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**Module: Problem Solving and Decision
Making (BMSW4004)**

Group 1

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Introduction

My name is Jana and this writing assignment will be focused on analysing how to efficiently deal with problems in the workplace.

Abstract

Throughout this course and in particular in this module we have acquired skills needed to detect, analyse and effectively solve problems by applying several proven techniques. These techniques range from SWOT and PESTLE analysis to applying a range of decision-making techniques and tools.

Detecting a problem in the workplace

Definition of a problem in the workplace

Problems in the workplace can be caused by a wide range of factors such as:

- The need for various types of individuals to efficiently work together as a unit
- The need for a company to meet its targets and deadlines
- The pressure of having to work within small budgets
- The growing demand to adhere to ethical norms within the culture of the organization.
- Communication problems between staff and management
- Declining performance amongst staff
- Discrimination on the work floor
- Competition and client retention
- Outside factors such as the constantly changing nature of modern-day economy

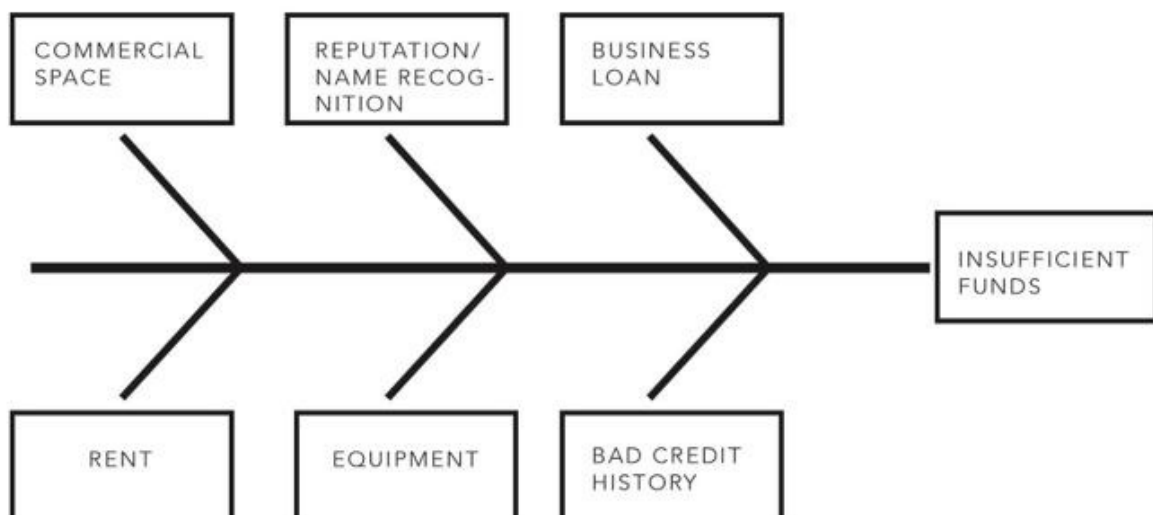
First stage of detection and analysis – Cause and Effect

A problem in the workplace can only be solved when it is tackled at its core. In order to determine what the main root of the problem is, we should refrain from globalising the issues at hand. Meaning we can't approach it by using global terms. Defining a problem by claiming that 'everything' is going wrong, or the company is 'losing money', is describing the problem, but not defining the problem.

In this case it is better to go deeper into the WHY of things. Why is everything going wrong? Why is the company losing money? This technique is called "Cause and Effect Analysis".

A handy tool for a cause and effect analysis would be to implement a Fishbone diagram. Also known as an "Ishikawa Diagram". Making use of this diagram will stimulate your thinking during brainstorming potential causes to problems and will help you understand the relationship between the cause and the problem in more depth. It serves as a visual display of the specific dynamic between your cause and effect.

Fishbone Diagram



A problem also rarely solves itself. Procrastination or waiting until things to get better will, in most cases, cause the problem to spiral out of control.

When the problem lies with individuals or staff, it's always important to practise fairness when handing out a punishment or expressing criticism. Praising and criticising the entire team is a better strategy than criticising a sole individual. Unless that certain individual is essentially the root of the problem.

Self-reflection on my current approach to problem solving

Currently when facing a problem in the workplace, I rarely take steps to solve this. My reaction to problem is usually to wait until it solves itself. More often than not this causes the problem to spiral out of control and emotions to get involved. This poor approach to problem solving has proven to cause tension between me and management or me and co-workers in the past. On a scale of 1-10, I would rate myself a 4/10 when it comes to my problem-solving approach.

Ideal characteristics an individual should possess for effective problem solving would be to have an ability to listen to all parties involved and react appropriately and with fairness. A good problem solver has an ambitious and confident attitude and can think outside the box. They seek a solution that can satisfy all parties involved and is therefore able to gain their commitment. They should also have the ability to determine when a problem is not within their ability to solve and be able to delegate this to the proper authority. An important thing to remember is to never make a promise to any parties involved which you cannot keep but consider all possible outcomes first.

Second phase of detection and analysis

When a problem has been detected and properly analysed to find its core issue. A range of techniques can then be applied to reach a viable solution.

One of these techniques is to draw up a SWOT and PESTLE analysis.

A SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool used to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of your business. It serves the purpose of identifying these aspects and gives you the ability to work up a strategy on to tackle the issues found.

A PESTLE analysis however is a framework used to analyse several key factors influencing your business from the outside. It analyses the following key factors:

- Political
- Economical
- Sociological
- Technological
- Legal
- Environmental

As this writing assignment is to solve a problem within our personal career, I have applied both analysis on the issue of opening a professional tattoo-studio without the required funds.

SWOT analysis

Strenghts - Extensive knowledge in fine arts (Bachelors degree in Graphic Design, college degree in fine arts). - Fully certified tattoo artist - 2 years of experience in professional tattooing - Experience working in professional settings such as studios and tattoo conventions. - Large portfolio of previous work - Returning client base - Growing social media presence and following	Weaknesses - Insufficient financial means - Growing rental prices on commercial property - Growing demands from lenders - Insufficient experience in colour-tattooing - Lack of business knowledge - No experience in owning own business - Strict council rules and regulations for tattoo-studios
Opportunities - Free advertisement through social media - Government supported business loan schemes - Sharing rent and utility bills with other artists in exchange for a space in the studio. - Chair rental options - Small-business tax relief schemes - Small-business business rate relief schemes - E-commerce platforms such as Wowcher, Treatwell, Groupon to increase footfall and acquire clients	Threats - High rate of competition - Client dissatisfaction leading to bad advertisement - Difference of skin texture in clients makes it hard to work on a timed schedule - Sudden changes of regulations by councils - Public reputation of tattoo-artists - Pandemics

PESTLE analysis

Political

- Regulatory bodies constantly changing legislations and requirements
- Government policies getting stricter

Economical

- Risk of financial loss through switching from employment to self-employment
- Specific industry demands such as the need for constant expensive training to keep up with new techniques
- International laws and legislations when working abroad

Social

- Neighbouring businesses might object to having a tattoo-studio around due to bad reputation.
- Competition from other artists
- Constantly changing trends
- Consumer attitude
- Diversity of culture in London. Muslim cultures consider tattoos as haram.

Technological

- The need to use costly top-notch equipment
- Constantly changing methods of inking
- Future changes to technology legislation, a growing need for more advanced sterilisation technology after pandemic.

Legal

- Insurance and liability costs are high for tattoo-studios
- High chances of customer dissatisfaction leading to legal procedures against the business

Environmental

- Growing demand for environmental-friendly equipment and tools
- Reducing the business' carbon footprint
- Using environmentally friendly ink and products could cost more

Conclusion of analysis

After analysing the workplace situation with a fishbone diagram, a SWOT analysis and a PESTLE analysis, we can draw the conclusion that there's a few obstacles to overcome in order to be ready to take the steps of opening a tattoo studio.

The main obstacle is financial means. Other obstacles would be hard competition from other artists and the increasingly demanding and constantly changing legislation towards running a tattooing-business.

Decision making

Decision making is what comes after fully analysing the problem and brainstorming on potential solutions. It is the stage in which we have to make a tactical decision between different problem-solving solution options.

The type of decision to be made isn't always equal to the next. *Routine decisions* for example are made when the problem is common and there are already policies in place to solve them. *Adaptive decisions* are made when the problem is somewhat unusual and not fully known. For example, you could try to make alterations to a common method in order to establish whether the problem is fixed afterwards. *An innovative decision* is a creative solution to an unusual problem with unknown cause

Of course decisions have consequences to them. There are several important factors to consider when in the process of making a problem-solving decision. These factors range from experience and knowledge of the business to the risk associated with said decisions. You also have to calculated in the time and funds available, the level of authority you possess, the degree of support your decision would have amongst the working staff and management. It is needless to say, decision making is the hardest step of the problem-solving process!

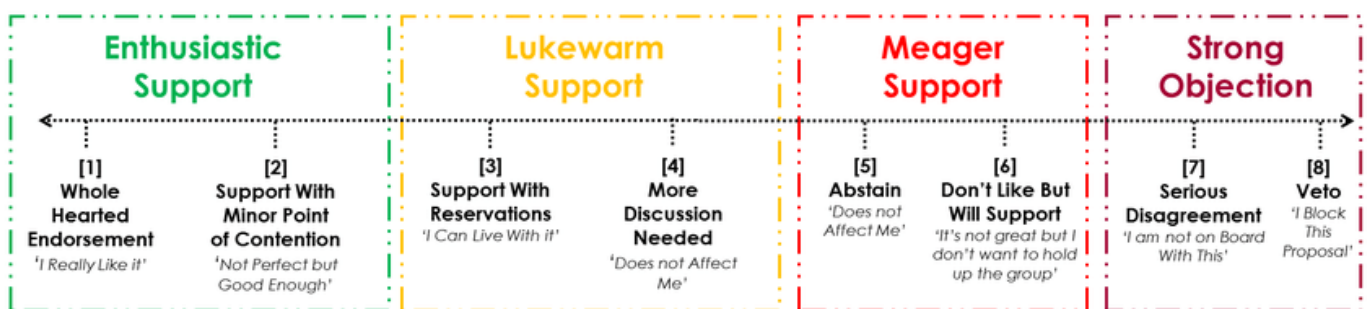
Making an effective decision

To adhere to the characteristics of being a good decision maker, you have to possess the following skillset:

- Be able to follow a systematic process
- Be creative and objective
- Engage the affected team and gain support
- Be able to work with others, consider their inputs and ensure participation
- Implement your decision in a systematic and comprehensive way
- Take a goal-oriented approach and consider all alternative solutions

Gradients of agreement

When a solution to a problem involves team members, you could use a gradient of agreement to identify where your team stands on the issue and make sure you reach a consensus or team decision. Keep in mind however, there is rarely a full consensus amongst a group of different individuals. Below is an example of how it works.



Kaner Gradient of Agreement-Adapted (TRG, 2017) and (Hughes, 2017)

As my problem doesn't involve a team of people. I have no need for a gradient of agreement. But found this an interesting tool for individuals in a management position.

PMI decision making tool

A decision making tool that seemed most relevant to implement in my personal situation was the PMI decision making tool

It was developed by Dr. Edward de Bono and serves the purpose of making decisions based on outweighing the pros and cons of your brainstorming ideas.

Please find below an example of PMI decision making technique, applied on my own personal circumstances.

The conclusion we can draw from this analysis is that the best course of action as of now would be to try and get a business loan and find a denser area to lease a commercial property in. This will create debt, but it will also create the opportunity to expand my financial reputation towards lenders, and gain the reputation and credibility needed to grow as a business. A more densely populated area will also cut the costs of advertisement and marketing and create the possibility of introducing walk-in treatments such as piercings or laser removal. Increasing turnover and draw in a larger client base.

Course of action	Positive	Negative	Interesting	Total
- Getting a business loan to solve the issue of insufficient funds	- Fast access to needed funds (+5)	- Getting into debts (- 2) - High chances of rejection by lenders due to bad credit history (-1)	- Being able to pay off the loan payments will increase financial reliability to lenders and increase chances of acceptance for lower interest loans. (+ 3)	+7
- Leasing a commercial space in a cheaper area	- Lower monthly costs (+ 6)	- Less passage in the area means less footfall (- 3) - Need for more advertisement and promotions. Increased costs. (- 3)	- Every tattoo artist has their own style, clients willing to travel for specific artist. (+1)	+1
- Leasing a commercial space in a busy area	- More footfall thus higher turnover (+3) - Faster way of gaining name recognition (+3)	- Higher rental costs (- 3) - Chances of other artists in same area creating competition (-1)	- More footfall creating opportunities for fast treatments such as piercings (+3)	+5

Final Conclusion

This writing assignment was incredibly beneficial in learning how to narrow down a problem, analyse the root cause and learn how to take an informed decision. Whereas previously I would either let a problem spiral out of control, or act on impulse.

The above problem analysis and decision-making tools and techniques have helped me reach the conclusion that solving a problem requires a systematic approach in which a lot of factors need to be considered. Especially when dealing with a team or in a workplace environment where the consequences of your decision making can have adverse effects on staff, management and the reputation or turnover of the company itself.

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Presentation slides and speaker notes

PROBLEM SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING (BMSW4004)

End of term assignment : Effectively identifying, analysing and solving a problem in the workplace.

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Group 1

Lecturer: Yajesh Kumar
Term: 3



INTRODUCTION



How to detect a problem in the workplace

Cause and Effect

Fishbone analysis

SWOT/PESTLE

Decision Making

Gradients of Agreement

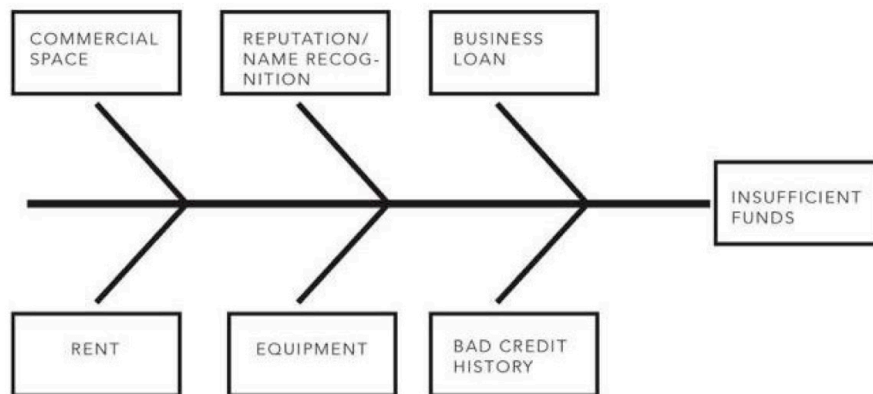
PMI decision making technique

Conclusion



DETECTION OF A PROBLEM

- Wide range of internal and external factors
- Do not globalise an issue
- Find root cause
- Cause and Effect
- Fishbone Diagram



FISHBONE ANALYSIS



S Strengths Capital stock: We've established and maintained a strong capital base. Marketing: Aggressive and focused marketing campaign with clear goals and strategies. Management team: We have wide experience in product and business know-how.	W Weaknesses Not tech-savvy: Establishing a reputation on the internet will be challenging. Quick expansion: There are a lot of new hires to train and organizational structures to learn. New: Don't have the reputation or money of big breweries.
O Opportunities Packaging: New generation of consumers appreciate high-end bottling and labeling. Craft beer niche: There is a growing community of craft beer appreciators in Botswana. Government programs: Promotions of and initiatives to support Botswana exports.	T Threats Vertical integration: Major breweries have control of supply and distribution channels to corner the market. Price fluctuation: Fluctuations in prices of supplies may occur. Competitive market: Expensive new marketing campaigns.



ANALYSING THE PROBLEM

- SWOT analysis
- PESTLE analysis

SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
- Extensive knowledge in fine arts - (Bachelors degree in Graphic Design, college degree in fine arts) - Fully certified tattoo artist - 2 years of experience in professional tattooing - Experience working in professional settings such as studios and tattoo conventions - Large portfolio of previous work- Returning client base - Growing social media presence and following	- Insufficient financial means - Growing rental prices on commercial property - Growing demands from lenders - Insufficient experience in colour-tattooing - Lack of business knowledge - No experience in owning own business - Strict council rules and regulations for tattoo-studios	- Free advertisement through social media - Government supported business loan scheme - Sharing rent and utility bills with other artists in exchange for a space in the studio. - Chair rental option - Small-business tax relief schemes - Small-business business rate relief schemes - E-commerce platforms such as Wowcher, Treatwell, Groupon to increase footfall and acquire clients	- High rate of competition - Client dissatisfaction leading to bad advertisement - Difference of skin texture in clients makes it hard to work on a timed schedule - Sudden changes of regulations by councils - Public reputation of tattoo-artists - Pandemics

PESTLE ANALYSIS

Political- Regulatory bodies constantly changing legislations and requirements- Government policies getting stricter

Economical- Risk of financial loss through switching from employment to self-employment- Specific industry demands such as the need for constant expensive training to keep up with new techniques - International laws and legislations when working abroad

Social- Neighbouring businesses might object to having a tattoo-studio around due to bad reputation. - Competition from other artists- Constantly changing trends- Consumer attitude- Diversity of culture in London. Muslim cultures consider tattoos as haram.

Technological- The need to use costly top-notch equipment- Constantly changing methods of inking- Future changes to technology legislation, a growing need for more advanced sterilisation technology after pandemic.

Legal- Insurance and liability costs are high for tattoo-studios- High chances of customer dissatisfaction leading to legal procedures against the business

Environmental- Growing demand for environmental-friendly equipment and tools- Reducing the business' carbon footprint- Using environmental ly friendly ink and products could cost more

CONCLUSION ROOT OF PROBLEM

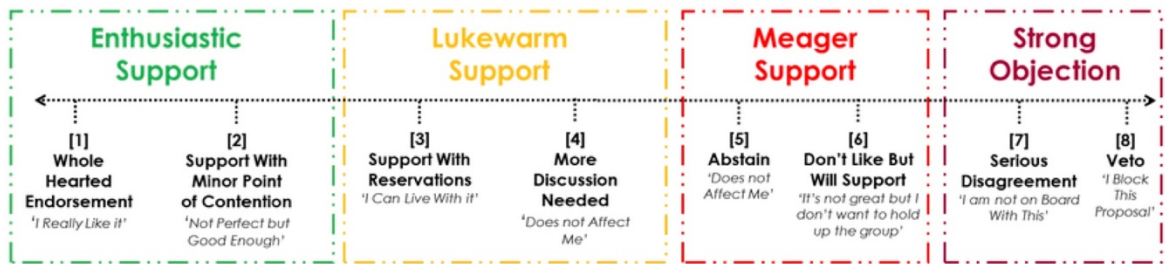
- Financial means
- Competition
- Council legislation

DECISION MAKING

- Routine decisions
- Adaptive decisions
- Innovative decisions
- Degree of support
- Ethics

EFFECTIVE DECISION MAKING SKILLS

- Be able to follow a systematic process
- Be creative and objective
- Engage the affected team and gain support
- Be able to work with others, consider their inputs and ensure participation- Implement your decision in a systematic and comprehensive way
- Take a goal-oriented approach and consider all alternative solutions



Kaner Gradient of Agreement-Adapted (TRG, 2017) and (Hughes, 2017)

GRADIENTS OF AGREEMENT

Plus	Minus	Interesting
Learn about computers (+5)	Give up a regular social evening with friends (-2)	Might make new friends (+3)
Increase chance of getting different job (+2)	Cost of course (-2)	Improve confidence in social situations (+4)
		Might feel "stupid" (-3)
Total: +7	-4	+4

PMI DECISION MAKING TECHNIQUE

- Dr. Edward de Bono
- Pros and cons
- Critical thinking and Analysis

PMI DECISION MAKING TECHNIQUE

Course of action	Positive	Negative	Interesting	Total
Getting a business loan	Fast access to needed funds (+5)	Getting into debts (- 2) High chances of rejection by lenders due to bad credit history (-1)	Being able to pay off the loan payments will increase financial reliability to lenders and increase chances of acceptance for lower interest loans. (+ 3)	+ 7
Leasing a commercial space in a cheaper area	Lower monthly costs (+ 6)	- Less passage in the area means less footfall (- 3) - Need for more advertisement and promotions. Increased costs. (- 3)	Every tattoo artist has their own style, clients willing to travel for specific artist. (+1)	+ 1
Leasing a commercial space in a busy area	More footfall thus higher turnover(+3) Faster way of gaining name recognition(+3)	Higher rental costs (- 3) Chances of other artists in same area creating competition (- 1)	More footfall creating opportunities for fast treatments such as piercings (+3)	+ 5



- Best course of action is to take a business loan and lease a commercial property in a more densely populated area
- Problem solving requires a systematic approach
- Decision making can have very positive or severely adverse effects in every aspect of the company
- Consider every possible outcome

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REFERENCES



Thank you
for
listening 😊



Speaker notes per slide

1. Introduction slide

My name is Jana and in the following presentation I will demonstrate the process of effective problem solving and decision making in a workplace setting. We will first discuss how to detect and analyse a problem through techniques such as a fishbone analysis and drawing up a SWOT and PESTLE analysis. Once the first stage of detection and analysis has been done, we will move onto discussing the steps and techniques you can use to reach an effective and comprehensive decision.

2. Detecting a problem

A problem in the workplace can have a wide range of both external and internal factors. Communication problems between divisions or poor staff performance can all spiral out of control when problems aren't dealt with in an efficient, ethical and strategic manner. Therefore when a problem arises, the best approach is to look at the "Why?". This technique is called "Cause and Effect". To reach the conclusion of why the problem has manifested, you can use a Fishbone Analysis.

3. Fishbone analysis

Here you can see a fishbone analysis of a problem applied to my personal situation

4. SWOT and PESTLE analysis

*A **SWOT analysis** is a strategic planning tool used to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of your business. It serves the purpose of identifying these aspects and gives you the ability to work up a strategy on to tackle the issues found. A **PESTLE analysis** however is a framework used to analyse several key factors influencing your business from the outside. It analyses the following key factors: - Political- Economical- Sociological- Technological- Legal- Environmental.*

5. SWOT Analysis

Here is a swot analysis applied to my personal situation.

6. PESTLE

Here is a PESTLE analysis applied to my personal situation.

7. Conclusion root of problem

After analysing the workplace situation with a fishbone diagram, a SWOT analysis and a PESTLE analysis, we can draw the conclusion that there's a few obstacles to overcome in order to be ready to take the steps of opening a tattoo studio. The main obstacle is financial means. Other obstacles would be hard competition from other artists and the increasingly demanding and constantly changing legislation towards running a tattooing-business.

8. Decision Making

The type of decision to be made isn't always equal to the next. Routine decisions for example are made when the problem is common and there are already policies in place to solve them. Adaptive decisions are made when the problem is somewhat unusual and not fully known. For example, you could try to make alterations to a common method in order to establish whether the problem is fixed afterwards. An innovative decision is a creative solution to an unusual problem with unknown cause. Of course, decisions have consequences to them. There are several important factors to consider when in the process of making a problem-solving decision. These factors range from experience and knowledge of the business to the risk associated with said decisions. You also have to calculate in the time and funds available, the level of authority you possess, the degree of support your decision would have amongst the working staff and management. It is needless to say, decision making is the hardest step of the problem-solving process!

9. Effective decision-making skills

To adhere to the characteristics of being a good decision maker, you have to possess the following skillset:

10. Gradients of agreement

When a solution to a problem involves team members, you could use a gradient of agreement to identify where your team stands on the issue and make sure you reach a consensus or team decision. Keep in mind however, there is rarely a full consensus amongst a group of different individuals. This is a very useful tool when used from a management perspective.

11. PMI decision making

A decision-making tool that seemed most relevant to implement in my personal situation was the PMI decision making tool

It was developed by Dr. Edward de Bono and serves the purpose of making decisions based on outweighing the pros and cons of your brainstorming ideas.

12. PMI technique applied

A PMI technique applied to my personal situation.

13. Conclusion

The problem analysis and decision-making tools and techniques discussed in this presentation have helped me reach the conclusion that solving a problem requires a systematic approach in which a lot of factors need to be considered. Especially when dealing with a team or in a workplace environment where the consequences of your decision making can have adverse effects on staff, management and the reputation or turnover of the company itself.