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**A Comprehensive Analysis of Trader Joe's:
Exploration from National and Omaha Metropolitan Perspectives**

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Abstract

Trader Joe's started in 1967 when founder Joe Coulombe became inspired to provide local Pasadena residents a refreshing grocery store experience. Aimed at the young college student crowd, his idea quickly grew into a chain of successful grocery stores. The concept was simple: private label products cut out the middleman to keep prices fair, and the floor space compacted to feel like a local market experience. With a nautical theme to match the casual and outgoing feel of the stores, customers have flocked to Trader Joe's stores around the country for the "wow" experience only found within those walls. Fast forward to the present day and more than 500 locations exist nationwide in 43 of the 50 states as well as the Washington D.C. area. However, Omaha is relatively new to the Trader Joe's experience. Having just celebrated the 10th anniversary of store 719's opening day, there is no better time to reflect on the past and evaluate in order to have a more successful future. Preliminary results show that employees of 719 are continually pleased with the familial environment and dedication to customer experiences but are displeased with the current style of store communication and accountability measures in place. Analysis of the local and national level will provide insight on improvements for the future of Trader Joe's.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	iv
Methodology	v
Store 719 Analysis	vi
SWOT	vi
National Store Analysis.....	x
Internal.....	x
Marketing Mix/4 P's:.....	x
External.....	xiii
PESTEL.....	xiii
SWOT	xvii
Recommendations	xx
Store 719.....	xx
National	xxi
References	xxiii
Appendix A	xxiv
Appendix B	xxv
Appendix C	xxvi

Introduction

Trader Joe's was founded by original owner Joe Coulombe in 1967. A native Californian, his vision was a new kind of grocery store aimed at the younger crowd. His target market being college kids, Joe created Trader Joe's in Pasadena, CA. Originally called Pronto Mart, the name change happened as Coulombe reinvented what a typical grocery store could look like. Fresh organic food can be expensive, and college kids tend to rely on less than nutritionally viable foods during their years of study. Trader Joe's acted as a window into quality food without the account depleting expenses attached. By offering novelty fresh food in a neighborhood market setting, the idea exploded. Trader Joe's is known for having some of the nicest employees in the business, which is another attractive draw for those bored of the traditional grocery shopping experience. Coulombe transformed the in-store experience by making each store bright and inviting. Each store is equipped with its own art team in order to create vibrant signage and decorate the store throughout the year. The crew members and managers wear bright t-shirts and Hawaiian button ups, emphasizing the excitement and nautical theme that Coulombe put in place so many years ago.

Trader Joe's is a cult favorite in modern day America. As the company has grown, so has the intensity of supporters and popularity. Currently on Instagram alone, there are 56 accounts dedicated to the brand and its products; everything from soon to be discontinued products all the way to vegan recipes using only the store's products. This is what initially appealed to me when I applied to the store. I, like so many customers, was drawn in by the atmosphere of the company and the excitement as I learned about all the delicious products offered. Then in 2020, the Coronavirus pandemic changed my status as an employee. I was no longer just a grocery store

worker, or a crew member at Trader Joe's – I was essential. My change in status became a tremendous stressor, and I felt compelled to reach out to other employees to see how our novelty status was affecting them. Thus, this project came to light. I wanted to take this opportunity to highlight the highs and lows of service work. Trader Joe's as a company has an exemplary reputation, but how does that compare to its individual stores? The Omaha store I was employed by for two years has existed for a decade and was actually the very first Trader Joe's in the Midwest. This presented many challenges, as the concept of "health food" was not yet popular outside of the coasts. With ten years of history, I was very interested to see how the company and my individual store have evolved. Store 719 was the focus of my research, and in the following sections I will detail my findings.

Methodology

Originally, I wanted to conduct face to face interviews with current employees. Unfortunately, due to vaccine limitations and social distancing measures, I was unable to do so. I opted for a Google form structured survey. The survey was comprised of 16 questions, 13 of which were open ended. Participants were given the option to remain anonymous, as I was looking for honest opinions and did not want anyone to feel deterred by the risk of disciplinary action when answering. This method of question and answer allowed employees to think carefully about their answers and spend time on each question.

In order to properly gauge each individual's knowledge and experience with the store I began with a series of prerequisite styled questions. Subject matter included the number of years employed at store 719, what (if any) sections of the store have been led by the participant, and how 719 compares to other stores the individual has worked at (if applicable). The remainder of the survey was geared toward individual opinion regarding the culture of the store, strengths and

weaknesses, recommendations, observed changes, and a ranking of the most important of the company's seven core values (Appendix A, Photo 1).

Store 719 Analysis

Of the 65 employees who were currently working in the store at the time, I only managed to get 16 responses. These responses only account for 24.6% of the staff, and although I made it widely known that this survey was happening some of the staff were just not interested in participating. With about a quarter of the store represented, I still managed to observe some very useful and thoughtful answers.

The average length of employment for the participants at store 719 was 3.2 years. High turnover rates have been something this location struggles with even still, and that is made even more apparent by this survey. Due to the fact this was aimed at reaching the employees who have been with the company since the opening of the Omaha location, this confirms that turnover is a concern. Out of the participants, 37.5% of them have not written or been responsible for a section at 719. This shows another example of new hires because typically employees do not gain the opportunity to take on a section of the store until they have been employed at least 6 months.

SWOT

When asked what the greatest strength of the store is, almost every participant mentioned store environment and crew members. Variety of tasks, lack of drama, and diversity/culture were other like-minded answers pertaining to the overall strength of the store. The crew certainly operates as a family and there is a genuine level of care amongst crew and management that would be difficult to feign. The tight knit, uplifting atmosphere is the same vision that founder Joe Coulombe conceptualized all the way back in 1967. One of the core values emphasizes the

mindset that Trader Joe's is a national chain of neighborhood grocery stores, so the sense of community is ever present, based on the survey answers that were collected. Store leaders were another point of praise, as several crew members pointed out the cohesion between managers and the crew they oversee.

The weaknesses were all across the board, but most responses fell under the umbrella of inadequate communication. One employee emphasized the need for management to adopt a more structured and assertive method of communication as right now the style is more passive and later to advise discipline. The example given was: "If I'm doing something wrong, I would like to have a meeting over what expectations are not being met before we get to the semi-annual reviews and suddenly, I am not receiving a raise when I did not even know there was a problem in the first place". Leniency and nepotism are unfortunately present in this store based on the responses of crew. Because store 719 is smaller than a lot of the coastal area stores, the crew is very tight knit. Unfortunately, this also means that certain managers are tight knit with some crew members rather than others, which leads to a series of unequal discipline or lack thereof depending on the crew member. Several participants listed underperforming crew not receiving equal action if they were "seasoned" or "well liked" by management. Communication is an integral part of a successful business, and it seems like the process of delegation and notification could both be improved in store 719 (Appendix A, Photo 2).

Store 719 opportunities were again all across the board, but majority of the responses focused on improving sustainability initiatives, cohesion of training and management, and the addition of a more prevalent crew forum.

Sustainability has been a hot topic in the last several years, as single use plastic continues to pollute our oceans and overflow in our landfills. In 2019, Trader Joe's pledged to eliminate one

million pounds of single use plastic from their stores. However, each store has different processes dedicated to recycling. For example, stores have the option of whether or not they want to compost food that is not suitable for donation. Store 719 only recently started composting and it seemed as if they process was adjusted about every two weeks, which left consistency to be desired. In addition, the recycling system in place needs to be constantly pushed back to the forefront of priority as new crew is constantly being hired and there are not official recycling processes in place. This leaves a deficit of recyclable material that is either wrongly thrown away, or non-recyclable material that is getting mixed into reusable materials.

Training cohesion was an issue when I started all the way back in 2019, and it seems that new hires are still experiencing discrepancies while they are learning the job. The most prevalent issue is the lack of communication between trainers and the individual performance processes. Of course, everyone will do a task a little bit differently. However, two completely different methods will only confuse and frustrate a new hire, inevitably leading to a lack of understanding and a hesitancy to complete the task on their own. There has been a complete restructuring of training, which seems to be helping incrementally, but without all the steppingstones in place training will continue to be an issue in 719. In addition to training, management needs to see a change in systems to increase crew morale. Just like with training, everyone is different, and managers will have varying styles of leadership. Where the frustration begins to manifest are the inconsistent processes under different managers. Crew members who have been with the company long enough to be considered proficient in their positions know how the store runs, and there are managers who are underutilizing the time they have to accomplish the necessary procedures.

Lastly, the crew forum to voice opinions is something that should be improved. Currently, crew members are able to voice their opinions on management and overall satisfaction during a

yearly survey taking place in the summer of each year. There is also a suggestion box in the break room where employees can anonymously submit ideas, but there is not regularity in checking or following up with these suggestions. Especially in the time of COVID-19, employees need to feel like their feelings are valid and the company is willing to protect them. Having no voice in the way the store is one leaves feelings of exasperation and resentment to grow, and in a company where service is #1, there is a definite necessity to fix this.

Threats affecting 719 are minimal, as Trader Joe's nationally are even more profitable than before as now grocery stores are an essential service. However, 719 is again facing its own set of threats than should be addressed if the store wants to have another successful decade of business.

The threat of turnover is ever present, and with the influx of new hires and recent loss of seasoned crew members, the threat of underwhelming service is something that should be considered. When I was a crew member, there was a noticeable change in the overall feel of the store. As more experienced crew began to transfer, find other employment opportunities, or retire, there was a palpable shift in environment. Processes that were normally streamlined became much more difficult, and more mistakes were made on a greater frequency. If training is not improved, this threat will continue to grow.

Another ongoing threat is the inconsistencies from store to store. Even the processes from store 719 in Omaha to store 722 in Lincoln vary in several ways. The guidelines Trader Joe's corporate structure is vague and lacks clarity. This leads to more of a distinct approach from store to store, which stifles national unity. Sustainability practices, scheduling, dress code, and crew expectations are not concise despite details outlined in the handbook. This could again lead to crew frustration and turnover if not dealt with appropriately.

The last threat comes from a simple ranking of the store's 7 core values (Appendix B, Figure 1-2). When asked which of the core values was most important, 56% of participants chose integrity. Integrity is the very first core value introduced to a new hire at Trader Joe's, and it is integral for an employee to show integrity in the store. However, when asked which of the core values store 719 excelled in, 56% answered that WOW! Customer experience was the winner. It seems as if store 719 is exceeding expectations in some values as opposed to others, and the discrepancy between the two answers reflects that that assumption.

National Store Analysis

Internal

Marketing Mix/4 P's:

Pricing is key to the success of this company. Trader Joe's operates on a system where the suppliers convert the product into a "private label". 85% of the products within a Trader Joe's are all marked as a Trader Joe's product. By eliminating the brand name from the packaging, Trader Joe's can sell quality goods for lower prices than their competitors because the consumer base is paying for the product only instead of having to pay for the product and the brand name. Similar to Costco's rotisserie chickens, Trader Joe's also has "loss leaders" that draw customers in. Bananas at Trader Joe's are only 19 cents apiece, Charles Shaw, also known as Two Buck Chuck, is a cheap wine made in California.

Trader Joe's also is unique in the way that they do not offer any clearance items or sales. Perishable items that could be market down are instead pulled from the shelves and donated to an organization local in relation to the store, for example in Omaha goods are donated to The Stephen Center and Saving Grace.

As I previously noted in the Price portion of the Marketing Mix, Trader Joe's stores contain mostly private label goods. In addition, Trader Joe's uses a less is more kind of strategy. Traditional store chains like Wal-Mart may have hundreds of options when you're shopping for something specific. A good example is jarred pasta sauce, Wal-Mart has around 300 different options in some locations, different brands, flavorings, etc. Trader Joe's has 24 different sauces. By eliminating so much choice, it actually makes for an easier shopping experience. By only providing one of each option, shoppers are better able to make quick decisions and possibly add something they didn't need to their cart. Shopping trips can feel agonizing, but at Trader Joe's it feels more like a positive experience! Another facet of the Trader Joe's products is that they are constantly changing. Not only are there seasonal products that garner attention every year because they have become customer favorites (scented candles, holiday foods, gift ideas), but Trader Joe's also keeps their product line fresh by introducing new products on a regular basis. This keeps their customer base excited with all of the new items and keeps them coming back! Trader Joe's is also notorious for discontinuing items that either did/do not sell well or items that have been in the product line for "too long".

Advertising is something Trader Joe's does uniquely. Simply because they do not conduct traditional advertising. The brand operates almost entirely on word-of-mouth marketing. Trader Joe's is unique in the way that they do not attempt to draw in new customers; instead, they work to keep their current customer base so enamored with the brand that naturally customers will want to tell everyone about it. Trader Joe's will never be seen on TV or heard on radio, but the company has found other more modern ways to initiate contact. One such way is through the use of social media, namely Instagram. The chain consistently posts recipes, new products, and even oversees a customer ice cream competition on the platform every summer, awarding the winners gift cards

redeemable at any Trader Joe's location. In addition, Trader Joe's has amassed enough of a cultural following that fans from all over have created accounts dedicated to Trader Joe's: everything from soon to be discontinued products to wine connoisseur pages are tagged in relation to the brand. In addition, a podcast called "Inside Trader Joe's" hits the airways once a month diving into what makes the brand special. Store managers are invited to speak on the podcast, and every episode is comprised of a different theme. Examples include why employees are so happy, how new worldly products are discovered, and teasers of new products. Although Trader Joe's has somewhat unconventional promotion methods, their customers cannot get enough.

Trader Joe's has locations in 43 states and Washington D.C., and locations are in larger cities and more urban areas. Within the store itself, displays are constantly in rotation. Stores take this opportunity to showcase new items or items that have recently dipped in sales. Large displays with colorful signage are not only eye-catching, but it proves nearly impossible for a customer to miss. Similar to other grocery chains, Trader Joe's also utilizes space near the registers to draw in customers while they are waiting to check out. As far as product availability, since most of Trader Joe's products are private label, they can only be bought in store. The chain also has no intention of offering a delivery or online shopping option, as it would take away from the exemplary customer experience that every store strives to obtain. This makes the locations even more important to the shopper, as it is the only place to get certain products. In addition, the stores themselves on average offer about 15,000 sq. feet, which is only a third the size of traditional grocery stores. This ensures that the space is used efficiently and keeps the store from becoming overcluttered with options.

External

PESTEL

Trader Joe's is a business that is not heavily intertwined with government action. I think the biggest hand they would have in regulation of Trader Joe's as a business is through tariffs on countries, they receive imports from. Many of the frozen products come from Italy and France, so if tariffs were imposed then the prices would definitely fluctuate. In this case, it is entirely possible that Trader Joe's would try and find a different supplier to create a similar product at the price they are better able to pay and charge customers.

Economically, Trader Joe's is a sound business. In 2001, current CEO Dan Bane took the brand's 150 stores to over 500 in 2020. That number is still growing. Because Trader Joe's is a privately owned company, exact growth rates are not readily available to the public. However, it is known that in 2015 annual sales reached \$8.27 billion and 2021 sales are projected to reach \$9.67 billion. Employment numbers continue to grow as new stores open, and the company has over 10,000 employees. With the current times, prices do fluctuate, but the increases or decreases are rarely significant enough to cause consumer problems. In certain instances, as previously mentioned, if the price of a product becomes too high the company will seek out a new supplier. The entire premise of Trader Joe's is providing quality food at reasonable prices, and to this day the company has sought to maintain that reputation.

Trader Joe's started as a grocery store for the college students in California who wanted fresh food with what little money they had. The key demographic Trader Joe's attempts to reach is still categorized as the "younger" generation, those aged 18-40. Health food and the idea of clean eating has become ever present in today's society. People are always looking for new ways to eat

healthy, but their food should still taste good. As a company, Trader Joe's has been a health pioneer since its opening in 1967. Trader Joe's maintains their reputation of "a national chain of neighborhood grocery stores" by donating all unsellable food to local food recovery agencies. In 2020, 69 million meals were donated by the chain as a whole.

As a company, a simpler and more methodical approach to technology is taken. Recent developments include tablets for order writing instead of printing off paper order guides, and a new POS register system. These advancements, while incremental, work to provide a more efficient environment for employees, which in turn allows for a better customer experience. Looking past these advancements, Trader Joe's has taken more of a traditionalist route. None of their services are available online, and in fact stores do not even have a self-checkout option for customers.

Trader Joe's is a retailer that has recently been under fire for the amount of unnecessary packaging and single use plastic present in their stores. In 2018, the stores officially stopped using plastic bags and by 2019 the only bagging option was paper or reusable grocery bags. Produce bags have been replaced with a compostable material, and Styrofoam has been eliminated in favor of compostable alternatives. The brand itself has pledged to eliminate one million pounds of plastic from their stores. This includes eliminating packaging from produce items, swapping out foil and non-recyclable packaging from tea packets and elimination of plastic wrap from greeting cards as well as bouquet wraps. Trader Joe's still has a long way to go in terms of reduction of waste. Many of their products are still encased in plastic, and not even the store recycling programs can properly dispose of this plastic.

In the legal portion of this analysis, Trader Joe's must adhere to labor laws and consumer protection laws. Several different states have separate labor laws in place, meaning break times

and number of hours worked must be closely monitored. Hiring and firing depends on the state as well, for example, Nebraska is an at-will employment state. This means an employee can be terminated at any time without notice as long as a contract is not in effect.

Porter's Five Forces:

As the health food industry becomes more popular, more competitors are looking to enter the market. However, Trader Joe's and Whole Foods Market are the dominant national chains. With the Coronavirus pandemic still raging on, the threat of entry is low. Grocery store workers are considered essential; however, they are lower on the vaccination lists in addition to many companies not compensating their workers for being on the front lines for the entirety of this global crisis. In addition, from the standpoint of a Trader Joe's in Nebraska, Fresh Thyme, a similar health food store, closed all of its locations in the Cornhusker state, citing low performance as the reason for closure. Of course, delivery options are threats to the chain because Trader Joe's has been adamant about its business staying in the physical location and not exploring other options.

The suppliers are the most important part of Trader Joe's supply chain. Due to the majority of products being private label, the brand has exclusivity in that they do not reveal who is responsible for sourcing their products. Similar to Costco and their Kirkland brand, this method works to drive down costs, ensuring the lowest possible pricing options. The suppliers are the reason Trader Joe's is so notorious for unique items you cannot find anywhere else. Not only are these items difficult or even impossible to find other places, but customers know that if they do not shop at Trader Joe's they will simply not get some of their favorite products.

Buyers are the reason that Trader Joe's is so successful. The cult following of Trader Joe's is unmatched by any other grocer. Shoppers do not just buy their groceries from the chain, they experience it.

As stated in the power of suppliers portion, the threat of substitutes is rather low for Trader Joe's. Although there are some items that you can purchase anywhere (like basic produce or cuts of meat), only a Trader Joe's will carry items like lemon elderflower soda or dark russet potato chips. The threat of substitutes does exist to a certain extent, but to mimic the customer experience of Trader Joe's would be an uphill battle. Trader Joe's is the only store that will regularly give away free flowers for events like birthdays, anniversaries, or engagements. The internal environment of the stores is another unique feature, each store is painted with scenes from the city and other features only present in certain areas. For example, store 719 in Omaha shows scenes from the Orpheum, historic Dundee, the College World Series, and Union Pacific. The cost of switching to a new store may be cheaper for some items, however, as previously stated, shoppers will not find all of the items present on their Trader Joe's shopping list.

Of the competitors in the industry, Trader Joe's is opening new stores the fastest. The three main players in the health food grocer industry are: Natural Grocers, Whole Foods Market, and Trader Joe's (Appendix C, Photo 1). Due to Whole Foods' merger with Amazon, Trader Joe's lacks in the delivery and online service options. Trader Joe's also has no membership program, whereas Whole Foods now offers a discount to Amazon Prime members. Natural Grocers also has a loyalty program for frequent shoppers, known as {N}power. Shoppers have access to coupons and exclusive offers, which are earned by providing a phone number at checkout. Trader Joe's does not have any clearance items either or yearly sales. Occasionally, seasonal items will be marked down in price to sell off remaining inventory, however these price drops are not advertised

on the local or national level. The grocery industry as a whole is engaged in monopolistic competition, as they all set similar prices and have differentiated products. The health grocer industry is more of an oligopoly, although conventional grocery outlets are beginning to jump on the health trend to gain a percentage of the growing market. By 2022, the market will have grown by 6%, or \$280 billion.

SWOT

Trader Joe's as a national brand is only gaining popularity and notoriety. Social media companies like BuzzFeed regularly review new products and rank them in degree of taste. Promotional efforts and marketing style have solidified the chain's place as a consumer favorite time and time again. Their unique approach to marketing is refreshing and not pushy, instead their campaigns invite the viewer to constantly ask more questions. The business model is unique because the company does not attempt to draw in new customers with the orthodox methods of advertising. Instead, Trader Joe's focuses on customer retention through a more authentic way of connecting. By utilizing social media platforms, their advertising feels more personal like you are seeing posts from a friend. It takes away the added pressure to appeal to new demographics; why change the product line to accommodate new customers when the loyal customers are verbalizing exactly what they want to see?

Customer loyalty and buying power keep Trader Joe's at the forefront of the health food store market. The emphasis on customer experience continues to be a topic of discussion and customers flock to stores all around the nation for that reason. The commitment to community enables workers no matter the store to form genuine connections with their coworkers and neighborhood regulars. The authentic compassion that most Trader Joe's crew members exude is

unfortunately a rarity in the service industry, especially now with the added tension of the pandemic. The strength of the brand hinges on the customer-company relationship.

Nationally, Trader Joe's is subject to inconsistencies from location to location, and region to region. Although every store is encouraged to form its own exclusive identity, brand unity seems to have fallen through the cracks a bit. State by state of course there are different laws and regulations, but it is up to the corporate office to settle policy issues. Setting forth firm guidelines is an issue that has come up many times while I was employed by the company. The core values are not always at the forefront, and that is an issue that should be addressed. National cohesion is definitively lacking, as store locations are sometimes far apart and there is little opportunity to network with different crew members with refreshing perspective.

The second weakness became even more prevalent during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lack of technological presence and unwillingness to offer no contact shopping actions have stifled new and loyal customer retention to a degree. Many competitors now offer grocery pickup or delivery, not only for safety purposes but also for convenience. Trader Joe's has no plans to ever implement one of these systems, not even a self-checkout register has been mentioned. The reasoning is to not compromise the customer experience that can "only be achieved in store". Unfortunately, in the digital age it is possible to please customers virtually. Before the pandemic Trader Joe's was busy; now in the thick of the pandemic it is still bustling with the added stress of waiting in line due to social distancing measures.

Sustainability is an initiative that this company has had ample opportunity to improve on. After their 2019 promise to eliminate one million pounds of single use plastic from stores, the company has been quiet about new sustainability goals and continued to use unnecessary packaging. In addition to single use plastic packaging, the brand is also guilty of "greenwashing",

or portraying products as Earth friendly when in reality they are not sustainable alternatives. A recent example of this is the 2020 holiday season where there was a national paper bag shortage. Unfortunately, Trader Joe's was forced to use plastic bags once again. The issue is when the plastic bags came in the company was not forthcoming with the details of these bags and employees were instructed to self-advertise them to customers as recyclable and reusable. In reality, the bags were a #4 plastic meaning they could not be recycled in the traditional bins that recycling collection services pick up. In addition, there is no comprehensive corporate guide to recycling and no new sustainability goals for stores or the national chain.

The reputation of Trader Joe's is one of friendliness and reliability. However, as a company with more than 10,000 employees, there is a duty of care that should be provided. Employees expect to be protected and stood up for. Trader Joe's as a corporate entity remains neutral on major events, political and otherwise. One such example is the Black Lives Matter movement that reached a peak last summer after the murder of George Floyd. Trader Joe's released a statement of inclusion, but it was vague and provided no actual stance on the movement. Employees are encouraged to act with integrity and treat everyone in store with respect. This expectation of integrity becomes counterintuitive when employees were subsequently sent home or disciplined for wearing clothing or accessories showing support of BLM. Another modern issue is the pandemic. Trader Joe's has given a stance on masks, but still allows shoppers to enter the store without a mask in several states. Again, it's a "store by store" policy. Corporate has an opportunity to become assertive with their positioning in modern events and make sure the employees they are speaking for feel adequately represented.

The first threat is something that is out of Trader Joe's control; the Coronavirus pandemic. With the vaccination rates increasing, the threat will continue to weaken. However, the effects will

continue to be felt by the company's supply chain. Several of the most sought-after items, and much of the frozen department, are imported from European countries. With the pandemic still surging on, shortages will continue, and Trader Joe's may find themselves in a compromising position: either charge on imported items or discontinue them, both of which are not ideal customer pleasing solutions.

The last piece of this SWOT analysis is the threat of employee unionization, which has been an ongoing debate the last two years. After last year when conversations regarding hazard pay arose, the threat of unionization became stronger. Employees across the country began to feel that the company was encouraging wellness and staying home until review periods where raises were withheld, insurance was not maintained even though the company had widely promoted that it would be, and additional hazard pay was taken away a month after being instated. Whispers of unionization are growing stronger because transparency with employees is key, and in today's world it has become crucial to maintain benefits and continue making a livable wage.

Recommendations

Based on the analyses conducted for the Omaha store 719 and the national chain, here is a comprehensive set of recommendations. Implementation measures are included for the full scope of problem recognition to effective solution.

Store 719

The Omaha location has an incredible staff that keep it running well. The problems in the store seem to all stem back to communication efforts and overall integrity.

The first 719 recommendation is for management to sit down and figure out how to better implement notices and meetings for disciplinary action. The current system of passivity causes resentment from the employee and resentment from management over the underperforming employee not improving. With the current gap in communication, there is no check in period for employees when their efficiency and performance begin to decline. This is where management should start checking in with crew members who are struggling and simply having a weekly or bi-weekly meeting to see what is going on and working mutually with the employee to find reasonable solutions before the behavior becomes a problem.

Training cohesion is something that needs to become better, as it has been an issue for years and continues to come up in weaknesses. When managers are selecting trainers, the trainers should be required to meet together and go over how they complete individual tasks. If there are differences, the capable trainers can mutually decide how the task could and should be done. If discrepancies continue, that is when a manager steps in to clarify or decide the correct method. Everyone is a little bit different, and discourse may occur with this solution, however everyone in the store should be doing things the same and most efficient way for a consistent store environment.

National

On the national scale, there are several problems that need to be address and dealt with accordingly. Overall, the most prevalent issues are sustainability measures, corporate and crew unity, and corporate responsibility.

Sustainability is only going to become more of an urgent initiative as time goes on. Global warming and pollution damage cannot be reversed, all that can be done now is a change in patterns and a commitment to a greener future. Trader Joe's can do this by ceasing use of plastics with produce. Much of the packaging used for produce is unnecessary. If produce needs to be put into a bag or a box that could be replaced with cardboard, paper, or compostable material. In addition, Trader Joe's as a company needs to put more comprehensive recycling and compost measures in place so every single one of the stores knows exactly how it should be done. Employees then have less to worry about if they decide to transfer stores, because they already know exactly what to do with the reusables. Without these measures being solidified, individual stores will continue in this limbo of not fully committing to reduce wasting and recycling.

Corporate has a lot of work to do as far as the employee representation goes. There is a general disconnect from store to store, and although neighborhood markets are the goal, it has to be stressed that nationally all stores belong to one entity. The unification should be at the forefront of corporate responsibility. Not only does the corporation have a duty to fully represent the needs of their staff, but to communicate that publicly and put policies in place that reflect those needs. One idea that would be beneficial is to have locations that are in close proximity to each other meet every 6 months in order to check in, bounce ideas off of each other, and make it a point to network. Even in a state like Nebraska where there are two locations only, it would still make a difference and provide a greater sense of Trader Joe's community. This should be required by corporate, and regional managers should be more readily available to crew members as a resource when problems or discourse arises.

With the provided recommendations, I believe Trader Joe's on both the Omaha metropolitan and national level will grow into a more well-rounded and efficient company.

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Appendix A

Photo 1:

Trader Joe's 7 Core Values

THE 7 GOLDEN RULES AT **TRADER JOE'S**

<p>Integrity</p> <p>In the way we operate stores and the way we deal with people. Act as if the customer was looking over your shoulder all the time.</p>	<p>We are a “national /neighborhood” company</p> <p>Our customers benefit from our national buying ability, but we want each store to be close to the customer and really a part of their neighborhood.</p>	
<p>Produce customer wow experiences</p> <p>We celebrate the special way we treat and relate to our customers. We think retailing is all about customer experience, and that is what really differentiates us.</p>	<p>Product-driven</p> <p>Our strategy emphasizes price, product, access, service, and experience. We want to excel at one, be very good at another, and meet customer expectations on the others.</p>	<p>Treat the store as the brand</p> <p>Individual products are not the brand. The store is. Brand is really the covenant between the company and the customer, and the real key is day-to-day consistency in meeting and satisfying needs.</p>
<p>We hate bureaucracy</p> <p>We give everyone a license to kill bureaucracy. All officers are in cubicles. The CEO is in a conference room. We have very few layers—a very simple organization.</p>	<p>Kaizen</p> <p>Each one of us every day is trying to do a little better. This is infused into our training programs. We really stress teamwork and working together, while we do not do elaborate budgeting at the store level.</p>	

Watch the full story about this framework on my YouTube channel © Dan Croitor 2017 • part of my video series about unique company principles and culture

Photo 2:

Store 719 Signage



Appendix B

Figure 1:

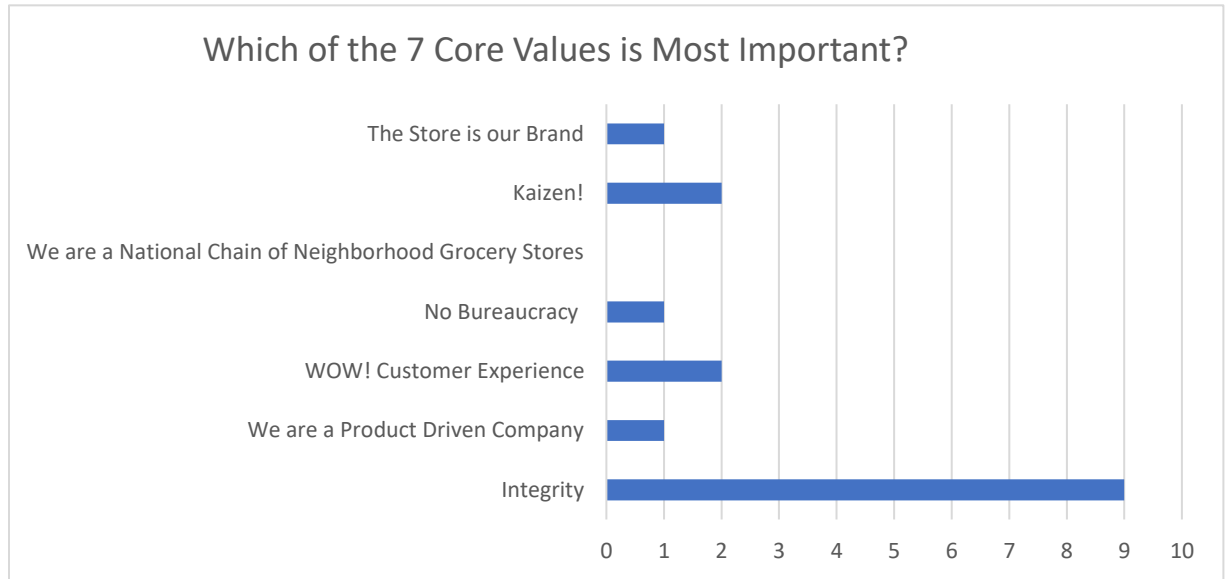
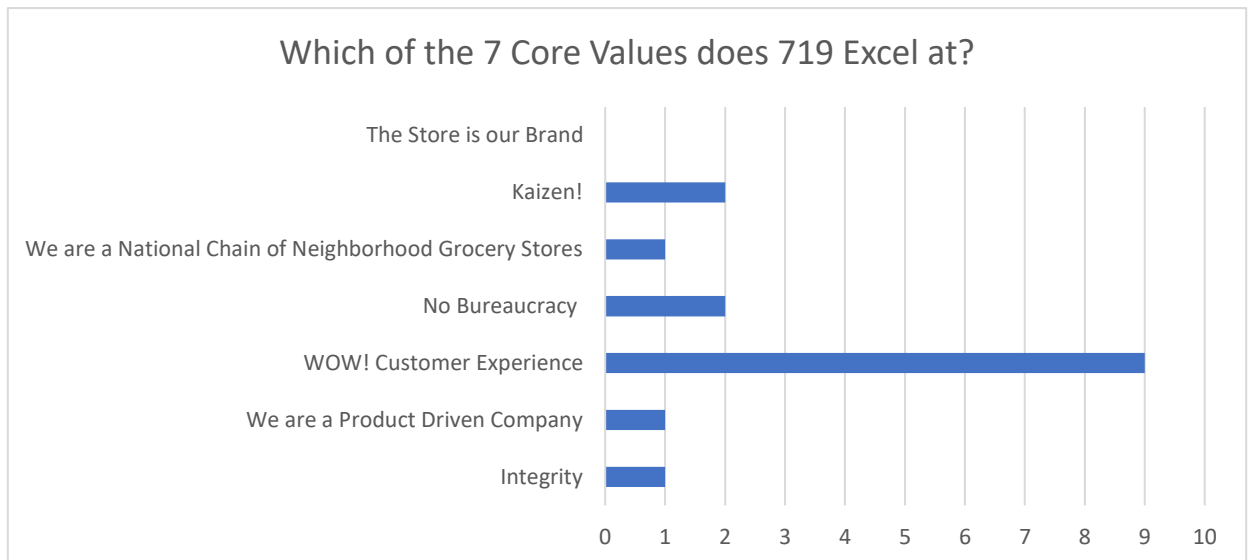


Figure 2:



Appendix C

SWOT for 719:

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Crew culture	Passive communication	Sustainability initiatives	Employee turnover
Store Atmosphere	Nepotism/unequal crew treatment	Cohesion of training processes	Underwhelming service
Variety of tasks	Crew – Management communication	Improved crew forum	Varied processes from neighbor stores
Sense of community			Store value priorities

SWOT for National Chain:

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Marketing style and brand recognition	Brand/national unity	Sustainability initiatives	COVID-19 pandemic
Customer loyalty and retention	Lack of technological advancements	Corporate stance and responsibility	Employee Unionization
Crew friendliness	No curbside/grocery pickup options	Corporate standardization	Public backlash

Photo 1:

Competition Maps

