3725 The Human Line

People Book · https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/3725-the-human-line/

Cost pressure arrives at the People level as a labor question. The human line is the most visible cost and the first target.

Every reduction in the human line is a reduction in relational capacity. The cast member who was cut is the cast member who would have read the table, recognized the regular, held the difficult moment. The shift that runs understaffed is the shift where the Connection Floor is hardest to hold. The training budget that gets trimmed is the training that would have built the capability the operation needs to justify its price point.

The operator under cost pressure who cuts the human line is making a trade: short-term margin relief for long-term relational capacity. That trade compounds. The operation with less relational capacity produces a lower E address. A lower E address produces a Guest who is less loyal, less forgiving, and more price-sensitive. A more price-sensitive Guest base makes the next cost squeeze harder to absorb without another cut.

The [Rising Costs Argument] in People is a capacity question. The human line is not overhead. It is the production capacity for the one thing the operation sells that no tool can replicate — the relational experience that converts a Guest into a regular. Cut it and the operation is selling a compressed product at a price point the Guest will not hold.

The honest response to labor cost pressure is not a cut. It is a casting decision — fewer people who can do more of the relational work, trained to a higher standard, held to the Connection Floor on every shift. That is not cheaper in the short term. It is more defensible in every term that follows.

What Changes Tomorrow

Before the next labor cut, name what relational capacity goes with it. If you cannot name it, you do not yet understand what you are cutting.