

Applied Leadership and Management in the Workplace Module Assignment Submission

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Table of Contents

1.0	Introduction.....	3
2.0	Workplace Complex Problem.....	4
3.0	Analysis.....	5
3.1	Brainstorming.....	5
3.2	Mind mapping	5
3.5	Fishbone/Ishikawa.....	7
4.1	Obstacles & Barriers	8
5.0	Evaluate.....	8
5.1	Grid Analysis.....	8
5.2	Cost Benefit Analysis.....	9
5.3	Financial Ratios	10
5.4	SWOT Analysis.....	10
6.0	Implementation of plan	11
6.2	Action Plan.....	12
6.4	Stakeholder Analysis.....	13
7.0	Monitor and Review	14
7.1	Contingency Plan	14
7.2	Tracking progress.....	15
8.0	Conclusion	15
9.0	References.....	16
10.0	Appendix A - Force-Field Analysis.....	17

1.0 Introduction

Problem solving and decision making are crucial skills needed in business operations as they enable teams and individuals to identify issues, evaluate options and implement effective solutions. Effective problem-solving helps reduce disruption, improve customer satisfaction and support staff wellbeing (Byrnes, 2002).

Effective decision making allows leaders and managers alike to choose the most appropriate course of action based on evidence, stakeholder needs and available resources (Etzioni, 2023)

This report explores the problem of being unable to keep up with demands during busy periods at Bay Haven. The owner will be responsible for finding solutions to this problem that has impacted the speed of service, staff capacity and customer experience.

If the problem goes unresolved, it will affect customer satisfaction, impact negatively with volunteers and have a lasting impact on the sustainability of the business. Addressing this challenge is essential to the on-going success and the social impact of Bay Haven.

The report will analyse the complex problem using a range of problem-solving techniques, including brainstorming, mind mapping, 5 Whys, stakeholder analysis and cost benefit analysis. Models such as Fishbone/Ishikawa diagram, Gantt charts and communications plans will also be applied to analyse and evaluate potential solutions. A SWOT analysis will be used to help clarify the internal and external factors that contribute to the complex problem.

Other models can be used such as the Force-Field Analysis which can be found in Appendix A.

The aim is to propose a realistic, financially viable solution that ensures Bay Haven can continue to meet demand whilst supporting both its customers and its social enterprise goals.

2.0 Workplace Complex Problem

The complex problem that Bay Haven faces is being (Unable to keep up with demand during busy periods). As the social enterprise grows in popularity, peak hours have led to long wait times, reduced service quality and pressure on both staff and volunteers.

The problem is significant as it risks damaging the Bay Havens reputation, discouraging repeat visitors and undermining the calm, supportive atmosphere that is vital for neurodivergent customers. If left unresolved, it could also lead to burnout among staff and volunteers, missed revenue opportunities and reduced workshop attendance.

Bay Havens problem affects multiple stakeholders, including customers, employees, support staff and referral partners such as local authorities and care managers who rely on Bay Haven as a consistent and safe space.

The complex problem is classified as a deviation problem as things aren't working as expected from the planned performance. It also falls under an operational problem as it affects day to day operations and causes disruption to customer service.

Addressing the problem is essential, not only for maintaining high standards of service but also for ensuring the long-term success and social impact of the business.

2.1 Scope

The scope of Bay Haven's the complex problem involves several operational and service-related areas. The areas affected are the following:

- Customer service is slowed down during peak times.
- Staff and volunteers become overstretched or overwhelmed.
- Limits the number of customers that can be served.
- Impacts stock management and preparation processes.
- Affects scheduling and staffing capacity.
- Restricts future growth and sustainability.

2.2 Impact

The impact of the complex problem affects both internal and external stakeholders. These are listed below.

- Customers experience longer wait times and may not return.
- Neurodivergent individuals may feel stressed or unsupported during busy, chaotic periods.
- Staff and volunteers, increased pressure, risk of burnout or reduced job satisfaction
- Business reputation, poor service could damage relationships with the local community.
- Revenue, lost sales opportunities during busy times.
- Workshop delivery, reduced attendance or participation due to operational stress.
- Stakeholders, including care managers, funders, and local authorities, may lose confidence in the service.

3.0 Analysis

It is important to explore the underlying causes and contributing factors to the complex problem. There are 6 steps to effective problem solving.

- 1/ Identifying the problem.
- 2/ Specify the cause, reasons and effects.
- 3/ Identify possible solutions.
- 4/ Evaluate and select the most promising solution.
- 5/ Plan the action.
- 6/ Action the plan.

To do this, structured analysis tools will be used to find potential outcomes and solutions.

3.1 Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a technique used to create a wide range of ideas in response to a specific problem. (Kramer et al, 1997). This technique is important as it encourages creative thinking, promotes team involvement, creates multiple solutions and supports better decision making. The technique works as it explores possible solutions for organisations to choose the best outcome. For Bay Haven's complex problem, the following ideas were thought of.

- Offer takeaway-only options for peak times.
- Hire more volunteers for peak hours.
- Create a pre-order system.
- Introduce a loyalty app for off-peak discounts.
- Use timers to speed up service.
- Install a new point of sales (POS) system.

This technique has helped identify practical and creative approaches to managing peak demand. To help form this into a visual aid, the mind mapping technique will be used.

3.2 Mind mapping

Mind mapping is a visual tool that is used to organise ideas and thoughts around a central topic (Buran & Flyukov, 2015). This tool is important as it helps organise information clearly, supports creative thinking and makes problem solving more effective.

The following mind map has been created from the brainstorming technique to organise ideas constructively.



The mind map above shows multiple possible solutions to Bay Haven's complex problem.

3.3 Root Cause

The definition of the root cause is the underlying reason that the problem occurs. It's the source of the issue and informs organisations of why the problem exists in the first place.

Root cause analysis is important to address as it helps eliminate the problem, saves time and resources, improves decision making by choosing the most effective solution, reduces risks and promotes continuous improvements. Below are several ways to find out the root causes using various problem-solving techniques.

3.4 5 Whys

5 Whys work by repeating the question 'why' 5 times to determine the root cause of the problem and not just the symptom (Gangidi, P, 2019). For Bay Haven's complex problem, it would like this:

Unable to meet demands during busy periods.

- Why is Bay Haven unable to keep up with demands? Because processing takes too long.
- Why does it take too long? Staff spend too much time manually entering and checking orders.
- Why do staff spend so much time on orders? Because the current till system is outdated.
- Why is the current system outdated? Because it hasn't been upgraded since the business started and lacks features for fast order handling.

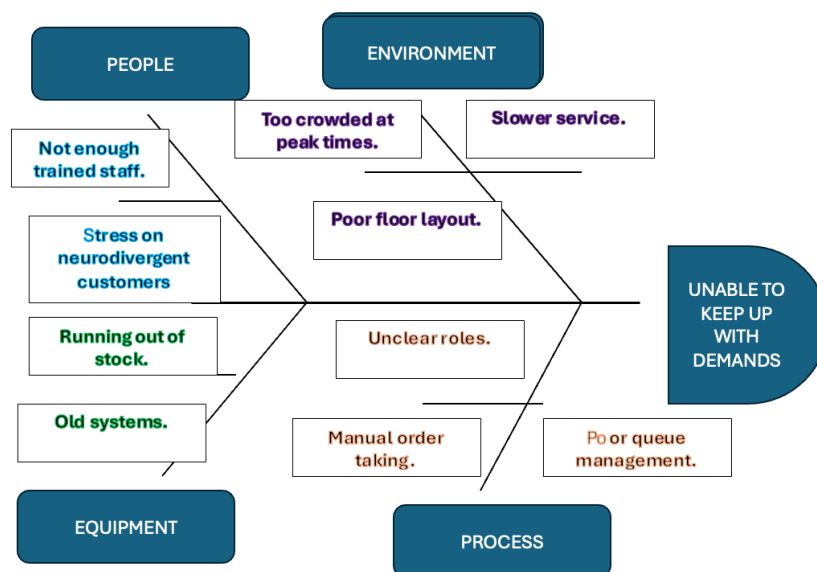
- Why hasn't the system been upgraded? Because the business prioritised other start-up costs and didn't anticipate peak hours demands.

The root cause has been defined as a lack of vital POS system. Upgrading to a new system with faster processing, touch screen order entry and integrated payment systems, enable the business to operate effectively and efficiently during all hours, especially during busier periods. By completing this problem-solving tool, it enables Bay Haven to prevent repeated problems, encourages critical thinking and continuous improvement.

3.5 Fishbone/Ishikawa

The Fishbone or Ishikawa diagram is a visual problem-solving tool that identifies possible causes of a specific problem (Radware B Captcha, 2025). This technique is important to encourage structured thinking, promotes team collaboration and supports continuous improvement.

Below there will be an Ishikawa diagram using the brainstorming and mind mapping suggestions as a guide.



The Ishikawa diagram above, shows the main points to consider when trying to find a solution to Bay Havens complex problem.

4.0 Possible Solutions

After using the tools and techniques above, there have been several solutions highlighted that may work in favour of the complex problem. These solutions are as follows:

- Hire temporary staff during peak hours.
- Changing the shop floor layout.
- Updating the POS system to create speedier service.

- Introducing takeaway-only deals at peak times.
- Create a loyalty app for off-peak hours.

4.1 Obstacles & Barriers

While there are several solutions to the complex problem, there are also other things to consider when deciding what solution is best used. The table below shows what these obstacles and barriers may be.

SOLUTIONS	OBSTACLES	POSSIBLE BARRIERS
Hire extra staff.	Recruitment and training required.	Budget limitations and unavailability of volunteers.
Changing layout.	May cause short term disruption during changes.	Physical restrictions and landlord permission required.
Updating POS system.	Purchases and training needed.	Limited funding for tech investment & unreliable internet connections.
Offering takeaway-only deals.	Needs a new system and could overload the kitchen.	Lack of staff capacity and older customers may struggle to use.
Creating a loyalty app for off-peak hours.	Extra costs and outgoings.	May lose customers who are unable to use the app.

The table above shows that while several solutions were identified, each one has its own potential barriers and obstacles.

5.0 Evaluate

After deciding on the proposed solution of updating the POS system to improve speed of service and efficiency, the next step would be to run financials to see if this is the correct decision for the business. The models and techniques used to do so will be that of a grid analysis, cost benefit analysis and financial ratio analysis. By using these financial models, it enables Bay Haven to determine the most financially strategic option.

5.1 Grid Analysis

Using the grid analysis tool helps to evaluate choices logically and fairly, especially when decisions are complex or involve competing priorities (Tahir et al, 2009).

Solution	Impact (1-5)	Cost (1-5) Low = Better	Ease of implementation (1-5)	Long Term Benefit	Total	Totyal weight
(Weight)	5	4	4	5		
Hiring extra staff.	4 (20)	3 (12)	4 (16)	3 (15)	14	63
Changing Layout	3 (15)	4 (16)	2 (8)	3 (15)	12	54
Updating POS system	5 (25)	3 (12)	3 (12)	5 (25)	16	74

Offering Takeaway-only deals	4 (20)	3 (12)	5 (20)	3 (15)	15	67
Creating a loyalty app.	3 (15)	4 (16)	3 (12)	4 (20)	14	63

From the Grid analysis above, it is determined that the best solution to choose from would be the implementation of a new POS system for Bay Haven. Using the weight to measure the importance of each factor, the chosen solution has been identified. The next stage is to run a cost benefit analysis to determine if this solution is financially viable for the business.

5.2 Cost Benefit Analysis

A cost benefit analysis is a decision-making tool that is used to compare the costs of an action or investment against its expected benefits. It is important to use as it creates informed decision making, justifies spending, prevents overspending and supports strategic planning (Mishan & Euston Quah, 2020).

Below is a cost benefit analysis which shows the projected expenditures and profits over a 5-year period.

	Year					Cost (£) Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
Purchase of equipment	£640					£640
Less trade in	£150					£150
Net cost of purchase	£490					£490
Monthly subscription £40	£480	£480	£480	£480	£480	£2400
Installation & setup	£200					£200
Staff training	£150					£150
Maintenance/ upgrade	£100	£100	£300	£100	£100	£700
Total costs	£1420	£580	£780	£580	£580	£3940

Benefits (£)	Year					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
Time Saved	£500	£550	£600	£600	£600	£2850
Error reduction	£200	£200	£200	£200	£200	£1000

Extra Revenue	£0	£500	£500	£500	£500	£2000
Total benefits	£700	£1250	£1300	£1300	£1300	£5850

The cost benefits above show all vital outgoings and profits for a 5-year period to ensure sustainability for the proposed solution.

5.3 Financial Ratios

$$\text{Benefit-to-cost ratio} = \frac{\text{Total benefits}}{\text{Total costs}} = \frac{£5850}{£3940} = 1.48$$

$$\text{Net annual benefit} = \text{annual benefit} - \text{annual cost (First year)} = -£720$$

$$\text{Net annual benefit} = \text{total benefits} - \text{total costs} = £1910$$

In the first year, the net annual benefit is negative due to the costs of equipment purchases, installation and staff training. However, from the second year, recurring benefit from increased efficiency, reduced errors and additional revenue exceed ongoing costs, resulting in positive net benefits.

5.4 SWOT Analysis

After extensive use of evaluation techniques and models, a SWOT analysis has been completed on the POS upgrade below to show the potential profitability and growth of the business and long-term benefits.

Strengths

- Speeds up transactions, reduces queues during peak hours.
- Improves order accuracy, reducing waste and errors.
- Provides better sales reports for making decisions.
- Enhances customer experience and encourages repeat visitors.

Weaknesses

- High initial outlay which may strain the budget.
- Requires staff training which takes time and resources.
- Potential technical issues, increased risk if system fails.

Opportunities

- Potential to introduce loyalty apps in future.
- POS can support online ordering in future for extra revenue.
- May qualify for grants or social enterprise funding.

Threats

- Competitors may already have advanced systems in place.
- Technology costs can continue to rise so updates may be delayed.

- Staff and volunteers may struggle with unfamiliar technology.

From the SWOT analysis above, the POS system can provide Bay Haven with a practical, long-term solution that enhances efficiency. While long-term sustainability will depend on careful financial management, a plan must be in place to measure the progression.

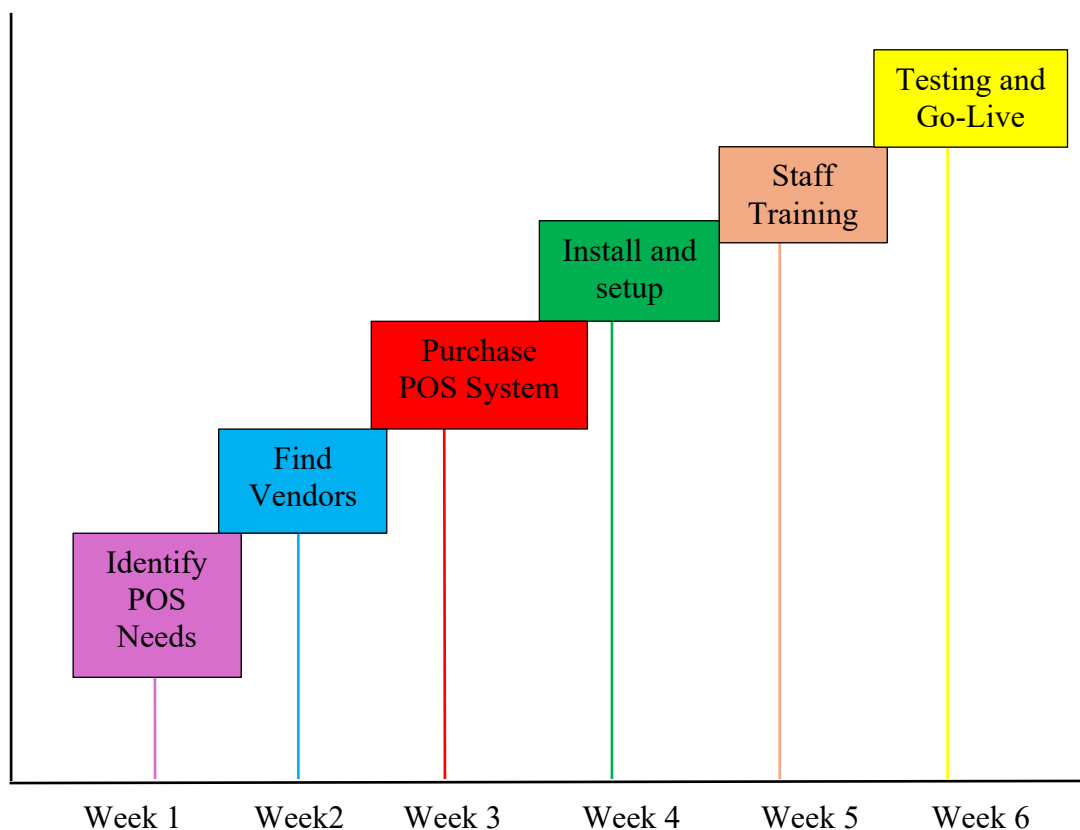
6.0 Implementation of plan

In order to implement a plan effectively, the actions will be prioritised based on their cost, impact and ease of conveyance. By using a Gantt chart, an action plan and a communication plan, it will be determined what the best course of action is and when to implement the changes. This is important as stakeholders need to be made aware of any upcoming changes that may disrupt the service provided.

6.1 Gantt Chart

A Gantt chart is a visual tool used in project management that shows timelines of tasks and activities against a calendar. (Gerald & Lechter, 2012).

Below is a Gantt chart designed for the proposed solution with a clear visual timeline, to track progress and to identify tasks by priority.



The Gantt chart above, provides a clear and visual timeline for the implementation of the POS system over a 6-week period. This ensures that the project remains on track and resources are allocated efficiently.

6.2 Action Plan

The following action plan outlines the specific steps Bay Haven will need to take to implement the proposed POS system solution. This structure provides a clear timeline, defined responsibilities and measurable outcomes.

Action	Task	Responsible Person (s)	Resources	Time Frame
Research POS system options.	Identify suitable systems for small to medium cafes.	Owner (Emma).	Internet research, supplier brochures, industry reviews.	01/09/25
Request quotes and demos.	Contact suppliers for live demonstrations and get quotes for installation and training.	Owner (Emma).	Contact list of suppliers.	08/09/25
Select POS system.	Compare short-listed systems using a grid analysis and choose the best fit.	Owner plus 1 volunteer.	Evaluation sheet (grid analysis).	16/09/25
Secure budget/funding.	Allocate budget from cash flow or request social enterprise grant.	Owner (Emma).	Financial records & funding application forms.	19/09/25
Install POS system.	Supplier installs system and software and tests connectivity.	POS supplier.	POS hardware & software. Internet connection.	01/10/25
Train staff & volunteers.	Provide full training on the system for speed and accuracy.	POS supplier & owner.	Training materials, practice stock items.	02/10/25
Go live with new system.	Begin using the system for daily use.	All staff & volunteers.	POS system.	07/10/25
Monitor & review.	Track service speed, error rates and customer	Owner (Emma)	Customer feedback, social media reviews & sales reports.	07/10/25-07/11/25

	satisfaction over 4 weeks.			
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By following the action plan above, Bay Haven can confidently introduce the new POS system with minimal disruption and improved service efficiency.

6.3 Communication Plan

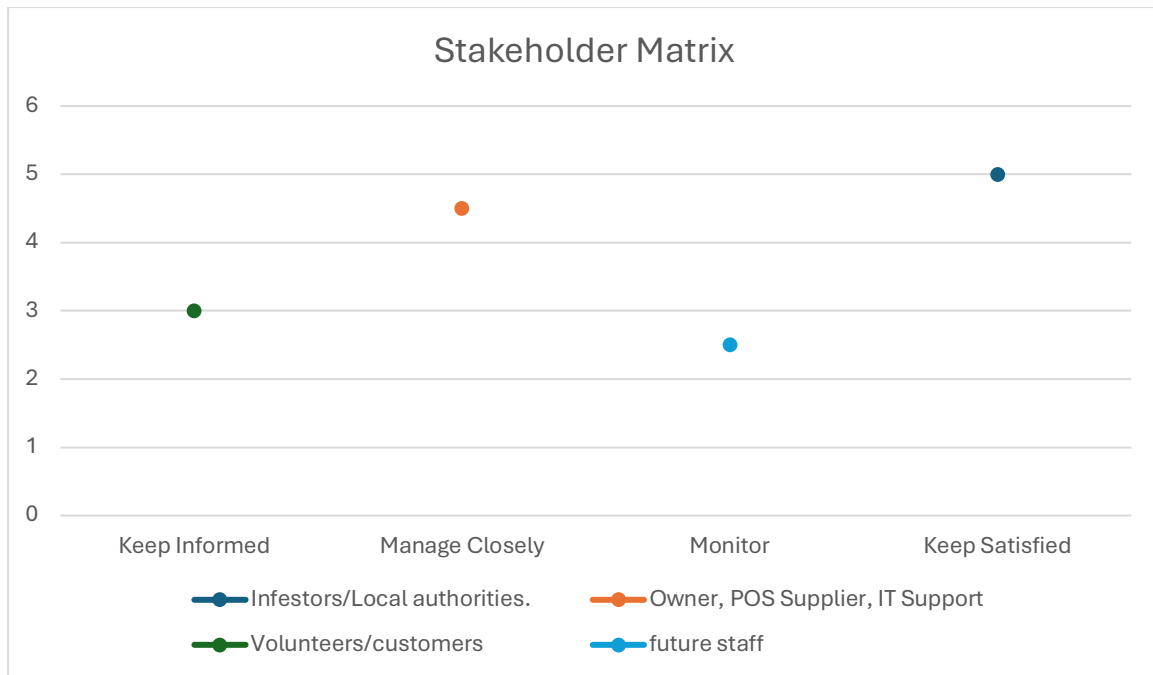
A communication plan is important when solving a complex problem as it provides clear and timely communication (Brown et al, 2021). It is a step-by-step plan for sharing information to the right people at the right time.

Stakeholder	Information needed	Method of communication	Frequency	Responsible person
Volunteers	Training schedules, new POS procedures.	Informal briefing, printed guides.	Before installation. Weekly thereafter.	Owner
Staff	Training timeline, downtime during installation.	Staff meeting, WhatsApp updates.	Twice before implementation then week thereafter.	Owner
Customers	Service changes, benefits of upgrade, loyalty incentives.	Posters, social media and website.	Weekly	Owner, marketing volunteers.
POS Supplier	Installation schedule, requirements, testing feedback.	Email, phone calls.	As needed.	Owner
Local Authorities	Compliance, accessibility.	Email.	Once before launch.	Owner

The timeline of the communication plan above will be over a 6-week period consisting of before the implementation and close monitoring for 4 weeks after. The business will gather feedback in the form of staff debriefing sales reports and customer feedback via reviews.

6.4 Stakeholder Analysis

A stakeholder analysis is used to identify the individuals or groups that have an interest in the organisation. It assesses how much influence and interest they have and understands their needs, concerns and expectations (R. Brugha, 2000). A stakeholder analysis is important to help prioritise who to communicate with and how to respond to their specific concerns. Below is a stakeholder matrix to show the data.



The matrix above shows the colour coded information on who needs to be informed and the level of interest they have.

7.0 Monitor and Review

Progress will be monitored by using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Weekly sales reports and footfall will be tracked to assess the progress for the peak time performance. Feedback will be collected from both staff and volunteers to identify challenges and progress. Customer satisfaction will also be monitored through social media reviews. Adjustments will be made based on the data collected.

The importance of monitoring progression is to help identify progress, detect issues and keeps everyone accountable. It also enables businesses to make informed decisions based on data and evidence (Kumaran, 2022).

7.1 Contingency Plan

Having a contingency plan in place is vital to sustaining efficient service if systems were to go offline or experience technical failure. The plan will consist of back-up methods to ensure smooth service continues. These will be as follows:

- Keeping a manual order pad and calculator on hand.
- Have a paper-based price list for reference.
- Use a back-up card reader with mobile data for payments.
- Train staff and volunteers to manually take orders and payments.
- Maintain a service contract with POS supplier for speedy repairs.
- Take manual stock checks if system fails.

These back-up plans are crucial to maintaining customer service and customer satisfaction if a system error should occur.

7.2 Tracking progress

Having established a contingency plan to safeguard the operations in the event of a system failure, it is equally important to track the effectiveness of the upgrade during daily service. Monitoring this progress ensures that the solution is delivering the intended benefits. The monitoring techniques that will be used to track the progress will be that of a weekly progress report, monthly informal meetings and feedback from customer reviews on social media platforms.

8.0 Conclusion

This report has highlighted the importance of problem solving by recognising the complex problem and discovering vital techniques to find the root cause and several ways to resolve the issue.

Tools such as Ishikawa and 5 whys were used to find the root cause, whereas techniques such as cost benefit analysis, grid analysis, and SWOT analysis were used to enable evidence-based decision making. Using these approaches ensures that solutions were not just quick fixes but targeted responses to the underlying issue.

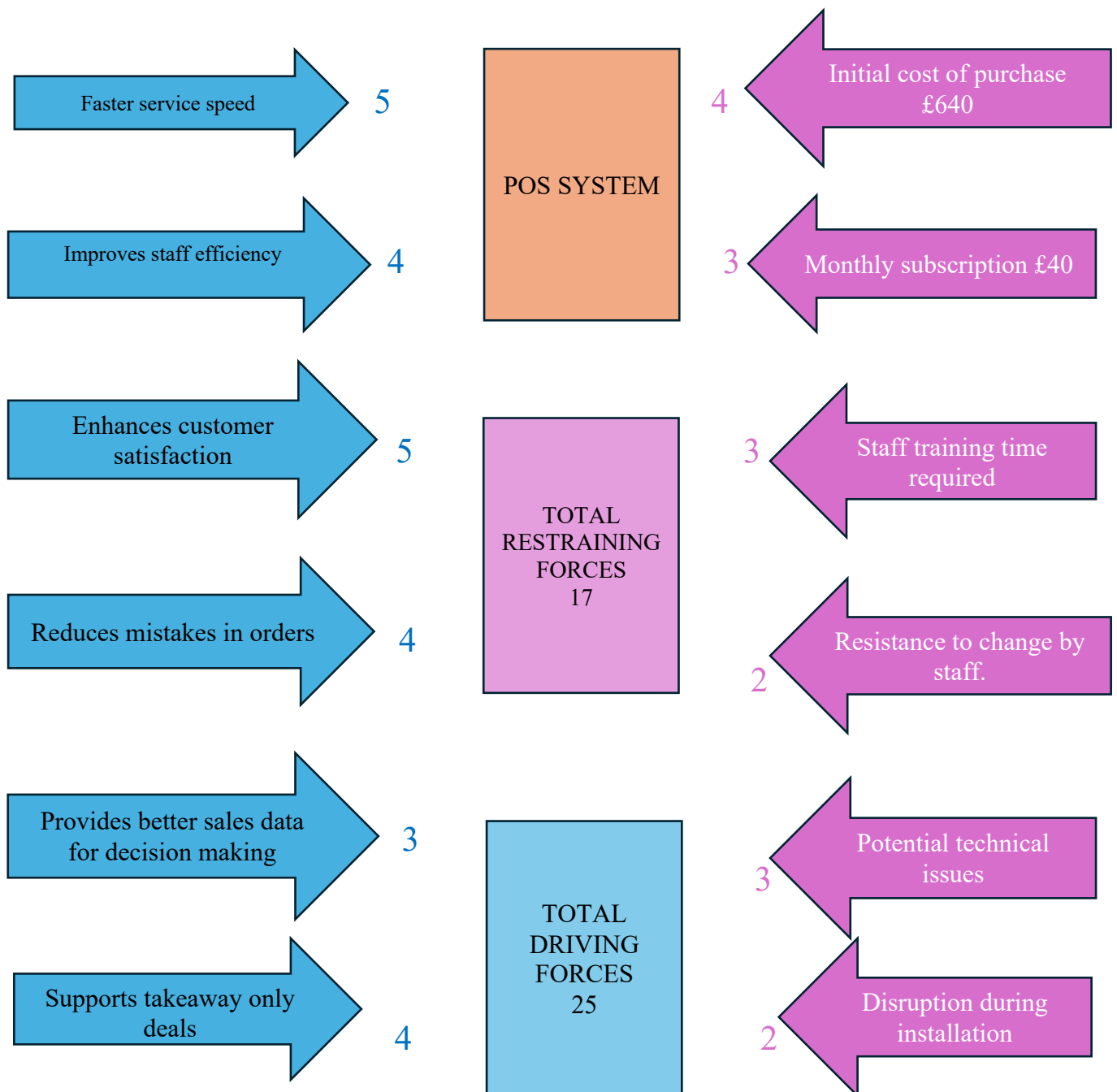
Having completed the cost benefit and financial ratio analysis has provided the ability to see the long-term profitability and sustainability for the business. Using visual tools such as Gantt charts, stakeholder matrix and action plans has also provided a clear plan for the implementation, ensuring accountability and minimising risks.

Effective problem solving is not just about fixing what is broken but about uncovering the underlying issues and creating strategies that deliver ongoing benefit to the business.

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10.0 Appendix A - Force-Field Analysis



This visual method helps weigh whether or the driving forces outweigh the restraining ones. The analysis shows that the driving forces outweigh the restraining forces by a factor of 8, suggesting the implantation of the POS system is beneficial for the business.