these benches. This option would be financially feasible and not harm profits for Buffalo Wild Wings because it is a low-cost and infrequent purchase.

Adding benches can help encourage elderly customers to come eat here since they know additional seating is offered for them. This would also help improve the customer's experience in the waiting area, providing a better reputation for the store.



Figure 3: Windham Wood Bench: \$93.99

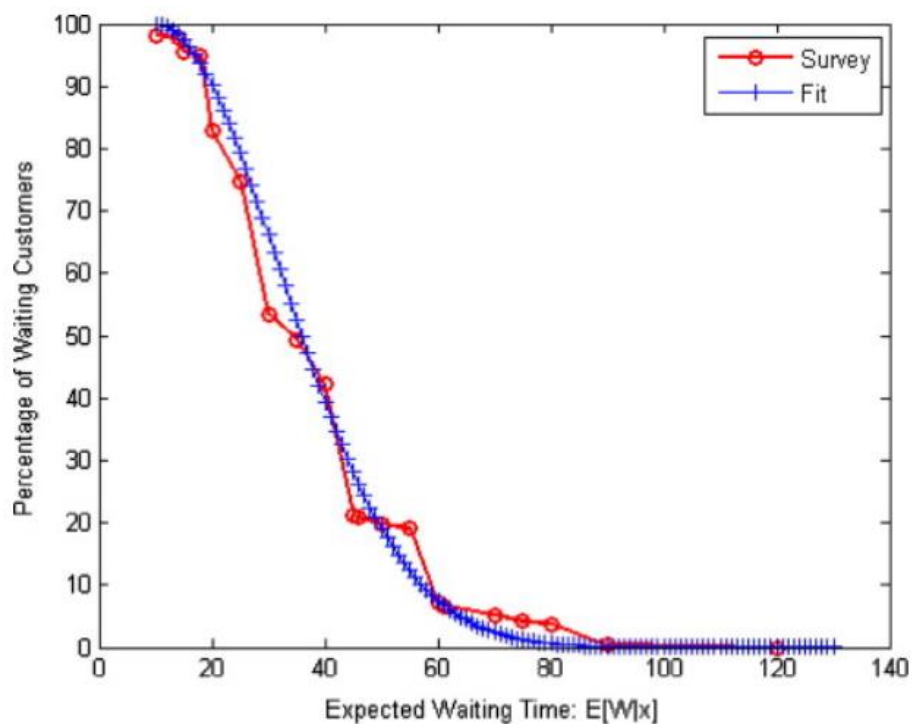
Adjusting the Flow of Employees

Our final recommendation is to change the movement of employees, near the waiting area and the payment area, to improve flow of both people and staff throughout the restaurant. This modification can be done by creating specific paths for employees to follow, creating lanes for the different traffic to follow.

During busy hours, servers should walk through the path between the bar and the dining area only, rather than using the path between the dining and waiting area. This new route will create more streamlined and organized movement of traffic, improving the safety of customers waiting. The employees that are seating customers should also use a specific path between the dining area and waiting area while seating customers in the dining area. Employees who are seating customers should only use the seating and waiting area path to walk into the dining area. The path between the dining area and bar is only to be used as a way to return to the entrance area, allowing for a single-directional flow of workers at the entrance area.

Improving the flow of people throughout the restaurant will need to be addressed using a queueing-based model for capacity management. Hwang, et al presented an excellent study in “Joint Demand and Capacity Management in a Restaurant System.”

Figure 4: Sample graph of capacity management-type data



Conclusion

By combining the hosting stand with the payment area, we have the opportunity to provide quality satisfaction for customers waiting to be seated. Additionally, the convenience of the additional space allows new benches to be added to the waiting area.

Buffalo Wild Wings can also adjust the flow of the employees to be more courteous towards the customers waiting, which will not only improve the quality of service to those customers, but it will provide Buffalo Wild Wings an opportunity to gain new customers who would typically skip the stop due to the limited seating. With the additional space in the waiting area, this extra room would alleviate some of the congested feel the waiting area has, allowing customers--who might be uncomfortable in this environment--to be more encouraged to eat at this restaurant.

Having a better reputation of customers enjoying their experience will likely lead to new customers and more frequent visits from returning customers. Using our recommendations will keep the Ames Buffalo Wild Wings as a restaurant of choice and allow customers the satisfying dining experience they deserve.

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