

Zingerman's Community of Businesses: A Recipe for Building a Positive Business

Ari Weinzweig returned to Ann Arbor, Michigan, after several weeks of traveling abroad. Although he had technically been away on business, the trip for him was primarily pleasure, since it centered on his passion for “really, really good food.”

The evening that Ari arrived back in Ann Arbor, he stopped by Zingerman's NextDoor, the coffee and dessert house next door to Zingerman's Deli. He ordered a cup of tea, realizing that he would need the extra energy to get through all his emails before returning to a full schedule the next morning. As he prepared his own cup of tea, he witnessed the following customer experience:

“One thousand three hundred eleven cents will be your change, sir,” the smiling, bearded cashier said to the exhausted-looking customer as he handed him a ten-dollar bill, three ones, a dime, and a penny. The customer, who had appeared almost lifeless to that point, lit up and cracked a wide grin. The cashier then leaned forward and in a loud whisper said, “My recommendation—pop this in the microwave for about a minute. You won't be sorry.” The customer did as the cashier recommended, and the smile he first cracked because of the cashier's friendly service continued as he delighted in his warm, oozing, rich slice of Hunk O' Burnin' Love Chocolate Cake.

As chief executive officer of Zingerman's Community of Businesses, Ari could not help but be proud after watching the customer's mood change from gloom to bliss. Ari reflected on the dedication and shared passion of many of his employees. He thought back on all he had learned in the 31 years since co-founding Zingerman's in 1982, resolute to keep Zingerman's a great place to work and eat while continuing with his ambitious vision for the years to come.

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