**Group Discussion**

**Case Study 1**

**Barry and Communication Barriers Effective Communication as a Motivator**

One common complaint employees voice about supervisors is inconsistent messages – meaning one supervisor tells them one thing and another tells them something different. Imagine you are the supervisor/manager for each of the employees described below. As you read their case, give consideration to how you might help communicate with the employee to remedy the conflict.

Answer the critical thinking questions at the end of the case then compare your answers to the Notes to Supplement Answers section. Barry is a 27-year old who is a foodservice manager at a casual dining restaurant. Barry is responsible for supervising and managing all employees in the back of the house. Employees working in the back of the house range in age from 16 years old to 55 years old. In addition, the employees come from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. For many, English is not their primary language. Barry is ServSafe® certified and tries his best to keep up with food safety issues in the kitchen but he admits it’s not easy. Employees receive “on the job training” about food safety basics (for example, appropriate hygiene and handwashing, time/temperature, and cleaning and sanitizing). But with high turnover of employees, training is often rushed and some new employees are put right into the job without training if it is a busy day. Eventually, most employees get some kind of food safety training. The owners of the restaurant are supportive of Barry in his food safety efforts because they know if a food safety outbreak were ever linked to their restaurant; it would likely put them out of business. Still, the owners note there are additional costs for training and making sure food is handled safely. One day Barry comes to work and is rather upset even before he steps into the restaurant. Things haven’t been going well at home and he was lucky to rummage through some of the dirty laundry and find a relatively clean outfit to wear for work. He admits he needs a haircut and a good hand scrubbing, especially after working on his car last evening. When he walks into the kitchen he notices several trays of uncooked meat sitting out in the kitchen area. It appears these have been sitting at room temperature for quite some time. Barry is frustrated and doesn’t know what to do. He feels like he is beating his head against a brick wall when it comes to getting employees to practice food safety. Barry has taken many efforts to get employees to be safe in how they handle food. He has huge signs posted all over the kitchen with these words: KEEP HOT FOOD HOT AND COLD FOOD COLD and WASH YOUR HANDS ALWAYS AND OFTEN. All employees are given a thermometer when they start so that they can temp food. Hand sinks, soap, and paper towels are available for employees so that they are encouraged to wash their hands frequently.

**Questions:**

1. What are the communication challenges and barriers Barry faces?

2. What solutions might Barry consider in addressing each of these challenges and barriers?

3. What are some ways Barry might use effective communication as a motivator for employees to follow safe food handling practices?

**Overcoming the barriers to communication**

The Shannon-Weaver model refers to the process of 'noise'. This can weaken messages that are being sent and offer some real barriers to contact.

#### Types of 'noise'

To use an example, many members of UNISON may not have access to a computer and might not understand the communications technologies that are being used. For some, English might not be their first language. To overcome this problem, UNISON has to create a means in which members can access and use the technology. This has been carried out at a local level through each branch.

Another blockage to interaction is where people are lone workers. There are many expert lone workers for example, meat hygienists and lock-keepers - who aren't easy to get hold of. UNISON has come up with diverse ways of communicating with such employees by carefully targeting its messages to individuals rather than groups.

#### Adapting communications

Being in touch with varied groups of employees and individuals from the health services to the utility industries has not been easy. UNISON has had to be flexible and adapt its communications. This is so it can support its members in a way that shows an understanding of the needs of each group.