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Assignment Title: Problem solving and decision making

Problem Solving and Decision Making

Work Place Problem

Two years ago, I was working for KITKING company in UK as part of the sales team. The company is a sports teamwear specialist that supplies teamwear to various clubs in football, rugby, hockey, cricket, volleyball, and basketball. However, towards the end of my second working year in the company, the business began experiencing loss of customers to its competitors in the country. Some customers moved to other companies, such as Pendles Sport Wear and Direct Soccer.

The impact and scope of this problem is that first, the company started losing sales and revenue. Apparently, the cost is higher when replacing lost revenue than it is in retaining the business according to Straus (2002). Second, loss of customers denoted loss of feedback and lack of opportunity for desirable improvements in the company. The company started receiving little to no feedback from customers. Previously, the company would receive numerous feedbacks from customers in form of advice, criticism, and opinions, but after sometime there was little to no feedback. Third, loss of customers resulted to a loss of confidence in the entire organization, especially concerning validity of the services offered. Lastly, it resulted to demoralization of the sales and marketing staff with introspection concerning the products and services offered; that is the reason I quitted the job.

Possible Solutions

One of the possible solutions is derived from the porters five Force analysis tool. It is a tool used to analyze competition level in an industry. According to Proctor (2014), it is a powerful tool that explains where power lies in a business operation. The five components of the tool include threat of new entrants, threat of substitute, bargaining power of buyers, bargaining power of suppliers, and rivalry within an industry (Pizlo, 2012). In this case, KITKING company is not threatened by new entrants because it is an established brand that has been operating for 30 years apparently. Second, it is not threatened by substitute products because there are none that can match its quality items; neither is it threatened by bargaining power of suppliers. The only threat to the company is the bargaining power of buyers and the rivalry within the industry. This problem can be solved by lowering the price tags of the company product supplies and creating a competitive advantage over its competitors.

Another solution can be identified by conducting a SWOT analysis of the company. SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It is a framework used to identify and analyze the internal and external factors that can affect the success of a product

(Gürel & Tat, 2017). Gürel and Tat (2017) further states that an organization can take advantage of one of its strengths in reversing or limiting its weakness. Also, a company can avoid a threat by utilizing an opportunity. In my stated work problem, the company faces threat of high competition from its competitors. However, void that threat by focusing their attention on the emerging and growing market opportunities in the UK. Many sports club are coming up and they would need reliable teamwear supplies. Therefore, KITKING can tailor their adverts and promotions to such emerging markets with aim of gaining loyalty from them at their initial stages of development.

The last possible solution can be obtained through the cause-and-effect analysis. Biały and Ružbarský (2018) defines cause as the reason why something is happening and effect as the aftermath of the thing that has happened. Biały and Ružbarský (2018) establishes that cause-and-effect analysis visualizes the reason why an issue is happening. In the workplace problem mentioned earlier, I can say that some of the issues that probably led to the loss of customers to competitors is a change of workforce. Some of the people involved in the sales and marketing department did not have academic qualifications and some even lacked adequate training on how to go about it. Therefore, the change of skills and knowledge on how to handle customers was probably overlooked by the management; and it may have resulted to customer dissatisfaction. Therefore, the possible solution to thus problem is to begin an employee training program that would be running through out the year to train employees on all departments on the skills and knowledge required for the success of their department.

Evaluation of the Solutions

Apparently, I intend to use the PMI (plus, minus, interesting) decision making tool to identify the most appropriate solution for the work problem experienced in my previous working station. Proctor (2014) states that PMI is an effective critical thinking tool that encourages examination of various concepts, ideas, and experiences from different angles. Besides, the decision-making tool aids in weighing the pros and cons, and the strengths and weaknesses of an idea hence making it easier to settle for the best.

The decision to lower price tag has several plus. First, it has the potential to generating profits due to increase of sales from the discounted prices. Second, it is likely to increase sales as more customers rush to buy the discounted products while they last. Third, it has the potential of rising turnover rate as it frees up capital stuck in inventory (Cottrell, 2017). The minuses in this decision are that it may cost high marketing fees in advertising the discounted products hence increasing company expenditure. Second, it may lead to reduced profit gains due to the discounted prices. Third, customers may begin to doubt the quality of

the products due to the unexpected price tags. Lastly, customers may become loyal to the company only when prices are discounted.

The second decision of tailoring adverts and promotions to the emerging markets also has several plus, minuses, and interests to consider. The plus for the idea is that it attracts a first-mover advantage. It has the capacity to build brand loyalty at an early stage by creating local partnerships that are an added advantage to the business. The idea also promotes access to new capital, which is untapped but available for grabs hence aiding the business to expand. The minuses and interest of this idea is that the business may face cultural barriers, especially if the target customers are in different geographical settings. Besides, there may be limited protection in carrying out business in certain areas since the legal frameworks keeps on evolving.

The third decision of initiating an employee training program is also worth considering. The advantages of employee training are that it promotes job satisfaction and engagement of workers. Tinkler et al. (2017a) states that job satisfaction can be as a result of many things but it all concerns with people feeling good about their work, which is closely tied to employee engagement. The second advantage of employee training is that it increases their motivation through the available training opportunity that allows them to learn new skills, hence being able to take up new work challenges. Tinkler et al. (2017b) states that employee motivation improves their commitment and creativity in work. Third, improvement of knowledge translates to increased profits in terms of high sales and improved customer satisfaction. The only disadvantage with employee training is that it incurs high costs, especially to small and medium sized companies. It also consumes a lot of time.

In consideration to the three solutions received, I would propose employee training as the most ideal method of dealing with the witnessed work problem. According to the PMI decision making tool, employee training has more pluses than minuses. Besides, the minuses do not apply to the KITKING company because, first, it is a large size company that has been in operation for more than 30 years now. Second, the loss of customers is a more waste of time and cost compared to the time and money that would be invested in employee training. The interesting thing about the decision is that it would generate employee loyalty, hence being able to retain the most qualified employees. That would also translate to high customers satisfaction and improved brand image (Ziegenfuss, 2002).

Implementation of the Solution

The implementation plan shall have establishment of goals and objectives intended to be achieved in a set period of time. The goal of the plan is to promote increased flow of customers in KITKING and subsequent increase in revenue earned, which is a smart goal

according to (Project Smart, 2020). The objectives that shall be set include monthly evaluation of employee training to determine if it is adding value to employee or not. Another objective is to evaluate the productivity level of employee, employee satisfaction, and loyalty level. The training program shall be put into a schedule with task deadlines and project timelines. Additionally, resources shall be allocated to the implementation plan in term of time, manpower, and money for successful execution of the plan. The implementation plan shall also include designation responsibilities to staffs in the company it will also involve defining metrics of success that will help in understanding whether the plan is successful or not. Lastly, the plan will include adaptation mechanisms to changes about the plan and the criteria for evaluating success.

Basically, KITKING company will hire professional tutors to train their staff members on the essential skills and knowledge for every department. The training shall make use of Gantt Chart tool for implementing timelines. Each department shall be covering a specific module per month and later they shall be given an evaluation test to gauge their understanding. There shall also be metrics of success put in place to measure the progress of the intervention. For instance, the management will be required to set targets for the employee in terms of exam performance. There shall be an examination after every point and the cut off points shall be a C grade. Also, all learners shall be required to participate in group activities and make equal contributions.

Communication to Stakeholders

Notably, the plan shall be communicated to stakeholders for analysis. The primary stakeholders identified in this case are the customers, suppliers, the staff members, and shareholders. The secondary stakeholders that shall be involved are business partners. The stakeholder shall be informed about the implementation plan via email. Besides, they shall be given a monthly update of the progress of the employee training and the progressive impact it will have on the company. Adair (2016) states that communication with stakeholders is vital as it helps in deciding the point in which a company should invest stakeholder management effort. It also helps in engaging those that have high levels of interest and power in the organization with the aim of keeping them satisfied.

Monitoring and Review Techniques

Monitoring and review techniques are part of organizational control. Morgan (2017) states that manager are responsible for monitoring and regulating the efficiency and effectiveness of how things are run in an organization. One role of managers is to monitor and evaluate whether a company has converted inputs into outputs. In the case scenario, managers shall be tasked with evaluating and monitoring whether employees are putting into practice the

concepts taught during the training. For instance, managers shall monitor the relationship between employees and customers, whether it is improving or not. They shall also monitor whether the sells are increasing or not and whether the company is receiving more customers or not.

Conclusion

Problem solving and decision making is a module that has equipped me with a lot of skills, knowledge, and understanding. I have been able to apply possible solutions to a work place problem scenario that I experienced in my previous working experience. I have used problem solving techniques, such as SWOT analysis and cause and effect to weight the possible solutions to the case scenario. Finally, I was able to make the final decision on the ideal solution through the use of PMI, which is a decision-making tool. I have also outlined a plan for implementing the solution and the communication plan to stakeholders. Ideally, communications to stakeholders are intended to be passed through an email for the purpose of saving time and cost. Finally, the project intended to make use of Gantt chart as a effective tool for successful plan implementation. Appropriate monitoring and review techniques have been employed to ensure the success of the proposed solution.

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