



GREAT FOOD. NO BULL.®

AN EMPATHY MAP EXERCISE

Luke McMullin

Spring 2022

ICM 512—Principles of UX Design, M3

UNDERCOVER BOSS: EPISODE SYNOPSIS

Headquartered in Cincinnati, Ohio, **Buffalo Wings & Rings** is a growing restaurant empire that employs over 5,000 people and operates over 65 locations globally (as of 2015). However, President and CEO Nader Masadeh wishes to expand his franchise even more; but to do so he feels the need to go undercover, discover any and all shortcomings in his operating restaurants, and ensure that they are corrected.

In this episode of Undercover Boss, Nader decides to disguise himself as Pete, a Lebanese immigrant and new employee who is competing on a reality show for prize money to put towards franchising his (fake) hamburger restaurant.

Along the way, Nader experiences first-hand what it's like to be an employee under several of his restaurants. He interacts with fellow employees, managers, and franchisees—all without them knowing he's the CEO. He soon discovers negative aspects of how some of his restaurants are ran, such as management, and works to resolve those issues before the restaurant's reputation is tarnished.



MEET NADER MASADEH: PRESIDENT & CEO

Born and raised in Jordan, Nader and his family immigrated to the United States in 1989 for more opportunities during his adolescence. However, he was a social outcast and struggled to adapt to his new surroundings. He started working alongside his dad as a dishwasher for various fast food restaurants in high school and college. Eventually, in 2004 his father found a restaurant called Buffalo Wings & Rings for sale and they decided to pour their savings into purchasing it.

Nader loved the restaurant culture, hot sauces, and the concept of family enjoying good food so much that he wanted to be more involved with the franchise. Therefore, soon later in 2005, with the help of some investors he bought the whole brand and franchise.

In the span of 10 years, he grew the franchise from 4 locations in the Midwest to over 65 locations globally—including one in his home country Jordan. With this passion, he wishes to have over 100 restaurants in the next several years.



EMPATHY MAP: NADER MASADEH



THINK & FEEL

- ◆ Nader is driven by family and his love for food/hot sauce
- ◆ He is proud of the success and growth of his empire
- ◆ Feels it's his responsibility for making sure that employees' and franchisees' needs are met
- ◆ Does not want to disappoint his father, who sacrificed his life in Jordan to move to the US and introduced him to the restaurant industry in the first place

HEAR

- ◆ Nader listens to the aspirations and struggles of his employees such as Dave and Amber
- ◆ Hears from Amber that management is harsh and not understanding
- ◆ Overhears crude comments from manager Wes
- ◆ Hears Dave's enthusiasm for working there and wanting to work there full-time but cannot

PAIN

- ◆ Nader is pained when he finds out that employees are not treated with respect
- ◆ Does not like it when people misinterpret the concept of his restaurant (sports bar instead of family dining)
- ◆ Being bullied himself as a child, he does not want bullies managing his restaurant
- ◆ Problems within the environments fall on his shoulders

SEE

- ◆ Nader sees Dave's enthusiasm as a dishwasher
- ◆ Sees Amber working hard as a server but sometimes overworking and performing the duties of other servers
- ◆ Witnesses some staff not doing their job
- ◆ Sees familiar faces and worries that they'll blow his cover
- ◆ Acknowledges the passion from his staff

SAY & DO

- ◆ Nader does not raise his voice around his staff, as CEO and a fellow employee
- ◆ As employee he is slow and makes mistakes but is obedient
- ◆ Becomes 'fired' by Wes for being 'too slow' despite being given full control of the station on his first day

GAIN

- ◆ Nader hopes to have hard-working employees that love their work and share his vision
- ◆ Wants to have safe and comfortable work environments for all staff
- ◆ Wants to find the problematic people and address them head-on or have them removed if need be

MEET AMBER: SERVER

Along his journey, Nader meets Amber, a server at their location in Chicago. Amber works full-time while trying to pay college tuition for her studies in Anthropology and Environmental Studies. Overall she is an honest, competent, hard-working employee. However, there are instances shown where she is perhaps working too much, such as when she covers a table of 11 plus another table by herself while her fellow servers, who were not occupied at the time, should have been helping her.

During their delivery shift, Amber reveals to Nader that she's tight on money which is why she uses her car with over 200,000 miles on it to deliver. She also reveals issues with management being harsh and not understanding of her and other employees' circumstances. She was even scolded once for having to take off work for a few days under a mandatory order from her doctor, despite presenting the doctor's note as proof.



EMPATHY MAP: AMBER



THINK & FEEL

- ◆ Amber sometimes feels overwhelmed, having to work full-time while studying and struggling to pay loans and life expenses
- ◆ Thinks that management is too harsh and exploitative
- ◆ Feels a disconnect from management due to their lack of respect and understanding
- ◆ Cares about her fellow staff and customers

HEAR

- ◆ Amber is attentive to customers' needs
- ◆ Listens to fellow staff when communicating
- ◆ Was told by managers that she does not do well under pressure

PAIN

- ◆ Amber is overwhelmed by her tough circumstances, but pulls through anyway
- ◆ Lots of expectations put on her as a server
- ◆ Lack of respect from higher-ups stresses her out

SEE

- ◆ Amber acknowledges the work that needs to be done and takes over
- ◆ Sees and knows how to run the computer/ordering system
- ◆ Her first impression of 'Pete' goes well, as if she senses a good heart in him
- ◆ Notices 'Pete's' lack of experience and is nervous for him

SAY & DO

- ◆ Amber diligently teaches 'Pete' the roles of serving
- ◆ Says that management scolded her once for having to miss shifts due to an emergency with her foot
- ◆ Says that turnover rate is very high
- ◆ She is working hard to pay for her education

GAIN

- ◆ Amber strives to persevere through her challenges
- ◆ Wants respect and understanding from management
- ◆ Wants positive changes in the work environment

USER EXPERIENCE SUMMARY



NADER MASADEH
President & CEO

- ◆ Passionate and driven to grow the business
- ◆ Problem-solver for the ultimate success of his business
- ◆ Wants a safe and comfortable work environment
- ◆ Cares for the struggles of his staff
- ◆ He and his father took risks to get to where he is
- ◆ Being an immigrant and a victim of bullying himself, he wants his staff to feel comfortable and respected



AMBER
Server

- ◆ Passionate and driven to achieve her goals
- ◆ Honest about herself and how things are ran
- ◆ Wants a safe and comfortable work environment
- ◆ Cares for the well-being of the workplace
- ◆ Works on the front lines to get to where she eventually wants to be
- ◆ Being a full-time employee while in school, she wants everyone to feel comfortable and respected while running their shifts

CONCLUSION

Respect Your Employees and They'll Respect You

At the end of the episode, Nader reveals his true self from his disguise, rewards the hard-working employees that he interacted with, and gets the franchisee to fire Wes, who was a very hostile and inappropriate manager. As for Amber's situation, Nader tells her manager Justin and franchisee Fran to be more respectful and understanding of the employees' circumstances. He then ends up congratulating and rewarding Amber for her honesty and hard work with launching a new scholarship program (with her being the first recipient) and a new car. As for Dave, Nader offers him a full-time position at the restaurant (like he wanted) and VIP seats to a Bengals game.

Unlike how I feel many CEO's act, Nader is empathetic about the struggles of his employees, especially given that he struggled in his youth. He even takes their side when addressing problems with management and generously rewards them for their dedication, given that the employees shown on camera—aside from some of the staff at Amber's location slacking a bit—were passionate and competent with their work.

Although Amber does not plan on working at Buffalo Wings & Rings forever, she and Nader share similar goals of wanting respect, safety, and proper systems within the workplace. When the employers and employees share the same goals and respect each other's feelings and needs, then there becomes a healthy workplace that fosters cooperation, harmony, and success.