

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Problem solving and decision making
(BMSW4004)

Individual report
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Introduction

During this last term of study, we have gone through different ways and methods to resolve problems and take decisions effectively. At the end we participated in a role play where we took the role of a consultant aimed to resolve a complex problem.

Now at this report, I will go through a real work-based problem where all the steps will be taken in order to resolve it. I will expose management issues, analyse it, explore a range of solutions making use of decision-making techniques to find the most suitable, develop a plan for implementing the solution and communicate it to relevant individuals or stakeholders to finally give steps to assess and monitor the successful implementation of the solution.

Personal work-based problem

Over the last 4 years I used to work in a fast-food franchise belonged to subway universal, the chain operates very closely to underground stations selling customizable sandwiches.

The hiring process was standard, and I was hired to cover gaps in the shifts, also as a cleaner. by the time I started, the owners were just stopping from working as managers in the stores to fully commit in upper management/direction.

It was a surprise that in my beginning months I started to hear from my co-workers the issues that has been around, it did not change my mind as I don't like to judge until I experience it by myself.

I keep my hard work and within six months I was given the opportunity to try the manager position and if I could perform it, the role was mine. After the 3 months training, I was still not ready and I decided to step back and request my previous role, but I was awarded with a supervisor position where I been working almost 4 years and experienced everything from a different perspective.

My main duty as supervisor was to control the staff and daily operations to run the store smoothly without issues while the manager was mainly focused on stock control, weekly paperwork and deadlines planning.

With that as context, I been always dealing with staff and could develop a strong communication skill. Since then, every single person in the store has been communicating their problems to me and I had to discuss it with the store manager.

To start, one of the biggest problems was "missing wages" where most of the staff did not get paid the actual worked hours. I also experienced it, but I was able to sort it permanently, while other staff could see some intermittent improvement. Also, there was a solid issue with payslips being provided months after they payment. No answers given on requests.

Staff complaining about their wages to the store manager were always getting referred to upper management, where they send them back to the store manager, at the end no solution was given.

The following problem that I could see was employee retention as most workers were leaving within 4 months average, so, we had to give constant training to new applicants, struggle to work while they learn to finally watch them leaving and start the process again. Also, most of the time, new applicant didn't have any work experience or English level to work in front of customers.

One of the affected positions by employee retention was the store manager, their wages were the same as a normal employee and we had with somebody leading the store for 6 months average, we also had to deal with gaps in the store management with nobody available for the position.

The store was also delivering food with delivery partners which introduced a lot of unhappiness as any mistake done during the preparation process was discounted from the whole team, specially with new staff every short time, this was incredible difficult to sort, in short words, the store was constantly understaffed as they always wanted a high productivity at low cost.

Holidays were easy to book but it was not paid correctly to anyone and there was no way to discuss it as any concern regarding missing wages were paid with reduced shift, pushing the staff to go away.

According to subway operations, we had regular monthly visits to the store to check its compliance as a franchise, with all those problems, the store was constantly failing, sometimes because they didn't have staff to operate the store or cleaning issues, and it was near its total closure 3 times, having to pay big fines.

There were regular customer complaints with concerns in food preparation and very long waiting times.

The whole situation got worse with the pandemic and the schemes introduced to help maintain the economy, the company started using those schemes in a fraudulent way making all of us being part of it. After all workers were unhappy with it, they asked to act as representant and speak in their name, which I did and few days after I got a letter being dismissed as they were unable to maintain my minimum wage as a result of the pandemic.

To conclude I would say it was a very challenging position for me and the reason why I lasted almost 4 years was to help staff and help upper management/direction to understand the problems at our branch.

Analysis

According to the above problem and my personal experience we can see that even every issue looks different, all of them are linked together. Also, Proctor (2014) in his book identifies 3 types of problems, where I can say this is a *Well Structured*.

To start I would say that management was terrible focused in profits and rentability, pushing them to account and pay working hours in a different way without explanations to the managers/staff.

This led to a solid miscommunication as most staff were complaining about missing wages and they were not able to properly answer all the request, leaving them unhappy.

With no improvements on missing wages and communication, staff were left without choice and started to leave the job.

Managers were not able to manage the store as it required, pushing them to leave as well.

This was saving money to management as they did not have to pay for holidays.

The staff without wages issues started to find a hard workplace as they had to constantly give training to new staff, so their days started to be busier and harder as they had to do more job to cover the training staff.

Operating understaffed store made the company lose money as it was not possible to open some days and failing compliance every month.

Considered solutions

James and Ziegenfuss (2001) says in their book “executives and managers are at the centre of the organization, supporting production and distribution with structure while building a quality psychological climate”, where this was inexistent at my workplace.

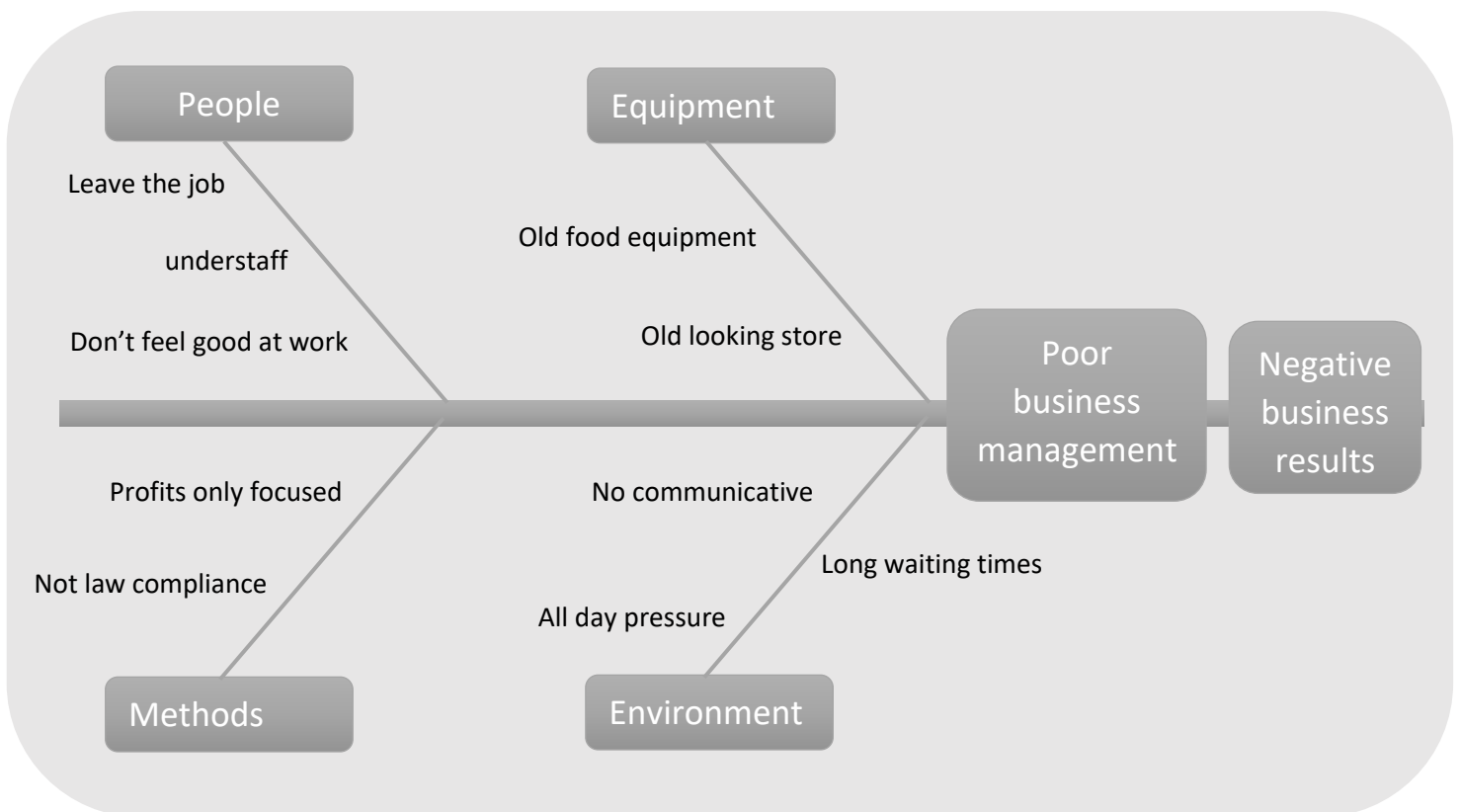
Also, one of the most obvious and radical solution according to the problem, will be to inform the UK business and employment authority and they will act accordingly. In this case, we want to give the opportunity to restart the business and improve management to do things well from the beginning.

Some of the considered solutions are:

- Taking a course by the owners/management to understand the impact of focusing only on profits and all problem that will be derivate from it.
- Revisit the UK employment law to work according to it and meet its deadlines
- Study and review all communication in the workplace
- Fund a HR department or a designated person strictly working according to the law to manage and deal as intermediary of employee issues.
- Implement an employee perks or bonus program to support employee retention
- Introduction of periodical surveys to follow employee satisfaction
- Assessment and review of wages and introduction of gradual increase depending on performance
- Improve the hiring process, giving equal opportunities focussed in hiring the best profile for the job
- Regular visits from management to the stores

Cause-and-effect analysis and chosen solution

To have a quick and simplified view to be able to choose the best solution I will use the fishbone diagram seen on week 5 which also according to Radziwill (2017) “is a visualization tool to diagram and explore cause and effect relationships.”



Looking at the diagram, I have a structure picture of the factors contributing to the problem and what is more important, I have identified the main issue and will be able to choose the best possible solution.

I have considered using PMI decision making tool but being able to graphically understand the main problem was easy to choose the best possible solutions.

I cannot focus on the factors as this will not stop the problem from happening again, in this case I can see how “poor business management” is the main problem as we cannot relatively “fix” negative business results.

Business results will get better as soon as we address the problems in management, and this will possible sort all those factors.

At this point the best option is to take a course by the owners/management to re-educate them regarding UK employment law and the consequences of focusing only on profit with a wide explanation of the psychological impact in employees of bad practices at work and in the results of the company.

Plan for implementing the solution

As there is only one solution to the main problem because management is carried by the owners, I will use Gantt chart seen in week 8 for its schedule display offer found in Wilson book (2003).

Decision Implementation Plan								
Task	Period							
	30/08/2021		06/12/2021		10/03/2021			
UK employment law course for employers.								
Consequences and impact in the business and employees of bad practices at work								

Although is not requested in the task and a following up will be made, I consider that is important the introduction of extra solutions to have a kicker improvement stopping going back to the previous state.

Communication to the stakeholders

To communicate the plan to the stakeholders, I have decided to use a document seen in week 8 during the classes called “stake holder communication plan”. We can find many templates online, but I have created one myself following the advice from Atlassian.com.

Stake holder communication plan					
Stakeholder	Owner	Objective of communication	Medium	Frequency	Comments
Owners/manag ement	Project manager and consulting team	To discuss the future of the company and the need of an improvement/ rework in management.	Meeting	Once	Follow up will be made and certificated of completion is required.
Employees	Store manager	Get transparency with the staff and let them know future steps taken by the company for its improvement.	Meeting	Once	Ensure all employees are informed.
Management Employees Customers	Project manager and consulting team	Follow up the steps taken to its review.	Survey	Every 3 months	To prove effectivity or prepare for alternatives

Assess and monitoring

During the week 9 of study, we learn many different ways of assessment and monitoring but I have contrasted that information with

www.sapling.com were we find information regarding monitoring and evaluation techniques, I would like to suggest:

The introduction and information of the steps and change in direction being taken by the company to customers and employees.

Make a clear business structure of communication and inform customer and employees how to get to the right department.

Monthly company meetings with store managers and management to discuss goals and overall performance taking in consideration all factors affecting the whole business.

Designate an area manager to supervise weekly performance across all stores and take notes to discuss during the monthly meetings.

Realization of surveys to the staff and customers taken by store managers to track and supervise store improvements.

Annual meetings with consultants to analyse survey data collected during the year and being able to designate future steps for the company.

Assess and monitor realistic company projections on revenue to have a balance between a healthy working environment and profits.

For future success of the business is important to make a follow every 6 months regarding its compliance with UK employment and business law, reviewing the employees and checking company documents for a minimum period of 2 years or until solid improvement proofs.

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