

✦ A FABULIZ SOLUTION

## New Dutch Trading Company Guest Service Improvement Initiative

A Consultative L&D Case Study – From Order Taker to Trusted Advisor

A case study demonstrating how discovery-first consulting, root cause analysis and human-centered leadership empowerment reversed a 15-point service score decline – without building a single new training course – and resorted a demoralized team to peak performance within one quarter.

92.5

September Service Score (Goal:90 ✓)

100%

Secret Shopper Score  
2<sup>nd</sup> Consecutive cycle

+20.7

Team Member Satisfaction Points (73 → 93.7)

+9 pts

August Score vs Prior year

0

New Training Courses Created

▀ **Measurement Note:** Two distinct mechanisms are referenced throughout this case study. **Guest Service Scores** are real-time guest-completed surveys collected at checkout, disaggregated into three independent sub-scores: F&B Quality (goal: 86), Promptness (goal: 87), and Service (goal: 90). **Secret Shopper (Shop) Scores** are conducted separately by a third-party vendor via mystery visits evaluating brand standards compliance. Both are tracked and reported distinctly.

### ORGANIZATION

Loews Hotels at Universal Orlando Resort  
Sapphire Falls Resort

### MY ROLE

Manager, Learning & Development

### ENGAGEMENT DURATION

July – October 2019

### SCOPE

Quick Service Grab & Go F&B Outlet  
19 Team Members & Site Leadership

## The Ask – And Why It Was the Wrong Question

**The Problem:** Guest service scores at New Dutch Trading Company (NDTC), the grab-and-go food and beverage outlet at Sapphire Falls Resort, had declined sharply. June 2019 recorded a YoY drop of 15 points – the steepest single-month loss in the review period. F&B leadership came to L&D with a clear request: *Train the Team Members*. The answer was not a training program. It never was.

This is the moment that defines the difference between L&D order taker and trusted learning advisor. An order taker builds the course. A trusted advisor asks: *What is actually happening, and why?* The L&D practitioner accepted the invitation to help – but not the assumption embedded in the request. Discovery began before any solution was designed.

### Specific Business Challenges Identified:

- **Score Decline:** Overall guest service scores drop to ~74.7 avg MTD in July – 13 points below the F&B Quality goal, 12 points below Promptness, and 14 below Service
- **Team Morale:** Transfer request volume had increased; senior leadership observations and guest verbatim described Team Members as disengaged and unhappy.
- **Operational Disruption:** Addition of “Starbucks Served Here” designation increased traffic without proportional staffing; second oven had failed; supplemental barista shift had ended
- **Staffing Instability:** Of 6 Team Members working during the shadow observation, only 1 had been at the location more than one year.
- **Leadership Gaps:** Limited in-the-moment recognition, unclear performance expectations on guest engagement, and the outlet leader spending peak hour in the back cooking sandwiches.

**Strategic Context:** As Manager of Learning and Development, I was embedded as a strategic partner across both Sapphire Falls and Royal Pacific Resorts - responsible for identifying learning and performance needs, advising senior leadership, and building solutions that drove measurable business results.

## My Approach:

### Discovery Before Design

**The FabuLiz Philosophy:** I don't just design training – I build learning products with roadmaps, user tiers, quality systems, and iteration cycles. This program succeeded because I combined *strategic product thinking* (3-year roadmap, tiered framework, sustainability architecture) with *learner-centered design* (engaging delivery, cultural adaptation, continuous feedback integration).

**Phase 1: Stakeholder Consultation (July 2019)**

The formal L&D consultation was initiated at a cross-functional meeting convened with Associate Director of F&B, Complex Director of F&B, HR Business Partner, and Director of L&D. Using the Possible Cause Model as a diagnostic framework – evaluating performance gaps across knowledge/skill, expectations, consequence/process, and obstacles – the meeting surfaced the following critical intelligence:

- May 2019 score dip correlated directly with the end of a supplemental barista shift and failure of the second oven – documented operational variables, not skill gaps
- Guest verbatim and leadership observations indicated morale erosion, not incompetence
- The question asked of leaders: *What are pre-shifts like? How often are leaders recognizing Team Members? What does peer-to-peer recognition look like?* - none had clear answers
- **Key Finding:** The performance gap was not a training problem. It was a performance system problem

**Phase 2: Shadow Observation (July 2019)**

The Manager of L&D conducted a three-hour pre-dawn field observation during peak opening operations. No survey could have produced what three hours at the counter revealed:

Domain	Current State Observations	Opportunities Identified
<b>Team Member Behavior</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kind and warm; good at asking guest names for coffee orders.</li> <li>• Focused on task execution, limiting guest engagement time.</li> <li>• Of 6 TMs working, only 1 had been there more than one year.</li> <li>• One call-out reduced team by 17%.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce structured engage-and-delight behaviors (10-5 rule).</li> <li>• Provide conversation starters.</li> <li>• Leader to model in the moment.</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership Presence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader spent the majority of the peak shift in the back cooking breakfast wraps.</li> <li>• Limited in-the-moment recognition of Team Members observed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redesign leader role during peak hours: front of house, modeling engagement, coaching in real time.</li> <li>• Leader should not be the primary sandwich cook.</li> </ul>
<b>Process &amp; Operations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not all menu items available at 6 AM open.</li> <li>• Doughnuts and sandwiches arrived ~8 AM.</li> <li>• TMs had to leave counter to retrieve food.</li> <li>• Working oven insufficient to cook sandwiches — used only for bagel toasting.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review closing stocking protocols.</li> <li>• Examine AM delivery process.</li> <li>• Repair or replace second oven.</li> <li>• Address root cause of F&amp;B Quality and Promptness sub-score gaps.</li> </ul>
<b>Guest Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steady guest flow by 7 AM.</li> <li>• Guests requesting items not yet available; Team Members unable to fulfill — creating negative first interactions for early arrivals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure menu is complete at open.</li> <li>• Position senior TM or leader to manage early guest interactions and set expectations warmly.</li> </ul>

## Solution Design – Possible Cause Model Framework

Solutions were mapped across the four root-cause domains of the Possible Cause Model. Every intervention was matched to a verified cause. No new training content was created. Local leaders were equipped, coached, and empowered to own the solutions within their domain.

### Solution Options

Knowledge/Skill	Expectation	Recognition/Consequence	Obstacles
—	<b>MET Forms Refresher</b> Reset expectations on guest name usage, engage-and-delight behaviors, and service standards. Delivered in pre-shift starting 8/29. ✓ COMPLETED	<b>Star Card / Focused Recognition</b> Leaders intentional daily: Monday = 10-5, Tuesday = guest name usage. Specific, timely, behavior linked. ✓ ONGOING	<b>Rotating Cashiers</b> Reduces monotony; all TMs support all facets of operation. Keeps energy fresh. ✓ COMPLETED Sept. 2019
—	<b>Keys to Success</b> Location Leader developed key phrases for every guest interaction. Leaders recognize or coach in the moment. ✓ ONGOING	<b>Keys to Success</b> Zero-cost, zero-lift recognition built into every shift. Team earned 3 baseballs in first month. ✓ ONGOING	<b>Oven Repair — 2nd Oven</b> Repair completed prior to August. Restored full sandwich menu at open — directly addressing F&B Quality and Promptness gaps. ✓ COMPLETED
<b>People Bingo</b> Conversation-starter tool building engage-and-delight "muscle" through game mechanics. 🕒 OCTOBER PILOT	—	<b>People Bingo</b> Location Leader draws weekly winner; restaurant voucher as reward (product knowledge). Springboard for Keys to Success. 🕒 IN PROGRESS	<b>Self-Serve Sandwich Station</b> Countertop warmer; culinary stocks from back, guests self-serve. Custom warmers sourced with Complex Executive Chef. ▶ LONG-TERM: In refinement
—	<b>My Voice Round Tables</b> Location Leaders facilitate TM feedback dialogue. 4 sessions of 5 TMs each. HR scheduling. ✓ COMPLETED late Sept.	<b>My Voice Round Tables</b> Reciprocal recognition loop; accountability between leaders and TMs. ✓ COMPLETED	<b>Coffee-Only POS Station</b> Express front-of-house station reducing queue pressure on full-service counter. Testing Oct. high-volume days. Obstacle: PCI-compliant outlet access. 🕒 TESTING Oct. 2019

### Guest Service Score Data – Intervention Baseline (July 2019 MTD)

Score Category	2019 Goal	Prior Year (July LY)	July 2019 MTD	Gap to Goal
F&B Quality	86.0	83.8	73.0	-13.0 pts
Promptness	87.0	85.4	75.0	-12.0 pts
Service	90.0	87.1	76.0	-14.0 pts
<b>Overall Composite</b>	<b>87.7</b>	<b>85.4</b>	<b>~74.7</b>	<b>~13 pts below</b>

### Year-Over-Year Score Trends (January – June 2019 vs 2018)

Sub-Score	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun Δ	H1 Avg.
F&B Quality — 2019	83.0	88.5	81.2	79.7	83.9	77.5	82.3
F&B Quality — 2018	84.8	82.6	89.0	82.6	86.3	85.4	85.1
Promptness — 2019	83.5	88.0	79.9	73.6	88.4	81.3	82.5
Promptness — 2018	78.5	83.9	87.9	80.9	80.9	80.9	82.2
Service — 2019	89.6	93.2	88.0	87.6	91.1	82.9	88.7
Service — 2018	83.2	88.0	90.1	82.8	86.3	86.3	86.1
<b>YoY Delta — Overall</b>	<b>-1.0</b>	<b>+1.4</b>	<b>-4.7</b>	<b>+0.6</b>	<b>+2.4</b>	<b>-15.0 Δ</b>	<b>+0.4</b>

## Measureable Results & Impact

### Guest Service Score Recovery

- July MTD overall: ~74.7 (-13 pts to goal)
- August overall: **89.4** - +9 pts vs LY
- September overall: **92.5** ✓ - over goal of 90
- YoY (rolling 12 months): +0.7 pts
- Scores trending up for 2 consecutive months

### Secrete Shopper Excellence

- Achieved **100% secret shopper score**
- Maintained for **2 consecutive cycles**
- Represents highest attainable score
- Team earned 3 “home run” baseballs in one month
- Distinct from guest service scores (separate mechanism)

### Team Member Engagement

- Employee survey satisfaction score: **73** → **93.7**
- **+ 20.7-point increase** in employee satisfaction
- Leader adjusted schedule to connect with PM team
- Round tables completed late September
- Leadership described: “The space feels different – new, happy people”

### Sustainable Operational Change

- Second oven repaired – menu complete at open
- Rotating cashier schedule implemented and sustained
- “Keys to success” embedded as ongoing leadership practice
- Self-Serve station and coffee POS in active testing

*“Best grab-and-go of all the Universal hotel properties we have stayed. Staff was top notch, especially Kelly who worked in the morning. Every morning for seven days I ordered two lattes and two chocolate croissants. She always had a bright smile and a sunny hello and greeted me by name and knew my order. All the mornings were fantastic, and they clearly work hard to quickly handle the morning coffee crowd. Kudos to everyone. Fantastic customer service.”*

- **Guest Verbatim, Post-Intervention Survey | Sapphire Falls Resort, 2019**

*This verbatim captures three convergent outcomes in a single guest experience: personalized name recognition (MET Forms/ Keys to Success), operational efficiency (oven repair, rotating cashiers), and genuine Team Member warmth (recognition strategy, morale recovery). A seven-day return pattern signals sustained, not episodic service excellence.*

## What This Demonstrates – Having a Seat at the Table

This case does not showcase a training program. No curriculum was designed. No eLearning was built. No classroom was scheduled. What is showcased is something more consequential: what strategic L&D partnership looks like when a practitioner has the access, credibility, and skill to do the work that actually matters.

L&D Advisor Principle	What it Looked Like in Practice
<b>Trusted advisors challenge the ask.</b>	When senior leaders requested training, the practitioner did not build a course. She asked: <i>what is actually driving this gap?</i> Discovery revealed process failures, morale erosion, and a broken oven — none of which training would have fixed. Saying yes to the right problem, not the presenting one, is the advisor's most important skill.
<b>Empowering local leaders is the intervention.</b>	Every solution was owned and executed by the outlet leaders — Elise, Danielle, and Roni. The L&D practitioner did not deliver answers; she facilitated conditions for leaders to find them. Keys to Success was developed by Elise. Star Card discipline was built by the team. L&D provided the framework and the mirror.
<b>Presence builds trust. Trust opens doors.</b>	Attending a 5:45 AM shift. Sitting in the manager meeting. Reviewing guest verbatim alongside F&B and HR. These are how a practitioner earns the relational capital to say: <i>this is not a training problem.</i> Without trust, that statement ends the relationship. With trust, it starts the real work.
<b>Data without context misleads.</b>	The YoY data showed a 15-point June decline. The dashboard could not explain the failed oven, the ended barista shift, or the fact that only one TM had been there over a year. The field shadow surfaced what no report could. L&D practitioners who only read dashboards miss the story behind the numbers.
<b>Morale is a business metric.</b>	The 20.7-point jump in Team Member satisfaction was not a culture initiative running parallel to service work — it was the service work. Engaged, recognized, supported Team Members deliver better guest experiences. L&D that operates only at the skill level misses the performance lever that sits one level deeper.
<b>Structure sustains results.</b>	The October 3 review was not a celebration meeting. It was a formal accountability touchpoint with a defined agenda, solution status tracking, and a clear next-step horizon. Results were sustained because the practitioner designed a rhythm for accountability, not just a moment for action.

***The ask was training. The answer was trust, discovery, and empowerment.  
The result was transformation***

✓ **Discovery-First Consulting**

- Stakeholder needs analysis (July 19)
- Possible Cause Model facilitation
- Pre-drawn field shadow observation
- Guest verbatim synthesis

✓ **Leader Empowerment Model**

- Leaders designed their own recognition systems
- Round tables facilitated, not led by L&D
- Solutions owned operationally by the outlet
- L&D provided structure; leaders provided solutions

✓ **Accountability Architecture**

- Phased solution timeline (immediate/ near/ long)
- Formal October check-in with status tracking
- Next steps defined at every touchpoint
- Results reviewed with senior leadership at the table

✓ **Measurement -Embedded Design**

- Three sub-score goals tracked independently
- Secrete shopper distinguished from guest survey
- Employee satisfaction as leading indicator
- YoY and MTD tracking to demonstrate trajectory

**Replicable Framework:  
The Consultative L&D Approach**

This approach applies to any service, operations, or performance challenge across industries:

**1. Diagnosis Before Designing**

- Stakeholder needs analysis
- Possible Cause Model facilitation
- Field observation & data review
- Guest/customer verbatim synthesis

**2. Empower, Don't Prescribe**

- Leader-owned solution design
- Recognition & accountability systems
- Peer-facilitated round tables
- L&D as coach, not content owner

**3. Measurement & Sustain**

- Multi-metric outcome tracking
- Formal accountability check-ins
- Solution status framework
- Continuous feedback integration

🌟 **The FabuLiz Takeaway: Why This Works**

This engagement succeeded because it honored a fundamental principle: **the presenting problem is rarely the actual problem – and the best L&D practitioners know the difference before they open a slide deck.**

When senior leaders said “train the team,” the easy path was to build a course. The harder (and more valuable) path was to earn enough trust to say: *Let's look deeper first.* A pre-dawn field observation, a structured root cause framework, and a willingness to challenge the ask changed the entire trajectory of the outcome. Not a single new training was developed. The team that was described as grumpy and disengaged became the subject of a seven-day return guest commendation by name.

**The secret?** Combining diagnostic rigor (data analysis, field observation, Possible Cause Model) with *human-centered leadership development* (recognition systems, empowerment, accountability structure). That is where the strategic solutions meet fabulous results – and where consulting becomes transformation.