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Strategic Case #1  
*Sundown Bakery*

Ch.1

1. Regarding the resentment of employees over the dress code and the employee manual, most of it comes from the fact that the communication is too formal for these employees. Most of them come from cultures where there is a closer connection between the boss and the employee. To further create a feeling of detachment, the use of memos creates a higher level of impersonality. In addition, as we see the rapid growth of the company these changes were incorporated too soon and by a new employee who had even less of a relationship or knowledge of the previous employees or their ideas. The way the memos were carried down a line of authority resembled more the “government” than a “family” which was the original appeal of the company. The employees resenting the changes had in mind a stereotype which explains their negative decoding of the message. One of the things that I caught my attention was the diversity of cultures in the company. The wide variety of cultures, costumes, languages and the personal proficiency level of each ESL employee only complicates the decoding of downward messages and the lateral ‘communication. On top of that there is a wide range of minorities who carry their own personal perception of other groups.

I believe that a better way to introduce the new changes would have been a company wide meeting directed by Bruce; then a memo to reinforce the concept and reminding the reasons why changes were made.

Input from the employees about the uniforms would have been appropriate, after all they are the ones directly affected by the change.

2. The original communication channel was oral. Then it shifted to written. It changed from being directly from the boss to being through 2 or 3 lines of authority.

Perhaps originally there was more upward communication which eventually declined as the communication process went from informal to formal.

Sundown bakery should incorporate an anonymous employee comment box to insure upward communication and foment open communication without retaliation.

Most changes have a reason why they happen, so to insure everyone is on the same page, some of those reasons should be disclosed.

Supervisors should hold periodical meetings with employees, or have a small daily meeting briefly outlining what needs to be done, as well to highlight any positive improvements or to give personal recognition for outstanding performance, thus creating a sense of team work or belonging.

3. Employees at Sundown dwelled on the idea that the company was becoming a bureaucracy. Generally speaking bureaucracies carry negative connotations; therefore employees assumed the company was becoming more driven to pursue larger profits which would require the employees devoting more to the company, which in turn would give less to the employees.  
As the business owners spent less time at the work place, that would send the message that now they are at a higher level, which would start defining the hierarchies even more. I assumed this since at the beginning Bruce and Carol were practically working shoulder to shoulder with their employees, which would create a sense of “we are in the same level, we understand each other very well”
4. As the company shifted from informal communication, most employees felt left behind or felt less valued. As the numbers expand and multiple locations open up, the more formal it becomes. But also little gestures can transform or minimize the formality. For instance, instead of a memo, it could be an email or a letter sent from the management. Or the fact that the owners could visit more frequently the different location so new employees can know who they work for.  
In the other hand employees need to realize that as the company grows, more standardized procedures come into play to ensure efficiency and consistency. The fact that most employees were used to the informal communication made the transition to a formal system harder which led to complaining. They lacked adaptability and resented change.  
As the management takes a more active role in establishing more informal communication with the employees, the delegation of authority would be more apparent to the employees thus lessening the resentment towards the new formalities.

## Ch.2

1. The demographics make up of Sundown’s bakery reflects the current rising trend of immigration and integration of other cultures globally into companies. As globalization increases so does tolerance for other cultures, facilitating ethnic and cultural diversity at the work place. In turn the services or products can become better suited to a larger audience or modified to adjust to other markets.
2. Since so many cultures, languages, races, sexual orientation and disabilities come together in one company; each instance must be respected to preserve individualism, but in general they have to come together and create a new “workplace culture” or community that would allow everyone to be in equal grounds and create collectivism.  
Probably one of the biggest obstacles is the clash between low and high context styles, since there are many Hispanic and Asian employees, compared to the number of North Americans. That clash of not only language but decoding creates confusion or can truncate messages as the process of communication takes place.

The power distance principle becomes problematic as one group sees itself as better than the other, thus minimizing or often defying orders or authority from other groups. For instance the confession of Jose about his struggle with a woman with a higher authority level created an inner conflict within himself since it was culturally shocking to him.

3. Sundown went from high sociability to low sociability. It shifted from general duties to more specific tasks. It became more structured. At the beginning the employees felt rewarded since they felt as part of the company. Later on that sense of pride vanished. The company definitely grew to the point where it could provide opportunities of growth since many different types of jobs were included; thus allowing someone to start at the bottom of the company and advance to other duties. Originally the company had an easier way to maintain emotional support, but as it grew it became increasingly hard to care for each individual (for example introducing the manual meant general training instead of personalized); many employees implied that management wasn't aware of them. The company still lacks a system to deal with conflict. At the beginning it might have been easier but eventually no attention was devoted to it.
  
4. I would advise the management of Sundown to motivate and help the employees see how their combined efforts bring a quality product that can satisfy the customer. Basically the management should help the employees feel part of the success of the company and encourage pride for that accomplishment. They need to let employees know that despite their differences they all work for one purpose. In my personal experience, when management takes time to incorporate or work on suggestions from employees they show that they value their opinions, and that creates an environment that promotes idea exchange which further improves the quality of the product or service and the morale of the employee.