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2026806

**MODULE TITLE: Problem Solving and
Decision Making**

MODULEBCODE: BMSW4004

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Introduction:

Problem solving is an action taken to investigate a dilemma, analysing issues that may be at hand and implement a solution. A problem is a bridge that needs to be closed between how things stand at present and the way they should be. For this to be achieved you need to understand these two elements, this can be done by using Problem Solving tools and Techniques.

Different type of Problem-solving tool:

1. Fishbone Diagrams
2. Flowcharts
3. Strategy Maps
4. Mental Maps
5. Idea Maps
6. Concept Maps
7. 6 Steps by Step
8. Charting Software
9. MindManager
10. ADKAR
11. SWOTS
12. PESTLE
13. PMI (Plus, Minus and Interest)

(Leanne Armstrong, 2020)

Problem Solving Tools:

When it comes to solving problems whether it is personal, or work based there are many ways you can go about to solve those dilemmas. Here are few effective Problem-solving tools that can help you to find a solution.

“Problem solving may unfold differently depending on the industry, or even the department you work in. But most of us will agree that before you can fix any issue, you need to be clear on what it is, why it’s happening, and what your ideal long-term solution will achieve.”
(Leanne Armstrong, 2020)

“Understanding both the nature and the cause of a problem is the only way to figure out which actions will help you resolve it.” (Leanne Armstrong, 2020)

Why use a problem-solving tool?

It helps you find the root cause of a dilemma as well as the steps, resources, and personnel associated with each possible solution.

Also, the least time-consuming, most cost-effective options.

6 Step by Step

1. Define The Problem

- Set aside fact from opinion
- Consult everyone that is involved
- State the problem specifically
- Identify what Standard or Expectation is violated
- Avoid trying to solve problems without the correct information

For example, the problem that has been affecting majority of us is being Overworked, according to (Christine Ro, 2021) "... a paper published 17 May, authors from institutions including the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) suggest that, each year, three-quarters of a million people are dying from ischaemic heart disease and stroke, due to working long hours", ..."systematically reviewed data on long working hours, defined as 55 hours or more per week".

Causes of Overworking are usually, stress and frustration of not being able to achieve the company or organisations goals per week or month. Being taken advantage at work with work overload as well as suffering due to the laying off workers. (Christine Ro, 2021)

2. Generate alternative Solution

1. Put aside evaluating other problems
2. Include all the individuals that are involved into finding solutions
3. State a solution that incorporate with the organisation
4. State short- and long-term solutions in line with the organisation

For an example:

- I. Encourage employees to take time off work is very vital for high stress level and overall health.
- II. Encourage employees to take breaks at work
- III. Healthy incentives
- IV. Culture of Care- have one to one or group meetings about company goals and expectations, make it known to them that they are being listened to and encourage for feedback, as someone might state a solution.

3. Evaluate and Select an Alternative

1. Make sure the solution meets the target and established Goals
2. Go over your solutions without any double standards or being bias
3. Make sure the selected solutions have been detailed and very clear

Such as:

- I. More paid holidays
- II. Paid time off work, longer paid parental leave as well as being paid for overtime
- III. Financial reward programs such as bonuses and quarterly incentives
- IV. Employ more staff, so when the current staff take time off, it will not affect the company and for work being shared equally.
- V. Date and time for when all these new changes will take place.

4. Implement and Monitor the Progress

- Plan a pilot test for the chose solutions
- Gather survey from everyone that is involved
- Set up and monitor these new changes
- Based on the results Implement these long-term changes

For an example after or during the process, have another meeting and find out how everyone feels about the changes so far. This way you will know if it is working and if you need to come up with a better solution.

Before these changes go into places, the senior managements need to have meetings with the Shareholders about the changes to comes, whether they agree or they think there is a better way to solve these dilemmas.

(timedoctor.com, 2022) (ASQ,2022)

The ADKAR Model

The Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability and Reinforcement in short (ADKAR) is another model used to solve problems.

In this case we will be using Conflicts at work for as an example.

Conflict means: Strong disagreements that goes on between individuals or groups from different backgrounds, that usually escalates into angry arguments. (Merriam-Webster,2021)

Awareness (need for change)

- What is the nature for change?
- Why is change happening?
- What is the risk for not changing?

The Purpose for this change is to Manage conflict that is going on between two colleagues or more. Changes needs to happen because it is disruption the work environment. If change is not implemented, it can escalate and become much worse.

Desire (supports the change)

- Personal motives to support the change
- Or Organisations drives to support the changes

For the colleagues to learn to co-exist at work, as there might be a time where they must work together to meet a target or a company goal(s).

As well as to create a safe welcoming work atmosphere for everyone else.

Knowledge (how to change)

- Knowledge, skills and behaviour required during and after the change
- Understanding how to change

Acknowledging the problem and trying to sort it out right away. Try not to gossip to other colleagues about the problem you have with someone without speaking to the person first as that raise tension and make the problem much bigger than it needs to be.

Collaborating and finding a better solution for both parties to resolve their difference.

Ability (new skills)

- Demonstrate ability to implement the change
- Barriers that may inhibit implement the change

Control- keep your emotions in check, do not be too hasty in to respond, stop and think before responding, not doing so may cause the situation to escalate.

Communicate- learn to speak clearly and stick to the facts. Be respectful and honest, if you need to write things down do so.

Learn not to be defensive and let the other person finish speak first as it might make sense when they are finished speaking.

Self-awareness is important as sometimes; we are not able to see the fault in ourselves since we are too busy pointing fingers.

Reinforcement (sustain the changes)

- Mechanisms to keep the change in place
- Recognitions, rewards and incentives

The management need to communicate with people on the senior level and they will have to communicate with the shareholder about the changes that will take place and how the plan to implement them.

Creating a safe place at work for people to speak up when they have an issue. Since not everyone can go through changes at the same time, patient is required in order to see a true progress. Praises when good progress is in action. (WPX HOSTING, 2013)

SWOTS, (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats)

Another tool that can be used to solve problem whether it is personal or for business is SWOTS. We will be using this tool solve Untrained stuff problem that many businesses and people face.

“By not training your employees you can affect their productivity, safety, and the overall well-being of your organization. Weakened performance is one of the most obvious negative outcomes...” of lack in training (Rebecca Gendron, 2018)

Untrained staff in a Hair salon

Strength

Strength that is already instilled in the salon

- Great teamwork
- Healthy work environment
- Provides good services to the public
- Great staffs and managements
- Qualified staff members

Weakness

Problem that the salon is facing due to lack of training.

- services not being up to standard
- services not being completed on time
- Providing poor service to the clients

- Services having to be redone by another staff and that causes other clients to wait longer than they should for their treatment to be carried
- Causing work overloads for other staffs
- Overworking
- Can cause conflicts

Opportunities

Opportunities the salon will have once staff training has been completed.

- Training all staffs for the services to run smoothly
- Smoother work environment
- Gains more new clients
- Build up brand

Threats

Threats are the problems the salon is currently facing.

- Causing delays at work
- Stress to other staffs and clients
- Over worked staffs
- Jobs not being completed properly and up to the brands standard
- Unsatisfied clients
- Clients not returning and complaining
- Conflicts between staffs
- Staffs feeling underpaid for what they are doing

Now that the salon has used the SWOTS tool to find the problems that the “untrained staff” is causing. It gives them the opportunity to evaluate properly and decide to what actions they will take and how it will be done. They first need to communicate to upper managements about the problems that have been encountered. Also, the plans they must make for these changes. If the salon comes across any other problems, they can use the SWOTS tool again to find the solution to their problem.

Conclusion

In order to grow your business or to just take it up a level, it is very important to know which problem-solving tools to use, especially in our fast-paced world where your target audience is always changing. Or if you want to use it on yourself to develop your personal skills.

“Solving problems is at the core of running a business and these problem-solving tools will help you to take a structured and methodical approach. If you own a business, or if you are a manager within an organization, solving problems is one of your key duties. In fact, it may be the activity which takes up most of your time each day.” (free-management-ebooks.com)

I have enjoyed studying this model, learning about different type of problem-solving tools and techniques has changes my views and way when it comes to solving a problem. I have also enjoyed using the SWOTS problem tools on myself to find my good traits and things that I need to work on, and I will be using more of these tools in the future. I have also enjoyed using the SWOTS problem tools on myself to find my good traits and things that I need to work on, I will be using more of these tools in the future.

Reference

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