

Report Eremia-Alex Avram

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Introduction

Bella Vita is a traditional Italian restaurant located in Nottingham, offering a range of authentic dishes made from fresh ingredients sourced locally and from Italy. With a focus on delivering an exceptional dining experience, Bella Vita has established itself as a popular choice among locals and visitors alike. My placement at Bella Vita allowed me to gain valuable insights into restaurant management, from leadership and staff management to troubleshooting and the use of point-of-sale (POS) systems.

In this report, I will critically evaluate the key aspects of restaurant management and leadership in relation to Bella Vita, focusing on the skills and knowledge required for successful operation. Drawing on both my placement experience and academic principles, I will explore leadership approaches within the restaurant, practical troubleshooting skills, and the use of information management systems, such as POS technology, for operational efficiency. Furthermore, I will reflect on the challenges encountered during my placement and how they align with management theories. *(Bella Vita, 2024)*

Restaurant Management & Leadership

Effective restaurant management necessitates a combination of leadership styles and management practices to ensure the establishment operates smoothly while also motivating staff. Managing an Italian restaurant like Bella Vita, which prioritizes quality service and food, provides valuable insights into the interplay of leadership, team management, and self-leadership in the fast-paced hospitality environment.

Leadership Styles in Restaurant Management

Leadership is vital in restaurant management for driving team performance and maintaining high service standards. Two significant leadership styles relevant to the restaurant industry are transformational and transactional leadership.

Transformational leadership is defined by the ability to inspire and motivate employees by creating a vision for the restaurant that aligns with the business's objectives (Northouse, 2021). Leaders employing this style encourage creativity and

initiative among staff, fostering a collaborative environment where employees feel empowered to make decisions and contribute to the restaurant's success.

Conversely, transactional leadership relies on a structured, reward-based system.

This style is particularly effective in ensuring that employees meet specific operational goals, such as adhering to service standards or maintaining hygiene (Burns, 2022). By establishing clear expectations and offering rewards or penalties, transactional leadership is instrumental in managing routine tasks within a restaurant. During my placement, this approach was particularly evident during peak hours when clear directives and immediate feedback were essential for maintaining service flow.

Another important theory applicable to restaurant management is Goleman's emotional intelligence framework, which emphasizes self-awareness, empathy, and relationship management in leadership (Goleman, 2017). In a restaurant setting, a manager's ability to regulate their emotions and understand their team's feelings can significantly influence morale and performance. For example, during high-stress periods like dinner rushes, emotionally intelligent leaders remain calm and composed, providing clear guidance and support to the team, which reduces tension and fosters a productive environment.

Hersey-Blanchard's situational leadership model is also relevant in restaurant management, emphasizing the need for leaders to adapt their style based on the maturity and competence of their employees (Blanchard, 2020). At Bella Vita, I observed this first-hand when new hires received more directive leadership, with managers closely supervising and providing explicit instructions. In contrast, experienced staff was granted greater autonomy, aligning with a delegating leadership style that trusted their expertise and judgment.

Team Management

In addition to leadership, effective team management is crucial in a restaurant setting. Communication is a key aspect of team management. Clear and concise communication ensures that all staff members understand their roles and responsibilities, especially during busy periods. For instance, during my placement, I observed how the manager utilized pre-shift meetings to outline the day's objectives,

delegate tasks, and address potential issues (Harvard Business Review, 2023). This regular communication kept the team informed and prepared, reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings during service.

Team dynamics significantly influence the efficiency of restaurant operations. Teams must collaborate seamlessly, particularly between front-of-house and kitchen staff.

Poor coordination can lead to delays, incorrect orders, or customer dissatisfaction. At Bella Vita, I noted the implementation of cross-functional team strategies where front-of-house staff regularly communicated with kitchen staff to ensure accurate and efficient processing of customer orders (Dyer et al., 2010). This collaboration was facilitated by technology, such as the point-of-sale (POS) system, which allowed for real-time updates on orders and inventory.

Conflict resolution is another critical aspect of team management. The fast-paced and often stressful restaurant environment can lead to interpersonal conflicts.

Addressing these conflicts promptly and effectively is essential to maintaining team morale and productivity. For instance, during a particularly busy shift, I witnessed a dispute between two servers regarding table assignments. The manager intervened quickly, employing conflict resolution techniques such as active listening and negotiation to resolve the issue (Goleman, 2013). This not only restored harmony but also highlighted the leader's role in diffusing tensions and maintaining a positive work environment.

Self-Leadership in Restaurant Management

In the high-pressure environment of a restaurant, self-leadership is essential for managing one's performance. Self-leadership involves taking responsibility for personal actions, managing time effectively, and maintaining motivation when faced with challenges (Neck & Manz, 2022). During my placement at Bella Vita, I found that one of the most critical aspects of self-leadership was time management. The ability to prioritize tasks—whether ensuring timely order processing or addressing customer concerns—was crucial to maintaining operational flow.

Another key element of self-leadership is the capacity to take initiative. In a restaurant setting, unforeseen challenges often arise, such as sudden customer influxes or equipment malfunctions. Waiting for instructions can lead to delays, so

taking the initiative to address issues as they occur is vital. For example, when the POS system experienced a temporary glitch during a busy evening service, I took the initiative to manually track orders until the system was back online (Inc., 2024)

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Troubleshooting and Problem-Solving

Troubleshooting and problem-solving are essential components of restaurant management, particularly in a dynamic environment like Bella Vita. Effective troubleshooting not only addresses immediate challenges but also prevents potential disruptions, ensuring smooth operations and high customer satisfaction. In a restaurant context, practical troubleshooting skills are vital for managing issues such as service delays, customer complaints, and unforeseen operational challenges.

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This section explores effective troubleshooting techniques and their application in restaurant management, drawing on theoretical frameworks and real-world experiences.

Troubleshooting in Service Delays and Customer Complaints

Service delays frequently occur in the restaurant industry, often due to bottlenecks in the kitchen or miscommunication between front-of-house and back-of-house teams.

A key strategy for managing such delays is proactive communication with customers, informing them of the situation and managing their expectations.

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This approach aligns with the Kepner-Tregoe method of problem-solving, which emphasizes clear communication and timely decision-making in addressing issues (Smith & Tovey, 2017). For instance, during my placement at Bella Vita, service delays were common during peak hours, but effective communication from wait staff—who reassured customers and offered complimentary appetizers—helped maintain satisfaction.

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Customer complaints represent another critical area where troubleshooting is vital.

Active listening and empathy are crucial when resolving complaints effectively.

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According to Grant (2020), adopting a solution-oriented approach that acknowledges customer concerns and provides appropriate remedies can significantly reduce dissatisfaction. For example, when a customer at Bella Vita complained about the temperature of their meal, promptly replacing the dish and offering a discount on their next visit resolved the issue amicably, preventing further escalation.

Problem-Solving Frameworks: Kepner-Tregoe Method

The Kepner-Tregoe method offers a structured approach to problem-solving by focusing on defining the problem, identifying root causes, and implementing solutions (Johnson & Anderson, 2021). This method is particularly beneficial in high-pressure environments like restaurants, where quick and efficient decision-making is crucial. Practically, the method involves gathering data on issues, such as when service delays occur, and analysing root causes, which may include staffing shortages or equipment malfunctions. Once identified, solutions like adjusting staff schedules or maintaining kitchen equipment can be enacted to prevent recurrence.

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At Bella Vita, a more rigorous application of the Kepner-Tregoe method could have addressed recurring kitchen bottlenecks during peak times. By analysing the timing and frequency of these delays, management could have implemented more effective scheduling or restructured workflows to enhance efficiency (Clark, 2019).

Anticipating and Mitigating Challenges

Anticipating potential challenges before they arise is a key aspect of troubleshooting.

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For instance, during my placement, I observed that large group reservations often led to significant service delays due to complex orders. By anticipating this challenge, the restaurant could have implemented a pre-order system for large groups, allowing the kitchen to prepare meals in advance and reduce wait times.

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Baker (2018) notes that foreseeing operational issues and addressing them proactively is a hallmark of effective restaurant management.

Staff-related issues can also impact restaurant performance. During my placement, I noticed low staff morale during busy shifts, which affected service quality. Regular staff check-ins and adequate support during peak hours could have mitigated this issue, maintaining higher levels of employee engagement (Cunningham & Stanton, 2020). Ensuring staff feel supported and valued is crucial for smooth operations, especially in high-pressure environments.

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Reflecting on Mitigation Strategies

Reflecting on my experience at Bella Vita, several strategies could have improved troubleshooting and problem-solving. Utilizing real-time data from point-of-sale (POS) systems to monitor service performance would have been beneficial. By

analysing POS data, such as average order times and customer wait times, management could identify trends and address issues before they escalate (Henderson, 2019). This dynamic approach to troubleshooting would enable quicker responses to service delays and operational challenges.

Another effective strategy would be cross-training staff to handle multiple roles within the restaurant. Cross-training would provide greater flexibility during peak times, allowing staff to assist where needed, which would reduce bottlenecks and improve overall service flow (Fisher & Lockhart, 2017). This proactive staff management approach enhances troubleshooting capabilities and ensures efficient restaurant operations, even in challenging situations.

Information Management Systems

In today's fast-paced restaurant industry, technology plays a crucial role in improving operational efficiency, enabling managers to streamline processes such as point-of-sale (POS) transactions, stock management, and payroll. These systems provide real-time data that helps decision-makers optimize performance and ensure smooth day-to-day operations.



Point-of-Sale Systems

Point-of-sale systems are a vital component of restaurant management, facilitating faster, more accurate transactions and enabling better record-keeping. POS systems allow restaurants to handle orders, payments, and even inventory in one integrated platform, significantly reducing human error. This technology supports data-driven decision-making by providing insights into sales trends, peak dining times, and customer preferences (Martin & Cook, 2018). During my placement at Bella Vita, the restaurant's POS system was indispensable in managing high volumes of orders efficiently, especially during busy periods. The ability to track real-time sales data allowed the management to adjust staffing levels and make informed decisions about menu offerings.



Stock Management Systems

Stock management is another critical area where technology proves invaluable. Restaurants must maintain optimal stock levels to avoid both overstocking, which

leads to waste, and under stocking, which causes delays in service and customer dissatisfaction.  31 Technology-driven stock management systems automatically update inventory levels as ingredients are used, ensuring accurate tracking and timely reordering (Roberts & Green, 2019). In Bella Vita, the use of stock management software enabled the kitchen staff to avoid shortages by providing real-time alerts when inventory was low. This not only improved the restaurant's operational efficiency but also ensured consistent quality by maintaining the availability of key ingredients.

Payroll Systems

Managing payroll can be a complex and time-consuming task, especially in an industry with high employee turnover and varying wage structures. Payroll management systems automate this process, ensuring that employees are paid accurately and on time.  32 These systems can also handle taxes, benefits, and compliance with local labour laws, reducing the administrative burden on restaurant management (Williams & Turner, 2020). At Bella Vita, the payroll system ensured that staff payments were handled efficiently, minimizing errors and reducing the time spent on administrative tasks.

Data-Driven Decision-Making

The integration of these technologies supports a data-driven approach to decision-making in restaurant management. Real-time data from POS systems, stock management, and payroll systems allows managers to identify inefficiencies and implement targeted improvements.  33 For instance, POS data can reveal which menu items are underperforming; prompting adjustments in the menu to better align with customer preferences (Jones & Baker, 2021). This approach enhances the restaurant's ability to adapt to changing market conditions and customer demands. During my placement, I experienced how data-driven decision-making improved the restaurant's overall performance. By analysing POS data, the management team at Bella Vita identified a trend where certain dishes were consistently left unordered, leading to their removal from the menu in favour of more popular alternatives.  34 This adaptability, supported by real-time data, allowed the restaurant to optimize its menu, improve customer satisfaction, and reduce food waste.  35

Conclusion & Future Application

Throughout my placement at Bella Vita, I developed a range of critical skills in restaurant management and leadership that are essential for the successful operation of any restaurant. These include effective communication, team management, troubleshooting, and the use of information management systems such as point-of-sale and stock management technologies. I learned how to lead a team under pressure, resolve operational issues efficiently, and make data-driven decisions to improve both customer service and business outcomes.

Looking ahead, I plan to apply this knowledge in my future career by taking a proactive approach to management and leadership. The skills I developed, particularly in problem-solving and decision-making, will be highly valuable in any restaurant or hospitality environment. In future roles, I aim to use these skills to optimize operational processes, ensure team cohesion, and enhance customer satisfaction. Moreover, my experience with technology-driven systems has shown me the importance of leveraging data to inform strategy and drive improvements, a practice I will continue to apply as I progress in my career.

In conclusion, my placement has provided me with both practical experience and a deeper understanding of theoretical concepts, which will form the foundation of my future career in restaurant management.

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GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

GENERAL COMMENTS

47 / 100

PAGE 1

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Comment 1

It is vital to include an in-text citation to support this statement.



Comment 2

It is vital to include in-text citations to support these statement.

PAGE 4



Comment 3

It is vital to include an in-text citation to support this statement.



Comment 4

It is vital to include an in-text citation to support this statement.



Comment 5

It is vital to include an in-text citation to support this statement.



Comment 6

As this sentence is in the past tense, it should be, "were".



Comment 7

It is vital to include in-text citations to support these statement.

PAGE 5



Comment 8

This doesn't appear to be a relevant reference, as you are reflecting.



Comment 9

These statements require in-text citations for support.



Comment 10

This sentence is a reflection and it the in-text citation doesn't appear to be relevant.



Comment 11

It is helpful to give a specific example/s of this.



Comment 12

These statements require in-text citations for support.



Comment 13

This is quite general and it is vital to provide a specific example of, for example, how the active listening and negotiation resolved the issue (what was said etc.).



Comment 14

It is important to provide specific examples of customer concerns.



Comment 15

This statement requires an in-text citation for support.

PAGE 6



Comment 16

This sentence is a reflection and it is unclear as to why there is an in-text citation.



Comment 17

This statement requires an in-text citation for support.



Comment 18

These statements require in-text citations for support.



Comment 19

This statement requires an in-text citation for support.



Comment 20

It is important to clearly link this to your reflection, as this is quite a general definition of the theory.



Comment 21

In UK English, it is, appetisers.



Comment 22

These statements require in-text citations for support.

PAGE 7



Comment 23

These statements require in-text citations for support.



Comment 24

This statement requires an in-text citation for support.



Comment 25

This is a specific and relevant example.



Comment 26

It is vital to briefly explain how low staff morale was quantified and/or measured and how it affected service quality. This is quite a general statement.



Comment 27

This statement requires an in-text citation for support.

PAGE 8



Comment 28

These statements require in-text citations for support.



Comment 29

These statements require in-text citations for support.



Comment 30

It is important to provide specific examples of this.

PAGE 9



Comment 31

These statements require in-text citations for support.



Comment 32

These statements require in-text citations for support.



Comment 33

These statements require in-text citations for support.



Comment 34

It is important to provide an example/s of the alternatives.



Comment 35

This is a relevant and important reflection.

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GRADING FORM: BMGM5004 RESTAURANT MANAGEMENT

EREMIA-ALEX AVRAM

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LITERATURE ENGAGEMENT /15



Remember to include an, "Acknowledgement of AI" statement. Much of your report includes statements that require an in-text citation for support (see in-text comments). There are in-text citations that do not appear to be relevant, as you are relating a reflection (please see in-text comments). You have provided references. Remember to order the reference list alphabetically.

6

KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING /30



You have demonstrated some understanding and knowledge. Much of the report is not supported with in-text citations and it is vital that it is. It is important and relevant to briefly explain what your role was at Bella Vita and to give a brief description of the operation (for context). It is important to provide specific examples for some of your reflections (some of them are quite general) (please see in-text comments).

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COGNITIVE & INTELLECTUAL /30



You have discussed several theories and linked them to your reflections, however, many of the reflections are quite general and it is vital to provide specific examples (please see in-text comments). Much of the report is not supported

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by in-text citations, which is vital (please see in-text comments).

PRACTICAL SKILLS /10



You have linked theory to practice, however, more specific examples are required (they are quite general) (please see in-text comments).

4

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS /15



You have written clearly and in a structured way. Many statements are not supported by in-text citations, which is vital. Many statements are quite general and specific examples are also vital.

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