

Teamwork Scenario
Carnegie Mellon Center for University Outreach
Think Tank on Urban Employment and Unemployment

Introduction

This scenario is part of a research project about Pittsburgh youth and young adults on the road to work. One of the things we are trying to do in this project is to talk to workers about the world of work as it really is. One of the issues that workers and managers in Pittsburgh often talk about is teamwork. Teamwork is the kind of thing everyone talks about – but we may not know that there are many different definitions for what teamwork is. In the below scenario, you will read about a story from a real situation – only the names and details have been changed. We are interested in how you interpret the story – what do you think is going on? Whose problem is it? Why is the problem there in the first place?

Teamwork Scenario: What is Going on Here?

The setting is Salido's, an Italian restaurant. The restaurant is busy, and there are people waiting in line for a table. The manager, Jill is by the kitchen door waiting for the health inspector, who is coming in a half hour. She is talking to a waiter, James.

Jill: James, can I talk to you for a minute in my office?

James: Sure, but I need to get coffee for table 8 and serve table 4.

They go into Jill's office.

Jill: As you can see we are very busy and we need to keep those tables moving. Try to get people out a little quicker, and clear those tables as soon as you can. The customers waiting in line are getting antsy. I know you can handle this.

James: Sure, I'll do my best. Do you suppose you could do the coffee for . . .

Jill: I can't do it right now, James, I have other things to do.

Jill returns to her desk and starts writing. James walks in the kitchen to get coffee for table 8. He walks with the coffee over to table 8, and hands them a bill.

James: OK, you can pay me whenever you are ready.

He reaches over and starts taking plates away.

Customer: Hey, I wasn't done with that! And forget that bill -- we might get a drink after coffee and dessert.

James: Oh, sorry, its just that we have lots of people waiting for a table and I was supposed to get things moving.

Customer: But I am at this table now, and I'm going to finish my coffee and dessert with this young lady until I'm finished, even if that takes an hour.

James: But ... well,, we do have . . .

James looks anxiously over at the customers waiting in line.

Customer: Just let ME talk to your manager.

The manager overhears the conversation and walks angrily up to the table.

Jill: Hi, is there something wrong here?

Customer: This waiter tried to take our plates away and then told us we had to leave so other customers can have our table.

Jill: Oh, I'm very sorry sir. Please, take your time, and let me offer you desserts for free. (to James) James, can I speak with you please?

They walk over by the kitchen, and Jill is thinking "Thank goodness the inspector isn't here yet."

Jill: James, I can't believe you just did that! We might have lost a customer because of this, you should NEVER tell people you want them to hurry.

James: But you told me to hurry them out, so I thought . . .

Jill: Come on, James, you should know that this kind of behavior is inappropriate – that's why I had to intervene. The customer is always right, right?

James: *Thinking, Dag, she's getting an attitude with me!* Really, this isn't right. I'm just doing my job, and now I'M in trouble? AND you made me look stupid to those customers by acting like it was all MY fault!

Jill: James, I'm not going to get into an argument about this. You should already know NOT to hurry customers out before they are through. I shouldn't have to be looking over your shoulder every second -- besides, there are other ways of hurrying customers out that aren't so offensive. Now, I'd like you to go over to that table and apologize. And I also want you to wait on them hand and foot until they are done -- no matter how long it takes.

James: But my bus leaves in 20 minutes!!

Jill: Then you will have to take another bus.

James: *Thinking, there IS no other bus!* But . . .

Jill: James, you have to do what you have to do. You know what I expect from you, and you can make your decision from there. I have work to do. *Jill walks off.*

James watches her leave.

James: Now you know this ain't right. (*James shakes his head and wearily walks over to the table.*)