

T-4-2

T-4-2 is a café which offers a range of food and drink to locals and visitors all year round. It is located in the visitor centre in the town of Wellsburg on the south coast of England. The visitor centre also contains the local tourist information centre and a range of workshops for local arts and craftspeople. It is often a stop for bus parties en route to Devon.

The café is a family owned and run business, with Sara Sewell managing the day to day running; aided by her daughter Helen, who is the Assistant Manager. They also have one full-time and two part-time staff, as well as a large pool of seasonal staff to help in the running of the café, as necessary. Many of the seasonal staff are students returning home during university breaks, so it is difficult for Sara to plan, as she does not know if they will be available or not due to their other commitments.

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One issue Sara and Helen often have is differing opinions about how the café should be run and this leads to conflict and delays in decision making. There is no formal identification of roles and responsibilities amongst the staff at T-4-2. Staff have stopped asking for advice and often make decisions for themselves, some of which have proved costly to T-4-2.

The hours of work are often long and can be unsociable with the café opening at 8.00am and closing at 8.00pm, and often later during the peak season. The work is monotonous and repetitive and seasonal staff wages are set at the minimum levels. The seasonal staff, in particular the waiting staff, get easily bored and levels of sickness and absenteeism are high, as is staff turnover. This is an issue Sara and Helen recognise but have yet to address. Being part of a 'tourist town' there are many other similar facilities offering jobs at similar or slightly higher levels of pay than those offered at T-4-2.

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Recruitment of new waiters and waitresses is something which T-4-2 does on a regular basis. An advertisement is placed in the front window of the café during the summer season (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 Recruitment Advertisement for T-4-2

T-4-2 WANTS YOU

Young Energetic Waiting Staff Wanted

Apply Within

When potential candidates come into the café, although Sara asks them to provide a CV, in most cases they are offered a position without producing one and on the basis of just an informal chat. Only the permanent staff are given a contract with their terms of employment stated. Many of the seasonal staff employed have little or no experience in the catering industry and Sara spends a considerable amount of her time training them. However, much of this time spent training is wasted due to high staff turnover.

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T-4-2 has never used any sort of performance management or formal training programme. Staff lack knowledge and consistency in terms of the standard of service being provided to customers, and many staff become frustrated about how little they can contribute to the running of T-4-2. 30

Sara is very much aware of the state of the economy through media coverage. She recognises that more people are choosing to have a “staycation”, that is holidaying at home, or within their own country. Sara and Helen have discussed this and realise that if they are to meet changing customer demands, they will have to review their staffing. Both Sara and Helen recognise they have staffing issues, and are planning to review the café’s operations in the hope that T-4-2 can become more professional and consistent in its approach. 35

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