**Staffing Shortage And Employee Burnout At C Market Coffee:**

**Addressing Current Challenges And Potential Strategies To Manage Staffing Problems**

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**ABSTRACT**

C Market Coffee is a local café that recently opened a second establishment in Port Coquitlam, British Columbia (BC); and this has led to an increase in demand for staff to keep pace with service and production at the new location. However, the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the Canadian labour market that became central to how small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) were affected by the crisis; and now that the large baby-boomer generation is heading to retirement, BC’s workforce is experiencing an even greater decline. Consequently, the café is facing the negative repercussions of the labour shortage as the lack of workers is leading to overworked staff and employee burnout. C Market Coffee needs time to train new hires, but there is difficulty in retaining them—new employees are quitting before training is complete because they are dissatisfied or have found a better opportunity. This makes the design of efficient prevention and intervention programs crucial not only for reducing burnout as a result of overworking staff, but to also optimize employee morale. The present report focuses on the succinct presentation of employee burnout throughout C Market Coffee senior staff; and it follows with a realistic and effective plan for streamlining hiring and retention strategies to improve the well-being of the existing workers and increase staff numbers.

**KEYWORDS:**

**INTRODUCTION**

**Recent Decline in the Canadian Labour Market**

While the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the Canadian labour market that became central to how small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) were affected by the crisis,

Canada’s current labour scarcity is mainly a result of the aging population heading to retirement and the accompanying decrease in labour force participation (Bouchard 4). The recent pandemic has only amplified the problem by destabilizing an uncertain situation and many provinces, including British Columbia (BC), are now experiencing an even greater decline. According to a 2021 BDC study on the labour shortage in Canada, 55% of entrepreneurs are struggling to hire the workers they need and 26% are having difficulties retaining their employees (Bouchard 3). Another study indicates that 65% of firms struggling to hire workers are also more likely to be a low-growth company (Wormstall 1). Notably, the inability of companies to match available jobs with available workers impacts their ability to innovate and improve competitiveness. Although the shortage revolves around highly skilled workers, it is accompanied by shortages for low-skilled workers as well—specifically in the retail and restaurant sectors.

**Staff Shortage at C Market Coffee (Second Location)**

As a local café that has recently opened a second establishment in Port Coquitlam, C Market Coffee is one of many local businesses that is experiencing the negative repercussions of BC’s labour shortage. The new venue is designed to seat 75 people, offering coffee, alcoholic beverages, bakery products, and food; additionally, it plans to function as a training center for new baristas, coffee brewers, and roasters looking to advance in their coffee knowledge. But while the new establishment has received positive feedback and reviews, it has also led to an increase in demand for staff to keep pace with service and production at the new location. The impact on missed or delayed orders, lower competitiveness, and quality problems on a business is self-evident in staffing shortages: 56% of entrepreneurs said existing staff must work more and many entrepreneurs also said their companies have been unable to fill or have delayed orders, that they have become less competitive, and that the quality of their goods/services has decreased (Wormstall 6).

However, the indirect costs of labour shortages are nothing short of subtle. The staffing shortage at C Market Coffee is causing senior staff to face unreasonable workloads and spend extra hours on the shop floor. Consequently, employees are experiencing difficult workplace challenges such as intense levels of burnout and distress; this is deteriorating employee morale and leading to an increased intention to quit. C Market Coffee is also paying an opportunity cost when senior staff spends more time supporting production than conducting high-value activities and projects that can encourage growth. The café needs time to train new hires, but there is difficulty in retaining them—new employees are quitting before training is complete because they are dissatisfied or have found a better opportunity.

**Methods of Inquiry and Research**

All seventeen staff members at C Markets Coffee responded to a survey designed to evaluate the employee satisfaction levels at the café. Additionally, 5 senior staffs responded to a short survey intended to address employee burnout; and the remaining 12 staff and new hires responded to a survey on C Market Coffee’s current hiring and training processes. By using secondary sources such as recent publications on recent labour shortage studies in BC, an analysis of potential costs and strategies was performed to determine the feasibility of developing a plan to combat staffing issues and ensure it aligns with the company’s strategic objectives.

**Scope of the Study**

This report aims to address the issues that derive from the staffing shortage at C Market Coffee. To assess the feasibility of developing a plan for combating a staff shortage and ensure it aligns with the strategic objectives of the company, this report pursues five areas of inquiry:

1. Staff perception of the company
2. Senior staff workloads and burnout symptoms
3. Key and valued aspects of C Market Coffee
4. Operational efficiency
5. Potential costs to increase compensation practices

I have been employed at C Market Coffee for over three years since the opening day of the first location, and plan to remain a loyal staff member at the recently established second location. Being highly familiar with the café’s daily operations and having a close relationship to the baristas and kitchen staff permits me to execute an in-depth feasibility study regarding the staff. By identifying employee satisfaction levels and the extra challenges faced by senior staff, the report offers a realistic and effective plan for streamlining hiring and retention strategies to improve the well-being of the existing workers, minimize attrition rates, and increase staff numbers.

**DATA SECTION**

**Overview of Staff Members at C Market Coffee**

The following figure represents all 17 staff members currently employed at C Market Coffee—it includes all baristas and kitchen staff. Members who have been associated with the company for more than one year are considered to be senior staff while those who have been employed for less than one year are junior staff and new hires.

**Employee Satisfaction**

Employee satisfaction is defined as the extent to which employees like their work; based on perceptions, an employee develops a positive or negative attitude towards their role in the workplace. While satisfaction does not always result in higher productivity, employees are said to be engaged when they show a positive attitude towards their organization and express a commitment to remain with the organization. Accordingly, low levels of satisfaction with the organization is more likely to lead to an intention to leave or change workplace. *Figure 2* and *Figure 3* below indicate the employee satisfaction of 17 C Market Coffee staff members:

**Dissatisfied**

The Employee Satisfaction Survey shows that a majority of respondents are highly satisfied with their work and demonstrate a solid foundation of their employee morale. However, 33% of staff indicated a dissatisfaction in their expected level of work, and two-thirds of those respondents are senior staff members.

**Senior Staff**

**Employee Burnout and Stress in the Workplace**

For this report, C Market Coffee senior employees were consulted to understand the main reason why they are dissatisfied in their current role. Results showed that only 40% of senior staff can strongly agree they know what is expected of them at work; the remaining 60% feel that their job description is unclear because they are having to take on more tasks than before without additional compensation. Majority of senior staff also felt that communication between the top management and employees were not clear and information on strategies and activities were not transparent on all occasions. For example, one senior staff member noted an experience they had regarding two missing cake orders where they had to stay additional time after their scheduled shift in order to solve the problem. The working conditions were reported to be moderately satisfactory with realistic workloads and work pressure was said to occasionally interfere with personal life, thereby causing some dissatisfaction to the respondents. Due to these factors, the majority of respondents who expressed the likelihood of seeking a different job in the next year were senior staff members.

**Statistics on Retention Strategies**

According to Isabelle Bouchard’s BDC 2021 study, companies that offer competitive salaries and benefits are 1.4 times more likely to find retaining workers easy and 1.7 times more likely to have sales growth above the industry average, compared to companies that do not offer such salaries and benefits (18). The study also concluded that companies offering flexible work arrangements could be 44% more likely to find retaining workers easy, compared to companies that do not offer such arrangements (18).

**New Hires**

**\*\* Data collection and analysis in progress \*\***

**Statistics on Hiring Strategies**

To minimize the time needed to recruit and hire employees, a formal hiring process is often used by companies to find strong matches and high-quality employees; which, in turn, boosts business performance and reduces employee turnover. Companies that had put a formal hiring process in place are 1.4 times more likely to find hiring easier than companies that don’t. A “formal” hiring process, refers to a fully organized hiring procedure where the business: (1) identifies its recruitment needs, (2) recruitment by putting out a detailed job posting that lists the relevant roles and responsibilities, and (3) selects the candidate who will be offered the position (Bouchard 25).

**CONCLUSION**

While short-term solutions can account for the simultaneous high unemployment and job vacancy numbers, long-lasting factors—such as the aging population and decreasing labour force growth—will continue to exacerbate the labour shortage problem, compromising the competitiveness of many Canadian businesses. Although these recommendations won’t single-handedly serve as a solution to BC’s staffing shortage, a better integration of hiring and retention strategies can alleviate part of the problem.

**Recommendations:**

In order to mitigate the effects of labour shortages and improve employee retention, an employee retention plan could be implemented at C Market Coffee. To summarize, these solutions have been statistically proven to reduce the impact for SMEs:

1. Using formal hiring processes
2. Offering a total compensation package

Potential compensation practices to attract new employees and retain existing ones by:

1. Increasing base and performance pay
2. Offering company stock to key employees
3. Organizing social activities and events
4. Allowing flexible schedules to enable a better work-life balance

By taking action now to adapt to the labour shortage situation, entrepreneurs will build the foundation for a stronger and more productive business in the years to come.

Works Cited

Bouchard, Isabelle. “How to Adapt to the Labour Shortage Situation.” Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) 2021.

Wormstall, Michael. “Labour Shortage: Here to Stay.” Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) 2018.