

Applied Module Leadership and Management in the Workplace Submission Assignment

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1. Introduction	3
2. The Role of Critical Thinking in Decision-Making	3
2.1 Critical Thinking Definition	3

2.2 Bloom's Taxonomy: The Different Stages	3
2.3 Krathwohl's Taxonomy: Effective Domain	4
2.4 Paul-Elder Theory	4
3. Application of Critical Thinking in Salon Operations	5
4. Biases and Assumptions	6
4.1 Understanding Biases and Assumptions	6
4.2 Understanding Biases and Assumptions in the Workplace	6
4.3 Generational Assumptions and Differences, and How This Affects the Workplace	7
5. Application of Critical Thinking Theories Applied in the Workplace	8
5.1 Workplace Problems	8
5.2 Identifying Challenges	9
5.3 Applying Bloom's Taxonomy	10
5.4 Applying Krathwohl's Taxonomy	10
5.5 Applying Paul-Elder's Theory	12
5.6 Applying the 5 Whys to Product Purchasing	12
5.7 Application of Gibbs Reflective Cycle to Product Purchasing	13
5.8 Application of Critical Thinking	15
6. Evaluation of Using Critical Thinking in a Salon Environment	15
6.1 The Benefits of Critical Thinking	15
6.2 Challenges and Limitations of Critical Thinking Skills	16
7. Conclusion	16
7.1 Summary of Key Points	16
7.2 Final Thoughts on the Importance of Critical Thinking in the Workplace	17
8 References	17

Critical Thinking for Workplace Decision-Making in an Aesthetic Salon

1. Introduction

1.1 Topic Overview, Purpose, and Structure of Report

Critical thinking plays an important role in a salon environment, where managers need to make quick, informed decisions to ensure client satisfaction and workplace efficiency. This report explores key critical thinking theories and their application in problem-solving. It will examine how generational differences impact critical thinking and influence decision-making. Additionally, the report will discuss other problem-solving tools such as Gibb's reflection method and the 5 why's method, which help managers to identify challenges, reflect on experiences, and generate effective solutions. By understanding these concepts, salon managers can improve communication, enhance decision-making, and optimise salon services.

2. The Role of Critical Thinking in Decision-Making

2.1 Critical Thinking Definition

According to the Cambridge Dictionary (n,d), "critical thinking is the process of thinking carefully about a subject or idea without allowing your feelings or opinions to affect you." In a salon environment, critical thinking supports decision-making when challenges such as product purchasing, staff management, and client interactions arise. It enables managers to analyse situations and make choices that benefit the business without being influenced by emotions.

2.2 Bloom's Taxonomy: The Different Stages

Bloom's Taxonomy, developed by Benjamin Bloom (1956), is a theory created to help teachers structure their teaching to encourage higher thinking by their learners. (Helpful Professor, 2024). This model has six stages to support learners from basic knowledge to advanced problem-solving. In a salon setting, Bloom's Taxonomy can

be applied to product selection. The six stages are: 1. Remembering: recalling and identifying key information (e.g., learning about different hair and beauty products). 2. Understanding: Understanding and explaining course contents 3. Applying: Using knowledge in real-world situations, using techniques. 4. Analysing: Separating information to analyse the situation and comparing quality and cost. 5. Evaluating: Assessing criteria and reviewing the client feedback to determine the best product. 6. Creating: Solving problems and creating ideas, such as a salon service package. Shabatura (2022) notes that Bloom's Taxonomy does not focus on emotions but rather on structured thinking and analysis. This can make it useful for business decisions such as selecting products in a salon.

2.3 Krathwohl's Taxonomy: Effective Domain

Krathwohl's taxonomy, created in 1964, was built from Bloom's model; however, it emphasises emotions, values, and attitudes in learning and decision-making. Krathwohl's taxonomy focuses on how emotions influence choices. (Alan & Freidman 2010). The model is built up of five stages, from basic awareness to fully integrating values into behaviour. 1. Receiving: identifying the situation. 2. Responding: how the reaction towards the issues lies. 3. Valuing: How important is the issue? Deciding what is important. 4. Organising: identifying values and how they impact decisions. 5. Characterising: creating actions and decisions from values.

In a salon environment, this model is useful for managing staff and handling client relationships, as emotions, values, and attitudes directly influence working relationships. For example, generational differences can impact how salon employees perceive work ethics, leadership, and customer service, affecting critical thinking and decision-making procedures.

2.4 Paul-Elder Theory

Paul-Elder's critical thinking theory (2001) has three key stages. 1. Elements of thought: looking at a problem, questioning, receiving information, and interpreting the situation. 2. Intellectual standards: applying clarity and accuracy whilst looking at the problem logically and understanding why there is a problem to begin. 3. Intellectual

traits: developing positive thinking habits such as integrity, confidence, and openness. In a salon environment, this theory supports high professional standards and encourages decisions based on logical reasoning rather than personal biases. For example, a salon manager might use this model to resolve staff and client difficulty to improve customer service procedures.

3. Application of Critical Thinking in Salon Operations

Salon management will make critical decisions regularly, particularly in areas such as product purchasing and difficult clients. Product purchasing challenges, such as managing the salon's brand, services, and overall reputation, can be a difficult decision when cost is a key factor. For example, dermal filler quality and durability need to be taken into consideration. While high-quality products often provide clients with positive results and client satisfaction, they have a high cost. While quality, cost, and client satisfaction are all key decisions for a manager, critical thinking theories will support decision-making. In addition to product purchasing, critical thinking is essential when handling difficult clients. From experience of a difficult situation where a client discussed inappropriate conversations, making staff and other clients feel uncomfortable, the manager received numerous complaints. Situations must be dealt with effectively to avoid legal and ethical implications for the business. Particularly under the Equality Act (2010), as this may damage the salon's reputation. Problem-solving tools such as the Gibbs reflection cycle (Gibbs, 1988) and potentially using the 5 Why's problem-solving tool (Hancock, n.d.) can help to analyse challenges and create solutions. When emotions and values are involved, Krathwohl's taxonomy (Alan & Freidman, 2010) may help to support decision-making in the workplace. The manager may weigh up the pros and cons of keeping a difficult client, especially when considering the well-being of staff.

Brainstorming is particularly useful for identifying problems and solutions. Elkenberry (2007) suggests that brainstorming is a tool used to plan and identify a difficult situation. Whether identifying problems or solutions, this can be a quick and effective

tool for all areas. Northern Illinois University Centre for Innovative Teaching and Learning (2012). By integrating these critical thinking tools, salon managers can enhance both client satisfaction and salon success.

4. Biases and Assumptions

4.1 Understanding Biases and Assumptions

Bias refers to preference or tendency to influence your judgement and is often unconscious. For example, overconfidence bias can lead to individuals overestimating their abilities, while confirmation bias leads to seeking information to confirm what they believe. (Chira, Adams, & Thornton, 2008). In a salon environment, biases and assumptions can impact the manager's decision-making. According to Davis (2024), "biases are rational thinking that often stems from personal beliefs, emotions, or social factors. Viewpoints or values without considering others' opinions and assumptions are preconceived ideas or beliefs. Bias can affect decision-making.". Similarly, Mevold (2023) highlighted that when individuals operate based on assumptions, they may overlook valuable information or fail to consider alternative options, potentially leading to poor decision-making. Conscious bias, unconscious bias, and assumptions all lead to the decision-making process. Both conscious and unconscious biases', along with assumptions, play an important part in the manager's decision-making in the salon.

4.2 Understanding Biases and Assumptions in the Workplace

Workplace experience suggests that emotions and unconscious bias may affect decision-making, particularly in project management when differences in presentation styles or overconfidence affect the outcomes. These biases can stem from gender and generational differences that can have an impact on workplace team dynamics and purchasing decisions. Generational differences can affect priorities, such as ethical sourcing being a high value over a more cost-effective product (Tolbize, 2008).

Biases often go unnoticed and stem from factors such as religious beliefs, age, values, and appearances. In a salon environment, these biases can affect the values around product purchasing, where well-known high-end brands may be more favoured while newer brands could be overlooked. Generational differences also play a role in how

the client behaves. From experience, younger generations often seek affordable treatments and are known for switching between salons, whereas older generations will prioritise quality and are likely to remain loyal clients if they are satisfied. From previous experience, clients aged 30 and older tend to be more committed to their treatments and the products used on them. These generational biases influence product purchasing, salon training, and interactions with clients of all ages. For example, dermal fillers can be sourced ethically from reputable pharmacies and supported to enhance the salon's reputation. Usually, opting for a cheaper product means unethical sourcing, and this could damage the client's trust. (Ayewa Labs, 2023) Additionally, older generations tend to focus on image, while younger generations are less judgemental.

Biases and assumptions also shape client interactions. This may stem from differences in values and styles. Therefore, decision-making can be more effective when emotions are removed from the process. For instance, when a client discusses inappropriate conversations, the salon manager should aim to maintain a positive working environment and uphold the salon's reputation. Brewster (2009) suggests that emotions can influence assumptions, and when working with others, assumptions can play a key role in the decision-making process. From experience, difficult clients are assumed to be socially awkward or have a learning need; however, before making business decisions, it is best to evaluate conscious and unconscious biases to make a fair judgement. By acknowledging these biases, this can help the salon manager make client-based decisions.

4.3 Generational Assumptions and Differences, and How This Affects the Workplace

Generational differences are categorised by age groups with different characteristics and workplace behaviours. Pew Research (2015). These include Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964), Generation X (born 1965-1979), Generation Y (Millennials, born 1980-1994), and Generation Z (born 1995 onwards). According to Tolbize (2008), Baby Boomers are known for their strong leadership skills, whereas Generation Y tends to be more people-centred in management. Millennials are also characterised by high confidence, ambition, and strong social skills. It is assumed that younger generations lack motivation and a strong work ethic. However, research suggests that their

learning and working styles change due to the influence and change in technology. Unlike older generations, who used primarily face-to-face, or telephone communication, Millennials and Generation Z use digital communication methods such as messaging and emails. (Purdue Global, 2025). These new digital ways of working have changed workplace expectations.

Workplace experience suggests that teams work better together when they communicate well. Managing a team remotely has demonstrated to be effective, saving both time and money (HrNews 2024). Younger employees were able to adapt quicker than others, being able to set up laptops and connect from home. Additionally, Generation X is often labelled as "The Slacker," while Baby Boomers have been described as "workaholics". Despite this, statistics from 1999 show similarities between both generations and their approach to work, says Tolbize (2008). Assumptions about generational differences can have an impact on workplace attitudes, values, and ethics. Kuttanppan (2023) suggests strong communication is key to overcoming these differences in the workplace. Managers may consider reviewing Baby Boomers preference for direct verbal communication, while recognising younger generations preference for digital communication can help to keep the whole team engaged.

5. Application of Critical Thinking Theories Applied in the Workplace

5.1 Workplace Problems

As identified earlier, workplace challenges in the salon environment include product purchasing, managing conflicts between staff and clients, as well as sales performance and brand reputation. Each of these problems must be managed carefully.

Product purchasing in a salon can include factors such as price, quality, longevity, and brand recognition. For example, dermal fillers with a strong brand reputation, particularly with longer-lasting results, may attract more clients. Conversely, a brand

known for being cheaper but less effective could have a negative impact on the client's perception of the salon and their services. High-quality products are often more expensive, which could make it more difficult for salons to invest in. Identifying good products is essential for building a strong reputation, as this can encourage more clients. Caramela (2025) dictates that when you provide high-quality products, it promotes trust with loyal customers.

Another issue, regarding salon space rented out to other professionals, may be managing the expectations of the salon use and the cleanliness, which can be difficult, particularly when shared space is not properly maintained. When another Business fails to clean work areas after use; this can lead to practical and emotional challenges. Concerns around hygiene, health, and safety and any violations in connection. The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) is the primary governing legislation that requires all businesses operating within the United Kingdom (UK) to carry out necessary safety checks. Unclean work areas can have a negative impact on the client's perception of the salon, and when other members of the salon are left to clean up the mess, this can cause frustration.

Additionally, difficult clients can pose challenges that can have an impact on the salon's reputation and affect other clients' experiences. Such as when inappropriate conversations are discussed and attending the salon with no appointment and staying for a few hours. These situations are often dealt with by the manager, trying to create a positive and professional environment for staff and clients. These workplace problems require strong decision-making, communication, and problem-solving skills to keep a positive brand reputation.

5.2 Identifying Challenges

Challenges relating to product purchasing can lead to financial strains, poor-quality services, a bad reputation, and ethical sourcing concerns. To prevent these issues, the manager must review options before making purchasing decisions. Such challenges with cleanliness in the salon can impact working relationships and should be communicated between one another before individuals become frustrated. The challenges with clients who are disruptive place a negative impact on staff having to deal with this individual. It can also impact other clients' experiences. Staff might leave

as a result, and clients may not return to avoid the situation. Making good choices can impact the salon's future.

Maintaining cleanliness in the salon is an essential task, as poor hygiene may strain working relationships. From experience, it is best to have open communication with all staff and address any concerns before they escalate and impact the working team.

When dealing with a client who has challenging behaviour, it can affect the workplace negatively, affecting staff morale. When situations are not managed effectively, staff can feel overwhelmed and undervalued. This may lead to workers leaving the salon. From all these workplace problems, ultimately, decision-making is key to ensuring the salon's long-term success.

5.3 Applying Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom's Taxonomy has been applied to product purchasing to ensure informed decisions regarding product quality, reputation, and profitability. The dermal filler brand Kairax has been identified as the best choice for the salon. As the salon is still establishing its brand reputation, the manager must consider cost as a key factor when purchasing products. Findings suggest that while Revolax may increase revenue, it could negatively impact the brand reputation and client satisfaction. Conversely, higher-quality fillers, such as Teosyal, deliver excellent results but come at a higher price. This could make it difficult for the salon to maintain profitability and allocate budget for other areas of the business. Kairax, on the other hand, offers long-lasting results and allows for reasonable profit margins, making it the most suitable product.

Bloom's taxonomy was selected for product purchasing because it allows a straightforward method for evaluating options while minimising the influence of emotions.

5.4 Applying Krathwohl's Taxonomy

Krathwohl's taxonomy focuses on how emotions, attitudes, and values influence decision-making. Each level helps to address the salon problem effectively. Dresser and an eyelash technician. The manager has an issue that needs to be addressed

concerning workspaces that are not being cleaned after use and resulting in a hygiene issue.

Each level of Krathwohl's taxonomy can help to address the issue.

1. **Receiving:** The salon manager noticed that the workspace was being left untidy and recognised the hygiene issue. The hairdresser and the eyelash technician become aware of the manager's concern; however, they do not see it as a major issue.
2. **Responding:** The manager expresses concern about the lack of cleanliness and asks both self-employed professionals to clean their areas. As there are two different generations, the message was set. The issue may be acknowledged, but their response will depend on whether they act or dismiss it.
3. **Valuing:** The manager makes both workers understand the importance of hygiene for the safety of the treatments being offered and client satisfaction, health regulations, and the salon's reputation. The hairdresser and eyelash tech see the importance of maintaining cleanliness, as it affects their work environment and professionalism.
4. **Finding a solution; organising;** the manager establishes clear expectations for the impact of the business and provides products to clean workspaces. The hairdresser and eyelash technician agree to clean their workspaces after every use. Finding a solution will prevent frustration and allow for good communication skills to be utilised. Discussing the issues and asking how the issue can be resolved.
5. **Characterising:** The manager provides a checklist for the salon, reminding the shared areas to be fully maintained. Both the hairdresser and the eyelash technician understand the benefits for everyone, including their clients. Creating a group messaging option via WhatsApp so that any difficulties, issues, or updates can be shared between the three workers. As all 3 workers were 35 or younger, the need for face-to-face communication was not necessary.

By applying Krathwohl's taxonomy, the manager was able to handle the situation and allow the hairdresser and the eyelash technician to see how their behaviour towards cleanliness affects the salon brand.

5.5 Applying Paul-Elder's Theory

Paul and Elder's critical thinking theory provides a structured approach to analysing and evaluating information before making decisions regarding client difficulty. When dealing with inappropriate client conversations, the theory proves to support making a difficult decision. As the theory identifies intellectual standards, such as logical reasoning and fairness, elements of reasoning were identified, and staff morale was affected, creating a positive and safe environment for clients. Intellectual traits support dealing with the situation. Evaluating potential consequences should the client remain. Identifying reasoning and being able to communicate. For example, if a client consistently makes comments that make staff and clients feel uncomfortable, the salon manager must assess the situation, gather feedback from the individual, and then decide to benefit the salon. The theory provided options such as setting boundaries, providing clear salon rules, and, in an extreme situation, asking the client to seek treatments elsewhere.

By using Paul-Elder's theory, the salon manager can handle difficult client behaviour with this decision-making. This ensures responses are fair and professional.

5.6 Applying the 5 Whys to Product Purchasing

The 5 Whys is a problem-solving tool used to identify the root cause of an issue by asking the question why until the problem is revealed. This can be used when selecting products for a salon.

For example, if the salon is struggling to decide which product is best for the salon, here are the 5 why's to help understand the issue:

1. Why is product purchasing a problem? Because the salon needs to balance quality, cost, and client satisfaction while still making enough to cover the overheads and make a profit.
2. Why is it difficult to decide which product is more suitable? Because some products are too expensive to generate a profit. Others are not ethical and may pose a risk to the client. Other brands can provide poor results, resulting in the

client having a poor experience, and some might be suitable depending on the client's expectations.

3. Why do lower-quality products affect the business? Because clients expect long-lasting results. Products that do not meet clients' needs create dissatisfaction and can potentially lead to bad reviews for the business.
4. Why would negative reviews and client loss be a loss to the business? Because the salon is still building brand reputation, retaining clients is important, as is generating new clients from good reviews and reputation.
5. Why is reputation important in product purchasing? This is important because a strong reputation will attract new clients, support repeat business, and be crucial for the salon's long-term success.

By applying the 5 Why's method, the root cause of the product purchasing challenges is identified, allowing quality to be maintained while ensuring the salon is still profitable. Products that offer both high-quality and long-lasting results can be purchased at an affordable price. This had proven to be Kairax.

By using both Bloom's taxonomy and the 5 whys method, salon managers can make difficult decisions that benefit both the business and client satisfaction.

5.7 Application of Gibbs Reflective Cycle to Product Purchasing

The Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1988) is a systematic model designed for self-reflection and problem-solving. It includes six stages: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan. This tool can be used to support product purchasing decisions.

1. Description: When choosing between three dermal filler brands, it can be difficult to decide which brand will sit well with the salon's values. Revolax, a cheaper option that may increase profit margins but has shorter-lasting results and potentially lead to client dissatisfaction. Teosyal is a very high-quality brand but comes with a high price and is not in the salon's budget, as profit may drop. Kiarax is a midrange filler and provides good results. The salon can make a good profit with Kairax.

2. After reviewing the options, the manager had to make the decision that would support the salon's reputation, finances, and client satisfaction.
3. Feelings: What were the managers feelings and thoughts? The decision was difficult, as the manager wanted the best dermal filler for their salon; however, it was not going to support the profit needed to grow the business successfully. There is always a concern when choosing a cheaper product; however, with the market growing fast in the industry and new competitors coming in, there are cheaper options that provide the same durability at a lower cost. Higher costs may lead to financial strain.
4. Evaluation: What was good and bad about the experience? Strengths include, but are not limited to, time to evaluate options and careful thinking tools to decide. Able to decide to support the growth of the business, focusing on the future and financial impact. Weaknesses include, but are not limited to, time-consuming looking at the products and testing them on clients. While testing, fear of making a wrong decision should there be a bad outcome.
4. Analysis: Has the outcome made sense? Thorough analysis of the product range and cost can support making positive choices when purchasing products. A low-cost product will generate the business a good amount of profit to grow and further invest in training or advertising; however, should there be poor client results, this could lead to client dissatisfaction and a bad reputation. This can be damaging to the business and therefore affect future business. A high-end product will not only improve brand reputation; it will also generate positive client reviews, potentially gaining new business through word of mouth and improving sales. However, the businesses do not have enough within their budget to source these products; therefore, taking a risk and minimising the business funds can leave the businesses with no profit, making it difficult to grow, and allow spending in other areas such as marketing. A midrange product can offer long-lasting results and client satisfaction and bring the expenses of the business lower to the business's affordability. Additionally, this can help to improve the business brand. Quality and brand reputation must all be considered to make the best decision for the business.
5. Conclusion: How could the situation be improved? Questionnaires could be used to view client preferences. Testing of more than three products before committing. Negotiating prices for large orders.

6. Action Plan: How can these findings be actioned? It is always good to gain market research on products before committing. Gaining client feedback will confirm decisions. Financial forecasting tools help to assess long-term profitability. Regularly reviewing products ensures the manager has the best products for the current market.

Using the Gibbs reflective cycle for purchasing products in a salon helps to structure decision-making. The salon manager can make decisions that support salon growth and client satisfaction.

5.8 Application of Critical Thinking

Critical thinking helps to directly make effective decisions within a salon. When critical thinking skills are applied, this helps to gather all relevant information and assess the best outcomes before deciding. For instance, when choosing between high-end and cost-effective aesthetic products, salon managers need to analyse their clients' preferences, how this financially impacts the business, and the long-term impact on the brand's reputation. In situations with conflict, it is beneficial to assess the root cause of disagreements, listen to each perspective, and then implement a decision that is fair. Critical thinking can support managers to adapt in situations where there may be generational differences, such as a preferred method of communication.

6. Evaluation of Using Critical Thinking in a Salon Environment

6.1 The Benefits of Critical Thinking

Advantages of critical thinking in the salon environment include, but are not limited to, problem-solving, improved business reputation, good working relationships in the workplace, strong communication and teamwork, and the ability to adapt and create innovation. By looking at problems logically, managers can reduce impulsive decision-making and create conflict solutions. By carefully selecting products with the use of decision-making tools, managers can ensure that the best products are sourced to enhance the salon's reputation. This may also lead to client loyalty. Understanding the

communication needs of different generations allows for a better way to communicate and understand others in the workplace. Additionally, understanding the generational trends and strengths can support working well as a team, prevent any conflicts, and encourage new ideas to be thought of. All of which provide advantages for managers to consider before impulse decision-making is done.

6.2 Challenges and Limitations of Critical Thinking Skills

Despite the advantages to the manager, critical thinking also comes with challenges and limitations, such as time constraints, being unable to change, biases, and emotional involvement. Critical thinking takes time to complete and may slow the decision-making process down. When quick decisions need to be made, a thorough analysis will be hard to complete in time. When changes are made, it can be difficult to put changes into practice, and this could slow decision-making. When working relationships and client relationships are built, it can be difficult to think logically and make decisions best for the business. When unconscious biases play a role within the decision-making process, the best decision might not be chosen.

Options to overcome these challenges would require continued professional development and further training, supporting staff in the workplace, and a planned or detailed decision-making structure.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Summary of Key Points

This report has explored the role of critical thinking theories in a salon environment, focusing on generational differences and problem-solving tools such as the 5 Why's and Gibbs' reflective method. Effective critical thinking can support product purchasing decisions, manage conflict and customer service, and offer advantages such as problem-solving. Challenges such as time constraints, emotions, and knowledge must be considered.

7.2 Final Thoughts on the Importance of Critical Thinking in the Workplace

Critical thinking is a skill in salon management that supports strong decisions and helps to adapt and remain professional. When these skills are developed, this ensures that problems are dealt with and the salon offers quality services. The industry standards and clients' needs remain.

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