

# **Problem Solving and Decision Making**

## **BMSW4004**

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## **Introduction**

This report investigates a communication problem from the workplace. An example of poor communication can occur between front of the house operations and back of the house operations. In the process of decision making it is realised a complex analysis using tools of analysis such as Fishbone Digram, PESTLE, SWOT. Based on that there are generated solutions and it is decided on one solution. It is described the process of implementation and monitoring using theoretical models. The most common problems in the workplace relate to communication, low motivation, low performance, discrimination, lack of training, lack of equipment and technology etc.

## **Defining the problem**

The problem to be analysed in this report refers to communication issues at the workplace. This problem is related to the poor communication between front of the house operations and back of the house operations in restaurants. Communication can be verbal, with the use of languages and words in written form or oral and non-verbal which is the body languages (Agarvaal, 2009). Waiters needs to have good knowledge on the menu and to keep informed the kitchen staff on customers preferences and give clear explanations on what adjustments are required. Waiters are taking the food orders from customers and are giving the notes to the kitchen staff to prepare them. When communication is poor, disruptions in activity can occur and the restaurant can appear to be unorganised (Web Restaurant Store, 2019). That is why the entire staff in a restaurant needs to work together and have a good flow of communication. In busy kitchens there is a designated person who ensures the flow of communication between front of the house operations and back of the house. If there are any issues this person who is usually the shift manager is there to solve them (Blog Clover, 2021).

## **The decision making process**

### *Definition*

The Decision making process is the sum of activities that precedes the solving of a problem. It involves data analysis and an evaluation of the alternative solutions. It can be realised rationally that imposes a fixed order of stages: problem definition, data collection, data evaluation, solution generation, solution implementation. It can be realised creatively based on imaginative and creative approach (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021).

### *Impact on Stakeholders*

The impact of the communication problem in front of the house operations and back of the house operations in a restaurant can have a diverse impact on diverse stakeholders. The stakeholders in restaurant are: customers, employees, owners, suppliers, communities, local authorities. The presented problem can decrease satisfaction for customers, can create tension between staff, can reduce activity for suppliers if customers number is lower. The legislation on restaurants activity dates back from 1947 The Civic Restaurants empowers local authority to enable the restaurant activity (Legislation Gov., 2021).

### *Problem analysis*

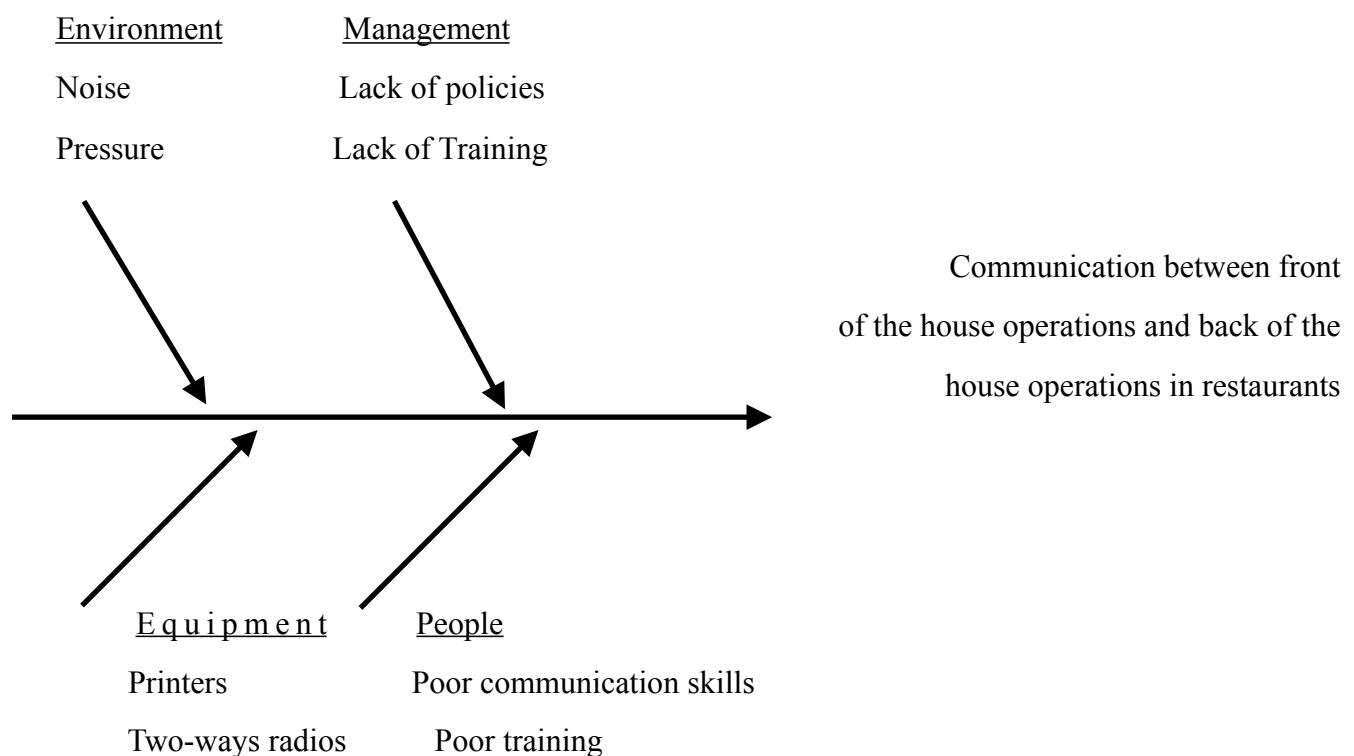


Figure 1 Fishbone diagram

Figure 1 Fishbone diagram presents the cause and effect of the problem. The selected problem is the poor communication between front of the house operations and back of the house operations in restaurants. It has been identified that part of the causes of the problem come from the Environment, Management, Equipment and People. The sub-sub-causes under environment are: noise and pressure. Kitchens are known to be pressure by time and to be noisy working environments. This can lead to communication problems. The sub-causes under management are lack of precise

policies how the process of communication should look like between kitchen and restaurant floor, what are the expectations, what are the procedures. Lack of training can be another cause for the problem as the managers do not know how to handle risen problems growing into a chain of problems and affecting the business activity. The sub-causes under equipment are printers that are used to send the orders to the kitchen that could get jammed and the two-ways radios which can get broken or encounter noise on the channel. The sub-causes from people can be poor communication skills, written or verbal, or poor training they do not know how to use POS machines to send the orders sending incomplete orders or do not provide further explanations on accommodating the dish (Mendocilla et al, 2021).

#### PESTLE analysis

Political factors: Tax reforms can affect the restaurants, health regulations.

Economic factors: Inflation can lead to rise in prices, Pandemic which imposed lockdown and closing of restaurants and affected the consumers disposable income.

Social factors: People had developed a habit to eat out as part of their lifestyle. Other trends that had registered growth is the healthy eating, preferring organic food and also sustainable sourced food.

Technological factors: The development of technology has created opportunities to the restaurants to increase speed, efficiency and quality of the service.

Legal factors: Local authorities can impact the restaurant business, having to follow certain regulations for their activity.

Environmental factors: Restaurants had started to recycle more, to reduce plastic usage, to make their business more sustainable, energy efficient, reduce water wastage (Lin et al, 2020).

#### SWOT analysis

| <u>Strengths</u>     | <u>Weaknesses</u>     |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Menu quality         | Limited funds         |
| Customer service     | No choices for vegans |
| Welcoming ambient    | Lack of technology    |
| <u>Opportunities</u> | <u>Threats</u>        |
| Updating technology  | Competition           |
| Business expansion   | Economic regression   |
| Expanding menu       | Pandemic              |

The strengths of a restaurant relies in the uniqueness of the menu and qualitative dishes. Customer service provided by the front of the house staff is vital for making an enjoyable experience for the customers. Towards this also contributes a welcoming ambient, clean and attractive design (Singh, Band, 2021). The weaknesses related to limited funds. Some menus do not incorporate vegetarian or vegan choices and that can be a weaknesses as the consumer behaviour and preferences has changed in the latest period. Lack of technology or not updated technology can reduce the efficiency and increase preparation time, or other activities. Opportunities consist of updating technology and address the customers expectations related to technology, such as POS. Business expansion to open new restaurants in different location or to enlarge the current restaurant. Expanding menu to other targeted customers such as vegan, vegetarians, health conscious, weight conscious. Threats relate to competition, economic regression and pandemic (Barnes Report, 2020).

### **Generation of alternative solutions**

The analysis revealed that there are several variables that could be addressed in order to improve the communication between front of the house operations and back of the house operations. One of the solutions would be investing in new technology to increase efficiency for front of the house operations, such as modern POS, modern printers that could give clear description of customers preference over the dish preparation. This information would be sent it to the kitchen printer and this way not paper notes would be lost, no confusion on what customer wants to eat. Another solution would be to train the staff on the communication process and that would help all activities in the restaurant including customer service and noise reduction.

### **Evaluation of the solutions**

The analysis identified that technology is a cause of the problem in the Fishbone diagram, it is an important factor in the PESTLE analysis and it is a weaknesses in the SWOT analysis. That is why it is considered that it is imposed a modernisation of the technology in the restaurant. This would benefit the restaurant in many ways. In the kitchen modern technology for food preparation would reduce the noise, would reduce the time pressure and tension that can have impact on communication. In the restaurant floor would reduce the time to take orders and send it to the kitchen. Using tablets at the table instead of paper notebooks, with the customers would ensure no information is forgotten or wrongly written that could create confusion over the message. This solution will make the business activities more efficient and potentially more sustainable, because modern technology usually has features to reduce energy usage etc.

## Implementation of the solution

The solution was selected based on the analysis of the problem. The solution will benefit the restaurant in order to solve the problem of poor communication between front of the house operations and back of the house operations (Kovtunen et al, 2020). The management is responsible with the implementation of the solution. The management will research what types of technology is more useful for the business activity, will look at costs and will make the purchases. After that staff will be made aware of the new technology, how to use it and by whom.

In order to implement the solution it will be used the Burke and Litwin change Model presented in Figure 3 bellow.

Figure 3 Burke and Litwin Change Model



The change model suggested by Burke and Litwin (1992) presents the areas that are impacted by the change and the hierarchy of the elements with the most important factors at the top and the less important at lower levels. The theory is quite complex debating factors such as structure, tasks, work unit climate, abilities, motivation and values (World of Work, 2019). This report uses the main framework from the theory illustrated in Figure 3. A change in one factor leads to a change in other

dimensions. In order to implement the proposed change in the restaurant to modernise the technology will be impacted several main areas. The external environment includes regulations, legislation, economy, markets. During pandemic and lockdowns the interaction between back of the house and front of the house has been changed with reduce contact and social distancing put in place. There were periods of time when restaurants were completely closed and the restaurant service has moved to home delivery and food collection (Yang et al, 2020). The technology will help towards reducing contact and social distancing. The strategy and goals depend on effective modification across the business. The restaurant goals and strategy related to qualitative services and distinguished dishes. The leadership in restaurants is realised by owners or by an appointed manager. It has a major role in ensuring the fluidity of communication. It is responsible with the purchases of the new technology and establishing how technology is used and by whom and highlighting the role of technology to ensure effective communication between kitchen staff and floor staff. The organisational culture would contribute to the implementation of the change, to be performance oriented and work in teams.

Figure 2 Stakeholder map analysis

| High         | Keep satisfied                       | Actively engaged       |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Influence    | Business owners<br>Local authorities | Suppliers<br>Employees |
| Of           | Monitor                              | Keep informed          |
| Stakeholders | Customers                            | Media                  |
| Low          | Interest Of Stakeholders             | High                   |

In figure 2 there are presented the levels of influence/power and levels of interest of stakeholders within a restaurant. It shows that business owners and local authorities have to be satisfied at all times, employees and suppliers to have them actively engaged, whilst customers just to be monitored and Media to be kept informed. The solution will involve change that will affect business owners, employees and customers.

### **Monitoring and reviewing**

The monitoring and reviewing of the change will be realised by the management. This will be realised through performance assessment, through feedback on the new technology and its input to the activities, through observation.

Management will enquire if technology helps activity in the kitchen, if reduces time for food preparation, noise and implicitly a less tensioned team that can communicate better. It will be monitored and evaluated monthly the effect of the change on the front of the house operations, if waiters find easier to use the new technology, if reduces time between taking orders, if customers are satisfied with the service. Management will also assess financial statements and notice if it helped with operating cost. This systems will provide the management the information on the change and it will help managers to see the effects of the input of technology and decide if they want to extend on other operations.

### **Conclusion**

The problem of communication can many times have different causes such as noise, language, pressure, stress. Communication is a very important aspect of the business and restaurants has to ensure they have effective communication between front of the house operations and back of the house operations. This benefits the business as it keeps the customers satisfied, it increases performance and that can reflect in the financial statements.

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