PuzzleHR
Human Resources Solved

A PuzzleHR Case Study:

Managing Employee Relations and Restaurant Closure in a QSR

01 The Challenge

The client, A quick service restaurant (QSR) with over 1,500 employees across nine states and two brands, came to PuzzleHR without a solid HR foundation in place. Daily HR responsibilities fell to the corporate administrative team, guided loosely by leadership, while managers followed inconsistent processes that left multiple locations out of compliance.

During PuzzleHR's initial assessment, an issue surfaced that leaders hadn't dealt with before: an extreme act of workplace violence at one of the company's locations, serious enough to require both EMS and police intervention.

Once immediate safety and employee concerns were addressed, a closer look revealed that this location was very high-risk, dealing with:

- Extremely high turnover
- Ongoing employee relations complaints
- Multiple failed operational and food safety inspections
- Leadership instability and poor management practices
- Allegations of wrongful termination
- Escalating workplace conflict

Together, these issues created significant legal, safety, and operational exposure for the client. Employee morale was low, and customer service declined substantially.



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02 The PuzzleHR Solution

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Immediate Risk Management:

- Worked with operations and security partners to advise leaders on how to partner with local law enforcement.
- Conducted employee and manager interviews, assessed the credibility of safety concerns, put interim safeguards in place, and ensured reports were documented and investigated.

Employee Relations Investigations:

- Reviewed the location's employee relations history and confirmed that broader management effectiveness issues were driving employee distrust and turnover.

Business Risk Assessment:

- Performed a risk assessment and determined that the location's risk profile would not improve without significant investment and restructuring.

Strategic Recommendation:

- Presented findings to senior leadership, and cross-functional stakeholders made the decision to close the location due to an unacceptable level of business and employee risk.

Workforce Transition Planning:

- Partnered with leadership to create a workforce transition plan, identifying openings and equipping managers with support for employee communications.
- Ensured the process was compliant with company policy and applicable employment regulations, and that affected employees had clear support for next steps and available resources.

03 The Results

Business Outcomes:

- Mitigated workplace violence and safety concerns.
- Reduced legal exposure tied to employee relations and termination claims.
- Executed location closure with no employee relations escalations.
- Maintained operational continuity at neighboring restaurants.
- Preserved top talent by retaining high-performing employees within the organization

People Outcomes:

- Transferred eligible employees to nearby locations
- Delivered transparent communication throughout a difficult organizational change, backed by leadership coaching
- Strengthened employee trust in leadership through a fair, consistent transition process
- Supported every impacted employee with dignity and respect throughout the closure

Contact PuzzleHR to discover how we can restore compliance in your organization.