

Case Study

Chuck's Wagon

Background

- You have been the HR leader at Chuck's Wagon, a chain of restaurants with 410 employees spanning three states, for ten years. The company has grown steadily over that time and is positioned to open four new stores in the coming year--the biggest growth to date.
- In recent months, you have noticed that some of the corporate support (accounting, HR, legal) has not grown fast enough to support the store growth. This has led to slower response times and some frustration for store management. It has come to a head and company leadership has demanded resolution to the problem.
- In addition, a service workers union has been making itself known among your staff in one of the states that the company operates, and you believe that one current employee may be a union sympathizer. Management has called you for help.

Discussion Questions

Take five minutes and consider the following questions. I encourage you to make notes on a sheet of paper or on a notepad app so you can match your suggestions with those on the following pages.

- What should you do first?
- What specifically do you need to do to get the corporate support up to par?
- What should you do, if anything, about the union activity?

Possible Considerations

First Things First

- Because there are two critical needs, you should present them to the company leadership for direction. While they told you the priority was corporate support, the union campaign may take precedence over that when given the options.

Possible Considerations

Corporate Support

- Due to the rapid growth in recent months, it's important to ascertain where the gaps are in support so you can help solve the problems. Don't assume the problems are people-based; for instance, the accounting team may need additional software to become more efficient, eliminating a need for additional staff.
- Hold a quick town hall meeting teleconference with your store managers to ask them specifically what their needs are so you can address them as needed.
- Because there is rapid growth on the horizon (four new stores in the coming year), it's important to ensure a better mechanism is in place for getting support to the store managers and for them to request assistance. If there are gaps in coverage/support, you need to know about it so you can resolve it ASAP.

Possible Considerations

Union Activity

- If you are unfamiliar with labor relations, it would be worth bringing legal into the discussion to help ensure that you avoid any appearances of unfair labor practices.
- Depending on the level of infiltration and your time to respond, it may be worthwhile to prepare an anti-organizing campaign discussing the facts of union organizing and your position.
- Do not threaten or coerce any employees or promise any benefits they do not currently have.
- You may post factual information about the union and organizing in general on company bulletin boards.

About

This case study was developed as a tool for students preparing for the PHR and SPHR exams as a way to demonstrate the various scenarios that HR professionals face in their daily work. The suggestions are not the only “correct” answers and are provided to help guide further exploration into the concepts covered by the case study.