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EMPL4008 Problem Solving

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Introduction

Under Armour is footwear manufacturing company that has wide market access to the UK. The company has embraced technologies and innovation to develop new designs or add new line of footwear products for the athletes and young people. The new invention of the company is the digitally connected shoes that track the direction of the running or walking distances. The company also faces stiff competition from the rival businesses like Nike and Adidas. The learner has developed a report that demonstrates the problem solving skills in solving the simple and complex problems of Under Armour.

Part 1 – Skills for tackling the problems successfully in Under Armour

AC 1.1

Problem

A problem is a critical question that is yet to be solved. So, a problem must arise from a specific question. It is a situation that is considered as unfavourable or unwelcome and need

to overcome (Adair 2015). Generally, a problem starts with a question that involves different conditions for demonstrating or investigating a result, law or fact.

Stages of a problem

A problem arises in an organization from a query when the managers can't find an appropriate solution for the question. In this regard, the problem is solved with four stages-

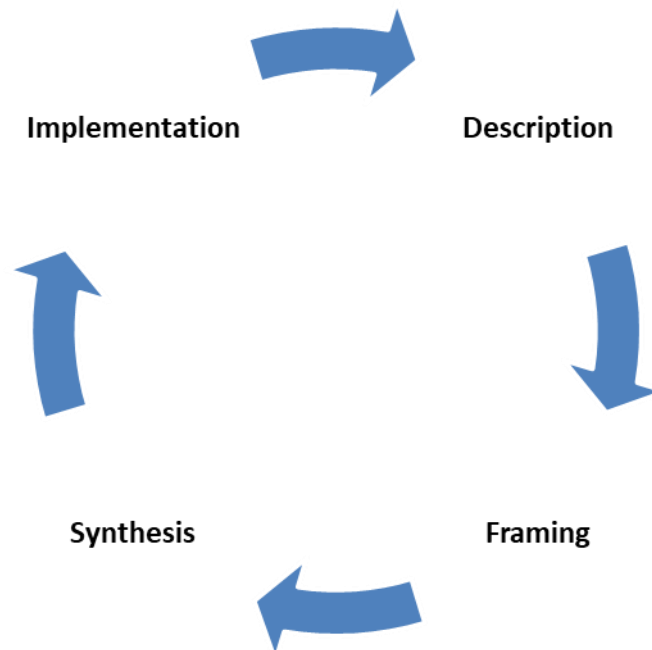


Figure: Stages of Problem

Description: In this stage, a question or set of questions are developed with classifications and nature. Here, the origin of the problem is identified.

Framing: In this stage, the managers identify the possible impacts of the problem on the organization.

Synthesis: In this stage, the managers conduct research and develop possible solutions for the problem (Adair 2015).

Implementation: Finally, the managers implement the optimal solution for the specified problem based on the evaluation of the alternatives.

Impact of the problem on psychology and human health

When a specific problem is identified and its impact on the business is identified, the managers become worried about solving the problem. Therefore, they go for review the origin of the problem and conduct scenario analysis to measure the impact at worst case

scenario (Butterfield 2013). It creates pressure on the manager when the problem has dire impact on the business. Thus, the problem may create psychological disorder if its solution is not found through critical reasoning and research. In an extreme case, the people engaged with solving the problem may lose some parts of their memories when the solutions are not properly identified.

Examples of Simple and Complex problems in Under Armour

Under Armour is innovative footwear manufacturing company. It also manufactures sportswear. Hence, the athletes and young people are the major target customers of the company. The simple and complex problems of the company are identified below:

Simple Problem: Under Armour is facing ‘Branding’ problem. Even if it has maintained high innovation, its revenue growth has slowed in 2017 due to its less competitive branding solutions than Nike (Martin 2017).

Complex Problem: Under Armour is facing Gen Z problem. The kids and young people born after 2000 now prefer Nike to Under Armour due. Here, these young customers complained that Under Armour don’t make affordable and stylish design for them (Green 2017). It is a serious problem because these kids will be the future customers of the company.

AC 1.2

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking refers to the technically disciplined system of skillfully and actively conceptualizing, framing, synthesizing and implementing the information generated through experience, reflection, observation, communication or reasoning (Butterfield 2013).

Key Steps of Critical Thinking

The key steps of critical thinking are diagrammatically shown below:

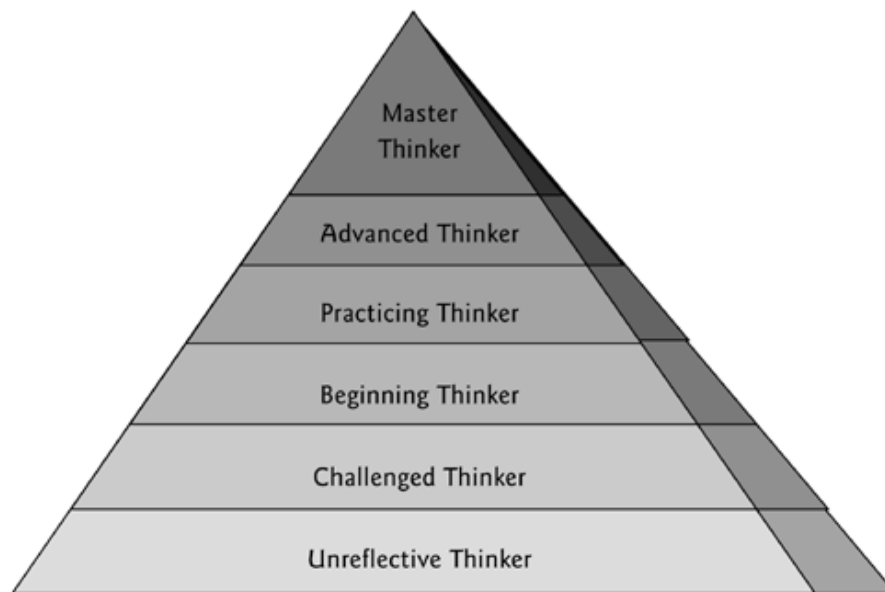


Figure: Stages of Critical Thinking

Source: (Butterfield 2013)

Unreflective Thinker:

The unreflective thinkers are highly unconscious of the necessity of thinking in solving problems (Kourdi 2011). They are also unaware of the impact of the problem on the organization. They take decisions based on misconceptions and prejudices.

Challenged Thinker:

The challenged thinkers understand the need for critical thinking to solve a problem. They realize that their thinking process may not be suitable for solving the problem. They have initial capacity to define and create solutions (Kourdi 2011).

Beginning Thinker:

The beginner thinkers take challenges to recognize basic problems. They try to study over relevant objectives to develop solutions.

Practicing Thinker:

The practicing thinkers try to think systematically to solve a problem even if they have capacity to think critically (Ingram 2015). They focus relevance, precision and accuracy to assess the solution.

Advanced Thinker:

The advanced thinkers want to solve new problems with their experience and insights. They engage actively and systematically to develop assumptions, implications, concepts and inferences.

Master Thinker:

The master thinkers have years of experience to solve any challenges. They think out of the box. They focus on innovation and practical solutions (Ingram 2015). They have multidisciplinary knowledge that enables them to relate different objectives with the problem issue.

Critical Thinking and Innovation for tackling the identified problems

As a beginning thinker, the learner needs to study over reasons and potential impacts of the problems identified for Under Armour. The Generation Z people think Nike provides more suitable shoes to them than Under Armour (Rindfleisch and O'Hern 2017). Here, the critical thinking will help the learner to understand the traits, choices, behavior, lifestyles and fashion sense of the young people. Then, the learner will be able to identify solutions for the company. The innovative thinking will enable the learner to identify brand solutions for Under Armour also (Korhonen 2017). It will also enable the learner to take assumption of customer choices, develop innovative brand ideas and create sustainable brand solutions for Under Armour.

Part2- Understanding organizational analysis & communication skills

AC 2.1

Key influencing factors to Under Armour

As a multinational company, the business of Under Armour is affected by several macro-environmental factors. A brief explanation of these factors is given below:

Political Factors

The foreign direct investment policies of different countries create restrictions on establishing or owning retail stores to save the local companies. It may create the threat of internationalization. Besides, the currency exposure risk also arises when a government undertakes stricter or easier fiscal or monetary policy (Rindfleisch and O'Hern 2017). Besides, the competitive tax implications also create uncertainty internationally.

Economic Factors

As the shoe industry is crawling up in terms of sales, Under Armour has also maintained high sales growth in the developed and developing countries (Korhonen 2017). Besides, the high interest rate and inflation rate in the developing countries lead to higher prices in these regions than its actual price setting.

Social Factors

In the footwear sector, the quality is usually more important than the price issue. In the recent times, the company is facing a complex price issue while persuading young people to purchase the shoes (Korhonen 2017). The health consciousness among the young people also creates high demand for its shoes.

Technological Factors

The wide acceptance of the e-commerce businesses and social media has helped Under Armour in expanding its market in the developing countries (Little 2017). The emerging technological progress is also helping the company to reduce its manufacturing costs.

AC 2.2

Report to Line Manager

To

Line Manager,

Under Armour UK

Sub: Impact of macro-environmental factors on Under Armour

Sir,

Under Armour has maintained its sustainable sales growth for the long term due to its high brand identity worldwide. As the company has operations in different countries, it faces restrictions on investing in opening up new stores. It may hamper the current sales growth to be continued. Besides, the government intervention on the fiscal policy also creates exchange rate risk for the company. As the company has maintained high brand equity, it has expanded its sales in the developing countries. In another case, the high interest and inflation rate may also increase the price level of the footwear products. In different societies, the quality-concern movement has attracted the young people to the footwear products of Under Armour. Because of high presence of young customers in social media and ecommerce shopping, Under Armour may expand its presence in the developing countries.

With regards,

Management division,

Under Armour

Part 3- Working with others and understanding employee behaviour

AC 3.1

Employee Behaviour

Employee behaviour is the standard organizational practice of speaking and working in the organization. The employee behavior can also be referred to as a set of norms and etiquette that need to be maintained by the employees in the workplace (Kourdi 2011).

Types of Employee Behaviour

There are mainly two types of organizational behaviours such as- Task Performers and Organizational Citizenship. **Task Performers** are highly concerned of the key activities in the organization (Kourdi 2011). They work hard to achieve the targeted goals. The responsibilities of these workers are in compliance with the goals and objectives of the organization. **Organizational Citizenship** behavior is focused on achieving additional benefits for the clients for maintaining sustainable and long-term relationship (Best and Krieger 2010). Hence, the employee needs to develop new ideas to generate sustainable solutions for the clients.

Key influencing techniques of managing the employee behavior

The employee behavior is managed by the strategic leaders who can establish strong base of trust and respect among each other. In Under Armour, the managers play the strategic leadership role. They adopt the following techniques to management the employee behavior-

Discipline: Discipline is maintained to avoid unwanted behavior. Here, the managers develop schedules of daily work for the employees. The managers also train the employees with skills and etiquette to deliver effective customer service (Ikeda et al 2016). For encouragement, the managers also reward the disciplined employees.

Positive reinforcement: After scheduling disciplined works among the employees, the managers in Under Armour mostly regard to disciplinary reward system of the company (Ikeda et al 2016). With this technique, the managers accomplish a special task by reward the employees for extra efforts.

Extinction: The managers of Under Armour also eliminate policies that deter employees to work efficiently and communicate properly. In the face of new changes, the employees also need to create new habits to work for the progress of the company.

Part 4 – Data analysis skills and information communication technology

AC 4.1

Benefits of Technology in the workplace

In the modern business environment, technology has become part and parcel of everyday work. Almost every organization purchases computer for achieving the daily works. The computerized working system has also increased efficiency of the task performers (Best and Krieger 2010). They can maintain a balance of daily works. The managers and employees can easily maintain an updated database that stores a massive number of data and files that are needed to solve critical problems. For any marketing company, the managers can develop designs, logo and pattern or implement innovative ideas through computer and internet connection (Ingram 2015). In the financial organization, the managers develop financial statements and analyse the fundamental and technical information for supporting the clients through the computer and digital software. The managers in the manufacturing companies develop work schedules and estimate budget through the use of technological devices.

Advantages and disadvantages of Information Technology in Under Armour

Through digital technology, Under Armour has developed digitally-connected shoes that track, store and analyse the running metric of the people (Lewis et al 2017). The shoes are directly connected with the apps of Under Armour that shows the direction to the walkers or runners. Besides, the information technology also helps the company to develop innovative UA SpeedForm construction to eliminate distraction (Berman et al 2016). Besides products, the company also accomplishes the daily activities through information technology.

The company also faces challenges with the advent of new technologies. Some companies are also stealing the innovative concept of the company's products. Besides, the widespread digital network also activated the hackers to hack the core product system (Berman et al 2016). Some competitive businesses like Nike and Adidas can easily reach into the product ideas of the company.

Conclusion

A problem arises from an unsolved question. To solve a problem, critical thinking process plays the significant role. The learner needs to apply the critical thinking or critical reasoning skills to solve the Generation Z and branding problem of Under Armour. In the global operations, the company faces inflation risk, interest risk and exchange risk. Besides, the growth of the footwear industry also helps expanding the market of Under Armour in the developing countries. In the organization, task performer completes all necessary jobs and organizational citizenship behavior implies new ideas for creating value to the clients. Through the use of technology, Under Armour has developed digitally connected shoes that keep track of the user's direction.

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