

# Who gives a FOC about Summer 2024?

## 1 – FOCs



Doggett's, with its autumnal brown exterior, has sat on the seams of the South Bank since the seventies. It attracts a constant flow of tourists but has been held back from

the top tiers of reputational excellence by its inability to train a high-turnover workforce with enough precision. Consider these four Failures of Communication (FOCs):

## A. Guests use **ambiguous utterances**

- (1) “**Brisket beef**” - could be the beef sandwich or the beef Sunday lunch.
- (2) “**Nachos**” – this could be the Large nachos, which is £12, or it could be the nachos which is just £6.20.
- (3) “**Chips**” – this could be referring to Chunky Chips or Fries or Piper’s crisps.

Suppose an employee fails to *address* an ambiguous utterance – probability of a negative review increases by 27%.

## B. Guests make **product presumptions**

- (1) **Plant-based burger**. They presume it comes with fries, the way the other burgers do.
- (2) **Mains and starter** (e.g. three burgers and salmon on toast). They presume all four meals will come at the same time.
- (3) **Glass of lemonade**. They presume that they’ll get a pint of lemonade.
- (4) **Sandwich and drink**. They presume they’ll pay exactly £9.50, because the advertisement says “from £9.50”.

Suppose an employee fails to *dispel* a guest of a product presumption – negative review 30% more likely.

### C. Products **concurrently covered** by categories on the till:

(1) Bottle of Coke.

Could be covered by the **Bottled** category, since it is bottled.

Or, by the **Soft drinks** category, since it is a soft drink.

(2) Fentiman's Ginger beer.

Could be covered by the **Bottled** category, since it is bottled.

Or by the **Soft Drinks** category, since it is a soft drink.

(3) Scotch egg.

Could be covered by the **Bar Snacks** category, since it is a snack.

Or, by the **Food** category, since it is food.

Suppose ten employees hesitate over concurrent coverage for 30 seconds, ten times an hour. Cumulatively, there's tension in the till user, and delays for guests.

### D. Maker mistakes

Food runners need the ability to “make out” which meal is which. *The chicken pie looks identical to the boar pie* etc This may seem trivial skill, since it is quickly picked up, but Meal Making is of **critical importance**.

Consider somebody who does not eat beef for religious reasons but is given the beef pie, since it looks just like the lamb pie. Such a **Maker**

**Mistake** would be catastrophic for the guest. But M&B training avoids this sort of thing, and instead informs food runners about colours of chopping boards, which they'll never need to use. Making out meals visually is called *meal making*. If there was a way to produce expert meal makers—without learning each lesson the hard way—it would be enormously beneficial.

## **E. Cross Ringing**

This is when employees press the wrong button on the till because they hold a false belief. They repeatedly press the wrong button. For example, an employee presses the button for Tanqueray No. 10 when they ought to have pressed Tanqueray.

General managers care about these things and publish an error report each week, for colleagues to see. This report shows how many incorrect buttons each colleague pressed. However, in an informal survey, 87% of employees in Doggett's said they were confused about what they were actually supposed to do in order to improve their error rate. This is a problem.

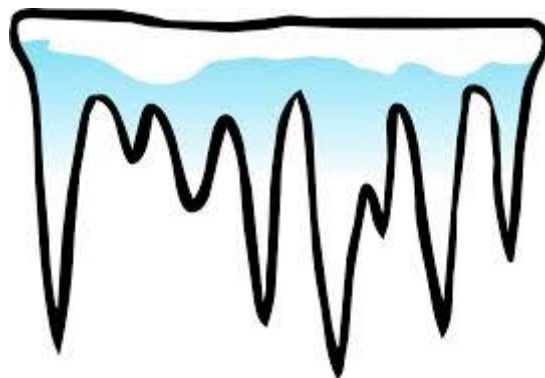
We have talked about four FOCs: ambiguous utterances, product presumptions, concurrent coverage, maker mistakes. These diminish the guest experience. They cause Doggetts to slip down in online reviews. They don't *ruin* an experience, but they reliably tarnish guest experiences, the way a golden-brown hue stains a shirt.

Nobody has done anything to resolve the problem. M&B leaders enforce completion of modules such as the one entitled The Guest Experience. But *the Guest Experience* has no way of actually targeting the specific FOCs that blight the guest

experience. From the “bottom”, bar tenders with practical expertise become good at using the till *generally*. And practical experts can supervise a new colleague - as the new colleague uses the till *generally*. But the expert has no technique to target the specific FOCs which diminish the guest experience. So, **there is a gap**.

The issue is not that employees lack *any competence* in using the till. The issue is more specific. Certain sets of products are being confused with one another. No tool for targeting this specific problem has been put forward.

## 2 - No Gas At the station



*“If we mandate the completion of training modules, we can pump knowledge into the workforce.”* This belief is held by executives in M&B, McDonalds, and more. They believe that they fuel their business this way. They fill their workforce with knowledge, the way a lorry driver fills up his lorry with gas to get through winter.

But M&B pubs suffer from a problem that affects all businesses: *No One Gives A Sh\*t About Training* (for short, NoGasAt). Employees don’t gain practical skills by being given sections of text to read on a computer screen. Employees don’t listen to the videos on the web pages; they just click the “next” button without reading any of the

text. It had been noted that McDonalds employees “click through” training designed to discourage workplace harassment. McDonalds bears the reputational damage of knowing to be incapable of managing sexual harassment in its workforce<sup>1</sup>. *Training does not occur in Doggett’s.*

On the other and employees in M&B possess intelligent capacities. In Doggett’s there are individuals who can manage the expectations of a seventy-year-old, guiding them through their special day, so that their birthday party in Floor Two’s function room runs without a glitch. There are individuals who can take sole charge of a restaurant full of sixty diners on a Friday night, brightening people’s day and letting difficult conversations flow. There are individuals who can make countless cocktails, charm grumbling geezers into giving generous tips, make tables of young children laugh, clear a bustling dirty floor of all glasses within ten minutes, talk down knife wielding aggressors, and perform CPR. But these intelligent capacities were not born from paragraphs of text on a computer screen. They arose from repeated attempts to do the real thing - while copying exemplars and reacting to criticism. *Training does occur in Doggett’s.*

Doggett’s is no more able to make a till user from scratch than a person can drink an icicle. It’s partly because staff turnover is fast. Most staff stay for an average of 5 months - only by the *end* of this time are they learning about the Ambiguous Utterances and the solutions to the Concurrent Coverage. Doggetts today uses *Exist and Expand*: recruit an

---

<sup>1</sup> McDonald’s faces legal action amidst widespread harassment allegations. Available at: <<https://www.leighday.co.uk/news/news/2023-news/mcdonald-s-faces-legal-action-amidst-widespread-harassment-allegations/>>

employee who already knows how to use a till and expand that knowledge to the *Doggetts* till.

***Serving real customers.*** Let's consider this as a technique for producing excellent till users. Let's suppose we're trying to make a till user from a novice. Well, **it's a bad technique for several reasons.** Customers must be served slowly, diminishing the guest experience. Second, the novice is not able to perform repetition exercises to get better at them. Third, the expert taps the till buttons too rapidly for the student to follow what happened. Fourth, there is a "stepping in" phenomenon. Every time the student cannot find a button, an expert points it out to them. So it's not the novice who finds the button in the end. **Fifth,** there is no focus on the sets of products that tend to get confused with one another. We can now see that serving real customers is a shoddy way of melting the FOCs.

In summary, then, it is no good producing some sort of till training module. For there is no gas at that station. Neither will *serving real customers* work if we want to maximise the guest experience and profits in Summer 2024. Rather, we need to give a tool to employees. It's not the tools job to persuade employees to use it. No spanner has lips to persuade passers-by to pick it up. But those employees who care can use it to hone their skills.

### 3 - More sales required



Doggetts needs to spring into action and generate more sales. It has the potential to be higher up, in the rankings of the Nicholson's pubs in **the district**. But it limps about like some newborn lamb.

Not long ago, it was written on a whiteboard that Doggett's ranked sixth in the district. Doggett's *needs* to find ways to move up, and flourish.

## Till Kill

With **Till Kill**, the till training module, we can melt away the problems of poor communication. Finally, employees can focus on the precise skills they need to sharpen up. Employees can now bring **warmth** to interactions. No more awkward, icy exchanges at the till.

Till Kill allows us to expand Doggett's capabilities: we can now recruit people more confidently who have no experience with a POS system. Let's let Summer 2024 shine out in the record books from years to come, as the summer of blazing sales.