

The People Ingredient

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Your brewery produces beer. Or does it?

The best equipment, business plan, location, and financial backing will not produce one drop of beer. We know that beer does not come from just throwing together water, malt, yeast, and hops. We know that these ingredients are not one dimensional, static, or homogeneous, and do not automatically react with each other. We know transforming these ingredients into delicious brewski requires an understanding and control of external factors, a specific process, adherence to that process, and maintenance of its protocols, among other things. And we (should) know that all of this requires people, and each person is more complex than any brewing ingredient, structure, or process. How much time and energy do you spend on those ingredients? How much time and energy do you spend on your people?

Your brewery produces a brewery* team. This team follows processes, and those processes produce beer. Your brewery's People Ingredient is just as essential as the other four ingredients of beer, if not more so, and is highly dynamic. And just like malt, water, hops, and yeast, if one aspect of the People Ingredient is off, the whole is affected. A single infection in one ingredient in the process, from grain to wort to yeast to beer, can ruin your product, as can a single glitch in your team (the individuals, their interactions, and processes they follow). And glitches happen, it is impossible to prevent them. How they are managed is critical, and unfortunately often overlooked. Many times, this team is taken for granted.

(* Please note that it is not "brewing" team, but the whole brewery team. This includes sales, serving, accounting, and other non-brewing duties).

A rock is only as strong as the bonds among its molecules and atoms. Your brewery team may have exceptional individual parts, but how well do they bond? Where can a glitch in your People Ingredient take hold? Here is a general look at how dynamic this People Ingredient is and where glitches occur most often.

Communication

Communication is more than conveying thoughts, data, directions, questions, and words. Having open, honest, and meaningful communication is not as easy as it sounds. Maintaining good communication is an ongoing effort that starts with individuals' skills, which includes how to handle poor communication and other barriers to quality communication.

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Some challenges and barriers:

- Language
- Volume
- Interpretation
- Vocabulary
- Proximity
- Medium
- Nuances (generational, geographical, cultural, etc.)
- Tone, or lack thereof
- Accents
- Jargon
- Sarcasm
- Humor
- Interference
- Assumptions
- Education
- Perspectives
- Gossip
- Silence
- Talking
- Reading
- Hearing

Safety

One barrier to healthy communication is Safety, and not just physical. If someone fears retaliation, ridicule, retribution, or ostracization for being honest and open, then they will cease to be both. Communication stops, cooperation decreases, and work suffers. Feeling safe to express opinions, complaints, and observations creates and builds upon Trust and reinforces a healthy feedback loop.

Civility

Being nice goes a long way. Civility's subtlety is often overlooked and undervalued. Yet, it can be the difference between thinking you are being yelled at and being supported. Being civil reduces anxiety, promotes connection, improves morale, and boosts company reputation, among other things.

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Confidence

The body's reaction to Fear is similar to (if not the same as) its reaction to worry, stress, and dread; three things that many people face at work. The body produces chemicals that are effective and necessary in real Fear situations, but when produced too much and too often these chemicals present serious health hazards. If the Fear reaction is persistent, then confidence erodes, and health is compromised. When confidence is present, fear and stress have been diminished.

Trust

Trust provides many benefits to the overall function of your brewery team. Perhaps the most significant benefit is the lack of distrust. Difficult to achieve and maintain, Trust is vital to team function. Without it, none of the other dynamics will survive.

Unity

Allows for sympathy and empathy for colleagues and customers, commitment to work quality, peer empowerment, and comfort during hard times. A unified team is internally supportive, educational, and nurturing.

Dignity

When self-worth is attacked or threatened our defensive mechanisms kick in. Sometimes, those Fear chemicals are released, other times we seek to avoid certain situations or people. When dignity diminishes, so too does the desire to work, among other things.

Dispute

Contrary to common perception, dispute can be a good thing. In fact, it is required. How dispute is handled is the key. Without dispute, nothing is challenged, considered, or changed. If a beer shows signs of infection, then a dispute exists, regardless of your awareness. It is important to allow disputes to be overt so they can be managed.

Enthusiasm

Your brewery team produces energy when all the pistons are popping. Positive energy that is difficult to describe and maintain. The desire to produce quality work intensifies and the enthusiasm can be contagious. Brewery personnel are excited to come to work.

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As with the other ingredients, the People Ingredient is complex and dynamic yet is often overlooked, undervalued, or ignored. Sometimes, this is passive; there is a lot to do every day and looking after each ingredient is just not possible. No fault in that, running a small business is not easy. Yet, it is important not to get used to this passivity. We all know people are important to the business. They deserve attention and nurturing.



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