

PROBLEM SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING

Individual Report
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1.Introduction

This report was created about a complex problem in the workplace in which tools and knowledge were applied to identify and propose solutions to the issue, also, an evaluation of possible solutions will be included. In this report, I will discuss a case of a difficult problem in which I was also involved, and it happened in my previous workplace. Analysis and discussion of the complex problem will have their place in this report, along with a plan of alternative solutions and recommendations that will focus on solving the issue. Tools such as cause, and effect and fishbone diagram will be used to identify factors that caused the issue in the first place. However, legislation and rules of conduct will be considered. Furthermore, I will elucidate appropriate review solutions and techniques to ensure that the complex problem solving was successful. A conclusion, a list of references including credits for the authors of lecture found, and an appendix will be set at the end of the report.

2.Complex problem definition

Differences in peoples believes, ethics and ideologies create problems daily either it being in a school environment, at home or in a workplace setting. However, problem-solving skills are essential in a workplace to prevent additional issues. Indeed Editorial Team (2021) underlines that problem-solving skills help individuals determine roots of a problem and find effective solutions.

In the workplace, minor concerns may spiral out of control, impacting everyone. As stated before, Stuart (2014) argues that complex problems are difficult to define as different individuals will have different opinions about the case, therefore they will see the complexity, nature and extent otherwise.

Experiments and work events have shown that cooperating and working together to solve complicated issues is difficult. I used to work at a coffee shop in a busy area. I later understood that there are some massive problems there. A range of small issues was creating a variety of complex issues, frustration and loss of profit in the coffeehouse.

A total of 5 people were working in that workplace including the manager.

The major problem with the coffee business was frequent complaints from customers regarding the coffee and service. The management and. The employees would typically give these clients a sour look. Also, comments encouraging bad behaviour towards customers were repeated often by the manager.

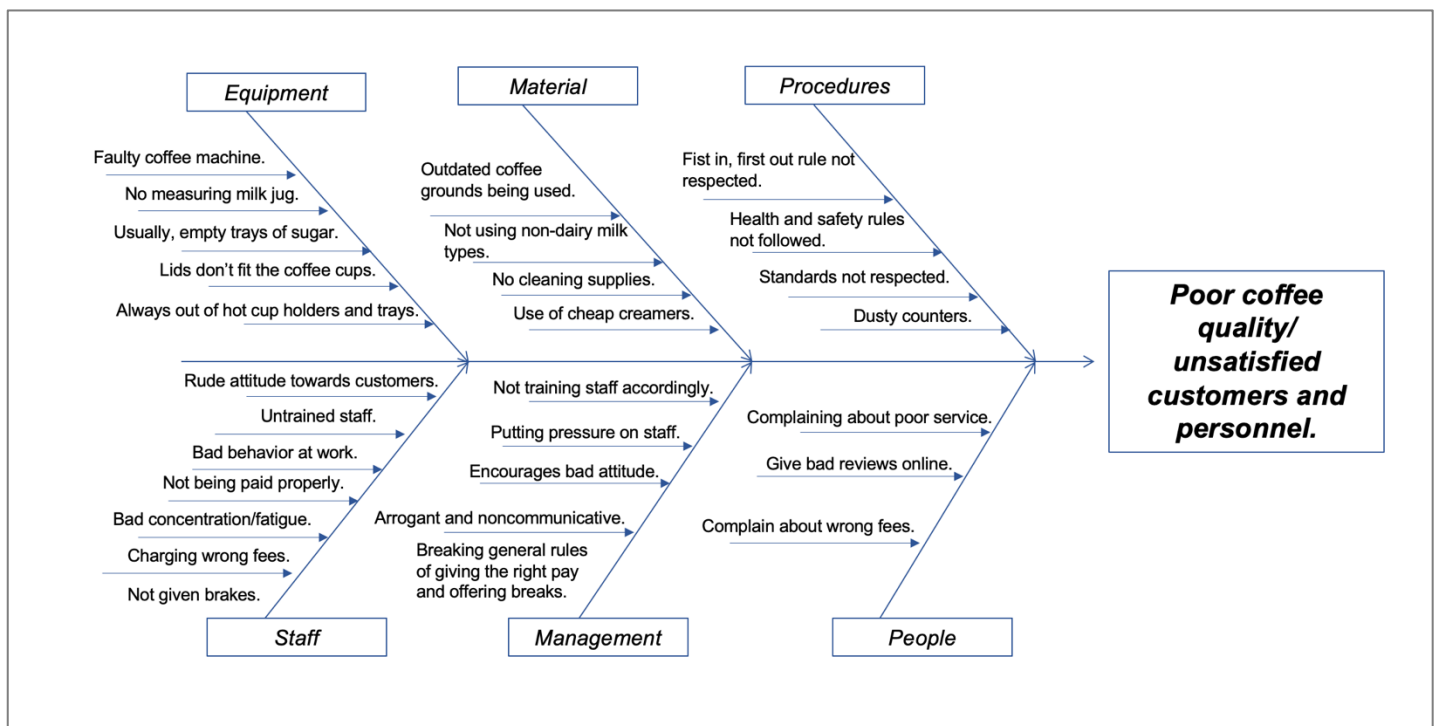
The training offered by the manager was of poor quality as he would “let me figure it out by myself” and if there would be any unclarified issues the manager would roll his eyes in disappointment. When I finally figured out how the old computer system and the counter works, I started learning how to prepare coffee. There I figured that the equipment was of poor quality and understood that the bad quality of coffee is a result of these.

After working a week, I understood that my colleagues and I are not being paid the correct rate and we are not allowed to take our breaks. We addressed the issue to our manager, and he disrespectfully justified that if the profits of the coffee shop will not go up, we will not get our correct pay.

To identify the factors and find an appropriate solution to the complex problem, a rational decision-making process will be approached. Lumen Learning (2021) argues that rational decision-making involves careful and methodical steps, and favours objectivity. These steps are:

1. Identifying the problem as a starting point.
2. Establishing decision criteria to determine what is relevant in concluding.
3. Generating alternate solutions to a complex problem.
4. Evaluating alternatives and selecting an approach to resolve the issue.
5. Implementation of the best alternative solution.
6. Monitoring the implementation of the plan to verify if the plan is followed properly or not.

Cause-and-Effect Analysis techniques will be utilised to solve problems effectively. Mind Tools Content-Team (2017) underlines that this technique helps individuals indicate all the possible causes of a problem. The cause-effect analysis involves the fishbone diagram, which is a valuable tool, to focus on factors that cause the matter. Bellow, the main problem has been identified in a fishbone diagram along with factors of the issue.



3. Discussion

As shown in the diagram, six factors were established which contribute to the complex problem which is the poor coffee quality and unsatisfied customers and personnel. The second stage into rational decision-making involves stakeholders, personnel and customers interests into process. A break-down of each of the causes impacting the main issue has been created below:

- **Equipment** – Issues such as faulty machine and not updated system cause customers to have a longer waiting time which creates dissatisfaction and anger. There has been an issue with ordering the right equipment, therefore, customers often complain about lack of sugar variety, correct size lids, hot cup holders or trays. One of the main factors why the taste of coffee is bad is because the coffee shop lacks a stainless measuring milk jug and instead employs a plastic cup with no measurements.
- **Material** – Supplies such as milk alternatives are not utilised, which causes non-diary consumers protest daily. Using outdated coffee grounds was highly encouraged by the manager of the coffee shop as he wished to avoid new product costs. “It is illegal for businesses selling products after their use-by date” highlights the Environmental Health Line (2019).
- **Procedures** – One of the issues of why the manager was unsatisfied was because he would have to throw away products (brownies, biscuits) as they would expire quickly. However, the manager was at fault for ordering too many goods at once and not managing the flow. Haraminac (2014) explained the FIFO rule and stated that the workers should consider using products before expiration *first*. However, the staff wasn’t trained properly to do so.
- **Staff** – Lack of training led to employees not following norms or health and safety rules in a workplace. Using the manager’s negative attitude towards consumers, injustice and illegal acts such as charging extra fees were developed.
- **Management & People** – Ultimately, these two factors are massively related as the poor customer reviews and less profit were creating dissatisfaction in the management team. Therefore, the manager would stop paying the staff the appropriate pay and stop offering breaks. Government Digital Service (2012) declared that an employee must give break time to ensure employees health and safety aren’t at risk.

These issues link up with each other and generate bad reviews, loss of earnings, dissatisfaction for customers, staff and management.

4. Analysis

This category will cover the third and fourth steps of rational decision making which are generating and evaluating appropriate solutions to the complex problem. Each aspect will be carefully examined to show how the issue may be resolved.

Equipment solutions

- The till system must be updated carefully to avoid long waiting times and customers frustration.
- Equipment such as coffee machine, should be replaced with modern and new equipment to make working operative and complete orders fast and efficient.
- Essential measuring milk cups must be purchased to perform duties successfully.
- Extra care must be taken when ordering equipment such as hot cup holders or lids so that customers would advantage and ample their needs.
- Filling up sugar trays with a variety of brown sugar, diabetic sugar and white sugar could satisfy a larger community of individuals.

Material solutions

- Products of high quality such as coffee grounds, syrups, creamers and milk alternatives will open a vast opportunity to attain more customers to the establishment. Therefore, the menu of the coffee-shop should be modified and be inclusive of the alternative, non-diary products that would welcome vegans to the store.
- Complaints and online reviews relating “dusty counters” and “sticky tables” would decrease massively if the management would start ordering cleaning supplies and therefore, train employees to use them safely and efficiently.
- The use and sale of expired products must be banned and reported as soon as possible when seen to the superiors, so that appropriate measures disciplinary or even legal action may be taken.

Procedure's solutions

- Appropriate training and a will to learn may avoid ignorance of laws such as FIFO and frequent errors.
- To enhance consumer pleasure and loyalty, important health and safety regulations and requirements related to coffee processing must be addressed. Inductions and online training sessions should be used to master these standards.

Staff related solutions

- The rude behaviour and attitude are showing the lack of respect towards customers. Therefore, the company is creating a bad image for itself and is layering themselves in criticism. However, this attitude can be changed if strict rules are created, and the appropriate training is conveyed. Managers should not promote impolite behaviour, but rather prevent it and act against it, either in an oral warning, discipline course or dismissal.
- The bad concentration and disappointment are a result of not being paid properly *intentionally* for unfair reasons, therefore employees can file an official complaint and report an employer for unfair treatment as ACAS (2021) suggests. The court may then decide further.
- Willis (2019) remarked "The Working Time Regulations (1998)" which govern legislation surrounding rights to adequate breaks. Therefore, the staff should check with HR if they are entitled to the breaks, and if so, take them. If the manager interferes, the personnel must contact the company's HR department.
- Lawdonut (2021) argues that giving misleading information about an item's price could have consequences on a worker, since they could have claims against them, lose their job or face a fine. Therefore, disobeying the consumer's rights must be reported immediately.

Management related solutions

- The manager is playing a massive role in influencing the people around him, whether it's employees or customers, everyone is discomforted since he is abusing the power that was given to him. The morale, performance, attitude and communication are lacking as he is not trying to collaborate and work along with the rest of the team.
- Deciding to harshly punish employees by denying pay and breaks, might result in the employer facing fines or being dismissed. Therefore, the manager must correctly pay his workers and give the correct breaks no matter the profit that the coffee shop is making to avoid consequences.
- As per previous accusations of selling expired products to the customers, the manager could "face a penalty of £20,000 or imprisonment for up to 6 months at Magistrates Court" since the fact is pointed out by Brent (n.d.).

5.Recommendations

The action plan involves the fifth step of rational decision making which is choosing the best alternatives for implementing a solution.

1. To help solve the complex issue, stakeholders must be informed first. Regional managers, partners and the owner hold high interest and high power towards the business. They must be aware of the circumstances and should be involved to find the solutions that would fit best.
2. A system in which accurate training is presented, must be created for managers and staff. Therefore, everyone would have the responsibility to complete the training so that work could evolve. In case that health and safety rules or standards are being disobeyed, disciplinary actions must be considered.
3. Slow equipment must be replaced to encourage fast and effective workflow to increase productivity. High-quality products like creamers, coffee grounds, syrups, milk alternatives and dairy milk should be utilised to avoid reviews regarding poor coffee quality. New coffee recipes and a new menu must be created to display the variety of products the coffee-shop offers to draw attention and bring profit.
4. The drinks must be served with good attitude and requests completed at high standards to reassure reliability and create customer loyalty.
5. Due to multiple rules broken and faults in managing the business and the people, the manager should be dismissed or even open an investigation where the high-interest stakeholders decide necessary penalties. New manager candidates need to be considered and recruited with extra care. A trained manager will bring out the best in employees and foster a fulfilling work environment.

6.Assesing, monitoring and reviewing techniques

The last step towards solving the complex problem is monitoring the implementation of the plan. Here are suggestions that could help make that possible:

-To make sure that the personnel is working effectively, weekly inductions must be created where the management would expand on the profit of the company and the performance of each of the team members to support improvement.

-Feedback and reviews must be reinforced in which staff are explaining their concerns towards their manager to their regional manager or the owner. Therefore, contact information such as emails and telephone numbers must be always accessible.

-Often inspection checks could be performed in the shop to stimulate standards and rules obeying.

-Trial coffee recipes could be implemented, in which free samples are given to customers, then surveys are completed to apply satisfaction and impressions.

7.Conclusion

Overall, this report's aim was reached as tools and knowledge were applied towards solving a complex problem in a workplace. Multiple aspects and factors causing the issue were recognised and described carefully. Subsequently, a alternatives list was given to implement a solution. The decision-making was rationally defined, and the implementing plan was communicated to the stakeholders. Ultimately, monitoring techniques were assessed appropriately to ensure successful plan development.

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9. Appendix

9.1. Role play script

Scenario – Role Play “Job dissatisfaction”

Manager consultant-Cristina Broasca and unsatisfied employee-Irina Pasa.

Bullying Irina (a woman) in a Coffee Shop

Irina: Good afternoon Cristina, thank you for coming over to Starbucks today.

Cristina: Hello, nice to see you today, not a problem at all, I am here to solve your problems after all I am a manager consultant. To start with, let me ask you how are you feeling today and what seems to be the issue at your workplace or what troubles you in general?

Irina: Sure. I've been working at Starbucks for 4 years now and I have been through a lot in this period. I met loads of amazing people ever since, but from last year until now it has been a nightmare. The reason behind it is that I am being surrounded by 3 male staff only, and including the manager makes 4. I didn't have an issue with that until when things started aggravating. I would come to do my usual shifts and the staff would start joking inappropriately and make remarks about the way I look or the way I dress, harshly and constantly criticize me that I am incompetent of doing things because I am a woman. I tolerated the rude jokes for a good period and tried to ignore the offensive behaviour, however, enough was enough and I told them to stop one day because they made me feel uncomfortable. That was clearly a joke to them because they didn't even bother to take a second and think that what they are doing is wrong.

I was very offended and felt intimidated by them and decided that the seriousness of the issue must get to the managers ears. I went to the manager and explained the whole situation and the response I got was laughing in my face and being told that I am too sensitive and can't take jokes because I am a woman. I asked the manager to hear me out and refer to the guys as that wasn't what should happen in a workplace but unfortunately, my manager supported that behaviour and started verbally harassing me alongside them. I was extremely disappointed that there was no support but toxicity from my manager.

This is the reason why I am here today, addressing this problem to you. I love my job and wouldn't want to run away from the issue but solve it with

your help. Is there any suggestions or ideas that could help me through this situation?

Cristina: First, I want to thank you for sharing your experience. I am very sorry for what has happened to you. While you were explaining what happened I made some notes of the cause and effect of the issue. For my understanding the main issue is that you are being faced with bullying, harassment and discrimination at Starbucks which leads you to low motivation and low performance at your workplace.

Irina: Yes, that is right. The store is very cosy and modern but since I have no support and defence from anyone, I started being distracted at the work I do. I started receiving many complaints from customers that their orders are wrong, therefore my sadness becomes infectious.

Cristina: Right, the major factors involved in the problem are the staff working at Starbucks (including your manager); the control and the task. Before proceeding further, I want to ask if "Have you thought about talking to the regional manager which is above your branch manager?".

Irina: I wanted to, but when I asked my manager for his contact information, he denied the request and said in a rude tone that I have no business to discuss with him, therefore I gave up.

Cristina: From what I can see in my fishbone diagram the cause of the issue is ignorance from your colleagues' side and tolerance coming from your side. The freedom of speech had your colleagues cross the line and hurt you multiple times, however the fact that you didn't act immediately when the "inappropriate jokes" started put you in a position that showed that you accept that behaviour towards you.

-The staff in the store must be trained appropriately to work effectively in the store alongside colleagues no matter of what gender they are. However, the inappropriate jokes show that The Equity Act 2010 rules against discrimination have not been followed which can end up in serious consequences.

-From my research Starbucks has a policy of laws that may give rise to disciplinary actions including dismissal if the manager of a branch is

managing situations badly and is being ignorant when it comes to a real situation.

-I assume that the performance in the branch is low as you said yourself, complaints and reviews can impact the store massively in a negative way. However, there is a reason behind it that in my opinion can be solved.

The macro-environmental factors that could contribute to the issue are:

Political-the manager could receive taxation or tariffs alongside the company for hiring unreliable people and failing as a manager.

Economic-employment rates could impact the quantity, quality, and cost of employees available.

Sociocultural- demographics including facts about women being discriminated could result into loss of reputation.

Technological- low-cost communications using internet can provide criticism to the company as rumours will spread quick.

Environmental- (not applicable).

Legal- political factors and laws collected by government entities have the power to identify issues and take actions therefore affecting the reputation and the success of the company.

Some of the solutions to the complex problems could be:

- Make the regional management and HR aware because they will be able to take steps on your behalf to resolve your issue.
- Keep any relevant evidence like names of witnesses, date, times, place, and data that could help to prove your claims.
- Make an official complaint if you feel like the bullying isn't stopping. The Starbucks Ethics & Compliance Helpline is a resource available to raise concerns that could help within the company.
- It is important to try and solve problems with your company first, however if you feel like injustice has been created, you have the right to take legal action to the tribunal.

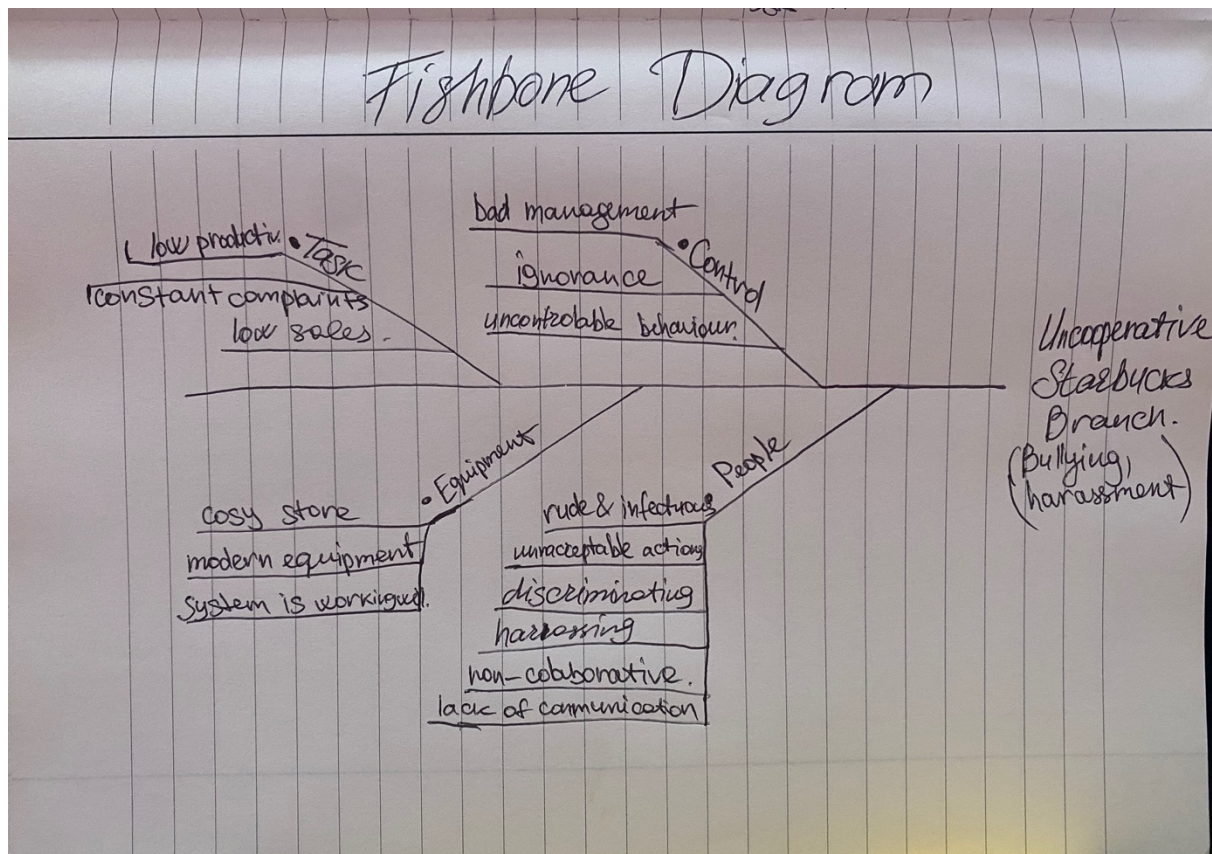
However, I feel like for the beginning you could announce your regional manager of what has happened and take it from there.

I can promise that you will be fine Irina and justice will be made.

Irina: Thank you so much for helping me and giving me the confidence, I needed it.

Cristina: But for now, I want to address to your manager, Mr. Balendran I hope you will provide Mrs Irina with the contact information of the regional manager and you along with the other problematic staff will attend further meetings and discussions for your own good. I wish that in the future you will learn your lesson and remember that demoting workers from bringing their best performance in their workplace will lead to anxiety, stress and more. Thank you very much and I wish Irina all the best in winning this case.

Role play's fishbone diagram note:



9.2. Class work notes

