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PROBLEM-SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING

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CONTENTS

Introduction

Problem Definition

Identifying The Problem

Identifying The Major Factors

Solution Plan

Evaluation

Chosen Decision

Decision Implementation

Implementation Plan

Conclusion

References

INTRODUCTION

This report will be discussing on the current problem at my place of work which is affecting the efficiency in delivering of speed or quick food servicing to customers during major functions.

The type of business is a catering and hospitality establishment in the production of cook foods and desserts and delivering of services.

It has various departments such as finance, human resources, personnel, maintenance, cooking kitchen and security.

This problem has affected the personnel responsible for the employment or hiring and the welfare of staff and finance departments greatly.

The policy of the company has created problem which is affecting the progress of this establishment in the sense that not enough staff to do the jobs (staff shortages) due to the restrictions imposed on the personnel department. Majority of the employees are not given permanent contract thus leaving employees complaining and some leaving the job, only managerial and few supervising positions are being given contracts.

This company policy is also affecting the finance department by being very tight with their budget in pay rises and incentives even though the work load is of high volume for the existing employees to handle especially the contracted supervisors had to do majority of the jobs because additional employment cannot be made.

As an employee in this establishment I am fully aware and very observant of how operations are carried out in all departments because there is always a weekly managerial and supervisors meeting and monthly general meeting involving all departments.

Continuous observations and communication with colleagues also highlighted this staff shortage problem which has not yet being looked into by the management.

Problem solving skills are applied to existing problems once they have been established or identified, these skills can be seen as reactive tools and also be done pro-actively. It can turn challenge into an opportunity for improvement and innovation, (The Happy Manager, 2021).

Problem-solving is the process of solving different or any kind of problem. This process is acted upon in some steps and Decision Making is whereby a selection of the best choice out of many options being mentioned and usually to be implemented or focused on in the future. In addition it should be a creative one and directional.

In solving this problem and making proper decision for this establishment the following steps are to be considered or techniques how to solve problem and decision making in these stages or steps below.

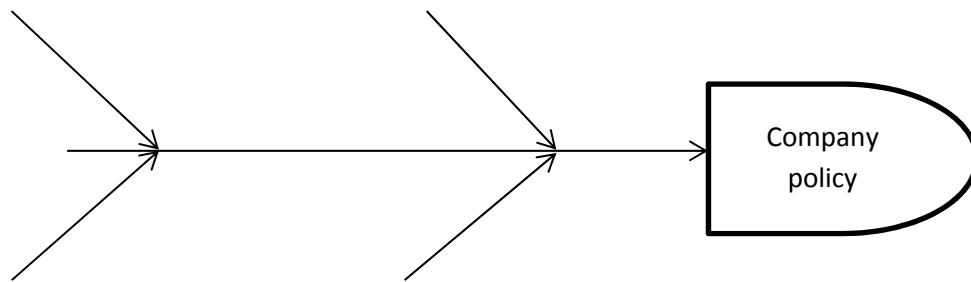
- 1, Problem definition (Identify the problem)
2. The causes and effects
3. Identify and evaluate alternative solutions

4. Evaluate and choose the best solution
5. Produce your plan and implement your chosen solution.
6. Implement your solution
7. Monitor and review the progress of your solution.

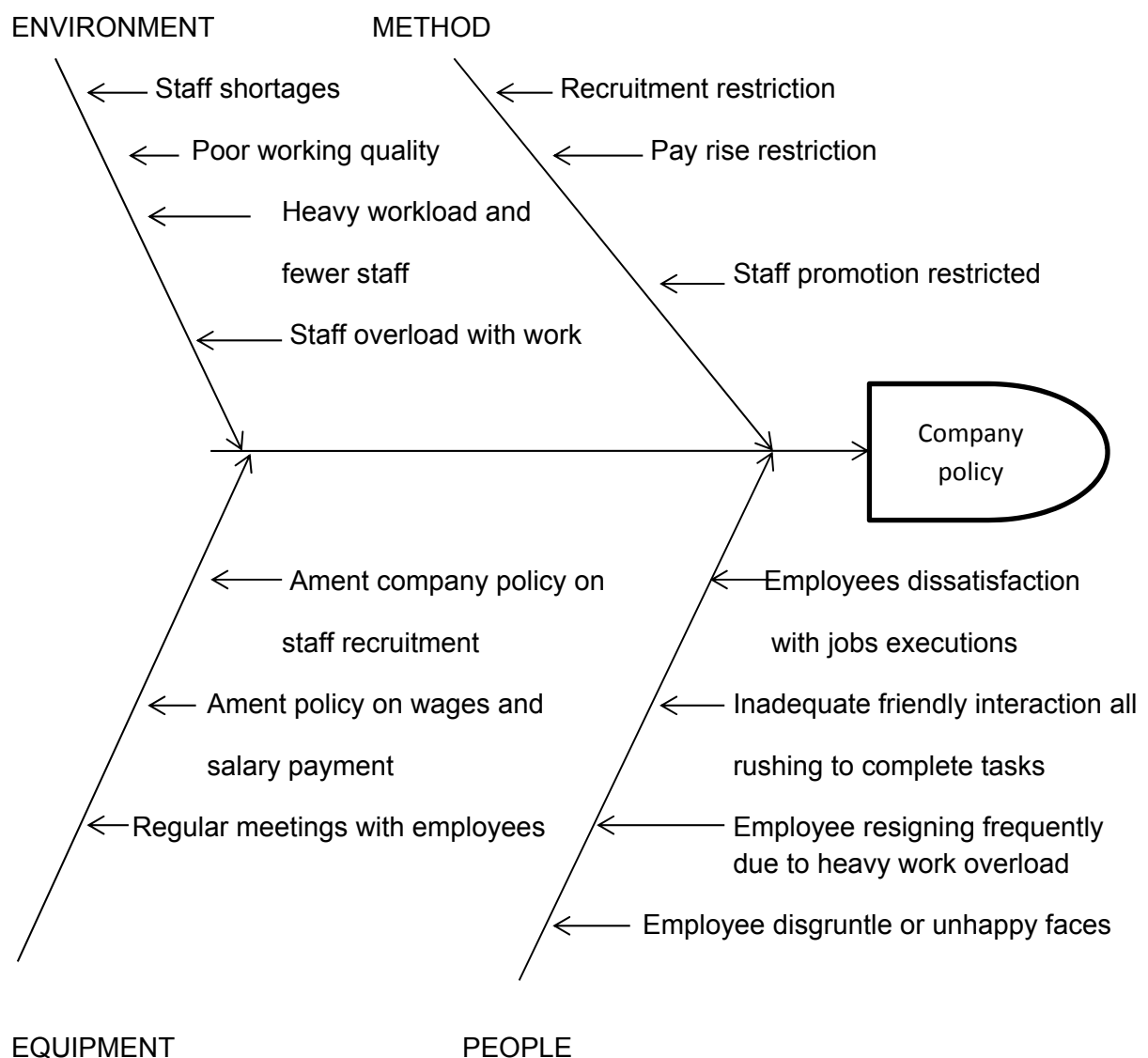
PROBLEM DEFINITION

Here is a diagram Invented by Dr. Kaoru Ishikaya, a Japanese quality control statistician known as the Fishbone diagram which is simply a powerful tool that provides a systematic way of understanding problems and the root causes and looks like skeleton of a fish as seen below.

IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM



IDENTIFYING THE MAJOR FACTORS



The above tool, Fishbone diagram has been used in assisting to categorize the many potential causes of the company's problem and is of great value which helps identify root causes.

As a stakeholder (Freeman, 1984) “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of an organisation’s objectives.” As an employee in this organisation and already observed such problem I am interested in bringing plans and suggested solutions in seeing a way forward.

In addition, this company policy has been design to maximise profits and has affected the whole organisation because the managerial team has to step in to execute some ordinary duties supposed to be done by lower staff.

SOLUTION PLAN

The Brainstorming and Creative Thinking technique will be use which is the generation of new ideas in a relaxed way and informal approach in solving problem with straightforward thinking around a specific area of interest. People are encouraged to come up with ideas and thoughts that seem to be crazy but some of these ideas can be made into original and creative solutions to a problem. All these ideas should be noted down and not criticised, (MindTools.com). These are:

- Forcing relationships with managers

- Company policy need to be a little bit flexible.

- Employ more staff and give guarantee working hours a week.

- Weekly meetings with front line managers.

- Give more contracts to existing lower level staff to assure or secure their jobs.

- Call in agency staff during busy times.

- Employ staff with hospitality experience.

- Employ apprentice staff willing to do the job both parties will be benefited.

- Introduce incentives and appraisals.

EVALUATION

Evaluating the current situation of this company the S.W.O.T analysis tool will be introduced and alongside PESTLE.

S.W.O.T an acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, meaning strategic planning tool used to help a person, business or organization identify their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

Well known establishment

Perform operations on customers’ sites

OPPORTUNITIES

Searching for more customers

Wishing to open more branches

High profits turnout

Wishing to be largest organisation

Produce high quality products

Wishing to be leader in catering operation

WEAKNESSES

THREATS

No flexible company policy

Competition from similar catering operations

Unstable staff

Competition from higher paid establishment

Lack of incentives

Competition for all levels of customers

Only produce for high level customers Competition from similar or different higher brands

Strengths and Weaknesses these are internal or inside factors while Opportunities and Threats refers to external factors.

Strengths this is where a person or an organisation out stands others and delivering their best performance and profit made thus already attained and controllable internally. Once these internal factors been identified it can be relied upon.

Weaknesses are areas where improvement needed and require urgent action this it is within your control by improving on them and eliminate less important or non-required by the business.

On the other hand, Opportunities these are external factors whereby you have no control because some might be performing better than you think and must be investigated and needed adjustment to be in same level with other competitors.

Threats, this is where many business competitors chasing and targeting a particular or same market, produce and services.

The PESTLE technique is used to help identify factors involve to change in the rather than solutions to any of the factors. Thus a powerful tool use for the understanding of risks associated with market growth or whether they are declining, and the position, potential and direction for a business or organisation and also help to identify opportunities and threats.

PESTLE an acronym meaning Political, Economic, Sociological, Technological, Legal and Environmental.

Political: A potential change of government, tax law, changing superannuation policies, labour laws, and trade restrictions.

Economic: Economic factors that will affect the business in term of inflation rates, interest rates, economic growth, exchange rates, and the price of property in the city and up provinces if thinking about expansion.

Sociological: Cultural and ethnical aspects and also demographical factors, including population growth rates, cultural, age distribution of population, and changing social behaviours in the use of social media.

Technological: New technological changes that may affect the business by enhancing simple and faster output or level with outside competitors.

Legal: The current and impending legislation that will affect the business' operation especially for expansion locally and internationally including area of activity like Discrimination and privacy, Health and Safety, Consumer and Data Protection law.

Environmental: Thinking about the environmental considerations that may affect the business like pollution from materials use for food cooking and the use of plastic bags for packaging finished cooking goods, vehicles for transporting goods and the pollution impacted from them. In addition weather conditions, natural disasters, and climate changes.

CHOSEN DECISION

Successful decision making involves choosing the right choices in order to achieve ones goal. In making good decision you have to select the most important factors to be consider, weigh the pros and cons, check for any pressures for the chosen factor and against the change and the outcomes and finally the relative importance of different chosen options, (Mindtools.com, no date).

However decisions are very challenging or difficult and sometimes uncertain due to many unknown facts and complex, the reason being, there are many factors to be considered including interpersonal issues thinking how people will react to such decision but in other word decision have to be made.

The PMI (plus, minus, interesting) tool which was developed by Dr. Edward De Bono will be use thus is a brainstorming, decision making and critical thinking tool. It also helps in making quick decision by analysing and weighing the pros and cons and in addition, very useful because it helps to check if a decision or opportunity is worth taking, (Mindtools.com, no date)

THE PMI DECISION MAKING TOOL.

Option 1. Solution – Company to flexible with policy – PMI Model (score scale is 5)

PLUS (+)	MINUS (--)	INTEREST
WHAT IS GOOD	WHAT IS BAD	WHAT IS INTERESTING
Employ more staff (+ 3)	Company should leave staff as they are (-- 4)	Call in agency staff on busy period (+ 4)

Reduce job load on staff (+3)	Give more staff contract to stay in job (-- 4)	Company profit margin affected (+ 4)
Incentives to staff to increase productivity and efficiency (+ 2)	Staff flexibility (+ 4)	More staff training (+ 5)
Company budget spending to be increased (-- 4)	More staff promotion (+1)	Company budget flexible (-- 4)
Total Plus Point=(+4)	Total Minus Point=(+5)	Total Interest Point=(+9)

Final Value for above solution = 4 + 5 +9 = 18

Option 2. Company to amend policy on staff recruitment --- PMI Model (score scale is 5)

PLUS (+)	MINUS (--)	INTEREST
WHAT IS GOOD	WHAT IS BAD	WHAT IS INTERESTING
Employ more staff and train (+3)	Employ Agency staff and train (-- 4)	Spend more budget on staff (+2)
Employ more apprentice staff (+1)	Hire casual staff (+4)	Company profits to spend on expansion (+3)
Staff with minimal job load (+1)	Purchase new equipment to replace staff (-- 4)	Staff appraisals to increase efficiency (+4)
Total Plus Point= (+5)	Total Minus Point= (-- 4)	Total Interest Point= (+9)

Final Value = 5 – 4 + 9 = 10

DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation is the process of executing a strategic plan already design, practice, or any idea, standard, specification, model or policy for making something. In order for something to actually happen there must be some preliminary thinking to follow. You have to take some concrete steps to turn your strategic plan into real actions that will help to accomplish the goals and objectives.

The primary benefits to implementation and implementation planning you should be able to list down or itemise all the tasks needed to complete the project and also be able in identifying the personnel and resources needed to carry out the tasks and documenting the required timeline for the project to be completed thus ensuring reaching your strategic goals and very crucial to project success because If you do not implement your plan, you do not get anything done.

Commitment is required, patience and persistent even when you encounter problems keep pressing on never give up or lose interest also prepare to be flexible because all plans are based on assumptions.

IMPLIMENTATION PLAN

Introduction - this plan is being created to successfully move my project plan into action about my company's policy need to be flexible thus created staff shortages and tight budget spending. (Smartsheet, 2021). The PMI Option 1 above has been used to choose the best solution.

Management Overview – the personnel manager, floor supervisors, line managers and finance manager will be overseeing the execution of the plan.

Major Tasks – more trained staff need to be employed to avoid shortages.

Implementation Schedule –

Tasks	Duration	Resources required
Proposal will be presented to management to view	2 days	Office room, laptop and notepad
Contact management to explain problem	3 days	Office room, laptop, projector and screen
To review the plan meetings will be arranged on agreement from management	3 days (one day per week)	Office room, projector, laptop, feedback forms for company stakeholders.

Security and Privacy – project plan will be stored on my local drive and protected memory stick encrypted.

Implementation Support/Resource List – technical department team will be providing projector and screen.

Monitoring Performance – weekly or fortnightly meetings will be arranged with management and other stakeholders to check effectiveness of the progress if there is any area of adjustment or improvement.

Acceptance Criteria – the PMI tool will be use to justify the solution already described.

Plan Approval – successful implementation and running of the project will be approved by management and ready to sign off.

CONCLUSION

Having learned this module Problem Solving and Decision I now know significantly the techniques and the tools to be used in solving problems. In addition, referring to the individual role play presentation made me to gain more understanding and confidence.

Finally, I will be willing to involve in any further training programmes to gain additional experience in near or future.

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