

Customer service

Business



Creamy Creations Ice Cream Shoppe is a small and popular ice cream parlor in a midsized southern city. In 2007, Creamy Creations had been open for almost two years and was gathering a loyal clientele of families and students from the local community college. Creamy Creations specialized in fancy, individualized ice cream confections.

Customers would order their base ice cream (or frozen yogurt) plus the toppings they wanted to make their own "creamy creation." The toppings ranged from the typical (such as hot fudge, marshmallows, nuts, fruit syrups, and crushed candy bars) to the exotic (mango fruit chutney, chocolate-covered hazelnuts, and crystallized ginger). Each creamy creation was made start to finish by one of the high school or college students working behind the marble counter. Many customers had a favorite "creamy creator" and would wait for that person to be available to make a special sundae. In the first eighteen months of the existence of Creamy Creations, it was owned by Bob Peterson, a local retiree who had started the business after thirty years in the military.

However, after a year and a half of successful operations, Bob's wife talked him into selling the ice cream business "while it's hot" and buying a motor home to tour the country. Bob sold Creamy Creations to Burger Barn, a local fast-food chain that wanted to expand into other types of food service establishments. When Burger Barn took over operations at Creamy Creations, management was pleased with what it saw. Creamy Creations had a solid customer base and had been making a modest profit almost since it opened. Customers spoke highly of the quality product and the friendly atmosphere.

As a result, repeat business was high. Not surprisingly, though, Burger Barn thought that Creamy Creations could do even better. Burger Barn had built its reputation on high- quality food served in an efficient and friendly manner. When Burger Barn executives looked at Creamy Creations, they were pleased with the food quality and the friendliness but disturbed by the lack of efficiency. Customers would often have to wait ten minutes before placing an order and would typically wait another ten minutes for the order to be filled.

This wait seemed excessive to Burger Barn executives, especially when they looked to the new Forgo frozen yogurt place down the street that was making a lot of money based on an entirely self- serve system.

After observing operations for several weeks, the Burger Barn managers decided that the best way to improve operations at Creamy Creations was to strike a happy medium between the previous Creamy Creations model and the Forgo operations by instituting three workstations behind the counter.

Customers would first order their base ice cream at the "scoop station" and then move on to the worker at the "topping station" to have their sundae completed. Finally, the customer would move to the "pay station" to order drinks and have the bill rung up. Because workers were already trained in all facets of the Creamy Creations operation, they could shift easily from station to station. Burger Barn executives reasoned that this would keep them from being bored with their 1 OFF work. Anna Nell, managing a nylon level AT Delightedly Tort canalling.

II After six months of operations under the Burger Barn umbrella, Creamy Creations was doing reasonably well.

Profits were slightly higher than they had been before the takeover, although not as high as Burger Barn executives would have liked. Employee turnover had increased substantially, but Burger Barn executives did not see this as a troubling problem because there was a large labor market in the community capable of this type of unskilled work.

Creamy Creations was still doing a brisk business, although there were many more customers getting their orders to go and fewer using the restaurant as a local gathering place. When watching operations, Burger Barn executives were pleased that customers were served more quickly than before, although there was sometimes a bottleneck of customers at the toppings station because this operation was more complex than activities at either the scooping station or the pay station.

Burger Barn executives considered splitting the top-pings station into two separate work areas ("syrup station" and "finishing touches") to further improve efficiency and avoid delays in customer service.

They also considered eliminating some of the more bizarre topping options because these toppings were very expensive, were rarely ordered, and tended to clutter up the work area and slow down operations. All in all, the executives were pleased with the progress made in their acquisition.

It was becoming clear that with the recent changes, Creamy Creations had the potential to become a profitable member of the Burger Barn family. They

even thought of opening more Creamy Creations in surrounding communities. CASE ANALYSIS QUESTIONS 1. The Burger Barn executives see a rosy future ahead for Creamy Creations.

Do you see any reasons why they should not be so optimistic? Have these executives indeed reached a happy medium between customization and self-serve? 2. How are the principles of classical management reflected in what has happened at Creamy Creations?

Which tenets of Payola's Theory of Classical Management, Weeper's Theory of Bureaucracy, and Taylor's Theory of Scientific Management are in evidence? How have the advantages and disadvantages of the classical approach been played out at this business? 3. If you were called in as a communication consultant by Burger Barn executives, what kind of information would you gather in making an assessment about the likely future of Creamy Creations? What would you predict your findings might be, and how would these findings influence your recommendations to Burger Barn executives?