

**Essay Question: "The cinema industry presents unique challenges, from customer service to business operations. Describe a situation where you faced a challenge related to the theatre business, how you handled it (or learned from it), and what impact it had on you."**

### Leading Through the Chaos

Managing in the cinema industry comes with its own stress, especially only being a teenager. During big movies when demand from the customers is so high everything has to be running as smoothly as clockwork. One night during the Moana 2 pre release show, I was put to the test of my leadership skills, but also my patience and thinking.

All the auditoriums were full that evening. Customers filled the lobby, and a few of our new employees were in their first busy shift. As the manager on duty, my responsibility was to watch operations, resolve customer grievances, and keep my employees in a peaceful state and operating efficiently. Very early on in the night a family had come in, they bought the last tickets for the showing that were very spread out along the theatre. I took the opportunity to go seat everyone in the family with it very apparent that this show was going to be sold out so they needed to stay in those seats. Mid-peak, one customer approached me with seating issues stating that someone was in her and her family's seats. Luckily, our theatre wasn't full yet and I could address the issue. On the other hand the family I had seated previously had moved to all be together. Again I explained to the sister, because the mom had left, that this was a sold out show and they needed to remain in their purchased seats. This whole seating arrangement was very new to our small town, so I knew we would have some problems. Admittedly I was nervous. This was my first major shift as a manager and I did not want to disappoint anyone. In all honesty it went really smoothly. Until two more family's came out with the same seating problem. Not only was this my first major shift with the seating arrangement but it was my first major problem that I needed to address as manager. I mentally prepared myself and went in to talk to the sister. In a professional manner I told her she either needed to sit in their purchased seats or leave and come back for another showing. She yelled at me and said that the kids couldn't sit on their own, I explained that I related with her but we still have a business to run. She said she wanted to speak to a manager and after I told her I was she was not very happy. She wanted to leave. I apologized and offered to refund her tickets.

What I learned from this experience is that leadership in the theater industry isn't just about solving issues, it's also preparing others to solve issues for themselves. With an industry where things are changing by the minute, flexibility and effective communication are a must. As a manager, my job is not only to keep operations running smoothly, but to build a team that feels cared for, confident, and capable of overcoming challenges on their own. Personally, I learned that you cannot make everyone happy. Only being 17, I had to push myself to do what needed to be done even if it meant someone didn't like me for the moment and that was a big turning point for me.

Since that night, I've made it a point to mentor others to create a culture where feedback is welcomed and mistakes are seen as opportunities to grow. I've learned that strong leadership means being visible, approachable, and setting the tone, even in chaos. That challenge helped make me a more thoughtful and engaged manager. In the fast pace of the film business, those lessons continue to influence how I manage on a day-to-day basis.