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Applied Leadership and Management in the Workplace

Module Assignment Submission

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|----------------|--------------------------------------------|
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Chat GBT was used to help with mind mapping and structure.

## 1. Introduction.

This report's objective is to use structured problem-solving and decision-making strategies to address a real and complicated workplace issue. Situations where there is a gap between the desired and actual states and where it is not immediately apparent how to close that gap are referred to as problems in organisational contexts. The cognitive and analytical procedures that are used to assess potential courses of action and choose a preferred solution are referred to as decision-making.

The selected problem centres on the difficulty of handling high client demand during midday rush hour in a crowded café, where the number of customers surpasses the staff's ability to serve them effectively. This problem was chosen because it has a considerable influence on customer happiness, staff workload, service quality, and overall operational performance. Early indicators show how complicated this issue is since it involves many different stakeholders, such as employees, management, and consumers, each of whom has different

goals and expectations. There are also many viable solutions, each with different operational and financial ramifications.

This paper employs the Kaizen concept of continuous improvement, as outlined by *Imai (1986)*, to methodically approach the problem. This philosophy focuses on tiny, gradual adjustments that add up to significant long-term advantages. Finding the underlying reasons for the lunchtime rush bottlenecks, coming up with and assessing potential solutions, speaking with pertinent parties, and choosing and putting into practice the best course of action is all part of the systematic approach.

By using this evidence-based, iterative approach, the report hopes to create long-lasting enhancements that increase the café's productivity, staff happiness, and patron experience over time, in addition to easing the immediate strains of peak service hours.

## **2. Define the Complex Problem, Scope & Impact**

### ***2.1 problem description***

The identified issue is the café's incapacity to handle large increases in customer demand during lunchtime peak hours, which leads to long wait times, agitated staff, and lower customer satisfaction. *Dörner and Funke (2017)* describe a complicated situation as one that has many stakeholders, dynamics, interconnections, and intransparency. In contrast, a complex problem is one that is linear and solved using set techniques, even though it may be challenging. The interaction of operating procedures, staffing levels, consumer behaviours, environmental factors, and resource constraints—all of which have an impact on one another and evolve over time—makes the midday rush issue a complex challenge.

The issue can be classified as mostly operational because it has a direct impact on workflow and everyday service delivery. Nevertheless, it also touches on administrative issues like resource allocation and rota planning, as well as strategic issues like customer retention and brand value. Because of its cross-functional character, it necessitates both analytical and creative problem-solving abilities, underscoring the necessity for systematic ways like continuous improvement thinking (*Imai, 1986*).

### ***2.2 Scope***

Customers, shift supervisors, senior management, and café employees (front-of-house and kitchen) are among the many stakeholders that are involved in the situation. Scope is defined as the extent of influence and the individuals impacted. Customer experiences, internet evaluations, and the organisation's overall reputation are all impacted in addition to the café's day-to-day operations.

Although the issue is geographically limited to a single physical branch, it might potentially affect other outlets as well if similar inefficiencies exist. It may also have an impact on

marketing (via bad press), finance (through lost sales), and human resources (e.g., employee attrition) if left unresolved.

### ***2.3 Impact***

At the organisational level, the issue jeopardises corporate goals, including client loyalty, profitability, and efficiency. During peak hours, teams are under more strain, which can result in communication failures, exhaustion, and low morale. Employees are under a lot of stress on an individual basis, and consumers are unhappy because of delays and uneven service.

### ***2.4 Constraints***

Tight schedules, a tiny kitchen and counter area, time constraints during service windows, and limited staffing budgets are some of the limitations. Flexibility is further restricted by regulatory factors like food safety and personnel break schedules. Because of these limitations, any suggested solution must strike a balance between creativity, analysis, and viability.

## **3. Analyse the Problem – Data Gathering & Root Cause Analysis**

### ***3.1 Data collection***

Performance metrics, stakeholder feedback, and observations were used to collect data for the lunchtime rush problem analysis. According to observational data, lines frequently stretched past the café entrance between 12:00 and 14:00, with wait times typically lasting more than ten minutes. This not only led to unhappy customers, but it also put more strain on employees. Performance information, including daily sales logs and point-of-sale system transaction timings, verified that while staff productivity and order accuracy decreased, revenue surged considerably around lunch. Employee and customer input was also gathered from stakeholders. Employees expressed feeling "overwhelmed" and "stretched thin," while online reviews from customers often cited delayed service. By triangulating these data sources, the conclusions' validity was increased (*Saunders et al., 2019*).

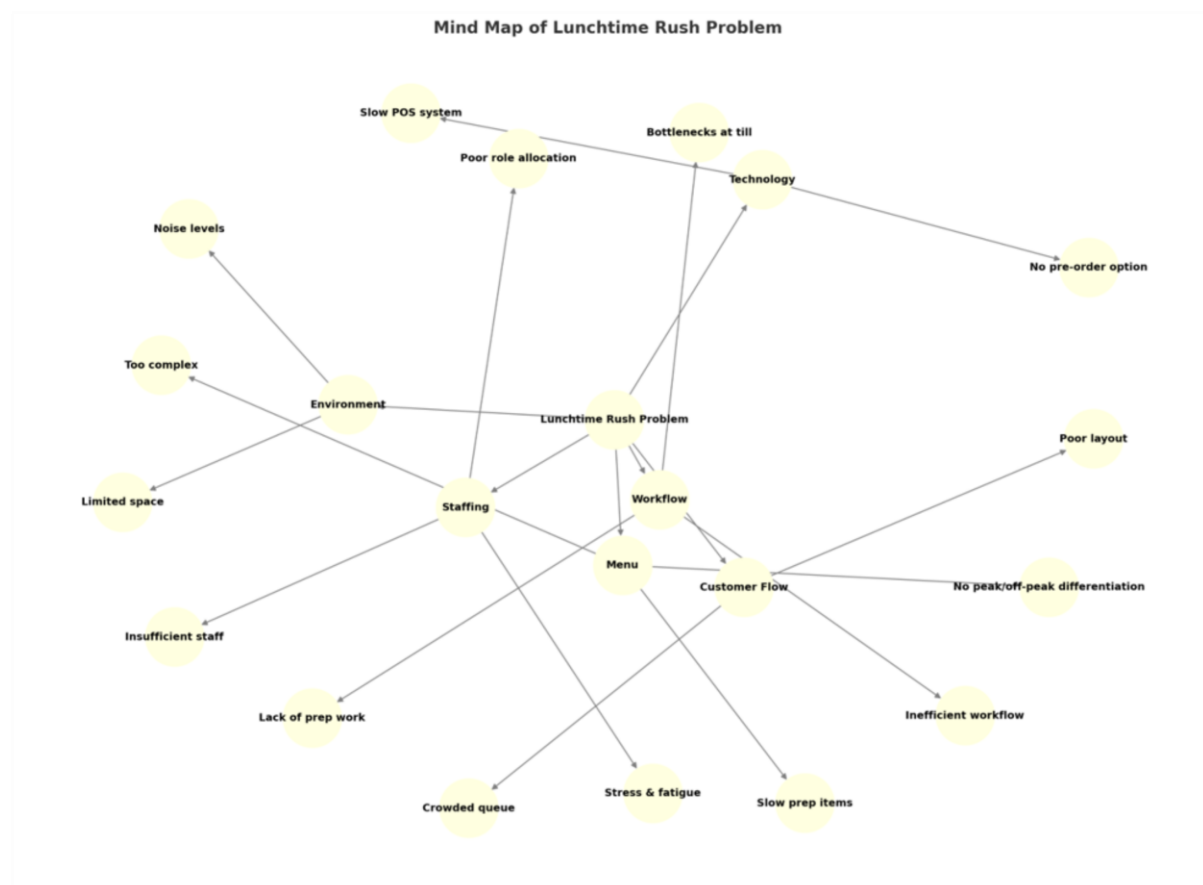
### ***3.2 brainstorming and mind mapping***

To come up with possible causes and remedies, brainstorming was used once the preliminary data was gathered. Brainstorming is a technique that promotes idea development without prompt critique in order to promote creativity, according to *Osborn (1963)*. According to *Proctor (2005)*, brainstorming effectively necessitates prioritising quantity above quality, deferring judgement, and expanding on the ideas of others. The café employees were invited

to freely contribute suggestions regarding operational constraints during a team-based brainstorming session.

A mind map was created to organise the results, classifying concepts into areas including customer flow, technology, staffing, workflow, and menu design. This graphic made it easier to see how various elements relate to one another. For example, it showed how menu complexity directly affected preparation times, which in turn led to an increase in staff effort. In line with *Dörner and Funke's (2017)* contention that complex situations are typified by dynamic interdependencies, the mind map offered a comprehensive perspective of the problem's complexity by charting these relationships.

[fishbones diagram.vsd](#)



### 3.3 Root cause analysis

Root cause analysis tools were used to better hone the comprehension of underlying causes. The Toyota Production System is the source of the 5 Whys technique, which was used to identify the root reasons for the problem of lengthy customer lines. For instance:

1. Why do customers have to wait so long? Order preparation takes too long.
2. What causes orders to take so long? Many of the dishes on the menu take a long time to prepare.
3. Why are complicated things added during busy periods? There's no distinction between off-peak and peak meals.
4. Why hasn't this been changed? insufficient strategic planning for managing demand.
5. Why has planning been neglected? An operational culture that is reactive rather than proactive.

In parallel, the root causes were categorised using the Ishikawa (fishbone) diagram under sections such as organised investigation of several factors influencing the midday rush (*Ishikawa, 1990*).

### ***3.4 Findings***

Using a variety of methods, multiple underlying reasons were identified. During periods of high demand, a menu that was too complicated was exacerbated by staff shortages and inadequate task allocation. Inadequate process design and a deficiency of prepared goods made delays even worse. The emphasis on crisis-solving rather than proactive planning was recognised as a systemic problem. These underlying issues had a direct effect on organisational goals since long lines harmed customer happiness, decreased the likelihood of employee attrition, and put stress on staff health.

## **4. Generate a Range of Alternative Solutions.**

Creative and methodical idea generation strategies are needed to develop viable solutions to the lunchtime rush challenge. The third session stressed that creative solutions frequently come from brainstorming and reverse thinking, where even "wild ideas" can inspire workable plans (*Proctor, 2005*). Workforce shortages, ineffective workflow, and customer flow bottlenecks are addressed by the suggested remedies, which tackle the underlying issues mentioned in Section 3.

### ***4.1 Solution 1 – Adjusted Staff Scheduling***

Using data-driven staff scheduling that corresponds with peak demand is one way to solve the problem. More employees can be assigned to peak hours while keeping staffing levels low during slower times by studying consumer traffic patterns. This resolves the imbalance between demand and staffing, which was the primary problem found in the 5 Whys investigation. Resources required include scheduling software or simple data analysis tools, alongside managerial time for rota adjustments. Risks include possible increases in personnel costs and employee opposition to more flexible shifts. But according to Kaizen thinking, efficiency can be increased with minor, incremental schedule changes that do not strain available resources (*Imai, 1986*).

### ***4.2 Solution 2 – Menu Streamlining***

Reducing the menu during busy periods is a second choice. Bottlenecks can be avoided by cutting out complicated or time-consuming goods during the rush, which will speed up preparation and service times. Stakeholder management is necessary for this solution, especially when it comes to striking a balance between operational effectiveness and consumer expectations. Potential client discontent or a diminished sense of diversity are risks. However, matching the menu to operational capacity guarantees a prompt and consistent client experience, which is directly related to the company's goals of customer retention and happiness.

### **4.3 Solution 3 – Technology Integration**

Technology integration, like better point-of-sale (POS) systems or pre-order apps, might greatly cut down on wait times and enhance efficiency. Orders might be placed by customers ahead of time, which would more evenly divide the preparation effort. The expense of staff training and app development or POS upgrades are examples of resource consequences. Customer adoption rates and technology dependability are risks. However, as suggested by continuous improvement models, preliminary small-scale trials could assess viability prior to broader adoption (*Imai, 1986*).

### **4.4 Hybrid Option**

A hybrid approach may offer the most effective solution. Combining smarter staff scheduling, a simplified peak-time menu, and gradual integration of technology could address both short-term and long-term challenges. This approach balances operational practicality with innovation, acknowledging that complex workplace problems often require layered solutions involving multiple stakeholders (*Dörner & Funke, 2017*).

## **5. Evaluate Solutions Using Decision-Making Techniques.**

When several solutions are developed, a methodical assessment is required to make sure the selected one addresses the identified root causes and is in line with organisational priorities. Frameworks for decision-making offer an organised way to weigh options and prevent prejudice. In order to determine the best answer for the lunchtime rush problem, this part uses grid analysis, cost-benefit analysis, and the Kepner-Tregoe technique.

### **5.1 Grid Analysis**

By comparing options to predetermined standards, grid analysis facilitates organised decision-making (*Goodwin & Wright, 2014*). The following criteria—cost-effectiveness,

effect on service speed, personnel viability, customer satisfaction, and scalability—were developed from organisational priorities. Since customer happiness and service speed are related to business survival in a competitive café environment, they were given the highest ratings among all the criteria, which were weighted to indicate relevance (Session 2 principles).

## **5.2 Cost–Benefit Analysis**

By measuring the financial and non-financial effects, a cost-benefit analysis (CBA) enhances grid analysis (*Boardman et al., 2018*).

First Solution (Modified Scheduling):

Costs: About £1,500 a year, mostly in the form of managerial time and overtime.

Benefits include fewer staff burnouts and quicker service times. Sales are expected to rise by £3,000 a year.

BCR (benefit-cost ratio): 2.0.

Solution 2 (Streamlining the Menu):

Costs: Minimal, mostly consisting of staff training and menu reprinting (~£500 per year).

Benefits include increased consistency, fewer bottlenecks, and quicker preparation. risk of lower sales because of fewer options. The anticipated net benefit is £2,000.

BCR: 4.0 (significant overall impact but high efficiency).

Solution 3: Integration of Technology

Costs: Expensive, including app development and POS upgrades (~£10,000 upfront, £2,000 yearly).

Benefits include possible yearly revenue growth of £7,000, long-term efficiency, and customer convenience.

Benefits do not yet exceed costs, as indicated by the BCR of 0.7.

Alternative 4 (Hybrid):

Moderate costs (about £6,000 up front, £2,500 a year for training, scheduling tools, and some tech integration).

Benefits include the combined effects of improved employee alignment, quicker service, and steady tech-driven expansion. Sales are expected to rise by £9,000 annually.

With the highest net annual benefit (£6,500), BCR is 1.8.

This analysis shows that the hybrid approach offers the most long-term return and company resilience, even though Solution 2 has the most effective benefit-to-cost ratio.

## **5.3 Final Decision**

To balance choice criteria, risks, and organisational goals, the Kepner–Tregoe rational decision-making model is used in the final decision (*Kepner & Tregoe, 2013*). The research indicates that the hybrid approach provides the most sustainable solution, even when the least expensive choice is not necessarily the best. It tackles several underlying problems head-on:

staff alignment is enhanced by scheduling, complexity is decreased by menu simplification, and scalability is supported by incremental technology integration.

Crucially, this choice allows for ongoing progress by striking a balance between creativity and viability (*Imai, 1986*). The long-term advantages in terms of customer happiness, employee well-being, and financial performance exceed the dangers, even though it requires more resources than alternative single solutions. Given the complexity of the issue and the involvement of numerous stakeholders, the incorporation of both strategic and gradual modifications guarantees flexibility in a dynamic café setting (*Dörner & Funke, 2017*).

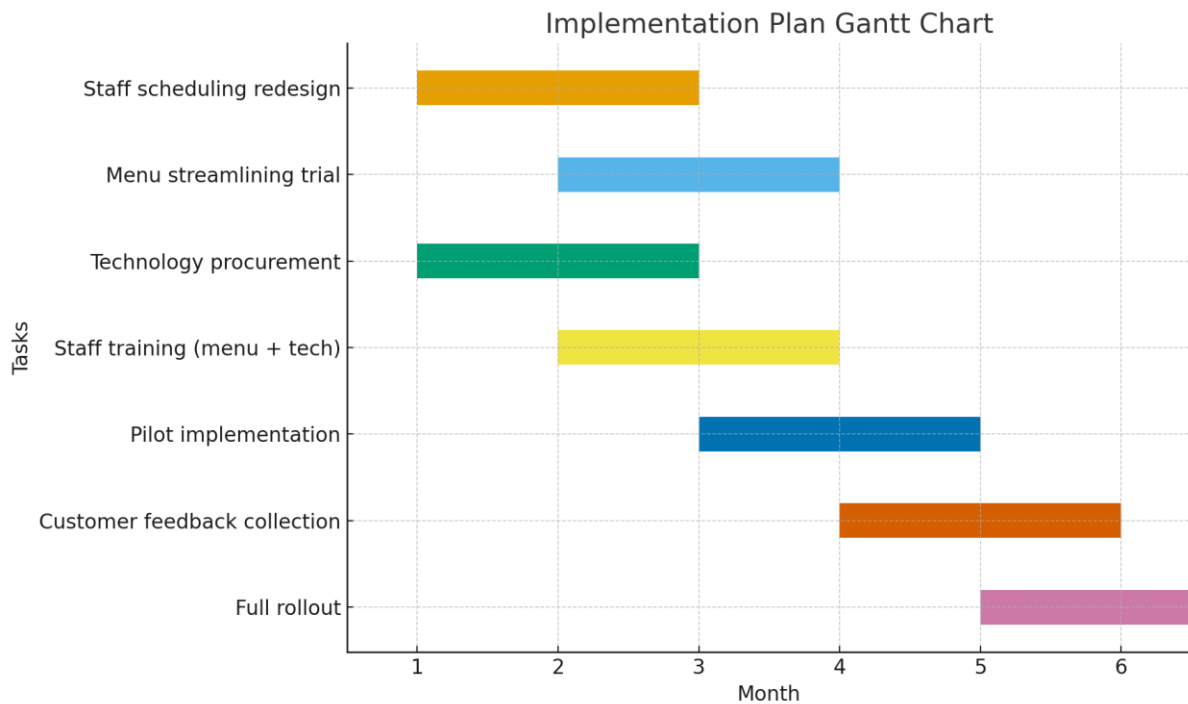
To balance strategic growth goals with operational efficiency, the hybrid approach is advised as the ultimate choice.

## **6. Implementation Plan.**

Putting the chosen solution into action requires a well-organised implementation strategy. To guarantee efficient monitoring and delivery, project management best practices emphasise the significance of work sequencing, establishing quantifiable goals, and controlling risks (*PMI, 2021*).

### ***6.1 Gantt Chart***

The six-month schedule for implementing the solution is shown in the Gantt Chart (Figure 1). Staff scheduling redesign (Months 1-2), menu streamlining trial (Months 2-3), technology acquisition (Months 1-2) for point-of-sale (POS) and ordering tools, and staff training (Months 2-3) addressing both menu adjustments and technology are important milestones. The plan calls for a pilot phase in months 3–4, a structured consumer feedback gathering period in months 4–5, and a full-scale implementation in months 5–6. Training and trial activities are finished prior to the pilot and final rollout, ensuring dependencies are respected.



## 6.2 SMART Objectives

SMART goals will direct the execution to guarantee alignment with organisational goals:

**Specific:** Optimise workforce allocation during peak hours by redesigning personnel schedules.

**Measurable:** Within three months of launch, reduce average customer wait times by 20%.

**Achievable:** Use internal knowledge and outside technology sources to deliver training to all café employees in a four-week period.

**Relevant:** Directly addresses the underlying reasons for inefficiency that were found through root cause analysis (*Toyota, 2004*).

**Time-bound:** Within six months, finish implementation and see quantifiable gains.

These goals guarantee conformity with the concepts of continuous improvement and offer precise standards for performance evaluation (*Imai, 1986*).

## 6.3 Risk Management

It is important to foresee the inherent risks associated with implementation. Principal hazards consist of:

Employee resistance to change can be reduced by giving them sufficient training and incorporating them in timetable design.

Phased rollouts and specialised technical support are used to address technology acceptance concerns.

Budget overruns: Managed via vendor agreements and an upfront cost-benefit analysis.

Customer discontent during the transition is reduced by getting input to improve procedures prior to full implementation and by clearly communicating the trial phases.

Through the application of risk management procedures, the café can limit interruptions and preserve service quality. Alignment with corporate goals, such as client satisfaction, operational effectiveness, and financial sustainability are ensured by this proactive strategy.

The implementation plan offers a methodical, practical, and risk-aware approach to solving the lunchtime rush issue. The café can guarantee that the solution is successfully implemented and tracked by integrating a precise time limit, SMART goals, and risk mitigation techniques. This kind of strategy shows how organised project management methods facilitate the long-term implementation of operational enhancements.

## **7. Communication Plan & Stakeholder Engagement.**

To make sure that the suggested solution is adopted and maintained, effective communication and stakeholder participation are crucial. According to research, one of the main reasons for resistance to organisational change is inadequate communication, whereas customised approaches increase stakeholder buy-in (*Kotter, 1996*).

### ***7.1 Stakeholder Identification***

The Influence–Interest Matrix can be used to map stakeholders (*Mendelow, 1991; Mitchell et al., 1997*). In this instance:

High interest, high influence: frontline employees and café owners/managers, who have a direct influence on operations.

Suppliers and landlords, who may have an indirect impact on resources and space, have high influence but low interest.

Low influence, strong interest: customers have little formal decision-making power, yet their satisfaction is vital.

Low interest, low influence: External observers who have minor impact, such as casual tourists.

This categorisation guarantees that the people who have the most potential to help or hurt the project receive priority communication.

### ***7.2 Communication Strategy***

"Who, what, when, and how" is the guiding premise of the communication plan (Session 8). Employees will get weekly updates on scheduling and training progress via team meetings and online platforms. The owner of the café will get monthly statistics detailing sales and wait times, among other performance measures. Over the course of the experiment, customers will be informed via feedback forms and signage. Only in cases where deliveries are directly impacted by scheduling or menu streamlining will suppliers be informed.

### ***7.3 Tailored Messages***

Messages need to be tailored to the several types of stakeholders. For instance, clients need assurances about increased speed and service quality, while employees need specifics about training, shifts, and support. Suppliers will only be contacted when there are specific operating needs. Resistance is less likely, and commitment to the programme is increased. When communication is tailored to each group's concerns and degree of influence (*Imai, 1986*).

Throughout the implementation process, stakeholders are kept informed, involved, and supported via an efficient communication plan. The café can increase transparency, lower resistance, and increase the chances of a successful project completion by mapping influence and interest, sequencing communication, and customising messaging.

## **8. Monitoring & Review.**

### ***8.1 Monitoring tools***

Progress must be tracked to make sure the implementation plan stays on track and in line with goals. Visual proof of progress can be obtained by tracking customer satisfaction and service times using tools like trend and run charts (*Oakland, 2014*). For tracking job completion, dependencies, and milestones, the Gantt chart created during the planning phase is still essential. Action plans also provide explicit assignment of specific tasks, which enables managers to track accountability.

### ***8.2 Review Process***

At weekly and monthly intervals, the review process compares actual progress with predetermined goals. For instance, SMART goals can be used to evaluate wait time reductions and training completion rates. The owner of the café and the employees will be informed of the results, fostering openness and participation (*Kotter, 1996*). This review cycle guarantees that methods can be modified in real time and promotes adaptive learning.

### ***8.3 Contingency Plans***

In the event of slippage, such as staff training or technology integration delays, contingency measures will be used. To relieve pressure, these include rearranging staffing, reprioritising duties, or temporarily changing the menu options. When a Kaizen mindset of continuous improvement is adopted, little setbacks are not viewed as project dangers but rather as chances for development (*Imai, 1986*).

Structured evaluations, ongoing monitoring, and backup plans all aid in preventing project failure and maintaining gains. The café will experience long-term operating gains because of this methodical approach, which also instils resilience.

## **9. Conclusion.**

This paper looked at the challenging operational issue of handling a busy café's high lunchtime client demand. The root reasons were examined and potential solutions assessed using structured problem-solving and decision-making processes. The suggested course of action, which combines process enhancements with staff rescheduling, resolves capacity concerns while guaranteeing long-term viability. Benefits such as shorter wait times, better employee health, and higher customer satisfaction are anticipated. All things considered, the procedure showed how important methodical analysis, innovative ideation, and evidence-based decision-making are for addressing workplace issues and coordinating enhancements with organisational goals (Imai, 1986; Kotter, 1996).

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