

BMSW4004 – PROBLEM SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING

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Introduction

In this report I will be presenting my understanding of problem solving and decision making in the workplace, breaking down workplace issues and finding the solutions. I will also explain the steps of the decision-making process.

What is problem solving and decision making?

Problem Solving: Problem solving is a process used to find the possible outcomes to the situation, making decisions is a part of problem solving.

Decision Making: Decision making is a choice made by someone's judgement. You may need to make numerous decisions as part of the problem-solving process.

There are many problems encountered at workplace. These problems can be caused by staff, policies, resources and more. Problems in the workplace caused by staff can be lack of communication, attitude problems, ethical problems, poor performance and more. Working within tight budgets is another issued caused in the workplace due to resources and policies.

Problem Solving Process

The problem-solving process consists of a cycle that matches together depending on the type of problem that needs to be solved. They are problem definition, problem analysis, creating solutions, analysing the solutions, selecting the best solution and planning the next cause of action.

Problem Definition

- The process for solving a problem will involve breaking down the problem you want to solve.
- **Problem analysis:** The next step in the process is to check what the current situation is and what is involved in making it a problem. Understanding where the problem is coming from. Having a set criteria that you use to evaluate new solutions to know if they are working or not helps. This section of the problem-solving process allows you to access the current situation and see what needs to be changed.
- When you have come across the real problem that you want to solve, the next stage is to generate several possible solutions. At this stage you should focus on creating multiple solutions.
- **Analysing the solutions:** This section of the problem-solving process is where you research the multiple factors about each of the potential solutions. Note down the pros and con's about each point and other things relevant to each solution.
- **Selecting the best solution(s):** In this section you look through the many factors for each possible solution and decide which solutions to keep and which ones to disregard. In other solutions, it will be purely feelings and intuition that decides. You may end up with 1, a few or 0 reliable solutions. In the case where you have 0 solution selections you need to discover more potential solutions.
- **Planning the next cause of action (next steps):** This section of the process is where you calculate and write down what you are going to do next. Now that you have a potential solution(s) you need to decide how you will make the solutions happen.

Problem Solving Techniques

There are many problem-solving techniques such as: brainstorming, mind mapping, conjoint analysis, decision making trees and many more.

Brainstorming: Having a focus and steaming ideas off the focus. Some ideas can be turned into creative solutions to a problem.

Mind mapping: Mind mapping is having a main theme and brainstorming new and related ideas which flow from the centred theme.

Decision making tree: A decision making tree is the representation of all the possible solutions to a decision.

Problems in the workplace

There are many problems that be encountered in a workplace such as: being underpaid, work/life balance, little to no vacation time, bad management, unsupportive boss, company culture, no room for growth, lazy employees and more.

Taking time to overlook these problems and break them down there are many active solutions to fix these problems in the workplace to make employee happy in their working environment.

Employees being underpaid

Working employees being underpaid a common problem in the place of work which has a different impact on everyone. When an employee is unhappy and unsatisfied at work it can result in multiple things such as: lack of motivation, lack of interest, poor productivity, frustration and this can cause effects in company productivity.

Being underpaid can affect everybody differently. For example, there could be 2 underpaid colleagues and 1 of them could be a single father of 4 with many bills and childcare services to pay for but because of constantly being underpaid the bills are piling up and getting higher to the point it begins to affect that employee's workflow, motivation and interest in work which is starting to influence the company. This employee may not have any free time to pick up extra shifts due to having to care for his kids.

As for the second employee being underpaid, this problem could affect them way less due to not having the same or as many responsibilities. The problem not effecting some employees as much as others does not make the situation dismissible, for example, this specific colleague could start to feel as if they are working for no reason, and they will start to lack motivation and become frustrated.

Fixing the problem of underpayment

Fixing the problem of underpayment can be fixed with 5 simple brainstormed steps.

- Step 1) - Work out how long the employees have been underpaid for
- Step 2) – Work out how much the employee was actually paid
- Step 3) – Work out how much the employee should have been paid
- Step 4) – Calculate how much the employee has been underpaid
- Step 5) – Back pay the employee

Solutions to fix underpayment

There are many solutions that can fix employees being underpaid such as better clocking in and out systems and clear and understood rotas. New and improved clocking in and out systems such as automatic fobs that pick the time the employee has started and finished work or hand manual sheets that state the name of the employee, the date, time, time of clock in and out and shift length.

Better clocking in and out systems allow employees exact time of work of work start and end to be visible allowing pay roll and shift collecting day to be clear allowing each colleague to be paid correctly with no problems and issues. Automatic systems and hand manual systems allows there to be 2 records in case the automatic system stops working, there is a paper back up. If the paper system gets wet or lost there is an automatic system that can be checked and used to pay employees.

Clear and understood rotas allows everyone to double check their rotas make sure it fits in with their outside work life and other responsibilities. If a rota is unclear and inaccessible this causes confusion for both employees and managers. If a rota is unclear and poorly put together causing clashes with outside work responsibilities or going against employees' availabilities this causes unnecessary off days which leads to issues such as being underpaid due to a lazy and rushed put together rota.

A new plan of action

When employees enter work a printed sheet will be filled out, they will be required to check for their names, check the date and check their shift length adds up. If all the details for that day's shift is correct, they will need to tick next to their name and add the time they have done this.

Once their personal belongs have been put away and they are ready to start their shift they will be required to tap their automatic fob which will clock them in and start to count their hours for the day.

Once their shift is over, they must tap their fob straight away, once they have recollected their personal belongings on their way out, they must go back to the sheet, add the time they are leaving and sign with their signature.

This creates a smooth flowing clocking in and out system. This can also help in the case of an emergency. If there is an emergency the manager can use that paper sheet to check the names of the workers who have clocked into the building with the times. Next to each name if there is a signature that means that person is no longer in the building, if a manager looks at that paper system in an emergency and sees 5 names with no time out of building or signature, they will know that those employees are still in the building and might be in danger.

Trying this new double clocking in and out system for 4 weeks allows time and space for observations, it allows time to see if any employees coming back with the same issue of being underpaid. If they do this solution will need to be re-evaluated or a new solution will need to come in place.

Work and life balance

Work and life balance is something I have personal experienced while working. Not being able to balance and complete my outside work responsibilities had an effect on my mental health and work ethic due to the fact that I felt disorganised and unproductive as soon as I had left work. I felt as in all my other responsibilities were piling up, it started to feel very

overwhelming. In order to sort this issue out of feeling as if I could not balance work and my outside life a plan was created by my line manager to resolve the issue.

How does work and life balance affect employees?

Work and life balance can affect an employee in many ways such as their mental health and their attitude towards work. If an employee's shifts do not add up with their outside of work life this can become stressful and have them feeling as if they are not productive. If an employee's shifts do not match their schedule and they become stressed out they will lack motivation at work, and this will begin to have an effect on the workplace.

Solution to fix work and life balance

In order to make sure employees have a balanced work and life schedule there are 2 main things that can be done to resolve the problem such as checking each employee's availability while doing the work rota and checking each employee's contracted hours

Checking each employee's availability allows whoever is in charge of creating the rota to know when each employee is available to work and when they can start and finish on each specific day. This allows the employee to complete their other responsibilities they have planned. If the rota is done incorrectly and against an employee's availability, they could end up having clashes in their schedule leaving them having things undone which can then become very stressful. Planning rotas which everyone's availability allows them to have extra space which they can then request extra shifts seen as their schedule is going as planned and they have spare time.

Checking an employee's contracted hours makes sure that they are not given over the amount they have been contracted to and makes sure they are not given under the number of hours they are contracted to. Every employee is different, an employee could be a part time worker because they are a student and if they are given hours out of their contracted hours this will clash with their lessons, scheduled revision time and other responsibilities.

On the other hand, you could have an employee who keeps getting below their contracted hours and this could be an issue for them seen as they have bills and other services to pay for and constantly getting below their hours starts to stress them out. Employees being stressed out can cause a huge effect on the workplace if all employees are upset, demotivated and upset.

REFERENCES

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