The Waitress

Description:

Toni has worked at Scotty's Diner for 23 years. She characterizes a good waitress as an "actress" who can get herself into a good mood to go out and make customers happy. She is successful at what she does, soothing problem customers and keeping track of a complex sequence of activities for preparing and serving food, as well as interacting with customers during peak and slow times. Toni views being a waitress as a means to an end, advising younger people to finish school and find a better job for themselves.

Key Words:

- "I am an actress."
- "You need to motivate yourself."
- "Is there a problem I can help you with? NOT what is your problem?"

Suggested Uses:

"The Waitress" can illustrate motivation and high performance, highlighting values, incentives and other factors enhancing performance. It can also be used to teach students how to conduct a job analysis since all students are familiar with the job performed by waiters and waitresses.

I. Motivation and High Performance

Values - Use the video to illustrate different values in the workplace.

Ten basic work values have been used in a nationwide survey (Kenneth A. Kovach, "What Motivates Employees? Workers and Supervisors Give Different Answers," Business Horizons 30:5, September-October 1987).

- Interesting work
- Full appreciation of work done
- Feeling of being "in on things"
- Job security
- Good wages
- Promotion and growth in organization
- Good working conditions
- Personal loyalty to employees
- Tactful disciplining
- Sympathetic help with personal problems

Before watching the video, have students rank these values in the order of importance they place on these values. Then, after viewing the video have students rank-order these values in terms of how they apply to Toni. Compare the two lists. Typically, money is ranked more highly for Toni, and involvement and appreciation are ranked more highly for the students. These differences parallel research findings regarding how managers typically rate their own values in contrast to ratings of their subordinates' values.

Discussion Questions:

1. Compare the rankings. How is your list different from the one you gave Toni?
2. Where do wages fall in the two rankings? If Toni's ranking places wages as more important, what factors might lead to a change in the rankings you gave her?

Consistently, researchers find that low-income workers and younger people rank money more highly, in contrast to more affluent people and older people. The individual values tell us something about why people come to work. The values Toni attaches to her work focus primarily on making money. Her job is relatively low paying, with little prospect of future or growth opportunities. But situational factors such as rewards from peers or customers and supervisory support are typically better predictors of the level and type of effort people display.

The Effect of Work Setting on Motivation - Use the video to illustrate different motivational theories.

Expectancy theory helps to link individual motives and situational factors into a model of motivation. The basic function in expectancy theory states:

$$\text{Motivation} = f(V) \times (E \rightarrow P) \times (P \rightarrow O)$$

where

V = the value or valence of outcomes obtained
$E \rightarrow P$ = perceived probability that effort will yield performance
$P \rightarrow O$ = perceived probability that performance will yield outcomes

Discussion Questions:

1. What does "performance" mean in the job of waitress? Students have a difficult time differentiating the typical or average performer from a "high performer." Toni exemplifies a high performer in a relatively unskilled occupation.

2. What are the features of high performance (e.g., satisfied customers, making tips)?

3. Can we explain Toni's performance using expectancy and/or some other motivational theory?

4. A person may be motivated to perform highly and yet still not be able to actually perform well. Toni is a high performer.

   - (a) What factors affect Toni's ability to perform her job well?
   - (b) What factors affect Toni's ability to translate her efforts into high performance (e.g., workload, such as working alone or with others; whether the kitchen does its job; whether management is supportive)?

5. What outcomes does Toni get from being a high-performing waitress? Have the class make a list. Remind students that some outcomes will be positive and others negative. Typical lists include:

Positive	Negative
Pay	Fatigue
Friends	Dead-end Job
Regular Work	Few Skills

6. Which of these outcomes does Toni value the most? The least?

7. Overall, to what extent does Toni achieve valued outcomes when she performs well?

II. Job Analysis

Use the video to illustrate different job analysis applications.

Jobs require many different skills to deal with people, information, and equipment. Waitresses largely rely on their skills in dealing with people. What skills does a high performing waitress have?

EXAMPLE

Job Activities:

Outline below the primary parts of the waitress's job and indicate the relative proportion of time and importance applicable to each. Use a typical day as a 100% time-frame. The amount of time spent on an activity need not correspond with its importance.

Job Activities	Time %	Order of Importance
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Job Qualifications Required:

Outline below the skills, knowledge, abilities, and experience necessary for the waitress to perform effectively. Be as specific as possible and refer back to the activities outlined above.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Constituents

Identify those people who are the waitress's primary stakeholders (internal or external to the organization).

Constituents	**Time %**	**Order of Importance**
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

What jobs are most like being a waitress (e.g., salesperson, teacher, clerk)? How do these compare in terms of skills, ease of entry into the occupation, and pay?