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Problem Solving and Decision Making

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Introduction

The aim of this report is to analyse a work-based problem from a case study related to employee's dissatisfaction with their job and work-life balance in the United Kingdom. To understand their causes and to evaluate some possible solutions using a decision-making technique.

Case study

Based on the case study, which can be consulted on the appendix 3, it was possible to allocate ten problems: heavy work load, long working hours, unpaid overtime, less interesting working leading to less motivation, unhappy with job/dissatisfaction, lack of job and financial security, decline in quality of work, change in nature of work, unable to switch off from work - impact on home work life balance and reduction in pay in the last three years.

Importance of job satisfaction

The more people are happy with their job, the more motivated they will be. Job satisfaction and motivation are directly linked, although they are not the same. Many things influence satisfaction at work, such as: the job role, the level and quality of working conditions, remuneration and benefits, career progression possibility, the environment in the workplace, the management, etc. (Parvin and Kabir, 2011).

According to Parvin and Kabir (2011) employee's satisfaction is very important, it directly influences their level of motivation, thus leading to the creation of greater connection and commitment with the company and consequently increasing the level of productivity. It also has a lot of influence on the health and mental state of employees. Happy employees, furthermore to being more loyal to the company and its goals, are also proud of their work (Strömgren et al., 2016).

Before finding solutions for all the problems highlighted on the case study, is important to understand and analyse all the cause and variables that influences or may have influenced them.

There are techniques used on solving problems, such as SWOT analyses (strength, weakness, opportunities and treats), the Fishbone diagram, the PESTLE analyses.

On this report I will focus on PESTLE analyses, trying to understand all the causes and effects in order to find a possible solution for all the problems related to the case study.

PESTLE analyses

PESTLE analyses are a tool used as a strategy planning to evaluate the impact of six variables: political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental, might have on the project, situation etc. It is highly used by organizations because it allows the analyse in many angles of the operating environment and, or his influences on their business (Rastogi and Trivedi, 2016). PESTLE analyses also are used as base for identify the strength the weakness, the opportunities and the threats, that is, for the SWOT analyses (Perera, 2017).

Political - includes the government political stability, the government constitution, actions, laws, policy, that might affect directly or not the company (Rastogi and Trivedi, 2016).

Economic - according to Perera (2017), economic factor, the most important, is fundamental for the organization accomplishment. This factor is about how the economy might affect an organization, company or even how is important to take in consideration when solving a problem.

Sociological - Perera (2017) says that is important for the organization to adapt to the culture and traditions of the country because they are strongly linked. This factor is related to how the social events might affect the business.

Technological - the changes and, or advance in technology that might affect the business. In this century, is crucial for a company to be technologically update, even if is not a technology-based industry (Perera, 2017).

Legal - the legal aspects, internal (company laws) or external (country legal aspects), such as, laws and regulations, rules, etc. (Rastogi and Trivedi, 2016).

Environmental - According with Rastogi and Trivedi (2016), the environment factor is related to all environmental consideration that might affect the organization, and it is determinate by the enclosed environment.

PESTLE analyses for the case study

The case study, does not specify clearly a period of time, however it mentions a reduction of salary during the last three years, so I will assume that the study was conduct on the past three years until now.

The political factors that had a great impact on the business and peoples live from 2017 until now, was Brexit. The UK's political decision to leave the European Union brought an environment of great uncertainty, which affected many organizations in the various pillars of society. The lack of clarity at the time and so far, especially regarding future immigration rules, is affecting the confidence of immigrants here to live and not only (Partington and Scruton, 2017).

With the Brexit, the UK's economy suffered great impact, according with Partington and Scruton (2017), starting with the weakening of the pound. Additionally, the Covid-19 pandemic did not help, in fact since the beginning of

the pandemic the UK's economy suffered significant negative impact (Office for National Statistics, 2020).

The social factor in this case, is a consequence of the Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic. The Brexit brought a lot of worries, uncertainties, doubts about the future for the society, especially for the 3 million European immigrants living in the country (Office of National Statistic, 2020). Furthermore, with the pandemic the society is feeling threatened, and fears for its health and well-being.

For the technological and legal factors, is difficult to say. Regarding to technology it can be difficulty to adapt to the news companies' technologies, as many people are not enthusiasts of new technologies, or the lack of technologies up-to-date, causing them stress and embarrassment with their daily work. The legal factor, can be any employment law, that does not protect the employees' best interest and/or the employee is not happy with.

[Solutions for the case study problems](#)

Heavy work load

The first thing that might cross people's mind in this situation is to hire more staff, to balance the workload, however with pestle analyses we can see that it might not be the best solution, since the company might be facing financials issues. Thus, the best way for now, to solve this problem is trying to know the members of the team, their strength and weakness to best distribute the work between them, and to ask the management team to help with some tasks among with their normal daily tasks (team work).

Long working hours and too much unpaid overtime

For the long working hours, is important to identify and prioritise the task that needed to do first, to improve the time management skills, as well as delegate task according with the employee's strength and weakness. In relation to the unpaid overtime, according with elliswhittam (2020) it is not illegal, unless it is explicit on the contract. However according to The Working time regulation 1998, you can not be legally forced to work more than 48 hours in a period of 17 weeks. Therefore, is important to try not exceed this period, until is financially advisable to hire more staff or to switch to hourly paid salary.

Less interesting working, less motivation and dissatisfaction with the job

First, is very important to know if the employee likes his job role. If he does not, it might be best to change job. In the other hand, using the example of what we have been facing in the past few mounts, about the pandemic, that a lot of people had to work from home, or other changes that had to be done to safeguard people's lives, what can be done is to try to add new challenges for the staff and perhaps had slight rewards and is also possible to offer career progression to motivate the staff.

Lack of job and financial security

Basing on the pestle analyse, after the Brexit referendum, people start to be worried, uncertain about their job's positions, even now with the pandemic a lot of people lost their jobs. However, a way to get around this is to try to be more proactive and efficient in the workplace and with this a career progression in the company may be offered.

Decline in quality of work and change in nature of work

Occasionally, peoples face a lot of issues in the work-field, that the management might not be aware of, it might be a lack or malfunctioning equipment and, or a lack of good communication between the staffs, all can contribute for a decline in quality of work, so is important to establish an effective communication at the workplace with all staffs, also is important always inspect the work-field, all the equipment and to be in contact with the employees in case of any changes.

Regarding to the changes in nature of work, occasionally the employee end up doing tasks that is not part of his job role, it might be because of lack of staffs and, or trained staffs, for example, in this pandemic some companies faced great issues with the number of staffs available, or in offering a proper training to the new employees. In this case the company might invest on online training, as long as it is possible, do a swot analysis on each staff member and to the company, to see what position best suit each one and find out what need to be improved within the organisation.

Unable to switch off from work - impact on home work life balance

The company can offer consoling to their staffs, as well as there are some actions that they might take by them self, namely, solve all work problems at work, preferably before leave work, avoid checking phone many times perhaps just once or twice before go to bed, try and keep the mind busy after work by creating exciting events, spending more time with family or even finding a hobby.

Reduction in pay in the last three years

According with Heathfield (2020) there is two most common reasons for a reduction in pay, the company might be facing financial problems, or due to a change of work position. As mentioned above, the country is facing a negative economic impact since Brexit, and with the pandemic, so definitely companies are facing financial problems. However, there are some actions they might take before considering the reduction in pay: freeze hiring programs, let short length contract and temporary employees go, freeze all benefits and bonuses, cut in working hours (Heathfield, 2020).

Decision-making technique

According with Ahmed and Omotunde (2012) there are some decision-making techniques such as: PMI (plus, minus and interesting), decision tree, consultation, experience, cost-benefit analyses, simulation, linear programming.

However, in this module we have learned about the PMI technique and Porter's Five Force Analysis.

Plus, Minus and Interesting (PMI)

The PMI technique base on the evaluation of the positive, negative and interesting effects of a decision. It consists in drawing a table with three columns, plus, the positive aspects (first column), minus, negative aspects (second column) and the third column with the alternative that are not either positive or negative (Ahmed and Omotunde, 2012).

There are a few decisions for the case study that can be used to solved more than one problem in the case study. A SWOT analyses of the staffs and a SWOT analyse of the company, therefore, I will use these two solutions, SWOT analyses of the employees, appendix one, and SWOT analyses of the company, appendix two, to do a PMI analyses.

Based on the PMI results, is possible to conclude that, the SWOT analyses of the company and the employees can be used as a base to start to solve all the problems that a company might be facing, even with their employees.

Plan of implementing the solution

The company should communicate to their staffs all the solutions found to solve their problem and the plan to implement them, in order for them to cooperate. One of the solutions appointed was to improve the effective communication between all the workers of the company, it is the best way to control what is happening in the company and if the solutions implemented is making any effects. Apart from control the level of satisfaction of the employees, the management team should control as well the qualities of their product, if is improving, the customers satisfaction and especially the economic aspects, that is, whether the implemented solutions are benefiting the company economically or not. They should keep a closer eye on everything, and do balance at the end of each month, in case of appearance of new issues, to be able to address them as soon as it starts or even before it starts. Not forget to mention they should be always update with the Government laws and regulations about the Brexit, and about the evolution of the pandemic, to be able to find new solutions in case the country's situation changes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, is safe to say that there are many factors that might influence one single problem at the workplace, that is important to stablish a happy environment at the workplace, keeping a close eye, to try to solve problems that can possibly appear, always keeping in mind the company's goals.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 - PMI – SWOT analyses of the staffs

Plus	Minus	Interesting
Identify the strength, weakness of each employee, Allowing the best distribution of task among them (+5)	It might take some time to finish the analyses of each employee (-4)	Identify staffs that might best work together, building a great team (+5)
Improve the quality of work (+5)	Negative employee's cooperation (-5)	
Best use of employee potential (+4)		
Increase of goals achievement (+5)		
Reducing the unnecessary work hours, the heavy work load and the decline of work quality (+4)		
+23	-9	+5

Appendix 2 - PMI – SWOT analyse of the company

Plus	Minus	Interesting
Identify the strength and weakness of the company, allowing to allowing the best use of strength and the improvement of weaknesses (+5)	It might take some time to finish the analyses (-4)	
Identify the company opportunities and threats, allowing to take advantage of opportunities and avoid threats (+5)	It may present an extra cost in case you have to hire a specialized team to do it (-3)	
Increase of company goals achievement (+5)		
Financial development of the company (+4)		
+19	-7	

UK workers among the most dissatisfied in Europe

Employees are more dissatisfied with their jobs and work-life balance in the UK than in most other European countries. Out of 20 European countries responding, only 6 were more dissatisfied than the UK, according to statistics reported in the British Social Attitudes survey, led by NatCen Social Research.

Where is this dissatisfaction coming from and is there anything employers can do to reverse the trend?

The report laid some of the blame with the UK's long-hours culture, particularly because much of the work is unpaid. Almost half of UK employees (48 per cent) take on overtime in a typical week with 44 per cent of it being unpaid.

There's also a perception among workers that job quality has declined during the economic downturn. The report found that people believed the nature of their work had changed for the worse in the last three years with almost a quarter saying they were now doing less interesting work than before. Fewer workers said that there was variety in their work.

More workers said they worked 'very hard' but one in five reported taking a reduction in pay during the last three years. More workers than before said they were unable to switch off from work, and that they worried about work problems when at home.

More than half of employees say that their workplace has experienced 'a great deal of financial difficulty' in the past three years and fewer workers consider their jobs to be as secure as before.

Source: University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Problem Solving and Decision Making assignment brief (2020).