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Cause and Effect: Crisis at Domino's during COVID

The year 2020 has been an extraordinary year so far: the Philadelphia Flyers' mascot Gritty is under investigation for assault, Mr. Peanut died and was replaced by a baby, and now we are dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Among other consequences, many citizens in the United States – and particularly Dallas County -- have been mandated to stay at home and non-essential business have been closed to slow down the spread of the virus. However, essential businesses, such as food service businesses, may stay open. The Domino's pizza restaurant that I am employed at is one of those essential businesses. However, our crew has progressively become more stressed, discontented, and upset with management. This is rooted in our fears of being exposed to COVID-19, which results in being understaffed; then the lack of staff results in increased stress because of an increasing volume of orders which we cannot fill in time, which causes frustrated customers and us feeling frustrated with management, leading to more people quitting.

First, the root cause for the increased business and stress comes from the efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19. Our government has been regulating the people, advising people to stay home and closing down businesses; this is a great way to keep people from having too much contact and spreading this virus. This also forces more and more people to either cook and eat at home or to order food from restaurants for delivery. Many people order food instead of cooking at home due to fear of being exposed to people with the virus by leaving their homes. So more

people ordering out means a much greater volume of orders coming into our store. But employees such as us are also fearful of catching this virus. Many of my coworkers have already self-quarantined because they have health conditions that put them at risk of being severely affected by the virus, or have family members who are high risk. As more and more cases are popping up around the country and the closer it gets to our town, the more real this whole situation becomes, resulting in more team members not coming in for work.

Second, we were relatively understaffed before this crisis, but after a few team members stated that they would stay home for the next month, the work conditions got a lot worse.

Management would ask many drivers to stay at work many hours past their scheduled time off because of the amount of orders that need to be delivered. The inside crew members who make the pizzas were neck deep in work, making hundreds of pizzas during our rush hours, and they also had to deal with complaining customers since wait times were usually double what we usually promise. Many deliveries were also going out late: for instance, I took many deliveries that were over an hour late because we just did not have enough drivers to handle all the business we were getting. As a result, neither the customers nor employees were happy.

Of course, dealing with upset customers all day really takes a toll on the workers; it makes working very annoying and forces people to decide whether it is still worth it to subject themselves to this level of stress and exposing themselves to many people who could have the virus. Many people who work at my store are younger, usually with less financial responsibilities than an older person, so they have the freedom to quit if one day they decide that it is not worth dealing with all this stress for minimum wage. Drivers, however, are getting more money since more orders means tips, so they have more of an incentive to stay, but it can also become too much for them. As for me, I feel the worst for our manager. She cannot quit because she has a

family to support and, with many other people quitting, it forces her to work more hours to make up for it. She is now working sixty-hour weeks and, to add insult to injury, she gets paid salary, so she is not even making a dime in overtime.

Another effect that really frustrates employees is feeling as if their voices are not being heard. Our manager says that she brought up concerns to the general manager and owner of our store by asking them to close the store so that the workers would not be exposed to catching the virus; however, they just ignore her. This makes her furious since they are valuing making money over the safety of their employees. We also feel that if people quit, then they will just replace them anyway, so it is hopeless to do anything other than just continue to work as if nothing is happening for those who need their job. Not all employees can afford to go into quarantine and lose their job, so it is very disheartening to learn that their employers are not even trying to find a solution for them.

These issues coming together results in a crew that is feeling extremely unhappy, stressed, and abandoned. Once the dust settles, I imagine many people will look for new work if they are not already. On the upside, our employers are definitely making a lot more money from the increased sales, so good for them, I suppose. It only cost them the little respect that the crew had left for them. Things could be worse; we could be servers or office workers who lost their job completely and are struggling to find out how they will pay their rent. I do not mean to complain too much; I am just looking to give a peek into the lives of small-town fast-food workers. We were already scared from the possibility of being infected with COVID-19, but the stressful working environment and lack of interest from management has made us even more discontent with our situation.