

case 1-428-861
August 21, 2009

Zingerman's Community of Businesses

Introduction

In late 2005, Ari Weinzweig returned to Ann Arbor, Michigan, after several weeks of traveling the world. Although he had technically been away on business, the trip for him was primarily pleasure, since it centered around his passion for “really, really good food.”

The evening, Ari arrived back in Ann Arbor, he stopped by Zingerman's NextDoor for a cup of tea (his favorite hot beverage), realizing that he would need the extra energy while reading through all his emails before returning to a full schedule the next morning. As he prepared his own cup of tea, he witnessed the following customer experience:

“One thousand three hundred eleven cents will be your change, sir,” the smiling, bearded cashier said to the exhausted-looking customer as he handed him a ten-dollar bill, three ones, a dime, and a penny. The customer, who had appeared almost lifeless to that point, lit up and cracked a wide grin. The cashier then leaned forward, and in a loud whisper said “My recommendation—pop this in the microwave for about a minute. You won't be sorry.” The customer did as the cashier recommended, and the smile he first cracked because of the cashier's friendly service continued as he delighted in his warm, oozing, rich slice of Hunk O' Burnin' Love Chocolate Cake.

As chief executive officer of Zingerman's Community of Businesses, Ari couldn't help but be proud after watching the customer's mood change from gloom to bliss. Ari reflected on the dedication and shared passion of many of his employees. He thought back on all he had learned in the over 23 years since co-founding Zingerman's, resolute to keep Zingerman's a great place to work and eat while continuing with his ambitious growth plans in the years to come.

Company Background

In 1982, Zingerman's Delicatessen was established in Kerrytown, a historic Ann Arbor, Michigan, neighborhood with brick roads, expensive boutique shops, and a weekly farmer's market. Zingerman's wacky, disproportionate, unpolished artwork was displayed prominently throughout the store, its menus, and its promotional mailings. (**Exhibit 1** includes several examples of Zingerman's signature artwork.)



Published by GloboLens, a division of the William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan.

Ryan Gunderson, MBA, prepared this case under the supervision of Professor Wayne Baker as the basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling. Special thanks to Maria Farkas for editorial assistance. ©2009, Wayne Baker.