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Problem Solving and Decision Making

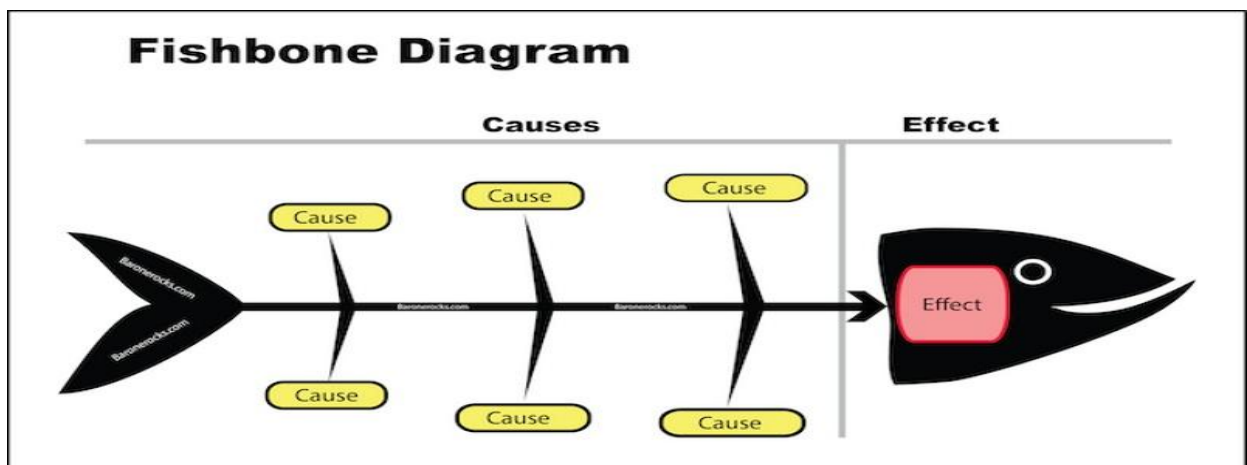
1. Introduction

This report aims to identify a complex problem in the workplace, using problem solving tools which we learned throughout the semester. My objective is to propose appropriate solutions and evaluate them. The development of a plan is necessary in order to implement the answer.

2. Defining the issue

The theme of the report is “Performance issues in the workplace”. This is a very common problem in every workplace, and it arises due to certain factors. Here are some examples:

- Poor time management could cause harm to the workflow of a company and the morale of the workers.
- Inadequate leadership
- Due to the recent coronavirus pandemic, many companies started moving their workers to home office. This is in and of itself an issue, considering the fact that people tend to be lazier when working from home.
- Too high expectations in a short amount of time (number of target cases is too much)



The fishbone diagram shown above visually demonstrates the source of the problem as the fishes' body and tail which faces while the head represents the outcome of the issue. It helps the employees and their employers use a diagram to find the roots of different obstacles.

Performance issues in the workplace can happen when the employee does not meet the demands of the employer. Each job comes with its own requirements, like punctuality, good work ethic, respect, meeting set targets on time. Failure in any of those points could result in potential delays in the workflow.

But how does that all impact the workers? It is very that a single issue may cause a chain effect. Stress could build up over time resulting in errors while working which in turn may lower the quality of the end product, leading to problems with the customers, which poses another problem - customer dissatisfaction.

3. Resolving the issue first begins with admitting the problem. Some companies may hire special teams to help assess the situation and provide insight as to how to deal with it and prevent it from happening again. Others may organize team-building events to help raise morale and encourage communication, which, while effective, needs to be constantly repeated. How to best set the example of resolving the issue if not with an example of my previous job. While working as a customer service advisor for a certain company which recruited students for various universities I personally experienced a major problem, which was poor organisation of our team. Every morning we had a group call in Teams and it should be noted that our team consisted of around fifty people. As one of the youngest members of the team it was my goal to keep quiet and not disturb the other colleagues. While I kept in mind to do that some of the other employees did not make it their priority to be as considerate. The feeling could be described as if the workplace was my old classroom. The team leaders checked the punctuality of each and every one of us, but most of the people could not seem to be bothered about logging in on time.

The major problems of this work environment were:

- Punctuality issues, as mentioned half of the employees never came on time and some of them did not log on to Teams until the designated lunch break.
- Targets set to new employees were too high, personally requiring me to recruit at least thirty five new students each month, which was impossible given the fact that my employment had just started.
- Laziness was an issue, because all of us were working from the comfort of our home on laptops, which meant we were laying on the couch or in bed.

One of the most appropriate solutions, which was proposed by our amazing team leader, was that all of us go back to the office so we can seek support in person and so the managers could monitor our work performance during the allocated hours that we had to spend in front of the computers. When that was decided we had a final group call in Teams and I personally was more that excited to be around the other employees at the time. But for some of them that was a huge problem, because they already made plans for the upcoming weeks. The team leaders were very mad and consequently let them off. This proved to be a very smart decision, as it reminded everyone that there are consequences. For instance, when an employee was late a small fine was issued by our team leader and, to be fair, this made everyone come to work on time out of fear that they would be fined or fired, which honestly made me happy that there were major improvements and some new rules that every single individual followed.

As aforementioned, meeting the targets for new employees felt too demanding and tiring. Some of the senior members tried to support and give us, the juniors, helpful sources on how to recruit students using simpler methods. However the root of the problem was not the sheer number of people per target.

After discussing, there were two adequate solutions proposed and tested:

Solution 1:

My colleagues and I proposed to reduce the number of students recruited for a month, which meant that instead of thirty five students per month, we were required to enlist 20 students for a month. This did not feel that challenging for us newbies, while at the same it motivated both juniors and seniors alike. We proposed a trial month to test out the suggestion, because our team leaders weren't too keen on the idea and thought that we were going to lose some potential clients. They somehow agreed and monitored us throughout the trial month.

Solution 2:

Another suggestion my colleagues and I made is that junior and senior members have support meetings at least once a week, for those who struggle to do their work on their own. Some of the senior members were unhappy, because they seemed to think that it would get in their way of working and disturb their workflow.

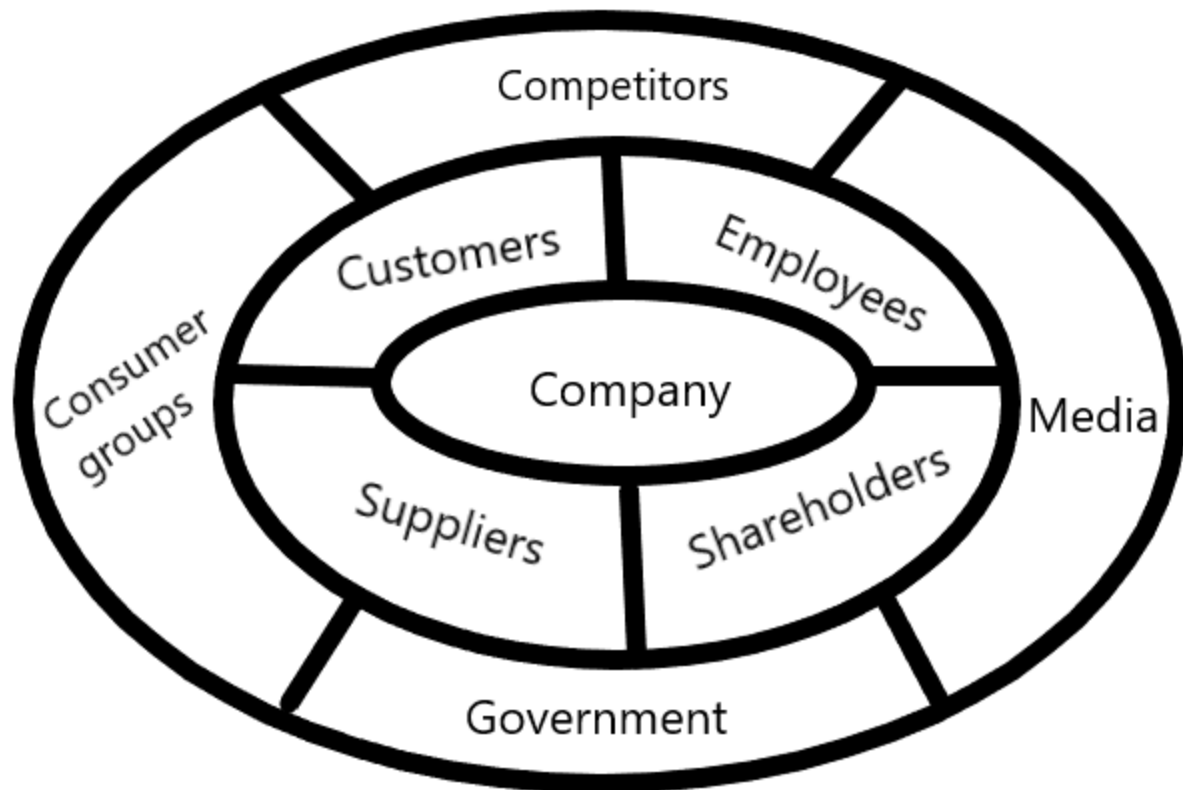
A study shows that people with more experience in the field should check in on the individuals with less experience, because they could provide feedback and motivate them to do better in the workplace. **“Then, there should be periodic (biweekly or monthly) meetings to assess and provide honest feedback. Adjust as needed!”** - Emily Kapit, ReFresh Your Step, LLC

After my senior colleagues did research on the topic we came to the conclusion that it is really better if they support us in group meetings and encourage sharing, suggestions and constructive criticism regarding the work environment. This proved to be beneficial to both sides.

Having decided to test these solutions right away we created the following plan on how to carry out those solutions step by step:

1. First and foremost we dropped the number of target students per month from thirty five to twenty as suggested. This reduced stress and anxiety for most of us and reduced competitiveness between us workers.
2. While the numbers were lowered we proved to our managers that we were just as effective if not even more so. We barely lost any students. This also increased our motivation in recruiting more and more individuals every month. Not only did we hit our targets, but we also managed to bring two, three more students each month.
3. We also experimented with meetings each week which proved helpful for both sides - junior and senior members of the staff. Juniors gained more insight on how to deal with potential customers better, while the seniors recalled how punctuality and responsibility are important in the workplace.
4. After the trial month ended most of us were really satisfied with how much we had done in so little time, so we held a meeting with our managers to discuss potentially updating our work routine. After their monitoring they were quite happy with what we achieved and decided that the new system was beneficial and encouraging for every single one of us.

4. Proposing our plan to stakeholders



In one of my lectures we constructed a diagram to map stakeholders and the way to construct it is to put our workplace in the middle and then show the primary stakeholders around it and then secondary stakeholders. This diagram is really useful as it brings attention to the importance of the primary stakeholders. In my workplace the primary consumers (except us) were our customers- that would be students. Suppliers and shareholders were the universities that worked with our company and sponsored us. Secondary stakeholders are important due to the fact that we had a lot of competitors (other firms that recruited students). They also had good customer service and excellent work ethic. At the time this posed a huge challenge for us considering the fact that we just created a plan in which we proposed smart solutions to reduce our performance issues.

“Change is good!”- as said by the lecturer in my class.

When meeting the stakeholders we knew we had to provide some solid evidence of Solution 1 and Solution 2 as mentioned above. That is why, the month before, during, and after the trial we thoroughly documented everything, which is the main reason the managers were so serious about keeping an eye on us during the whole process. The stakeholders were surprised by our new work system, because other companies tend to recruit more students per month to meet their target, no matter if they are successful or not. Upon carefully reviewing the proposal to

start working from our offices again, and taking into consideration our new work ethic, they seemed really pleased. As for reducing our monthly target and proving them to be just as effective they decided to give us an official six month trial, in which our goal was to recruit just as many clients as they wish, regardless of the target.

In those six months they sent some company executives to monitor our progress by having a meeting with our managers and senior employees. They did not believe that we could achieve the same number of recruitments as we were before this. The executives were impressed and happy that we met our goal and we continued to work this way, even after I quit this job.

5. Reference list

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