

A Venn diagram demonstrating the dining options in one of the new cafeterias

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Back in the early 2000s, a new building opened on the Microsoft main campus, and the food services department tried an experiment: Instead of creating a standard cafeteria, they decided to make the cafeteria in the new building a specialty cafeteria. This new cafeteria was more like a deli, specializing in offerings like antipasto, rotisserie chicken, and grilled panini sandwiches.

The idea was that the building would generate cross-building foot traffic with the building next door. The food services department figured that people would typically go to the cafeteria in the old building next door, but if they had a hankering for something offered by the specialty cafeteria, they could walk over to the new cafeteria.

It was an interesting idea, but it didn't work out well in practice because people are lazy and always go to the nearest cafeteria. This meant that the people who worked in the new building wandered into their cafeteria and saw the same specialty offerings every day. And nobody from the other cafeteria ever came to visit the specialty cafeteria.

One of my colleagues explained the dining options in the new cafeteria with a Venn diagram:



Rotisserie
chicken



Panini
sandwiches
Chicken
panini
sandwiches

After a few months, the food services department realized that their plan wasn't working out too well, and they converted the new cafeteria into a more traditional cafeteria.

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