

Consultation and Organizational Behavior Analysis of Qdoba

Team Orange: Jordan Atmeh

Dominic Gilani

Tiffany Lim

Jami Martinez

Yakov Slepoy

Madeline Taylor

The University of Texas at Dallas

Table of Contents

Consultation and Organizational Behavior Analysis of Qdoba

Qdoba Mexican Grill is a chain of fast and casual Mexican themed restaurants located in the United States and Canada. The culinary specialization of Qdoba includes homemade queso and “build your own” burritos and bowls. Upon visitation to the Qdoba Richardson location, Team Orange conducted a historical overview, analysis, and recommendations for the company.

Company Summary

Historical overview. Originally, Qdoba was founded under the name of Zuma Fresh Mexican Grill in 1995 by Anthony Miller and Robert Hauser in Denver, Colorado. Mr. Miller selected the name of Zuma because that was the name of a close friend’s cat. Mr. Hauser had attended the Culinary Institute of America and developed recipes for healthier foods by replacing animal fats with vegetable oils along with using more fresh vegetables and herbs. He specialized in Mexican themed foods and assisted Miller in the creation of a menu for Zuma’s. They envisioned a restaurant where customers could choose healthy meats and vegetables and build their meal however they desired. The restaurant was a success in the first year with profits exceeding \$1,500,000. The high profits and high customer volume resulted in 21 new locations opening by 1998.

However, many restaurants sued Zuma Fresh Mexican Grill for copyright infringement on their names sounding too similar. Zuzu Handmade Mexican Grill in Boston forced Zuma's to change their name to Z-Teca Mexican Grill in 1999. After that, Z'Tejas Southwestern Grill in Arizona and Azteca's in Washington sued Z-Teca by stating their names sounded too similar. Following the lawsuit, Z-Teca officially changed its name to Qdoba Mexican Grill. In 2003, Jack in the Box Corporation purchased the Qdoba chain from ACI Capital, which, resulted in over 600 Qdoba locations opening and operating as of 2013. Currently, Qdoba Mexican Grill is the only wholly owned subsidiary of Jack in the Box Corporation that allows franchising (Qdoba Restaurant, 2003).

Organizational structure. The organizational structure of the Qdoba restaurants is a functional structure (see Appendix A for Qdoba functional structure diagram). The top of the chain for the Richardson Qdoba consists of the franchise owner, followed by the manager. The assistant manager reports to the manager and oversees the subdivided departments of kitchen staff and front-end staff. Both departments have a shift supervisor that reports to the assistant manager. An average shift consists of roughly 4 kitchen staff members and 4 front-end staff members. The shift supervisors oversee one 8-hour shift per day. On the corporate level, Mr. Villagranana stated that each operating state is divided into regions, where a manager is assigned a region. This constitutes a geographical structure on the corporate level. Each regional manager reports to the state-level manager, and each state-level manager reports to the corporate office of Qdoba in Denver, Colorado. The Denver corporate office feeds into the Jack in the Box headquarters in San Diego, California. Both corporate offices are intertwined for

operational functions for Qdoba restaurants. However, very little information about the corporate structure of Qdoba can be found online or through primary sources.

Mission statement. The direct mission statement encompasses the company's loyalty to their customers and authenticity of their food with: "We are flavor fanatics. Food is our passion. And you loving our food is our promise. We encourage you to experiment with our unique flavors. Ask us for a sample of anything. Try something new. Create a dish from scratch that's uniquely your own. And if you aren't completely satisfied with what you ordered, bring it back. We'll gladly prepare something else free of charge." This mission can be found on Qdoba's company website, as well as on their to-go bags and beverage vessels. Qdoba feels that the customer has a right to choose what they want to eat and how they want that food. The mission statement and spirit of Qdoba is epitomized in their motto "We Live Food." This alludes to their authentically inspired dishes that are flavorful, unique, and offer a variety of entrée selections for their customers.

Organizational Commitment

Employees are generally able to commit to their organization through many means, regarding fiduciary purposes and situational circumstances. There are some employees that develop high levels of organizational commitment, and they are able to increase their work performance, profitability, and productivity. By creating a family oriented work team, Qdoba has exemplified affective commitments within their employees in the organization, yet they lack continuance commitment for all employees and normative commitment in general.

At Qdoba restaurants, everyone is treated like family, or "familia", to which employees and managers are acquainted with one another in and out of the workplace. Antonio

Villagranana, Assistant Manager for the Qdoba Richardson location, announced that he has never worked with a company that has a better work environment than Qdoba. He also says that he could not imagine working for another company because he is happy there and has a sense of belonging. Mr. Villagranana stated that the employees spend several hours of the workday interacting with one another. When the employees are not at work, they go together to the movies, haunted houses, weddings, and other social functions. This demonstrates that the Qdoba work team has an emotional attachment to the company, fostering affective commitment. Following the erosion model, the turnover rate is low at Qdoba as a result of the strong emotional commitment.

The company hires from within its staff, which makes job promotion equal to all employees and increases work performance for those seeking a higher position. This demonstrates a cost-based commitment because giving the opportunity to be promoted in a workplace that is much like a second family creates sacrificial embeddedness. Once a regular associate reaches the managerial level, the individual is open to a higher salary and health care benefits, which can result in a longer-termed manager. If the manager were to leave the job, they would sacrifice a salary and healthcare. By building long-term relationships with the organization, the manager is setting roots and becoming comfortable with their continuance commitment, which makes quitting and seeking new employment difficult because of the incentives and benefits. However, this is not the case with all of the other employees. Anyone who is not a manager does not get a salary, healthcare, or any other sort of benefit. Furthermore, the veterans that are hired only receive benefits if they are managers.

Of the three different types of commitments (see Appendix B for commitments), it is not apparent that many of the workers stay because they feel obligated to. Workers feel obligated to one another due to affective commitment. The incentives and benefits the company offers its managers create continuance commitment for them only. However, Qdoba does not offer specific training or skill development for its employees. Active participation in their community and charities are not associated with the company, thus creating little or no normative commitment. It can be noted that many stars and citizens are amongst the Qdoba employees (see Appendix C for Stars & Citizens chart). Mr. Villagranana said it might be difficult for people to quit because everyone is supportive and involved with one another, like the way citizens are. He also said that there are many employees who are knowledge workers and can exceed normal performance in multiple tasks within the workplace. Since the tasks are semi-complex, these Star employees are beneficial for overall work performance and productivity.

Having emotionally committed workers can increase productivity, profitability, and performance. Offering decent benefits can give a reason for employees to stay based on continuity. But not having any normative reason for staying will not result in a guilt feeling of staying because they ought to when the employee decides to seek alternative employment.

Team Process and Communication

Since Qdoba is in the food service industry, their businesses depend heavily on how their employees execute their work processes and communicate together as a team. Therefore, the daily task work processes play a major role in the success for not only the employees, but also the company as a whole. Qdoba does an exemplary job at conducting work processes and

communicating on a local level, but needs to explore different means of managerial communication at the corporate level to the local levels.

To assist with communication between all employees, Qdoba offers an online journal. Employees can log on and communicate any idea with a single employee or with all employees at once. They simply post the message and pick the employee that will receive that particular message. This is very convenient for employees to have one major database outside of the work place where they can communicate with one another. However, the preferred way that local Qdoba managers wish to communicate with their employees is through face-to-face contact, which can guarantee information richness. This is the most efficient because it is not likely that the message will be mistaken in any way. Even though this is how local Qdoba managers, like Mr. Villagranana, prefer to communicate, corporate only offers the journal as a means of communication for employees to the managers.

Qdoba influences boundary spanning by promoting positive competition between existing locations through means of scout activities. They inform their employees about the sales and current customer service rankings to help motivate each location to compete with other locations. Regional and franchise Qdoba locations are actively involved with these task work processes. However, corporate is rarely involved with task work processes and has shown little ambassador activities.

Staff validity and hierarchal sensitivity are utilized within Qdoba by having a full disclosure policy. This assists the restaurant management with their decision making because they feel like they can trust their employees. Since the cohesion and potency among the team is strong, employees and managers can keep an open line of communication, which makes everyone more aware of what is going on within the business. This also allows management and

employees to make decisions together, which can result in groupthink. Corporate does not seem to intervene in groupthink policies with each restaurant. Mr. Villagranana stated that he has rarely spoken to corporate management and has never met the CEO of Qdoba or any Jack in the Box corporate affiliate.

Team Characteristics and Diversity

The employees at Qdoba are part of an environment that is dedicated to providing authentic food for their customers. The employees interact with one another often, as well as with management. However, team characteristics will suffer if work processes remain static. In addition to detrimental work processes, low diversity was observed at the Qdoba Richardson location.

At Qdoba, the employees are engaged in work teams within their given environments. The front-end team routinely makes burritos, bowls, and other dishes in an assembly line orientation. At the end of the line, the cashier charges the customer. The kitchen work team prepares food and keeps the food handling area sanitized throughout the hours of operation. Each Qdoba restaurant has a management team, which consists simply of one manager and one assistant manager. The assistant manager, Mr. Villagranana, stated that he and the manager coordinate daily activities. They also keep work operations running smooth and constant based on customer traffic flow during the operating work hours.

The types of employee interdependence rely upon the task that needs to be completed. Because the ordering stations are organized in an assembly line manner, sequential interdependence is utilized. In order to prepare a burrito or bowl, a carbohydrate product is the base of the dish. Then meat is added, followed by vegetables, then spices and toppings. If an error is made in any part of the sequence, the whole dish is invalidated and the process must

restart. This can result in customer dissatisfaction and the staff getting upset with the employee that made the mistake. As for the kitchen staff, cooking and cleaning duties are in a pooled interdependence orientation. Each cook stays at one station and is expected to cook as much as they can in a given time period. Following completion of each culinary task, the kitchen staff then compiles the completed product. The kitchen staff encompasses additive task duties in their team. This may not be a great model for food preparation because one employee may be slower than the other, thus resulting in food being delivered to the front-end at different times in different amounts.

At the Qdoba Richardson location, there doesn't appear to be a significant difference in the diversity of the employees. Mr. Villagranana credited that Qdoba does not look for a specific race, religion, gender, creed, or any physical characteristic in its hiring process. However, it was noticeable that almost every employee was of Hispanic origin or decent. Having a majority of Hispanic employees makes sense with Qdoba being a Mexican themed restaurant. However, a lack of diversity diminishes the use of the value in diversity problem-solving approach. There will be less variety in knowledge and expertise, which can deter solving an issue from different angles.

Job Satisfaction

Many would think an employee's wage would be a large indicator of job satisfaction. On the contrary, the work that is done has a positive correlation to job satisfaction that is more than three times as strong as an employee's wage. A feeling of responsibility for the outcome of one's work is a large contributor to satisfaction with the work itself. When visiting the Qdoba

restaurant, job satisfaction was very high in employees. This was due to every factor of job satisfaction being well met besides a satisfying work experience.

The “Familia” work environment results in all employees at the particular Qdoba location being strongly connected to one another. However, the affective events theory states that workplace events can result in reactions that then influence work attitudes and behaviors. Because each employee is closely connected with one another, emotions can be stronger and fall in the intensive positive or negative when they are triggered. This can also result in emotions falling into the categories between feeling deactivated and unpleasant (see Appendix D for emotion chart).

In addition to this, the work process at Qdoba is mostly procedural. The training process is exceptionally comprehensive of all departments at Qdoba. Employees are educated on what sorts of procedures they must follow if placed into different departments. However, mobility between those departments is minimal. Employees are constrained to a certain department and they usually do not rotate between them throughout their work careers at Qdoba. This can cause non-stimulating routine task performance and an employee could feel their job has little variety and significance. The employees interaction with corporate is highly limited. The highest level of management that the Qdoba employees have met is the regional manager for North Texas, who does not have much influence on the product being produced. This decreases the responsibility of employees for the outcome of the product, and discourages them from taking the initiative to better a product.

The staff is also unlikely to receive feedback from their customers. The manager receives feedback, but due to the procedural nature of the food preparation, not much can be

done to fix any issues. The information is often not passed along to the employees. Not only is it hard to receive feedback, since the task is split up among a team, it is harder to thank the maker of the food when the customer makes it to the end of the assembly line.

Moreover, variety should be administered within the employee's job duty as well as offer more individualistic roles. This can be helped by allowing the same employee to be with the customer through all steps of food preparation. This will build a stronger relationship between the employee and the customer that won't be subdivided between several unknown workers. This will increase the job satisfaction due to having the opportunity to see each project through to the end. In addition to this, job variety will increase due to the performance tasks. Many restaurants similar to Qdoba have a screen that offers a tip option of 10%, 15%, 20%, or none when the customer has to pay will give each individual employee's performance an appraisal. These tips will be distributed at the end of the night, giving feedback to employees and offering incentive to do a good job. Qdoba should emulate this idea that other restaurants have already implemented. Meaningfulness can be inspired by their work due to the satisfaction of good feedback, further increasing job satisfaction.

Related to job satisfaction, surveys were conducted at the Qdoba Richardson location for the employees in order to gauge if they were satisfied with their jobs. The charts express how 3 employees rated from a 1 through 10 scale how they feel out what they have, what they want, and how much they value what they have (see Appendix E-1 for survey sample questions and Appendix E-2 for survey employee results).

Job Performance

Qdoba has in place certain job performances within the workplace. They assign everyone into a certain task and expect an outcome. However, improvements among task performances and citizenship behaviors can be made.

The employees are sent into adaptive task situation training. Upon completion of job orientation, each employee is assigned to different duties in the restaurant and they spend time training in each department. The staff is able to perform wherever they are placed and in a situation where an employee is absent from a certain department, the trainee can step into the situation and keep the process tasks going if need be. In the case of creative task performance, corporate management makes the decisions for new ideas and adaptations. Employees are able to consult their local managers on new ideas and projects, but corporate has the final say. An online journal is utilized for employees to voice ideas and concerns, but that is still not the same as face-to-face communication. This lack of face-to-face exchange of ideas to corporate can result in mild counterproductive behaviors, such as possible incivility or gossiping about the company due to a lack of representation.

In the sense of citizenship behaviors, Qdoba does a great job with interpersonal citizenship behaviors. The “Familia” style allows each employee to assist one another with a heavy workload. They also share information with each other in a timely fashion and are generally kind to one another. The sportsmanship encompasses the “Familia” style because everyone has a good attitude through the high and low parts of the workday. Contrarily, there seems to be little organizational citizenship behavior. Not too many of the UT Dallas student body is aware that a Qdoba is located near campus. Furthermore, most students are unfamiliar about what the restaurant has to offer. Civic virtue seems low because there are no Qdoba events happening in the area. Qdoba does not host or sponsor any events near or at the UT

Dallas campus. Boosterism is nonexistent at Qdoba because employees do not portray the company outside of the workplace. Mr. Villagranana mentioned that Qdoba offers discounted food on Tuesdays and other specials and offers for students. However, these are not advertised by employees outside of work, in advertisements, or online. Customers will only know about these promotions if they enter the restaurant premises.

Recommendations for Qdoba

Engage in more citizenship behavior. The staff at the Qdoba Richardson location should advertise the company more and spread their name to the projected clientele. Mr. Villagranana stated that Qdoba is affordable and targeted to the UT Dallas community. However, it is not well known to the UT Dallas community, and neither are the promotions. In order for the restaurant to flourish in the Richardson location, the employees must engage more in organizational citizenship behavior. These acts involve the employees actively supporting and defending the company, as well as working to improve its operations across its region. Employees must engage more in boosterism activities. Qdoba does not offer any charity events, nor does it offer any events in the UT Dallas area. Similarly, the restaurant offers special discounts and deals on certain days, yet they are not advertised to the public. These deals are only made available upon entering the store.

Employees should actively seek open advertising in the area. They could send coupons to UT Dallas, as well as send brochures and pamphlets portraying their deals, promotions, and specials. Qdoba does have a Facebook and Twitter page, yet those online media outlets are not advertised at restaurant locations. The company can also upload motion picture clips of their offerings on the company Youtube account. A very simple and easy way to attract customers is

if employees make it a known fact that Qdoba has free Wifi. A lot of students travel to Starbucks for a coffee and to study. They utilize the Wifi for their laptops and cellular devices for educational purposes and to have access to different categories of information. This is a common method of studying in modern times. However, Qdoba had nowhere listed in the restaurant that it had free Wifi. If employees engage in boosteristic activities for their companies, they do not have to only show the offers, deals, and promotions that Qdoba has at the current time. They could also advertise that free Wifi is available at their restaurant location. This method of boosterism can attract more UT Dallas customers as well as keep the employees engaged and busy. Plus employees engaging in more boosterism can add variety and significance to their jobs. The same routine tasks will be differentiated and the employees might feel that their work is significantly impacting the community positively by providing a haven for students to study and stay nourished with a healthy food product.

Reevaluate types of organizational commitment. Qdoba should give normative incentives for employees to stay with the company, differentiate the continuance commitments amongst their staff, and tone down the affective commitment. It was shocking to hear Mr. Villagranana say that Qdoba does not connect with the community or offer any specified training to its employees (Villagranana, October 15, 2014). This will be detrimental when an employee needs to switch to a different department or location because they will lack specified training and will be unsure on how to connect to their surrounding environment. Qdoba should offer specific training programs to do other tasks other than food preparation or front-end services. Management should teach them other necessary skills in case they want to acquire a managerial position. With these educational incentives, the common employee would be able to jump-start the careers of individuals. This should start with Qdoba getting to know who wants

to move up the managerial ladder within the company. From there, they could begin training that employee in all of the different departments of the restaurant. Upon completion of those educational instances, Qdoba should train the employee beyond the restaurant scope and start training them to look into the managerial aspect of the company. In addition to those circumstances, Qdoba should actively get involved with the community, or pick a charity and make that a central focus of why Qdoba matters to the public. All of these efforts will be regarded as normative commitments for the employees. When an employee decides to seek alternative employment, they will not just feel nostalgic about Qdoba because of their acquaintances. The employee will miss the workplace because of all of the training they received and all of the good things the company performed in the society. This results in a feeling of guilt and a possible feeling that they must stay with the company because they ought to.

Furthermore, Qdoba should explore giving all of its employees a healthcare incentive or some sort of benefit across the board. Currently, only management receives benefits and the other employees do not. If Qdoba expands their benefits to all workers, then workers will feel a sense of continuance commitment and may not leave the company because they do not want to forfeit their lagniappe. This can result in sacrificial embeddedness amongst all employees rather than solely the management.

Encourage independent work habits. Qdoba must encourage more independent work and slightly tone down on dependent work with employees. It is a positive attribute that the employees are “Familia” at Qdoba and they are so close together. However, this can result in strong social networks and influences. If the employees are strongly attached to one another,

then some of the employees may follow their friends out of the company when the quitting process occurs. Encouraging a little bit more independent work can alleviate this process. Offering more variety and autonomy in job tasks will foster higher independence and allow an employee to concentrate on their particular job. In addition, more feedback and communication from corporate can make employees feel like they are part of a much broader network rather than their concentrated restaurant's network of people. Employees would be less likely to leave the company if their friend leaves if corporate made all employees feel like they were part of a much larger network rather than small, separated restaurants with only one small family.

Autonomy can be a result of the division of labor and independence of certain job tasks. The "Familia" work unit is strong, yet it can result in emotional contagion. If the employees worked just a little more independently rather than so closely with one another, they can get a sense of emotional independence from the other employees. A staff member's issues would not affect the other employees as much and they are able to get their job completed on their own without too much help from the employee with dilemmas. This autonomy can provide independence, freedom, and discretion to the employee that is completing the assignment.

References

Qdoba restaurant chain sold to Jack in the Box. (2003, January 22). Retrieved November 5, 2014, from <http://www.bizjournals.com/louisville/stories/2003/01/20/daily16.html>

Appendix

Appendix A

Appendix B

TABLE 3-1 **The Three Types of Organizational Commitment**

What Makes Someone Stay with their Current Organization?

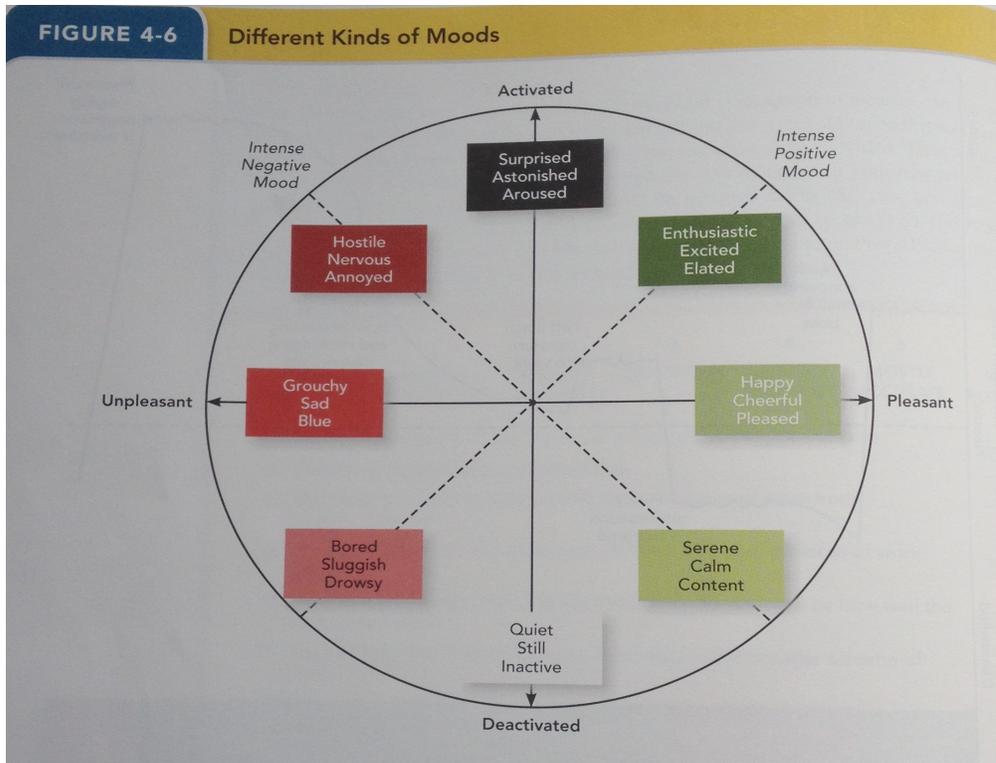
| AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT (EMOTION-BASED) | CONTINUANCE COMMITMENT (COST-BASED) | NORMATIVE COMMITMENT (OBLIGATION-BASED) |
|---|---|--|
| Some of my best friends work in my office . . . I'd miss them if I left. | I'm due for a promotion soon . . . will I advance as quickly at the new company? | My boss has invested so much time in me, mentoring me, training me, showing me the ropes. |
| I really like the atmosphere at my current job . . . it's fun and relaxed. | My salary and benefits get us a nice house in our town . . . the cost of living is higher in this new area. | My organization gave me my start . . . they hired me when others thought I wasn't qualified. |
| My current job duties are very rewarding . . . I enjoy coming to work each morning. | The school system is good here, my spouse has a good job . . . we've really put down roots where we are. | My employer has helped me out of a jam on a number of occasions . . . how could I leave now? |
| Staying because you want to. | Staying because you need to. | Staying because you ought to. |

Appendix C

TABLE 3-3 **Four Types of Employees**

| | | Task Performance | |
|---------------------------|------|------------------|------------|
| | | HIGH | LOW |
| Organizational Commitment | HIGH | Stars | Citizens |
| | LOW | Lone wolves | Apathetics |

Appendix D



Appendix E-1

Survey Questions

Is the work meaningful?

Do the employees feel responsible for the quality of the product?

Do the employees receive feedback? If so, through what channels is the feedback received?

How much does work differ on a daily basis?

How much worse would society be without Qdoba?

How much freedom do employees have in regard to food preparation?

How much freedom do employees have to interact with other people?

How much freedom do employees have to take breaks?

Please respond to the statements with a number from one to ten with one being feelings of constant disagreement, ten being feelings of constant agreement, and five being feelings of moderately occurring agreement. **Please consider the entire work experience and not just your current work day.**

_____ I look forward to the daily tasks that I am to complete every day because I enjoy doing the work itself.
 _____ I work with people who I can rely on and enjoy being around.
 _____ Management is easy to talk to and help Qdoba attain its goals.
 _____ I am provided with many opportunities for more personal growth, a better wage, or prestige.
 _____ I am compensated very well for my contributions to Qdoba.

_____ I want to look forward to the daily tasks that I am to complete every day because I want to enjoy doing the work itself.
 _____ I want to work with people who I can rely on and enjoy being around.
 _____ I want management to be easy to talk to and to help Qdoba attain its goals.
 _____ I want to be provided with many opportunities for more personal growth, a better wage, or prestige.
 _____ I want to be compensated very well for my contributions to Qdoba.

_____ It is important to look forward to the daily tasks that I am to complete every day because it is important to enjoy doing the work itself.
 _____ It is important to work with people who I can rely on and enjoy being around.
 _____ It is important management to be easy to talk to and to help Qdoba attain its goals.
 _____ It is important to be provided with many opportunities for more personal growth, a better wage, or prestige.
 _____ It is important to be compensated very well for my contributions to Qdoba.

Appendix E-2

Survey Results