

Case Study 17:

The Uniform Conundrum

Background

Kaia Patel, a baker and counter service employee at Gorgeous Gluten-Free Goodies, a small, ten-employee bakery focused on gluten-free baking, was asked by her boss, Tori Kim, to obtain information from three uniform companies to assist the all-female bakery team in selecting uniforms. Tori was just too busy with the establishment of a new catering operation connected to the bakery to take the time to do the research. Kaia was to write a short, informal report for Tori to help her decide which uniform provider would have the best uniforms for the needs of Gorgeous Gluten-Free's staff. She was to consider the following criteria: cost (had to be between \$75 and \$100 each), comfort of material, durability, colour choice (needed to be available in brown and pink, the company colours), and range of sizes as the staff varies in size from 00 to 22.

Current Situation

Kaia did some research online into local uniform providers and found over ten that would likely provide what Gorgeous Gluten-Free's staff would require in uniforms. Several companies were eliminated quickly from consideration, as they did not have the size range, meet the budgeted price range, and/or did not provide clothing in the company colours. She narrowed down the companies as requested to the top three in terms of meeting the criteria for uniforms. She did not call the companies directly to gather information.

The Problem

The three companies did not provide information on all the required criteria on their websites. Company A's information did not include the price range for the uniforms that would otherwise fit all other criteria for uniforms; Company B did not provide a size range. While Company C provided all the required information and would offer uniforms in the correct colours, sizes, material, and durability required by Tori, they were charging \$110 for each uniform (pants and tunic top).

Exhibit A

To: Tori Kim
From: Kaia Patel
Date: September 20, 2021
Subject: Information on bakery staff uniform providers

Hey—as requested, here is the information on three companies providing uniforms that I think will fit our criteria for size range, price, colour, durability, and material comfort.

Company A

Company A offers a mostly cotton with some polyester material uniform that should be durable, while being soft and comfortable for our long shifts. Their size range is extensive, from 00 up to 26, so everyone on our staff should be accommodated. Uniforms are available in solid brown and pink—you can mix and match tops and bottoms (e.g. pink tops with brown bottoms and vice versa), and our company logo can be sewn on to the tops.

Company B

Company B offers an all-cotton but stain and wrinkle resistant (treated) fabric in its uniform offerings, and they say the material is quite soft to the touch, like a bamboo-type of softness. Each uniform, including tunic top and pants, is \$89 plus HST, with discounts on bulk orders of 25 or more, so if we bought two or three complete uniforms for each person, we would have a 15% savings on our total order. Colour-wise, the uniforms are in a chocolate brown colour, with pink contrast piping on the sleeves and neckline of the tunic top. Company B can also sew on our logo to customize the uniform for no additional cost.

Company C

Company C offers a cotton-polyester, soft and durable fabric uniform as brown or pink separates (tunic and pants sold separately) and can also customize with our logo. Uniform separates are available in sizes 00 to 28. The tunics sell for \$60, and the pants for \$50; there is no discount on bulk purchase.

I recommend Company B's uniforms because I think the fabric sounds like it would be more comfortable for our purposes. The other companies look like they might be good, but I like the fabric in Company B's offerings best. I think Company C's colours look sickly, and that the girls would not like wearing these colours. I've got no idea if Company B's uniforms will fit everyone, so maybe you can call them to find out.

Should you have any questions about this report, please contact me at ext. 34.

Activities and Discussion

1. What is missing in Kaia's report to help her boss, Tori, make a good decision? Is there enough information for Tori to make an informed decision?
2. Should Kaia have provided her opinion in this report? Was she asked by Tori to provide an assessment? Would this be considered helpful or annoying by Tori?
3. Should a report ever open with "Hey"? Why or why not? What is appropriate for the tone of an informal report written for a supervisor? Is the size of the business a factor when deciding the correct tone for such an informal report?
4. Should Kaia have told her supervisor to make some phone calls to get information on sizes offered by Company B? Is this appropriate? How do you think you would respond if you were Tori?
5. Rewrite this information report so that it provides all the necessary information for Tori to make a good decision on uniforms and follows the protocol for an information only (not evaluation) report.