

FRONTLINE FOCUS

The Customer Is Always Right—Carol Makes a Decision

Rachel, one of Carol's brightest team members, identified the problem that Dave had created for them right away: "So we have a new menu that's supposed to bring in new customers, but we're only going to make a few healthy items to ensure that we sell lots of our unhealthy but more profitable items—is that it?"

"Looks like it," said Carol.

"Well, I hope I'm not working the drive-thru window when we start to run out of the new items," said Rachel. "Can you say 'bait and switch'?"

Fortunately, the new menu items wouldn't start until next week, so Carol had time to work on this potential disaster. She couldn't believe that Dave was being so shortsighted here. She understood his concern about sales, but healthier menu items would bring in new customers, not reduce his sales to existing ones. Sure, some might switch from their Jumbo Burger to a salad once in a while, but the new sales would more than make up for that. Plus, advertising items and then deliberately running out just wasn't right. She'd run out of things before—if there had been a run on a particular item or Dave had messed up the supply order—but she had never deliberately not made items just to push customers toward more profitable items before, and she didn't plan to start now.

For the first week of the new menu choices, Carol worked harder than she had done in a long time. She covered the drive-thru window through the breakfast, lunch, and dinner rushes, and when Dave made his trips to the bank for change or to their suppliers when he forgot something in the supply order, she ran in the back and made extra portions to make sure they never ran out. It was a close call once or twice when she was making things to order, but the customers were never kept waiting.

At the end of the week, she had all the information she needed. Sales were up—way up—the new items were a big hit. She had been able to sell everything she had made without affecting the sales of their traditional items. Now all she had to do was confess to Dave.

QUESTIONS

1. Did Carol make the right choice here?
2. What do you think Dave's reaction will be?
3. What would the risk have been for the restaurant if they had implemented Dave's plan and deliberately run out of the new items?