

UNIVERSITY OF WALES TRINITY SAINT DAVID

PROBLEM SOLVING

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Contents

Introduction	3
A problem.....	3
The problem-solving stages	3
2. Brainstorming on the possible solutions.	3
3. Selecting the best solution	4
Psychological effect of problems on human beings in the workplace.	4
Critical thinking	5
Critical thinking, innovation and problem solving in a workplace.	5
How does PEST affect JD Wetherspoon?	6
The impact of PEST on JD Wetherspoon bar and restaurant.....	7
What Employee Behaviour is and the two main types of employee behaviour. ..	8
Key influencing techniques in managing the behaviour of employees.....	8
How technology has supported business in general	8
Advantages of using Technology.....	8
Disadvantages of using Technology	9
Conclusion.....	9
Reference list	10

Introduction

Problem solving skill are very important in every part of our lives. Whether one is a business owner or an employee, solving workplace problems such as bad employee behaviour may require the implementation of problem-solving skills. The objective of this report is to discuss problem solving and the theories associated to it in the context of business. The report uses JD Wetherspoon (a pub and restaurant business) as a case study. Section one describes problem solving and critical thinking at the workplace, section two discussion PEST (political, economic, social and technological factors), section discusses employee behaviour and the different types of employee behaviour while a final section discusses the impact of technology on business development.

A problem

There have been many definitions of problems. It can be defined as a problem or a need that requires attention (Ritz *et al.*, 1986) or a situation that can be solved by using new types of responses (Kent, 2006). At Wetherspoon, there is a problem of time management especially during closing ours. Staff tend to spend an extra half hour which is unpaid for during the closing process.

The problem-solving stages

When solving a problem there are several stages to consider. These are listed below;

1. Identifying and defining the problem.

This means that you need to understand and accept that the problem exists before you start solving it. Then you label it for easy identification. In this case, the bar hardly closes on time at the end of every shift. This is a re occurring situation and it is a problem to be solved.

2. Brainstorming on the possible solutions.

At this stage, you should come up with possible solutions to the problem depending on whether it is a closed/simple problem that requires a straight forward solution or an open ended /complex problem which requires a wide range of solutions to be generated. Coming up with a solution which includes a full analysis of the problem and a desirable course of action is important. Many possible solutions such as multitasking and rescheduling of work processes and work flows are inevitable in solving the time management problem. The management is expected to call a meeting in this regard and come up with various solutions to this problem

3. *Selecting the best solution*

At this stage it is important to evaluate and select the possible solutions applicable to the problem. Decision are made based on the comparison of the possible outcomes from the various solutions available. You should look at the constraints the solution may meet, evaluation the solutions against the outcome, asses the risks involved in applying the solution and then work on an implementation plan. As the floor supervisor go through the various solutions discussed in the meeting and I adopt strategies such as rescheduling and redistribution of workloads.

4. *Implementing the solution.*

At this stage you should plan and prepare to implement the solution, take the necessary action and monitor the progress and finally carry out a review after a certain period. The process in stage for may be applicable to both complex and simple problems. So, I redistribute the workload by labelling the bottles and leave three barmen behind the counter to serve the customers and then I list the bottles to be refilled and refill then when the traffic at the counters goes down. We wash the dirty glass and replace them during this time. Only after we have closed serving at midnight, I change the bins, quickly mop the floor while my colleagues wipe the counter clean. I make sure that when the traffic goes down, we do most of the things that should be done during the closing time and in the end, we close fifteen minutes early and get paid for the full hour.

These four stages above contract a flexible plan adaptable for both complex and simple problems. (itsedication.asia, 2017).

Psychological effect of problems on human beings in the workplace.

The presence of problem in a workplace may cause psychological injury. This is a mental health disorder which is largely caused by problems in a work place. These work place problems may be caused by interpersonal conflicts, tolerance of bad behaviours, and when employee complaints are ignored this may cause them to be distressed and disgruntled (Faps, 2017).

Simple / closed problems mainly require one or few solutions and while solving them, you should focus on determining and evaluating the problem to identify its possible causes. While open ended/complex problems may require more brainstorming to come up with a range of possible solutions (itsedication.asia, 2017). For example, in the Wetherspoon bar, If the glasses need to be replaced on time in the counter, we simply take one person

off the counter to wash and replace them or the supervisor washes and replaces them but on the issue failure to keep time at closure. We are required to come up with more possible solutions and strategies.

Critical thinking

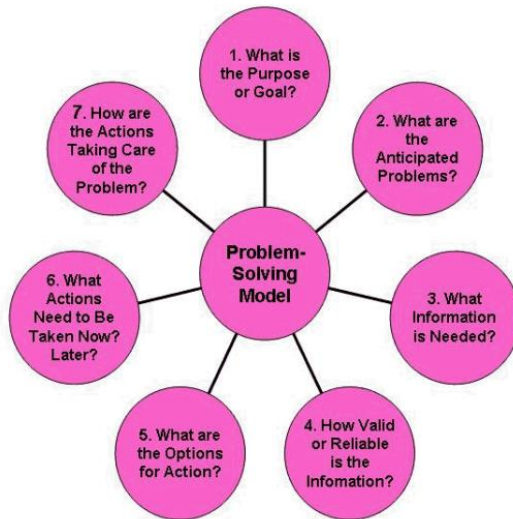
According to Paul and Elder (2013) "*Critical Thinking is the art of analysing and evaluating thinking with a view of improving it.*" There are various steps in critical thinking and the can be broken down into six steps as explained below (see Mhhe.com, 2017).

Step 1: Knowledge which includes acquiring knowledge to be able to identify the problem such as the problem of time management in the bar. Step 2: Comprehension which required a thorough understanding of the material of information acquired. That means being able to tell the difference between the priorities the problems in the bar take. Whether they are simple or complex problems. Step 3: Application which involves the application of the acquired knowledge based on your understanding of the acquired information. This may require you to be practical.

Step 4: Analysis involves breaking down the information you acquire about the situation into smaller manageable parts. Step 5: Synthesis involves putting the analysed parts together based on the information to create an idea or solution to the problem. In this case, rescheduling of tasks and redistribution of labour to form one solution to the time management problem(s). Step 6: Evaluation is carried out to confirm whether the information was understood as it was meant to be, and the analysed problems and solutions generated where found fitting after the application of the solutions. At this stage the end goal of time management is achieved, and we can now say we have a proven evidence-based system of dealing with the time management problem.

Critical thinking, innovation and problem solving in a workplace.

According to King (2008), critical thinking is adapted in the solving of problems as shown in the problem-solving model below;



(King, 2008)

How does PEST affect JD Wetherspoon?

Wetherspoon by law is expected to operate in accordance with the laws and policies such as health and safety laws of the United Kingdom. It is therefore a must for bartenders to label every refillable bottle of drink in the bar with a date beyond which is not to be served to the customers. As we go about our daily job, we should therefore make an accurate list of these drinks and have them refilled according to the expected refill dates. Whenever we are able to close the bar on time and have all the work distributed fairly amongst ourselves, we do make the job easier for the current employees and attract more people to apply for the jobs in the organization. The work relationships between colleagues and our families get better as we can go home on time or even have enough time to do other things we intend to do. We have introduced a new app where our customers are able to book and pay on line for tables and food plus drinks. We are making use of the currently trends on the technological world.

The impact of PEST on JD Wetherspoon bar and restaurant

December 02, 2017

Operations manager

Wetherspoon bar and restaurant

Dear sir,

I would like to thank you for the opportunity granted me to be a part of your Wetherspoon team. Due to the recent updates in the health and safety policies, I would like to bring to your attention the fact that we are due for an update in our health and safety training as per the law.

The recent adjustments on our work schedules and the changes in the distribution of tasks amongst ourselves have made the work easier and I can now say that all my colleagues are encouraged to invite many of their friends to apply for jobs at the pub.

This has made it possible for staff to finish the job on time and get back home in time with as less stress as possible and to spend more valuable time with their families and friends making their relationships healthier.

The adaption of the new trends in technology where customers can make orders online using their phones through our new App has created room for more customers and as they have been offered more payment options.

Yours sincerely

Alam

What Employee Behaviour is and the two main types of employee behaviour.

Employee behaviour refers to interactions amongst employees, between employees and management as well as between employees and other external stakeholders (Holtzhausen and Fourie, 2008). According to Hunt (1996), Employer behaviour is divided into productive and counterproductive behaviours while contribute and detract from the main goals of the organisation. Counterproductive employee behaviours are a group of acts that intend to harm or harm the organisation or its stake holders (Spector *et al.*, 2006)

Key influencing techniques in managing the behaviour of employees.

Employee working conditions are a contributor to the employee behaviour where by employees with better working conditions tend not to exhibit disruptive employee behaviour (Kariuki & Nico, 2004) Leadership of the company to a large extent determines the employee behaviours. Encouraging experiential learning so that employees get more knowledge, an open work environment where employee can ask questions and valuing the acquisition of knowledge by their employee should be paramount for any organization's leadership (Castiglione, 2006) and in so doing building an environment which encourages good employee behaviour through rewards for the same is established.

How technology has supported business in general

When conducting business today, top managers are identified by their ability to make sound decisions. The process of transacting business has become made technology a basic part of the process, which requires financial managers to be able to make good decisions. But to do so, these managers do need to have access to information often referred to as data a product of information technology (Barsky *et al.*, 2001).

Advantages of using Technology

Revenue management is a technique that is centred on good decision making to ensure profit maximization when selling perishable goods. Information technology is very fundamental when it comes to developing techniques that enable management of revenue. The more technology advances the more sophisticated the capabilities of business revenue become. For business to succeed today, there is a fundamental need to have system that support revenue management and management of technology. Most companies today use these technologies to enable the maximization of profits especially in situations where the capacity is constrained (Guadix *et al.*, 2010). The weather spoon

bar uses accounting systems and customer relationship management software to enable top management to make the most suitable business decisions.

Disadvantages of using Technology

Advancement in technology has made it easier to communicate by simply sending emails or text messaging. This has created a gap in face to face conversation yet for most business owner's, this is one of the main ways of solving a business problem or starting business relationships (see Gargaro, 2014). Wetherspoon's success has been built on face to face communication to ensure good customer service. Allowing customers to order for their food and drinks on line is in away affecting this communication process and will eventually impact the business in a negative way.

Conclusion.

Problem solving is an inevitable skill that all should have. Focusing on technology to improve business processes but not forgetting the possible negative impact it can have on any business is very import. And understanding the opportunities within the Political, economic, social and technological environment is equally an important part of day to day running of business.

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