

**Research Paper: Communication Issues and Leadership Skills**

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Communication is vital. It is one of the most important skills we can maintain with ourselves, but especially with others. There are many types of communication issues that exist in different settings. These communication issues consist of, listening, conflict management, and leadership skills but that's just to name a few. These issues can occur professionally, personally, or academically. Whether the issue is in the comfort of your home, or with a coworker at work, there are definitely many ways we can "fix" these communication issues. When navigating communication issues, many people look for quick fixes such as problem solving, assertiveness, or compromise. All of these "fixes" can lead to a resolved outcome, but there are some issues where specific "fixes" may be more suitable than others. Communication issues are not ideal, but with careful understanding of the issue, and a responsible approach on what "fix" should be used, the communication issues can be worked out.

As stated earlier, communication issues arise in various types of environments. There is not one setting where zero communication issues occur. Communication issues are inevitable. The food and beverage industry is a setting where there is a fair share of communication issues. Waiters and waitresses especially have many encounters with how the public interacts and responds to others. People will respond for many different reasons, such as a positive dining experience. Most of the time, people respond and interact when something is not to their liking. It is a fair reaction, because people should communicate whether it's positive or negative, and they do. If there is one thing for certain, it is that there will always be issues that arise within the restaurant setting. Some issues are clear as day who to blame, and other issues, the blame is not so evident. In any case, there is almost always going to be an individual who is trying to resolve the issue. For myself, I have found that I am usually the one trying to fix the issue, especially because of the position I am in at work. I am a waitress, so problem solving falls back on me very often. It is

my duty to do so. I interact with hundreds of customers a day. These customers consist of people with different types of requests and needs that I must fulfill.

Within the last year, there was an issue that kept reoccurring with customers. It would be the end of the dining experience when a customer would ask, “is there any dessert options?” I would have to kindly say no, and then explain why we are a restaurant with no dessert options. Every person would respond differently to the explanation; some would be confused, others were slightly irritated, most people were understanding. The issue of not having dessert in our restaurant was not one of the biggest issues I’ve endured since working there, but it was one that had enough attention brought to it. I decided to talk to my manager about the topic of dessert in our restaurant. I confronted my manager with concerns of how often people ask for dessert. I highlighted the way customers respond when I tell them we do not have any to offer and that most of them are looking for a simple dessert option. I concluded the confrontation by suggesting that we bring at least two dessert options to the menu and see how they perform. After all, it is what customers are asking for and customers are what keep our business open. I showed my manager the idea of a house cheesecake. I suggested a recipe and even included a piece of glassware we already have in the restaurant to serve in the cheesecake. My manager responded pretty well. He seemed open to the idea and even asked if I could do a “test run” with a recipe I presented to him. We ended up working together on the recipe at the restaurant and found one we thought was good enough after we tweaked it. There was definitely some trial and error that was done as far as how we presented the dessert but after a few failed attempts, we found one we believed was the best. Within that same month, we started serving cheesecake. My manager even asked me what flavor we should debut with the new cheesecake because I was the one with the idea. I suggested a classic strawberry cheesecake and that is what we sold.

My place of work has sold dessert for about eight months and it has been a successful new approach. It's pretty satisfying that a problem I endured repeatedly was solved from contributions of my own. With help from my manager, we were able to take the issue of not having dessert and find a "fix." The fixes that we focused on were leadership skills and conflict management. Leadership consists of an individual who inspires positive, gradual change by empowering others towards the same objective. In a workplace, specifically when an issue occurs, communication in leadership is very necessary. A leader's most powerful tool is communication which was used to not only shed light on a reoccurring issue, but also when steps were being taken to resolve the issue. During the process of finding a "fix" for the issue of no dessert, we displayed active listening, respectful feedback, and clarity. Leadership was definitely a contributing factor in our fix. Conflict management was another tactic we used as we worked through our issue. Conflict management is identifying and addressing conflict in a productive and impactful way. When using conflict management, the main goal is to adapt healthy communication, understanding, and collaboration. When I approached my manager about the conflict, it was because I wanted to address the issue respectfully and get it to the same goal. We collaborated in a healthy way that consisted of teamwork and respect. We accommodated the needs of others asking for dessert, even though dessert was not a part of our restaurant. We no longer avoided that fact and made a change for what customers were asking.

As I look back on the steps we implemented to reach our goal I feel good. My manager and I took an issue and tried our best to mold it into something successful. What I take away from this experience is that communication is so important. Whether the communication takes place in an office setting or the kitchen of a restaurant, we need hearty communication to grow. The types of communication fixes we focused on were ones that I will use again simply because they were so

effective for us. I also learned that I am more of a leader in my communication skills now than ever before. It's easy to want to shy away from conflict, but conflict management was a fix that was necessary in what we were trying to complete. I will take this experience and use it as a guide for when further communication issues occur. After all, we can never fully avoid communication issues, but being properly prepared is one of the best approaches we can start with.

## References

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