



**What Makes This Business Great!**

**A Study of Attitude and Motivation  
in  
Two Commonly-Owned  
Successful Restaurants**

**A Research Study**

**February 2009**

**Carl Harshman, Ph.D.  
Robert Miller, Ph.D.  
Ryan Hooper**

**The Institute for Work Attitude & Motivation**  
2510 South Brentwood • Suite 204  
St. Louis, Missouri 63144  
314.963.9170  
[www.iwaminstitute.com](http://www.iwaminstitute.com)

## **Acknowledgment**

The research reported in this study was funded in part by grants from jobEQ ([www.jobeq.com](http://www.jobeq.com)), publisher of the iWAM assessment and the Institute for Work Attitude and Motivation.

Dr. Harshman is the founder and chief executive officer of the Institute. Dr. Miller is member of the Institute's Advisory Board. Ryan Hooper is a graduate student in psychology at Saint Louis University.

This project was conducted with the endorsement and support of the restaurants' founder and current owner. All data and conclusions reported in the study were shared with the owner and his management team and are published with the permission of the owner.

The specific results are not intended to be generalized to all restaurant operations because, as noted in the literature on motivational and attitudinal patterns (MAPs), the patterns are contextual; that is, they may shift as an individual moves from one context to the next and/or from one role to another.

The methodology is, however, transferable. Any restaurant operation or chain can use this approach to (a) define the culture and patterns of the organization; (b) define what patterns differentiate high performers from low performers in a role; and (c) build performance models that will assist in recruiting, selecting, training, and developing employees for the operation.

We are grateful to Jim Fiala of The Crossing and LiLuma for his courage, support, and cooperation

**Carl L. Harshman  
Robert Miller  
Ryan Hooper**

## **What Makes This Business Great!**

### **A Study of Attitude and Motivation in Two Contemporary Restaurants**

#### **Background**

This study was funded by a grant from The Institute and jobEQ in the interest of furthering knowledge and understanding of the relationship between attitude and motivation and the performance of individuals, teams, and organizations.

In addition to the grant and services provided by Dr. Robert Miller and Ryan Harshman, the owner, Jim Fiala, and his staff of The Crossing and LiLuma committed time and energy that made the study possible.

#### **Mission of the Institute for Work Attitude & Motivation**

One mission of the Institute is the conduct of research on the role of attitude and motivation in human and organizational performance. Grounded in the research, tools, and methodology of jobEQ, a global organization devoted to furthering understanding of emotional intelligence, values, and motivation in human behavior, the study was based on the formula:

$$\text{[Motivation \& Attitude]} \times \text{[Values, Beliefs, \& Goals]} \times \text{Competencies \& Abilities} = \text{Results}$$

In studies conducted by jobEQ and The Institute, it is common to find that the attitude and motivation component of the formula accounts for 50% or more of ratings of performance.

The Institute's focus on descriptive research attempts to identify the relationship between attitudinal and motivational patterns and the performance of individuals, groups, and organizations. Predictive studies, culminating in the creation of reference models or Models of Excellence, are designed to identify the key differentiating attitudinal and motivational patterns of high performers and to use those patterns to identify potential high performers from applicant pools.

#### **Description of Restaurants in Study**

- Descriptive study of two restaurants located in same urban area
- Owned and managed by the same person.
- Restaurant #1 established in 1998 known for high quality French and Italian cuisine in relaxed, friendly, but up-scale atmosphere.
- Restaurant #2 established in 2002 has bistro-type setting.
- Third restaurant is presently being developed.
- Success of businesses demonstrated by their longevity and continued expansion in highly competitive market.

## Objectives of Study

Design and conduct study to answer:

- Do attitudinal and motivational patterns reflect a “restaurant culture” that may contribute to success of this operation?
- Do attitudinal and motivational patterns reflect the requirements of roles that people perform?
- Do different patterns exist among key personnel and their roles?
- Does variability of patterns among key individuals contribute to or detract from the success of the operation?
- Is it feasible to develop a “success profile” for employees?

## Owner / General Manager’s Business Model for Success

- Provide consistent high quality food and service to customers.
- Anticipate what customers want and/or help customers decide what to order.
- Gradually “educate customers” with more adventuresome cuisine.
- Create an atmosphere that is relaxed, with staff that are professional, responsive, but not pushy.
- Staff should be humble, willing to suppress their ego to win over the customer with love and being a servant so they have a great experience and want to return.
- Always have enough staff to ensure good customer service.
- Move staff between restaurants for cross-training, support, and learning from each other.
- Hire staff at entry levels, train, and promote from within.
- Treat staff fairly and be clear about expectations.
- Keep turnover low by encouraging personal growth and development.
- Be clear about behaviors expected of all staff and let people know how they are doing.
- Keep on top of the details and manage by the numbers.

## What is Culture?

- Culture defined as values, norms, and expectations shared by staff and captures “who we are and how we do things”.
- Strong culture ensures agreement, at both explicit and implicit level, about how staff is expected to behave.
- Challenge of management is to have a culture aligned with business model

## Culture of the Restaurants

Based on interviews and observations, a strong organization culture exists. Staff are expected to:

- Work hard, be conscientious, and committed to delivering a quality customer experience,
- Be flexible and “go with the flow”, some days are busy and some days are slow so be adaptable,
- Do what it takes, notice what needs to be done and do it,
- Don’t be concerned about roles and responsibilities; it’s “not my job” is not acceptable,
- Have a passion for the business and want to learn, continue to grow, and develop personally,
- Make sure the customers have a great dining experience; don’t be pushy and try to maximize “turns”
- Work together and deal with the stress without “losing it”,
- Keep it civil and respect each other,
- Be on time and ready to work,
- Work hard but keep a balance; don’t over-extend yourself.

## All Restaurant Staff Compared to U.S. Standard Group

Nineteen employees were assessed using iWAM. When all 19 restaurant iWAM attitude and motivational patterns were analyzed and the restaurant pattern mean scores were compared to the U.S. Standard Group means, significant differences (from  $p=.001$  to  $p<.05$ ) were found. Differences in means showed restaurant staff:

- Like goals to pursue and achieve (*high Goal Orientation*)
- Are motivated to follow established procedures and want to understand their work in depth (*high Procedures, high Depth*)
- Do not like to consider alternative ways of doing things (*low Alternatives*)
- Like to keep things the same in their work and aren’t motivated by change (*high Sameness, low Difference*)
- Like activity and keeping busy (*high Activity*)
- Like to work with time schedules; timing is important (*high Focus on Time*)
- Don’t like to work with lots of data or information (*low Focus on Information*),
- Are interested in the tools provided to do their work (*high Focus on Tools*),

- Are convinced by doing something themselves and require ongoing consistency of results to be convinced (*high Convinced by Doing, high Convinced by Consistency*)
- Buy into the restaurant cultural norms and are intolerant of others who don't conform to the norms (*high Compliance, low Tolerance*).

Borderline significant patterns ( $.05 < p > .10$ ) that conceptually fit with the above patterns, staff:

- Are motivated by work requiring organization and planning (*high Structure*),
- Are assertive about telling colleagues that they should follow the rules (*high Assertive reinforced by the high Compliance and low Tolerance scores noted above*)
- Have a high interest in where they work (*high Focus on Place*),
- Do not have strong desire to develop close relationships with others at work and are not motivated by working around others (*low Affiliation, low Group Environment*).

### **Comparison of Front to Kitchen Staff**

Analyses show little difference between front and kitchen staff. The number of kitchen staff is small ( $n=6$ ) in comparison to front staff ( $n=12$ ) excluding the owner.

However, some interesting significant differences were found.

Kitchen staff in comparison to front staff:

- Are more interested in who they work with (*high Focus on People*),
- Want to do something themselves to be convinced (*high Convinced by Doing*),
- Want less change (*high Sameness*),
- Want to have influence and be in control of others and things (*high Power, borderline significance*).

### **Variability of Patterns among Key Individuals and Roles**

#### **Owner/Manager**

The Owner/Manager is executive chef with considerable professional reputation. He spends most of his time at Restaurant #1. This is the original restaurant located in thriving business center and caters to demanding, sophisticated customers seeking fine dining experiences. The owner is soft-spoken, relaxed, but has active presence in his businesses. He is seen as a fair, respected, and effective manager by his staff. His profile indicates he:

- Is highly goal focused,
- Tends to be reflective and patient before taking action,

- Determines how well his businesses are running based on feedback from others,
- Approaches change by building on past successes in a evolutionary, measured way,
- Relies on established ways of doing things and uses procedures to ensure consistency,
- Likes tried-and-tested ways of running the restaurants based on his past experiences,
- Is organized and planful,
- Likes to be active and wants to experience things himself before being convinced,
- Is comfortable being the manager and in charge of his businesses,
- Models the norms he expects of others and does not tolerate noncompliance of others.

### **Restaurant #1 Chef/Co-Manager**

This chef is at the first established restaurant and shares some front management responsibilities with the owner/general manager. He has been an employee for about 3 years. His profile indicates he:

- Is less likely to initiate action than most colleagues,
- Is highly motivated by avoiding or fixing problems more than by goals to be achieved,
- Decides for himself how well he is performing,
- Has a unique combination of seeing “the big picture” while also seeking in-depth understanding,
- Focuses primarily on the content of a communication with little regard for using non-verbal behavior to understand what the speaker is communicating,
- Prefers to work alone and wants clearly defined responsibilities, likes to work independently and not as part of an interdependent team,
- Likes to keep work the same and without change,
- Is comfortable making managerial decisions and being in charge, although may come across as impersonal and uncaring,
- Is convinced by doing something himself, and looks for consistency each time and over a period of time,

### **Restaurant #2 Chef/Co-Manager**

This chef/co-manager is one of the original employees and has been with the owner/general manager for over 8 years. He was involved in the start-up of this restaurant about 4 years ago. It is larger than the original restaurant and has a lighter,

bistro atmosphere in a trendy section of the city. It is located several miles from the original restaurant where the owner/general manager spends the bulk of his time.

As chef/co-manager of this restaurant, he works closely with the front co-manager and is primarily responsible for the kitchen. These co-managers have considerable day-to-day responsibility for the management of this restaurant.

This chef/co-manager has a somewhat different profile from the mean profile of all restaurant employees. He:

- Is highly motivated to achieve goals,
- Is more likely to generate alternatives and less likely to follow procedures than most of his colleagues,
- Is likely to see “the big picture” and not spend much time looking at detail or being precise,
- Enjoys social contact and pays attention to non-verbal communication cues,
- Likes working with a team and not being an independent member,
- Enjoys evolutionary change starting from a base of past experience,
- Highly motivated by working with others.

### **Front Manager/Co-manager - Restaurant #2**

This front manager/co-manager has been with this organization for about 3 years, having previously been a server and bartender. He is responsible for overseeing the serving of food, servers, bartenders, reservationists, and ensuring the front of the restaurant runs smoothly with the kitchen. He must work closely with the restaurant co-manager/chef. Patterns of note in his profile shows he:

- Likes to initiate tasks and is not very patient or reflective,
- Likes structuring, planning and organizing work,
- Enjoys being in control and directing others,
- Likes being part of a team with shared responsibilities,
- Supports the culture of the organization and is assertive in ensuring others comply with expectations.

### **Accountant**

The accountant is responsible for bookkeeping, payroll, time-keeping and doing basic administrative task for the restaurants. She has worked for this group for about one year. Earlier in her career, she was a waitress but found interacting with customers too demanding. She is much more satisfied in her present position. She works by herself in an office behind Restaurant #1.

Looking at her profile gives some indication of why her present position is more satisfying. She is:

- Highly problem focused, looking for errors and fixing things,
- Highly focused on following procedures and not liking to generate alternative ways of doing work,
- Highly depth and detail oriented,
- Motivated by working alone and working independently of others,
- Achievement oriented and not interested in managing or controlling others,
- Convinced by seeing examples and decides quickly, sometimes automatically.

### **Conclusions of Analysis of Key Personnel**

- iWAM patterns of owner/general manager are closely aligned with the overall culture of the business. He is clearly “keeper of the culture”. He encourages staff to follow procedures and emphasizes consistency in ensuring customers have an enjoyable dining experience. His approach to change is evolutionary, building on past experience while planning gradual and planned expansion.
- The chef/co-manager of Restaurant #1 fits the pattern of a successful chef better than that of a general manager and is probably more comfortable in the kitchen than being a general manager. While he is comfortable in exercising managerial control, he may have some difficulty building a supportive team.
- The chef/co-manager of Restaurant #2 has a different profile from many of his colleagues. He has the potential to provide creativity and innovation to the team where most of his colleagues are not similarly motivated but more comfortable following established procedures that have been found to provide consistently high quality dining experiences for customers. He and the owner/general manager are working closely together in planning the development of the third restaurant.
- The front/co-manager of Restaurant #2 shows attitude and motivational patterns of a manager who enjoys planning the efficient operation of the restaurant and is comfortable in change of others. His strong teaming orientation helps keep the front operating smoothly and working effectively with the kitchen.
- The administrator/bookkeeper, who was a server in another restaurant (and says she “didn’t like it at all”), is excellent and satisfied in her present role. Her previous experience is invaluable in understanding the business. Her patterns of being motivated to solve problems, liking to follow procedures in depth, and being an independent contributor, are consistent with an effective accountant and administrative financial person.
- In general, there is high consistency with role expectations in some of the key positions such as chef and accountant. And, where the chef at Restaurant #1 might struggle with some management role expectations if that were all he were charged with doing, it is possible that he “recharges” his batteries by cooking and he is given that freedom by the fact that the owner takes over some of his front manager role.

- The fact that the owner and the chef/co-manager of Restaurant #2 are so different works out well for the business because both have interpersonal patterns that help build relationships. As a result, the two of them create a synergy that takes the best of each and multiplies it by the other. With their orientation to evolutionary change, it is not surprising that they work closely in business expansion projects, i.e., new restaurant start-ups.

### **How iWAM Patterns Relate to Restaurant Culture**

- The key elements of this restaurant business model are designed to ensure customers have a comfortable, relaxed, and enjoyable dining experience. Consistency in delivering this service is paramount. Consistency is achieved by having a well defined culture where the attentive but low-keyed owner is a role model for the desired behavior.
- Most staff are hired at entry level positions and are trained in-house and are moved up based on experience and performance. Appropriate behaviors are understood and staff agree with and conform to “the model”. Many staff are long term employees who value the opportunity to work in a relaxed, but professional, work environment.
- Turnover in these restaurants is low for this industry. Staff are comfortable following procedures and are not motivated to develop alternatives. This eliminates confusion and increases coordination, especially between the front and kitchen, and ensures a consistent customer experience. Time management is also important to ensure coordination between the front and kitchen staff. Staff are flexibly moved between restaurants and support each other although they don’t seem to particularly like working in a group environment.

### **Overall Conclusions of Study**

- The results suggest that there are consistent iWAM attitude and motivational patterns among key staff and these patterns are aligned with and reinforce the owner’s business model, strategy, and principles of business success.
- And the restaurants’ cultures are reflected in these patterns.
- However, change could be a challenge with such a strong culture of following established procedures, limiting alternatives, and maintaining consistency in service and product. However, evolutionary change is spear-headed by the owner/general manager with support by the chef/co-manager of Restaurant #2.
- These results strongly support the feasibility of developing a quick, easy-to-administer pattern scoring system that could be used to screen and select the best candidates from among those applying. By using such a system, management could increase the probability that future employees have attitudinal and motivational patterns that are compatible or consistent with the restaurant’s defined culture.

## RESTAURANT PROJECT

All Employees (N=19)

*In comparison to the iWAM U.S. Standard Norm Group, these employees' average scores are higher (high) or lower (low) than the Standard Group's average scores using t-tests of mean differences.*

### **Extremely Significant Differences (p=.001)**

Procedures (high)  
Alternatives (low)  
Sameness (high)  
Difference (low)  
Focus on Info (low)  
Focus on Time (high)

### **Very Significant (.01 <p<.001)**

Depth (high)  
Future (low)  
Compliance (high)  
Tolerance (low)  
Activity (high)

### **Significant (.01<p<.05)**

Goal Orientation (high)  
Convinced by Doing (high)  
Convinced by Consistency (high)  
Focus on Tools (high)

### **Borderline Significant (.05<p<.10)**

Initiation (low)  
Reflecting/Patience (low)  
Structuring (high)  
Affective Communication (low)  
Group Environment (low)  
Past (low)  
Affiliation (low)  
Assertive (high)  
Convinced by Hearing (low)  
Convinced by Period of Time (high)  
Focus on Place (high)

---

### **Kitchen Staff (N=6) in comparison to Front Staff (N=12)**

#### **Very Significant**

Concept (low)  
Convinced by Seeing (low)  
Convinced by Number of Examples (low)  
Focus on Tools (low)

#### **Significant**

Sameness (high)  
Convinced by Doing (high)  
Focus on People (high)

#### **Borderline Significant**

Evolution (low)  
Power (high)  
Indifference (high)  
Convinced by Period of Time (high)