

Problem solving and decision making

BMSW4004

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Assignment two: Report

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INTRODUCTION

Although many people use problem solving and decision-making terms interchangeably, they are completely different.

Problem solving is the process used to identify viable solutions to situations at any given time, whereas making-decisions is a part of problem-solving process and it is a choice made by someone.

There are six steps to effective problem solving such as:

- identify the problem
- Specify the cause, reasons and effects
- Identify possible solution
- Evaluate and select the most promising solutions
- Plan the action
- Action the plan and monitor

When it comes to decision-making processes, they can be rational which emphasises the need to evaluate the problem in an ordered way, whereas the creative approach emphasises innovation in a more comprehensive and less regulated way.

According to Ohio State University management professor, Paul C. Nutt, as he researched over 300 decisions made in a variety of organizations, he discovered that we only get about 50% of our decisions in the workplace right.

Creative approach is a way of solving problems or identifying opportunities where conventional thinking failed and encourages to find a new perspective and come up with innovative solutions to formulate a plan to overcome obstacles.

Complex problem in the workplace, its scope and impact

Typically, the workplace is an environment formed by people with different personalities, communication styles, experiences and different backgrounds.

These differences are very common sources of workplace issues and a source of stress for many people. There are many other issues that an employee can face including: communication problems, bullying, harassment, discrimination, low motivation and job satisfaction, performance issues etc.

For the purpose of this report, we'll be looking more in detail at one of the most common issues which is low motivation and job satisfaction.

Analysation information on the identified problem

Motivation is the willingness to get the job done persisting in the face of distractions of any kind.

Assessing the nature of motivational failure before taking action is the most important step as applying the wrong strategy can cause motivation to lower even more ultimately resulting in diminished productivity and a high turnover.

Job satisfaction is a psychological concept that refers to job related attitudes and characteristics such as pay and reward, policies, leadership behaviours, management styles and co-workers' attitudes and these are influenced mainly by a person's perception.

Causes of job dissatisfaction can be various including team conflicts, poor management, low wages, workplace stress, burnout, lack of recognition, limited career growth, and poor communication but are not limited to these only.

The impact of job dissatisfaction shouldn't be taken lightly as according to Forbes, only 21% of employees are engaged at work and more than one third are planning to quit their current jobs and find something better, more suitable to their lifestyle and goals.

Forbes also reports that disengaged employees are 15% less profitable and 18% less motivated than those who are satisfied with their jobs and put in the time and effort to do their best work.

Saïd Business School study shows that staff satisfaction, productivity and work performance are connected and that top performing employees doesn't work longer hours but instead, they use their time more efficiently to get all their work done

without the need to work until late or in some cases, cancelling their holidays to have enough time and finish any outstanding project.

Unsurprisingly understanding how motivation and job satisfaction fully work it is a true challenge for managers because it all arises from within and it's different for each person.

For example, if a manager of an organization doesn't reward hard work or even acknowledge it, it is prone to end up with a low motivated, disengaged team and as a manager you absolutely need to make the necessary changes in order to keep employees motivated, engaged and this will without fail, result in decrease turnover which will help the company to save a lot of money, time and effort put into recruiting.

Job dissatisfied and low motivated employees also affect customer experience as it is not uncommon to walk into a store and have a bad experience with an employee as they may appear rude or disrespectful because maybe they have been working overtime for too long, or they earn a low wage or their work hasn't been acknowledged for quite some time.

All of these experiences can affect an organization's image, marketing efforts but equally, won't be recommended to others as a company to work for and ultimately can suffer a high loss of profits.

Range of alternative solutions to the problem

When the problem of a low motivation and job dissatisfaction arises in a working environment, there are a few strategies that the management team might consider to focus on in order to increase job satisfaction and motivation which will result in having a better business and also engaged and happy employees.

Every company is different and operates on different grounds, culture and vision, but there are a few things that work regardless of the company and industry such as:

- **Create an employee rewarding** system which is simple and straightforward and once a certain level is achieved they can be rewarded either with money, gifts or anything the company may consider appropriate and achievable. Focusing on the employees or team's skill gap, behaviours to be changed and impacting the team.
- **Offer trainings** as most of the employees want to learn and grow as they want success and all the perks that go along with being the best. The more prepared they are, the more chances for promotion they have and the more the motivation increases.
- **Use an employee anonymous survey system** every quarter where employees are asked about what motivates them or alternatively, have team building activities where they can openly discuss about what could be improved and how would they like to be motivated at work

- **Give consistent praise and also focus on the impact** as according to Office Vibe's State of Employee Engagement research report found 63% of employees don't feel they get enough praise
- **Offer exclusive experiences** such as festival or sporting event tickets, holiday in the sun or extreme adventure day to show that the company aligns with the team's values and cores and hard work is never getting unnoticed. This will help to bring the team back at work and talking about the experience they had while making other staff members to want to experience the same and this will keep the motivation and momentum going.

Decision making technique to evaluate a range of solutions

There are different techniques to evaluate a range of solutions, but we will be covering the most common one which is SWOT ANALYSIS.

Strengths: What does the company do better than other competitors?

Weaknesses: What are the areas where the company can improve?

Opportunities: How can strengths be leveraged ?

Threats: What challenges stand in the way of achieving goals?

Swot analysis can help guide and support business decisions as it is easier to get a full picture and spot trends, patterns or any connections between the quadrants.

It can be used by an entity or an individual to gain insight into its current and future position in the market or against a stated goal. The idea is that because entities can see competitive advantages and positive prospects, as well as existing and potential problems, they can also develop plans to capitalize on positives, address deficits or do both. The analysis aims to help the company match its resources to the competitive environment in which it operates while also giving the flexibility of understanding what is required to be successful.

Although it helps creating a visual representation of the various factors that are most likely to impact a business or an individual, a SWOT analysis has its limits as it may not include all relevant factors for all four elements and it only includes factors of a particular point in time and doesn't allow to see how those factors could change over time.

There is also another tool that helps further a SWOT analysis and is called PMI.

PMI (Plus, Minus, Interesting) is a brainstorming, decision making and critical thinking tool and it is used to encourage the examination of ideas, concepts and experiences from more than one perspective.

PMI can help to brainstorm ideas, make decisions by analysing and weighing the pros and cons, reflect upon or evaluate a process or product after the fact, identify strengths and weaknesses for future improvement.

Plan for implementing the solution

Implementation is the execution of a plan, method, model, standard or policy for doing something and is the action that must follow any preliminary thinking in order for something to happen.

Implementation in essence, is the steps to take to turn a strategic plan into the actions that help achieving goals and objectives. These actions will be based on the specific projects and not the same for every plan or initiative.

There are a few important things to take into consideration when thinking of an implementation plan such as:

- **Define goals** – what is needed to be accomplished?
- **Schedule milestones** – give task deadlines and project timelines
- **Allocate resources** – this is one of the most important steps in an implementation plan ; to ensure there are sufficient and adequate resources as time, money and staff to successfully execute the plan
- **Delegate team member roles** – creating a team plan with roles that each member of the team will play
- **Define metrics for success** – have a quantifiable measurement that managers can track to see if the strategy is working effectively also known as KPI's (key performance indicators) such as Customer Satisfaction Score, Sales Target Percentage or Revenue per Customer
- **Define adaptability** – having a plan for any changes in the implementation plan
- **Evaluate success** – decide how often progress will be evaluated (weekly, monthly, quarterly etc)

Implementation plan doesn't just need all of the above to be taken into consideration, but also writing the plan must follow some critical steps and have the following :

- Introduction
- Management overview
- Major tasks
- Implementation schedule
- Security and privacy list
- Implementation resource
- Documentation
- Monitoring performance
- Acceptance criteria
- Glossary
- References
- Plan approval

The implementation plan itself can be low-tech document, however, software tools can help tracking and manage progress and there are several such as: **Gantt Chart** which is a graphical bar chart to use as a plan timeline or **PERT** (Program Evaluation and Review Technique) chart to forecast project duration by creating a timeline for individual tasks and identify dependent tasks.

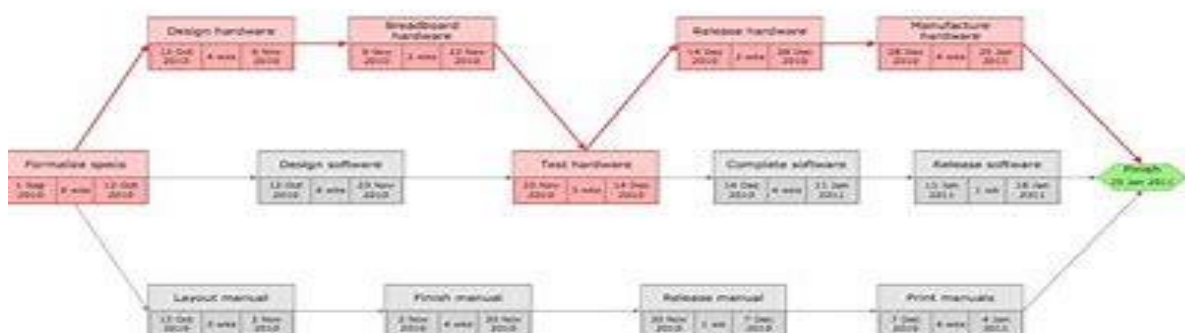
They are both illustrated down below.

Gantt Chart

Task Name	Q1 2019			Q2 2019		Q3 2019
	Jan 19	Feb 19	Mar 19	Apr 19	Jun 19	Jul 19
Planning						
Research						
Design						
Implementation						
Follow up						

(Product Plan , 2019)

PERT Chart Example



(Concept draw, 2019)

Communicate the plan to stakeholders

Communicate the plan is about keeping everyone informed at any given point and the communication planning defines the type of information that needs to be delivered, who will be receiving it, the format, the timing of its sending and also distribution channels.

The first step will be deciding what type of communication is needed and how much information will be included from the project for the stakeholders so that they won't be overwhelmed by unnecessary information, but they have enough to be informed and kept in the loop. The methods of communication can have many forms such as email, meetings either virtual or in person and these are decided based on the needs of the company and the industry in which operates as organization's tend to prefer a method of communication over another.

Assess appropriate monitoring and review techniques to ensure successful implementation of the solution

There is a control process that helps monitoring and reviewing the implementation to ensure it's successful and it is formed by the following steps:

- 1. Establish the standards of performance, goals or targets against which performance is to be evaluated**
- 2. Measure actual performance**
- 3. Compare actual performance against chosen standards of performance**
- 4. Evaluate the result and initiate corrective action if the standard is not being achieved**

Conclusion

All points considered, this module has allowed me to gain insight into the employment world and find out how problems in the workplace can be solved, what is the process that very often I have seen managers use in my own place of work and how these problems can affect the organization itself if not resolved.

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