

BMSW4004 - Problem Solving and Decision Making

Task 2 report

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Introduction

The importance of problem solving skills

In every workplace and business there will always be some form of problem that needs to have attention provided to it so that it does not cause long term challenges for the company. A problem is something that is causing issues either for one person or for many people in an organisation. It is something that stops a person or a company from being able to achieve their goals or targets. Problems can arise from areas such as tight budgets, communication problems, attitude problems, poor performance, policies or processes.

To approach a problem within the workplace a person needs to be confident in making decisions and approach the relevant people to raise issues that are affecting them and potentially others to get it changed.

The workplace problem

Defining the complex problem

Mental health issues are one of the biggest problems in the workplace within all industries today. It is something that has affected everyone at some point in their lives. According to the research done from a survey in England in 2014, at least 1 in 6 people report experiencing a mental health problem in a week [1].

The scope of mental health on a much larger scale than it first seems to the eye. Inside the workplace, there are times where employees can get pressured to work according to the company standards. Sometimes employee wellbeing does not get taken into consideration when companies focus on targets and outputs and this usually results in employees quitting their job because they have a lack of support structure in the workplace or feel that they are not a good fit for the company anymore.

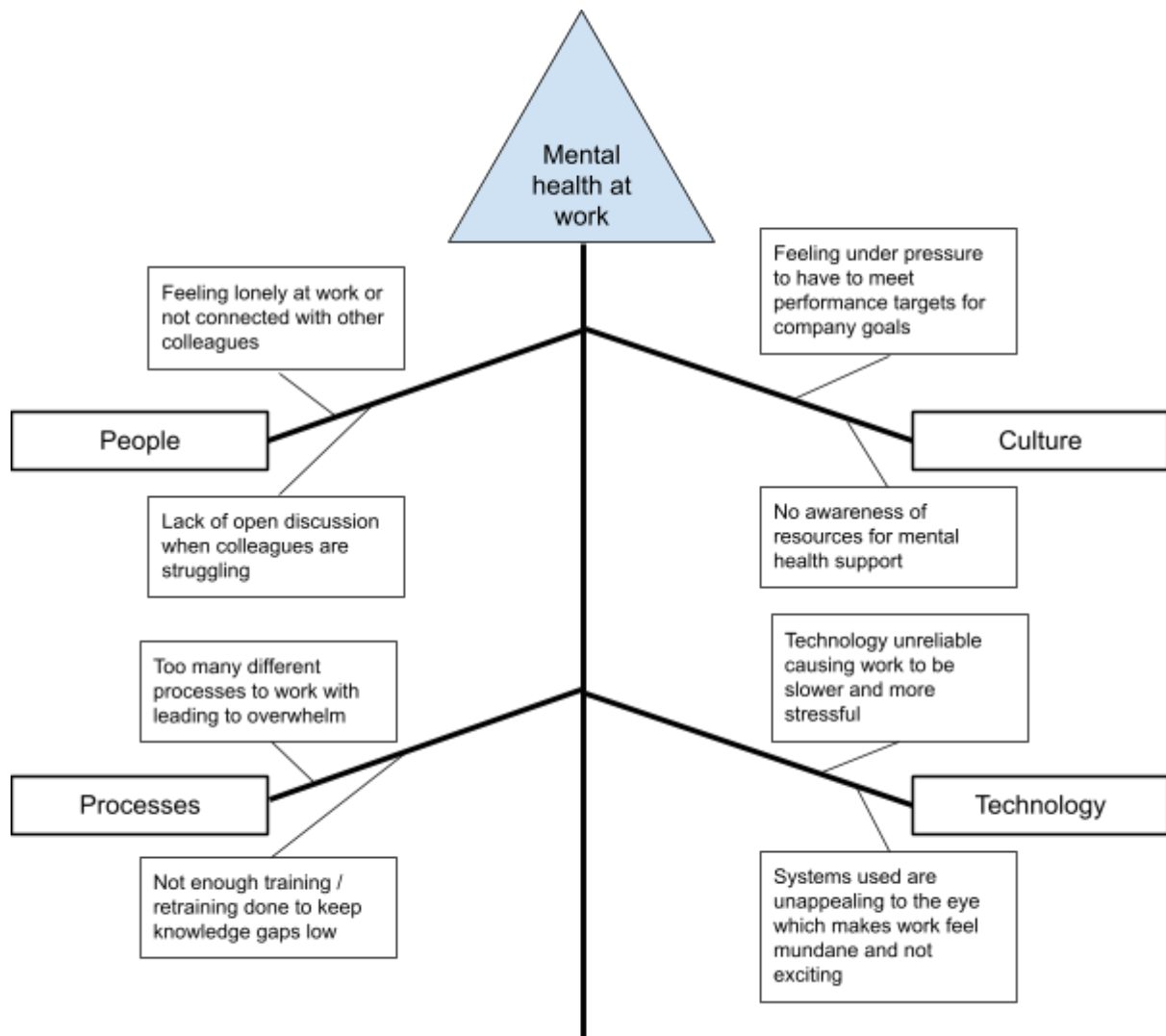
Potential impacts to the organisation

The impact of mental health within the workplace is so large that 1 in 6.8 people experience mental health problems and that with better mental health support in the workplace, it could save UK businesses up to £45 billion a year according to analysis by Deloitte [2]. As a result, this is a complex problem worth investigating solutions for and looking into how it can be better approached in today's workplace, bringing along benefits such as a happier workforce, lower costs of having to pay for sick days and a more productive company.

Analysing information

Root cause analysis (RCA)

I will use a fishbone diagram to identify possible causes that have an effect towards the problem



Situational analysis of mental health in the workplace

12.7% of all sickness absence days within the UK have some form of relation to mental health conditions [3]. This definitely shows that there is an opportunity here to improve upon how there can be a better or improved support structure provided to employees as well as encouraging an open conversation, without judgement to allow them to feel safe and comfortable where they work.

To add to this in a survey carried out by the Labour Force Survey (LFS), they found that in the UK there were 820,000 employees suffering from work related stress, depression or anxiety and around 17.9 million working days were lost due to the same issue [4].

Employees who live alone were more likely to report loneliness both "often or always" and over the past seven days than the average adult; this was also the case for those in "bad" or "very bad" health, in rented accommodation, or who were either single, or divorced, separated or a former or separated civil partners.

Finally, in the last year the effects of Coronavirus and lockdowns consequently leading to employees having to be forced to adapt their working environments from working in the office with colleagues to remotely working at home has significantly increased mental health effects. From recent research from RSPH, it found that working from home left people feeling less connected to colleagues (67% of people), had less exercise (46% of people) and for those who had multiple housemates were more likely to think that working from home was worse for their health and wellbeing (41% of people) [5]

Analysis model - SWOT

Below is a SWOT analysis of the strengths weaknesses opportunities and threats to that the current problem of mental health awareness poses to organisations:

<u>Strengths</u> Some form of mental health awareness can be found in many organisations and it is increasing Mental health awareness week is actively campaigned internally and talked about with others	<u>Weaknesses</u> Change can take some time to push through the whole organisation - behavioural changes don't happen overnight and requires occasional training Some organisations have a culture of tick boxing to be able to meet set standards to make themselves appear that they are aware of mental health implications
<u>Opportunities</u> Taking the opportunity of continuing to increase awareness of the many types of implications that mental health can have on a person by having awareness weeks for example UK Government is taking on mental health as a policy and is looking to continue to grow the amount of services as a result of increasing demand, with this in mind the opportunity can be made to help redirect individuals to useful services or resources to help their situation	<u>Threats</u> There is the risk that individuals may think that they are bigger and can do everything they can to make change, but change takes time and they may feel lost when they hit obstacles Unpredictable economic environment at the moment along with the political environment can add complications to how individuals are feeling in their situation

Range of solutions that are available

What solutions can be done to approach Mental Health - 3 alternatives

Mental health comes in a variety of forms and there is not one single point where everyone feels the same things as each other, everyone has a different experience and so the approach to providing a solution cannot be one size fits all.

Monzo is a good example of how they manage mental health by training people to become Mental Health First Aiders [6] as they believe physical health and mental health are connected to better work life balance too. On their website they have led the way within the industry on encouraging a better culture by providing a way for any employee to publicly share any issues they are having in their lives and by providing dedicated days to take off for anything related to mental health. Within offices they have also integrated first aid boxes which contain resources to encourage activities to improve mental health day to day and allow an employee to take ownership of their wellbeing [7]. Finally, things that aren't standard today have been introduced to further add ease and reduce stress to all types of employees such as the introduction of leave for pregnancy loss for either partner [8].

There are also other ways that companies provide resources to help empower their employees to take care of their mental health. Providing access to services such as an Employee Assistance Provider (EAP) helpline or private health insurance with dedicated extensive mental health cover on it with providers such as with Vitality or AXA will definitely help add an extensive network to their employees. Another thing that companies could provide would be subscriptions to apps that can be used from anywhere to help manage mental health such as Headspace or cognitive behavioural therapy apps (CBT).

Finally, companies could look to encourage awareness and talk of mental health and how it has affected various people within the workplace by hosting events for example by inviting industry specialists that can come in the company every month to talk about issues going on in people's lives with sensitive topics such as bereavements, pregnancy loss, relationships or suicidal thoughts. A professional talk option could work where mental health workers can make the employees working at the industry feel listened to and safe to share their worries.

Evaluating the range of solutions

Training colleagues to be Mental Health First Aiders

<u>Pros</u>	<u>Cons</u>
Provides people with the tools and knowledge they need to be able to support anyone who may be experiencing a mental health issue Helps towards increasing awareness and reducing stigma around approaching mental health and making sure it is taken seriously Individuals once trained can provide and form the support network that may not have existed previously in their organisation	Learning through cases studies of mental health can be quite intense and potentially triggering for some people and they may want to back out Costs associated depend on the company if they are willing to make it a priority

Providing more resources for colleagues to be empowered on their mental wellbeing

<u>Pros</u>	<u>Cons</u>
Colleagues can feel empowered to take action on their own with external organisations that are specialists in helping with mental health Colleagues will feel that they have a support network available to fall back on and specialists on hand to help	Conversations and discussions of mental health internally are moved away and the internal work environment is unchanged as colleagues will discuss with external resources when looking for support Finding the right balance of resources to provide can take some time and can be costly for an organisation

Encouraging increased awareness of mental health internally

<u>Pros</u>	<u>Cons</u>
In the workplace this can benefit the person suffering with this particular mental health so they can feel accepted and understood If an employee was worried if there is a particular way to approach an individual suffering with mental health it can prevent them from socialising with them if uneducated The awareness of mental health can have a positive effect to help employees stay for longer as they feel more comfortable in the workplace	There can be discrimination towards the person suffering with mental health when taking on tasks The individual suffering with mental health can feel like the odd one out from other perceptions towards them because of their mental health causing that individual to consider removing themselves from groups to avoid conflict

Implementing the solution

Based on the above evaluation of the 3 alternative solutions to tackling mental health within the workplace, the best solution to rollout seems to be the first one to train colleagues to be Mental Health First Aiders. This provides colleagues with the awareness and the ability to

help encourage others to seek support when they need it and provide relevant resources to them. It also provides colleagues with the tools to support someone going through a hard time. Finally it will also help to reduce any stigma experienced internally and encourage more open discussion around mental help.

The plan for implementing the solution

To implement the above solution we can make use of the **ADKAR model** which is used for changed management [9]. To start **awareness** we could run some learning sessions with employees and managers that the organisation is planning to introduce the ability for colleagues to learn how to become Mental Health First Aiders and they can ask questions and raise concerns about this. Through these sessions we can see the **desire** through the reactions and thoughts of individuals through this change that will be introduced.

Knowledge will be shared between teams and in the organisation as a whole as more people take on the role of being a Mental Health First Aider. To check the **ability** of this change we can roll it out in a small trial group to see how the first round of people feel and see if they are prepared themselves to provide support for people who may need it internally. Finally to do **reinforcement** we can run frequent sessions monthly to check in on everyone who has become a Mental Health First aider internally and see how they feel about the change.

Communicating it to key stakeholders

The key stakeholders in the organisation does involve everyone - the board members, managers and staff. Communication in rolling out this change is key and will be important to increase awareness and to get everyone onboard. To effectively start improving mental health in the workplace we can talk of how creatively make the topic of mental health stand out in the workplace.

The key player and stakeholder here would be the upper management as they are the ones who are impactful in making decisions. It would be good to speak to them with the intentions of rolling out this solution as they can then communicate and spread awareness to other teams within the organisation and help to keep engagement up and encourage others to train to be a Mental Health First Aider.

Monitoring and review techniques to ensure the successful implementation of the solution

Making use of anonymous survey services like Peakon will help management and employees see how much progress a company is making on mental health. By keeping the

survey anonymous it allows someone to feel honest in speaking their opinion without needing to worry about any consequences. [10]

Managers and executives can make sure to put an effort to review the topic of mental health. Things like posters around the workplace can remind colleagues that not everyone is doing well even if they may seem. Keeping the awareness of mental health awareness regularly will help each employee to feel supported throughout their time at the company.

They can also implement mental health awareness and the importance of it by adding it as an annual training to remind others of how to act and let people that suffer from mental health that they are listened to and understood. Keeping up with monthly meetings as mentioned in the implementation plan will also help to check how progress internally is going.

Conclusion

Overall mental health awareness is a key issue that faces all industries today. By taking a preventive approach to reduce the impacts it has on a workforce and raising the awareness of it within the workplace, will bring a positive impact to the business and their employees. Mental health should be a priority nowadays, especially with rates of mental health experienced being at its highest point. We've explored the impacts and the various ways to approach it now it is down to the employers and employees to take action.

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Appendix 1 - roleplay dialogue

UE: Hi there would I able to speak to you about some issues I have been tired of dealing with

MC: I'm really sorry to hear about that Zoriana, if you could follow me into the office and we can have an overview and see how I can help you

UE: ok! that would actually be great

MC: So how can I be of service to you

UE: I have been struggling managing the tills all by myself in the mornings, it's just been me serving and doing the job for like 4 people, I'm tired and I want something done and ALSO one of your employee's has been completely disrespectful to me knowing that I have Tourette's and is using it to embarrass me to my other colleagues

MC: That sounds awful, let me first apologise in behalf of our completely misbehaved employees, I will personally be contacting the employee that has behaved so rudely and we will have them dismissed from our company as such behaviour is unacceptable

UE: Thanks, I wouldn't want to be working anymore if I can't be myself and feel appreciated

MC: Yes of course I understand disabilities are not something to laugh about and people that behave inappropriately towards that shouldn't be working in our company, and now about you working by yourself it definitely will change - what we can do is change out your shifts so you will be working with other employees for support

UE: Alright well I can work evening actually but I just want to be working with other people as its socially stressful to work alone

MC: You are completely right and what else I can do for you is offer you an increased bonus for the hard days you worked by yourself and let me apologise and congratulate you for the hard work and being strong in your mental wellbeing to tell us where we can improve

UE: Well, that would really be a big help, thank you for taking the time to listen and actually do something about it – you have made me feel more valued than I felt in months

MC: Anytime Zoriana, I'm glad you came over to contact me, otherwise I wouldn't have known and we could have lost a valuable employee like you

UE: Aw thanks

MC: Looking forward to seeing you

UE: Yeah, see you