



## The Apple Cinnamon Bread Dilemma

A few years ago, my sister worked with a colleague who loved to bake for her fellow co-workers. Let's call her Maya to protect her identity. Maya loved baking bread, but apple cinnamon bread was her specialty and she brought it to the office to share on a regular basis. Of course, people gobbled it up immediately.

In the spirit of wellness, Maya made sure her apple cinnamon bread was low in sugar. She baked it with a sugar substitute.

Her colleagues used to complain to each other about how the bread was slightly floury, only mildly sweet, and had a strong aftertaste. Since it was not completely offensive, people ate it anyway, sending her the message that it tasted just fine. I mean, it was sugar-free! Besides, in most places of business, even a free bowl of celery would disappear quickly.

At company staff meetings, colleagues would approach Maya and share positive comments about her apple cinnamon bread: "We love how moist your bread is;" "Your bread reminds me of my grandmother's;" "If you don't grab a slice immediately, you miss out;" and so on.

They were being kind; and so the apple cinnamon bread kept coming every week, with each loaf disappearing within an hour's time. That is until one day, Maya, overjoyed by the reaction she was receiving from her colleagues, shared that she was thinking about starting her own baking business.

That's when it hit everyone. "Yikes," said one of her co-workers. "What have we done? We've been so positive in our comments that we've convinced Maya to start a new business!" But how could they undo the damage at that point? Actually say, "Your apple cinnamon bread is yucky"? Who would say that?

Soon after her announcement, Maya began to search for baking opportunities among colleagues. Many just nodded and smiled, never responding to her request.

What type of information can you trust? Is it a mistake to think the information that's most accessible to us will be the most accurate? When Maya began to consider a baking business, she based a large part of her decision on the positive feedback close at hand. "I take bread to the office and people go on and on about its tastiness, with every loaf disappearing within the first hour." Their feedback confirmed her gut feeling that she should start a baking business.

But she never sought disconfirming information that would challenge what she hoped would be true. Had she tried charging \$3 per slice, for instance, she might have learned how small her circle of support was. Maya also made another kind of mistake—one we all tend to commit. She fixed on the most obvious parts of her situation and failed to see larger patterns. For example, she took it as a huge compliment that all the slices of bread were gone by 10 a.m. (the particulars); however, she didn't pay attention to the fact that they finished every last morsel of anything brought to the office by 10 a.m. (the pattern). Nor did she see herself as part of a larger group of people, like other bakers who want to start pastry businesses, and wonder what she could learn from their experiences, including whether rave reviews translate into orders.

Source: The Banana Bread Incident, The Heath Brothers. Retrieved 2013 from <http://apostephen.blogspot.com/2013/>

