Case Notes

# Chapter 6: Developing Leadership Skills

# Case 6.1: Sweet Caroline’s

## Case Summary

In this case, Caroline, a former teacher, founded a successful business, *Sweet Caroline’s*, that grew beyond her expectations. Starting off as a baking business, she expanded into an actual bakery, catering company, and a full-service restaurant. As Caroline’s success with her business was unexpected, she found herself overwhelmed with the growth aspects of her business, and left with a decision as to whether or not to open up another *Sweet Caroline’s* in a neighboring town.

Caroline’s business has been open for five years, and the expansion has caused challenges. Caroline now employees 40 different people in various roles, including drivers, social media content managers, bakers, and restaurant employees. Caroline lacks experience in the administrative faction of her business. Her delivery driver has expressed frustration because there is not a system in place for how orders are to be delivered, which has caused double-orders and missed deliveries. Scheduling has also been a challenge, due to the lack of time for employees to obtain their schedules and communication of their schedules from Caroline. Also, Caroline tends to focus her efforts on the food preparation aspect of her business, which causes untrained staff members to be left to plan the events, a task in which they have not been trained to complete.

The positives of Caroline’s business are her ability to relate to her employees through encouragement and praise, and also in the accounting and payroll aspects of her business, however, she acknowledges that the fiscal practices are becoming more challenging due to the business growth. Now that Caroline has the opportunity to expand, she must decide if the timing is correct and best for her, due to the challenges she has already experienced with her existing business.

Case Analysis

The *Sweet Caroline’s* case is a perfect example of the three characteristics of the *Model of Primary Leadership Skills* (**administrative skills**, **conceptual skills**, and **interpersonal skills**). Caroline appears to be strong in her **interpersonal skills**, but needs more work in her **administrative skills** and even more so in her **conceptual skills** before she will be able to realistically expand her business.

Caroline **interpersonal skills** can be demonstrated through her ability to be **socially perceptive**. Caroline shows **social perceptiveness** in her ability to relate to her employees. She understands the importance of communication and working alongside of her employees to be a visible influence over her work. Caroline could work on her **emotional intelligence** by having a better understanding of the needs of her business. She also could work to better understand conflict through being more visibly present with some of the employees in her company.

Caroline’s **conceptual skills** were strong in the initial vision that she created for her company, however, with her business expanding, she needed to adjust her vision through **strategic planning**. Her **problem-solving skills** were limited in her ability to identify the problem and generate solutions with both her event planning and delivery coordination.

Finally, her **administrative skills** need fine-tuning, especially as her business has significantly expanded. She must learn how to manage people better, and possibly recruit people to lead the various divisions of her business. She must understand the process of managing resources and understanding what is necessary for the daily operation of each of her business divisions. Caroline does show appropriate **technical competence**, in her ability to have specialized knowledge about her industry and also in the fiscal management of resources.

## Sample Answers to Case Questions

*1. Based on the Model of Primary Leadership Skills (Figure 6.1), how would you describe Caroline’s skills? In what skills is she the strongest, and in what skills is she the weakest?*

The Model of Primary Leadership Skills is an appropriate way to decipher where Caroline’s strengths and weaknesses lie. There are dimensions where Caroline has demonstrated success, and other areas where she has room for improvement.

Caroline’s strongest skill is interpersonal. She understands the importance of inspiring her employees and working alongside them to express the commitment she has for her business.

Caroline’s weakest skills are administrative and conceptual. She has not been able to effectively plan for her business’s expansion and increase in operation. This would require more emphasis on strategic planning.

*2. Sweet Caroline’s bakery and restaurant seemed to emerge out of nowhere. What role did Caroline play in this? Do you think Caroline could improve her business with more strategic planning?*

Caroline had success through each level of her business expansion. People enjoyed her product, which led to her expanding to catering, delivery, and a full-service restaurant. Because her product was popular, she adjusted to her product’s demand.

That being said, Caroline expanded on her initial vision without appropriate strategic planning. Had she taken the necessary time to cross-train across all facets of her business and consider the implications involved in each expansion, she has the potential to improve and expand her business even more.

*3. Have you ever worked at a place that was very successful but felt quite chaotic and disorganized? How did you handle it?*

***As this is an opinion question, answers will vary from student to student.***

*4. If you were a consultant to Caroline, would you recommend she open a second location? If so, what three specific skills would you have Caroline develop in order to help manage her business better?*

At this time, unless Caroline could significantly improve her administrative and conceptual skills, it would probably not be in her best interest to open up a second location. However, should she be able to better strategically plan, it would be profitable and advantageous for her to consider opening up a second location.

Caroline arguably needs to work on two of her conceptual skills, problem solving and strategic planning, and one of her administrative skills, managing people. In terms of managing people, Caroline appears to not communicate appropriately with her driver, coordinate work schedules appropriately, or work with the personnel associated with event planning. She will need to improve upon her interactions and people management before she expands her business to include an additional staff of a similar makeup. In terms of conceptual skills, Caroline needs to better problem solve, or at least work with individuals who have experience in problem solving. Failure to appropriately coordinate, deliver, or schedule could lead to loss of clients and loss of business. Finally, strategic planning is the last area that Caroline must improve in order to her expand her business. For Caroline to have success in two different locations, she must understand that her business is now significantly more multifaceted than it was from its initial conception. Perhaps hiring additional personnel more apt in management and planning would help her meet the needs of both locations.