

Case Study 1 – Barry and Communication Barriers

Effective Communication as a Motivator

One common complaint employees voice about supervisors is inconsistent messages – meaning one supervisor tells them one thing and another tells them something different. Imagine you are the supervisor/manager for each of the employees described below. As you read their case, give consideration to how you might help communicate with the employee to remedy the conflict. Answer the critical thinking questions at the end of the case then compare your answers to the *Notes to Supplement Answers section*.

Barry is a 27-year old who is a foodservice manager at a casual dining restaurant. Barry is responsible for supervising and managing all employees in the back of the house. Employees working in the back of the house range in age from 16 years old to 55 years old. In addition, the employees come from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. For many, English is not their primary language.

Barry is ServSafe[®] certified and tries his best to keep up with food safety issues in the kitchen but he admits it's not easy. Employees receive "on the job training" about food safety basics (for example, appropriate hygiene and handwashing, time/temperature, and cleaning and sanitizing). But with high turnover of employees, training is often rushed and some new employees are put right into the job without training if it is a busy day. Eventually, most employees get some kind of food safety training. The owners of the restaurant are supportive of Barry in his food safety efforts because they know if a food safety outbreak were ever linked to their restaurant; it would likely put them out of business. Still, the owners note there are additional costs for training and making sure food is handled safely.

One day Barry comes to work and is rather upset even before he steps into the restaurant. Things haven't been going well at home and he was lucky to rummage through some of the dirty laundry and find a relatively clean outfit to wear for work. He admits he needs a haircut and a good hand scrubbing, especially after working on his car last evening. When he walks into the kitchen he notices several trays of uncooked meat sitting out in the kitchen area. It appears these have been sitting at room temperature for quite some time. Barry is frustrated and doesn't know what to do. He feels like he is beating his head against a brick wall when it comes to getting employees to practice food safety.

Barry has taken many efforts to get employees to be safe in how they handle food. He has huge signs posted all over the kitchen with these words: KEEP HOT FOOD HOT AND COLD FOOD COLD and WASH YOUR HANDS ALWAYS AND OFTEN. All employees are given a thermometer when they start so that they can temp food. Hand sinks, soap, and paper towels are available for employees so that they are encouraged to wash their hands frequently.



Questions:

1. What are the communication challenges and barriers Barry faces?

2. What solutions might Barry consider in addressing each of these challenges and barriers?

3. What Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) would be helpful for Barry to implement and enforce?

4. What are some ways Barry might use effective communication as a motivator for employees to follow safe food handling practices?



Notes to Supplement Answers:

- 1. **Communication challenges** abound at any workplace. Barry has some common challenges in his operation.
 - a. Language barriers: not all employees speak English as their first language making verbal communication a challenge at times.
 - b. Generational (age) barriers: having employees in various age categories can pose a unique set of challenges. While the younger generation is used to texting and using shortened messaging, their vocabulary may not be consistent with that of older employees. Work values and attitudes may also affect communication between younger and older employees.
 - c. Cultural and ethnic barriers: Cultural differences in food safety practices may be a challenge for Barry to overcome.
 - d. Non verbal challenges: Barry's body language (appearance) is telling others he does not care about personal appearance and cleanliness.
 - e. Emotional barriers: Emotional barriers can interfere with effective communication. Barry comes into work after a rough start at home. These negative emotions are affecting how he communicates with the employees.
- 2. Barry might consider the following **solutions** to the identified challenges and barriers:
 - a. Language barriers: Several potential solutions might be addressed here including posting signs in employees' primary language. Putting signage with visuals, not just words. Barry might learn some simple words in the employees' primary language to help show interest in the employees.
 - b. Generational (age) barriers: Currently there are 4 generations in the workforce and each potentially has a different preferred method of communication. While the younger generation might prefer to receive text messages as their preferred way of communication, older employees may not find this method of communication acceptable. Consider your employee's preferences and be willing to communicate a message in a few different ways.
 - c. Cultural and ethnic barriers: Barry may need to identify cultural beliefs and work to understand the ethnic barriers related to food safety. For instance, two employees come from the same country and they have made comments that controlling temperature in their country is not a priority; food can be at room temperature for long periods of time and nothing ever happened.



- d. Non verbal challenges: Barry's appearance is a nonverbal cue to employees. Barry's appearance is important as he is a role-model to the employees. His actions and behaviors should be consistent with what he is expecting of them. For example, because he is expecting the employees to follow proper handwashing procedure, he should also use proper handwashing procedures.
- e. Emotional barriers: Emotional barriers can interfere with effective communication. It will be important for Barry to get his emotions "in check" prior to starting work. Having self-awareness and potentially seeking outside assistance (ie. Employee Assistance Programs) may be possible solutions here.
- 3. **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)** serve as the written documentation of best practices and serves as the framework for organizational policy and structure. SOPs identify the who, what, why, when, and how of foodservice practices for employees. Part of the supervisor's role is to assure SOPs are in place, communicated to employees, and followed. For this case, two helpful SOPs would be:
 - a. New Employee Orientation SOP: Due to time constraints of "busy days" and high turnover, Barry currently finds orienting new employees to be a challenge. Although it may take time at the beginning, the pay off may be great and save time in the long run. A copy of this SOP is attached or at:

http://www.extension.iastate.edu/NR/rdonlyres/17AE5B90-A2AD-4E88-AF62-025BCD6B24DD/66867/RSOP33NewEmployeeOrientation1.pdf .

- b. Employee Health and Personal Hygiene SOP: Although SOPs are generally intended for employees, it is important to note that as role models, supervisors/managers should generally adhere to operational SOPs. Barry's own lack of adherence to personal hygiene standards indirectly tells employees that appearance and hygiene are not important. Barry's own personal hygiene and appearance should serve as an example to employees clean, unwrinkled clothing, clean hands, free from grease and dirt with neatly trimmed hair are a must for Barry to be a motivator for his employees to have good appearance and hygiene. At present, his non verbal communication is telling them personal hygiene and appearance is not important. A copy of this SOP is attached or at: http://www.extension.iastate.edu/NR/rdonlyres/B430FC3D-2919-46F9-AD79-22CD049D579F/66764/RSOP1EmployeeHealthandPersonalHygiene1.pdf.
- 4. All supervisors, including Barry, have many ways to use effective communication in motivating employees. A few suggestions are listed below:
 - a. Provide sincere and encouraging words when employees follow safe food handling behaviors. Use a communication method appropriate for an employee, so supervisor must know a bit about the employee. For a high schooler, maybe it's a quick "thank you" text message or an older employee it might be a hand written thank you note.
 - b. Serve as a role model through verbal and non verbal communication.
 It's said that "actions" speak louder than words, so Barry can, through his actions, convey a message to employees. For example: wear a clean uniform.



New Employee Orientation

Policy: All restaurant employees will receive training on basic food safety procedures prior to or during the first day of employment.

Procedure: All restaurant employees must:

- 1. Meet with restaurant manager to receive training on basic food safety procedures.
- 2. Review each point in the **Food Safety Checklist** with manager. Each procedure will be discussed thoroughly with implications for food safety described.
- 3. Ask questions to manager if policy or procedure is not clear.
- 4. Read, sign, and date the statement at the end of the checklist, indicating understanding and agreement with stated procedures.
- 5. Receive a signed copy of the document.

The restaurant manager will:

- 1. Schedule at least 30 minutes for the orientation session.
- 2. Inform new employees of the purpose and time of the session.
- 3. Explain the purpose of the checklist to employees.
- 4. Discuss each policy and procedure on the checklist. Refer to the department Standard Operating Procedures Manual as necessary. Check off each procedure as it is discussed. If employees have questions, note and follow up, if appropriate. The manual is available at www.iowafoodsafety.org and www.iowahaccp.iastate.edu
- 5. After reviewing all procedures, the manager should request employees to read, sign, and date the statement at the end of the form, indicating understanding and agreement. The manager also should sign and date the form.
- 6. Provide a copy of this form to each employee. Inform employees that a copy will be placed in their personnel file. If a copy is required for the Human Resources department, provide it and inform employees.
- Remind employees of the location of a copy of the department Standard Operating Procedures Manual. This manual can be used as a reference, if questions or concerns occur later.
- 8. Thank employees for participating. Emphasize again the priority of food safety and the involvement of every staff member.



Employee Health and Personal Hygiene

Policy: All restaurant employees will maintain good personal hygiene practices to ensure food safety.

Procedure: All restaurant employees must:

Grooming:

- 1. Arrive at work clean clean hair, teeth brushed, and bathed with deodorant used daily.
- 2. Maintain short, clean, and polish-free fingernails. No artificial nails are permitted in the food production area.
- 3. Wash hands (including under fingernails) and up to forearms vigorously and thoroughly with soap and warm water for a period of 20 seconds:
 - When entering the facility before work begins.
 - Immediately before preparing food or handling equipment.
 - As often as necessary during food preparation when contamination occurs.
 - In the restroom after toilet use, and when you return to your work station.
 - When switching between working with raw foods and working with ready-to-eat or cooked foods.
 - After touching face, nose, hair, or any other body part, and after sneezing or coughing.
 - After cleaning tables.
 - After cleaning duties.
 - Between each task performed and before wearing disposable gloves.
 - After smoking, eating, or drinking.
 - Any other time an unsanitary task has been performed i.e. taking out garbage, handling cleaning chemicals, wiping tables, picking up a dropped food item, etc.
- 4. Wash hands only in hand sinks designated for that purpose.
- 5. Dry hands with single use towels. Turn off faucets using a paper towel in order to prevent recontamination of clean hands.

Proper Attire:

- 1. Wear appropriate clothing clean uniform with sleeves and clean non-skid, close-toed work shoes (or leather tennis shoes) that are comfortable for standing and working on floors that can be slippery.
- 2. Wear apron on site, as appropriate.
 - Do not wear apron to and from work.
 - Take off apron before using the restroom.
 - Change apron if it becomes soiled or stained.



Employee Health and Personal Hygiene, continued

- 3. Wear disposable gloves with any cuts, sores, rashes, or lesions. Wear gloves when handling ready-to-eat foods that will not be heat-treated. Gloves should be worn when serving food.
- 4. Change disposable gloves as often as handwashing is required. Wash hands before donning and after discarding gloves.

Hair Restraints and Jewelry:

- 1. Wear a hair net or cap in any food production area that completely covers all hair.
- 2. Keep beards and mustaches neat and trimmed. Beard restraints are required in any food production area.
- 3. Refrain from wearing jewelry in the food production area.
 - Only a plain wedding band is permitted.
 - No necklaces, bracelets, or dangling jewelry are permitted.
 - No earrings or piercing that can be removed are permitted.

Illness:

 Report any flu-like symptoms, diarrhea, and/or vomiting to the restaurant manager. Employees with these symptoms will be sent home with the exception of symptoms from a noninfectious condition. These employees could be re-assigned to activities so that there is no risk of transmitting a disease through food. Instances of *Norovirus, Hepatitis A, Salmonella Typhi, Shigella, or Shiga Toxin-producing Escherichia Coli.* <u>must</u> be reported to the restaurant manager. Exclude the restaurant employee if diagnosed with an infection from *Norovirus, Hepatitis A, Salmonella Typhi, Shigella, or Shiga Toxin-producing Escherichia Coli.*

Cuts, Abrasions, and Burns:

- 1. Bandage any cut, abrasion, or burn that has broken the skin.
- 2. Cover bandages on hands with gloves and finger cots as appropriate.
- 3. Inform restaurant manager of all wounds.

Smoking, eating, and gum chewing:

- 1. Smoke only in designated areas. No smoking or chewing tobacco shall occur inside production facilities.
- 2. Eat and drink in designated areas only. A closed beverage container may be used in the production area.
- 3. Refrain from chewing gum or eating candy during work in a food production area.

The restaurant manager will:

- 1. Ensure all employees are following proper hygiene requirements when they report to work.
- 2. Follow up as necessary.

