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TEACHING MATERIAL

MODULE: ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS



SoftSkills4EU:
Promote your Soft Skills with Open Badges



TEACHING MATERIAL

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KEY SYMBOLS

Symbols	Explanation
	Definition of terms
	Scenario
	Tips
	Questions
	Learners/Trainers activities
	Resources E.g. links, reports, articles



MODULE – ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS

MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE MODULE

This module is aiming at developing general skills that are needed in every commercial and non-commercial organisation. Like investigating what the internal or external customer is expecting and delivering good service to meet those needs, working within limited time scales, prioritizing and concentrating on the task to deliver good results. It is also about finding solutions to problems, planning and delegating more long-term activities, keeping schedules and reporting progress. So these skills do come handy in your personal life too! Imagine you want to renovate your kitchen, that needs some careful goal setting, planning and time management too.

In general, organisational skills are about quality, effectiveness and efficiency of things you do to achieve something.

To meet this aim, the module covers the 5 following topics:

- 1) *Customer Service Orientation*
- 2) *Time Management*
- 3) *Critical Thinking*
- 4) *Strategic Planning*
- 5) *Leadership*



MODULE ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS SYLLABUS

Module	Topics	Sub-topics
Organisational Skills Module	1. Customer Service Orientation	1.1. Patience and attentiveness
		1.2. Efficiency and positivity
		1.3. Persuasiveness and perseverance
	2. Time Management	2.1. Personal goal setting
		2.2. Prioritization
		2.3. Keeping a To-Do List
	3. Critical Thinking	3.1. Analysis
		3.2. Self-reflection
		3.3. Logical reasoning
	4. Strategic Planning	4.1. Defining long term goals
		4.2. Problem solving and making decisions
		4.3. Planning and assigning resources, monitoring
	5. Leadership	5.1. Leadership style and delegation
		5.2. Responsibility and Risk-taking
		5.3. Negotiation



TOPIC 1 – CUSTOMER SERVICE ORIENTATION



Definition

“Must be able to display positive attitudes and behaviours, which demonstrate an awareness and willingness to respond to customers in order to respond to and meet their needs, requirements and expectations.” (Chicago State University, 2019)



For an organisation to be effective, customer service is very important. This is true for both commercial and non-commercial organisations. This is the reason customer service is a key competence for personnel dealing with customers. And nearly every employee faces customers, if not external customers, then most attitudes and behaviours will be important also for dealing with “internal customers”, like colleagues from other departments in your organisation.

One good customer service experience can change the entire perception a customer holds towards the organisation (or internal facilitating

department). The perception of success of such interactions is dependent on employees “who can adjust themselves to the personality of the customer”. Dealing with customers, especially when that is on a daily basis, also means that employees need to be service oriented. When someone has excellent customer service skills, he or she might also be described as “being a people person”. The most crucial competency here is to be able to really listen to a customer.



1.1 PATIENCE AND ATTENTIVENESS



Question

1. Do you believe the customer should come first?

Of course you want to make a good first impression and start welcoming a customer and establish the contact in a friendly and respectful way. But in fact, customer service already starts before that meeting. It is good to prepare yourself. You can try to think of possible things what customers could possibly expect of you. And think of what you want to get out of the meeting yourself!

During a conversation make sure you do not overload the customer with information. For the average person more than three sentences might be too much. Be clear about you can offer the customer, and what not. Explain the steps that are going to be made. If necessary, make clear follow-up arrangements, and very important: make sure you deliver what you promise!

If you are dealing with more persons than one, do not make the mistake of talking solely to one of them. Try to address and make eye contact with everyone in the conversation.

To establish good longer-term relations, it is important to also remember personal details. Of course, up to a certain level that is appropriate to the kind of business relation you have.



Tip

Make sure you remember the name. If necessary, write it down for later. What is nicer for a customer than returning to a company or department and being welcomed by a "Good morning Mr. Jones!"

If you deal with customers when they come to you frustrated or upset, it is so important to stay patient, calm and collected. Make sure you take the time to truly find out what they want. Customers want (and are entitled to) good and competent service, and there is always a chance of losing a customer if you rush them out of the door! So, a good employee allows a customers to express their frustrations, if needed, before responding with follow-up questions or a solution.



**Tip**

Tip for dealing with an upset customer or colleague:

- listen in an empathetic way, do not interrupt
- let off steam, do not tell to calm down
- try to summarize the problem, to show you are listening
- if there is cause for them to be upset, ask what you or your department can do to correct things or to improve.

Also, when not upset, knowing how to help customers depends on your ability of understanding their problems. If you know what their feelings are, you can help them to feel better, which is the most important part of a customer service job. Try to “read” the customer’s state of mind. What is the customer telling you without saying it? Employees should develop the ability to listen attentively to customer concerns. When employees interrupt or fail to understand the situation, customers can become a little (or more) frustrated or even angry, damaging the relationship with the business.

**Questions**

-
1. Can you remember a situation like that you returned an inferior product back to the shop where you bought it?
 - Can you describe your emotion?
 2. Were you satisfied with how they handled the situation?

1.2 EFFICIENCY AND POSITIVITY



Customer contact costs time. A returning client with additional questions costs more time, and “time is money”. Besides that, the customer is probably not totally sure nor happy about the previous contact. When it comes to important points that you need to communicate clearly to customers, keep it simple and leave nothing to doubt. That is efficient and clear communication!

Good customer service employees take their time to also follow up on the customer, if needed through other parts of the organisation, to make sure that things that were agreed and promises that were made are followed up. If necessary, report progress (or no progress) back to the customer. This is called follow through and when this is done well, it proves that the employee cares for the customers. An employee with great customer skills remains professional at all times to avoid damaging the company reputation. It can be difficult to avoid taking negative comments personally, but as also mentioned in the previous paragraph, maintaining a calm and professional attitude can calm down emotional customers and most importantly: preserve a potential profitable and long term relationship. Being able to complete a successful conversation or transaction with a customer means being able to end with a customer feeling being treated well and that everything has been taken care.



Tip

Do not waste both of your time trying to help a customer where you know beforehand that it is mission impossible. (which is also Time Management!)



Questions

-
1. What would be a better idea in such a situation?

Customer behaviour can also lead to you becoming emotional. When faced with a bad situation can you “keep your cool” and a positive attitude?





Questions

1. Have you experienced a situation in which you got angry at a customer or colleague?

Positive attitude is sometimes all it takes to turn a bad situation around. No one wants to be around the person who is negative and yelling at the first sign of trouble. People are much more willing to help a person with a positive attitude, a person who is smiling and keeping his head high despite of the problems that occurred. This positive behaviour can be "contagious" and bring people together. It is much nicer to be around positive people, so positivity is very functional for team and relationship building.

Often disappointing situations leads to anger, but anger clouds your judgement which tends to make things a lot worse. And it seems to be a worldwide "hobby" for people to fall into the habit of complaining.



Scenario

Individuals who complain about getting stuck in their career, but do not take courses or counselling to get grips on their own development.

Citizens complain about many negative things in their community, but do not get involved in their neighbourhood council.



Questions

1. What would you do in such situations?

But sometimes one cannot do anything but accept.



Tip

Have you ever got stuck somewhere, without anything you could do about it but wait? Like a grand delay in public transport? Try a smile next time, sit down and relax....

The more positive your attitude, the more productive you are.

1.3 PERSUASIVENESS AND PERSEVERANCE

Customer contact costs time. A returning client with additional questions costs more time, and “time is money”. Besides that, the customer (remember, that can also be an internal customer, so a colleague) is probably not totally sure nor happy about the previous contact. When it comes to important points that you need to communicate clearly to customers, keep it simple and leave nothing to doubt. That is efficient and clear communication!



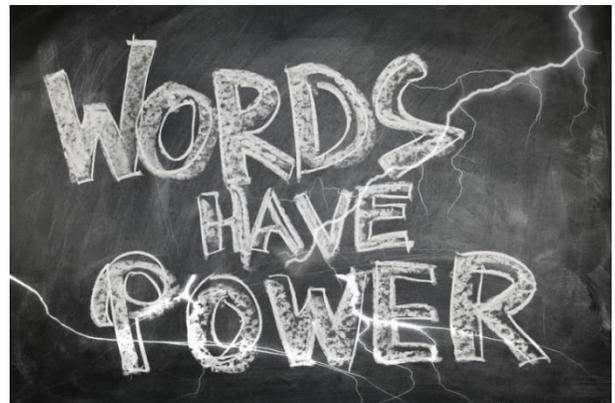
Things you might want to accomplish:

- selling a difficult product,
- getting a colleague to approve change of a procedure,
- negotiating a new solution to a customer,
- convincing a colleague to see things your way,
- motivating someone to achieve a goal.

Convincing or persuasive communication will help you to do that, this includes:

- communicating in an assertive way,
- active listening and summarising,
- finding common interests,
- establishing credibility by proving your expertise,
- calmly handling objections,
- focusing on the positive.

Language is a very important part of persuasion, and people (especially customers) create perceptions about you and your company based on the language that you use. Communicating with customers using “positive language” (see also the previous paragraph on positivity) can greatly affect how the customer hears your message.



Tip

Example using positive language

A customer wants to buy a particular product, but that product momentarily is not in stock.



Instead of saying:

"I can not deliver this product to you at this moment; it is out of stock and not available at this moment."

Use positive language:

"This product will be deliverable next month. I can make a reservation for you right now and make sure that we send it to as soon as we have it on stock again."

**Questions**

-
1. Can you give an example of how you were able to successfully convince or influence another person?

Sometimes it takes time and perseverance to satisfy a customer, but sometimes you have to deal with customers who are just grumpy. If you are in sales, often you need basic acting skills necessary to persuade them, or at least maintain the impression that you are still cheerful yourself. But sometimes you're going to come across people that you'll never be able to make happy. Do not get discouraged by this. Not everything can be controlled. Maybe they had a terrible day, or they are the "natural complainer" type of people.

**Questions**

-
1. Can you give an example of how you made extra steps to give good service to a customer?
 2. Can you give an example of how you dealt with an unsatisfied customer?
 3. What would be your approach when you feel a customer is really unreasonable?

1.4 FURTHER READING



- Consumer behaviour: <https://www.helpscout.com/consumer-behavior/>
- Dealing with customers: <https://smallbusinessbc.ca/article/ten-tips-dealing-customers/>



TOPIC 2 – TIME MANAGEMENT

Time management is the skill to plan and control how you spend your hours to reach your goals.

It is about prioritizing tasks so that the important things get done in time and the less important things are left until last. Good time management enables you to work smarter, not harder. You will be able to get more done in less time, even when there is little time and the work pressure is high. If your time management is not good, it will have negative consequences on your effectiveness and may cause stress or even health problems.



Definition

“The practice of using the time that you have available in a useful and effective way, especially in your work”.

“He's intelligent, but poor time management is limiting his success.” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019)

With Time Management you start with making a list of everything that needs to be done, decide what you must do yourself, and what you can delegate (see also paragraph 5.1 on this) to others. Prioritize them and determine a deadline for each task. Schedule your breaks too. When you have a good oversight on all the things that must be done, you will get a clearer head and you can focus on the thing that must be done now, and not worry about the rest.

If you make a habit of this, you will do it better and better, and helps you save a lot of time and you will get much more things done!





“Rules” for Time Management:

- **Prioritize Work**

At the start of the day, make a list of tasks that need to be done. Unimportant tasks can take a lot of your precious time. So do the urgent tasks that need to be completed first, the unimportant tasks can be done later!

- **Set Deadlines**

When there is a task to do, make a realistic planning and set a deadline. Stick to that planning and reward yourself if you make that deadline.

- **Make a To-do list**

Make a simple list, on paper or a digital one, whichever you prefer.

- **Start Early**

Especially when you are easily distracted and have trouble to focus, this is very useful. Successful people have this in common: they start their days early! When you get up early, you are more calm, creative and clear-headed. As the day progresses, your energy levels starts going down which affects your productivity and you may not perform as well.

- **Avoid Procrastination**

Procrastination is doing less urgent tasks instead of the urgent ones or doing all kinds of pleasurable tasks things in place of the less pleasurable work that should be done now. Procrastination really affects productivity negatively. When you procrastinate, you feel guilty that you haven't started; you start to hate doing the task; and, eventually fail to complete the work on time. You waste time and energy with it and can be a major problem in your work (and in your personal life too!). Avoid it at all cost. (a use useful strategy could be to tell yourself that you are going to just start on a project for fifteen minutes, instead of thinking you have to complete it from start to finish, which might feels overwhelming)

- **Avoid Multitasking**

Focusing and concentrating on one thing works a lot better than multitasking. We think the latter is an efficient way of getting more things done quickly, but in fact it just obstructs productivity and should be avoided!

- **Take Breaks**

Plan short breaks (10 to 15 minutes). Plan lunch. You need to reload! Your energy will return, and after the break you might suddenly find the answer to a problem you were thinking about before the break.

- **Deal with Stress**

When the workload is getting too high, stress occurs. And under stress you will get tired easily, which affects productivity negatively. Try to delegate tasks when there is an overload!

- **Say No**

If you are already overloaded with work, say no to additional tasks! Only say yes to new work when you know it does not interfere with your current planning.

2.1 PERSONAL GOAL SETTING



Above we spoke about prioritizing. Prioritizing is only possible if you have set goals. "Goal setting" is usually used for the intermediate or longer-term but can be short-time too.

Financial goals are common: within an organisation it could be "reduce operational cost with 20% within two years". A personal financial goal could be to save a certain amount of capital for your retirement. Goal setting is about knowing precisely what one wants to achieve, and it makes clear what to concentrate on. Achieving complex and difficult goals requires focus, effort and a belief in your own abilities.



Definition

"There's a S.M.A.R.T. way to write management's goals and objectives." (George T. Doran, Management Review, November 1981)

Goals are often formulated rather vaguely. What to think about the goal "Make ABC great again"? It is quite unclear when this goal is reached.

SMART is acronym for the criteria you can use to describe a goal (or "objective") in a clear and useful way. These criteria are:

- Specific – a specified target area,
- Measurable – a specified quantity or indicator of progress,
- Assignable – a specification by whom it will be done,
- Realistic – results that realistically can be achieved, given time and money,
- Time-related – specification when the result should be accomplished.

Specific

The goal should be clear and specific, otherwise you won't be able to focus your efforts or feel truly motivated to achieve it. When drafting your goal, try to answer the five "W" questions:

- What has to be accomplished?
- Why?
- Who will be involved?
- Where is it located?
- Which resources are available?





Scenario

Imagine that you are a sales employee, and you'd like to become head of sales. A specific goal could be, "I want to get the experience and learn the skills that I need to become head of sales within my organization" so I can make steps in my career and lead a team."

Measurable

It's important that the goal is measurable. Otherwise your progress cannot be tracked, which is necessary to stay focused.

A measurable goal should address questions like:

- How much?
- How many?
- How will I know when it is accomplished?



Scenario

To develop competencies needed to be head of sales you need four training modules to complete. Each course you have to complete with at least grade "A" or "B". Each course entails 80 hours of study.

Assignable (in some literature "Acceptable" is used instead)

Who will do it, or who will take the responsibility? Can you do that, or maybe somebody else? If this answer can not be answered, the goal is bound to fail.



Scenario

Next to the courses, you know you really need a mentor to guide you and motivate you through your studies. Can you find one?

Realistic

A goal needs to be realistic and achievable. Otherwise it will never be successful. It may be a challenge for you personally, but you should be convinced that you will manage to do it.

To determine if a goal is realistic, answer these questions for yourself honestly:

- Can I do it?



- Do I have the time and financial resources for it?
- Is there support, if needed?



Scenario

You might need to ask yourself whether following the necessary courses is realistic. Will you be admitted, with your previous qualifications and experience? Will your work and home situation allow you the time to study? Can you afford the costs?

Time-bound

Every goal needs an end date, so you can focus and plan necessary actions. This is needed to prevent everyday problems take over, and your longer-term goal gets out of reach.

Here you will have to think about:

- Which time frame are we talking about?
- What time do I need?
- What is my availability over that period?



Scenario

Following that four training courses to become head of sales costs time. You have estimated to do that in two years. Do you know how many training days you have to book in your agenda? Does your manager support the time off you have to take? Do you have the time for exam preparation?



Activity

Design a personal long-term goal; Describe it using the S.M.A.R.T. criteria.



Tip

Only design goals over which you have control. Do not design a goal that totally depends on the good will of someone else.

2.2 PRIORITIZATION

Time is wasted when goals are badly defined (see the last paragraph above), but maybe even more when they are not prioritized. Our time is limited, there is not enough time to do everything, Prioritizing is deciding what is most important.



Questions

Think about that busy day when there were so many things on your To-do list.

1. How many of those things did you actually get done?

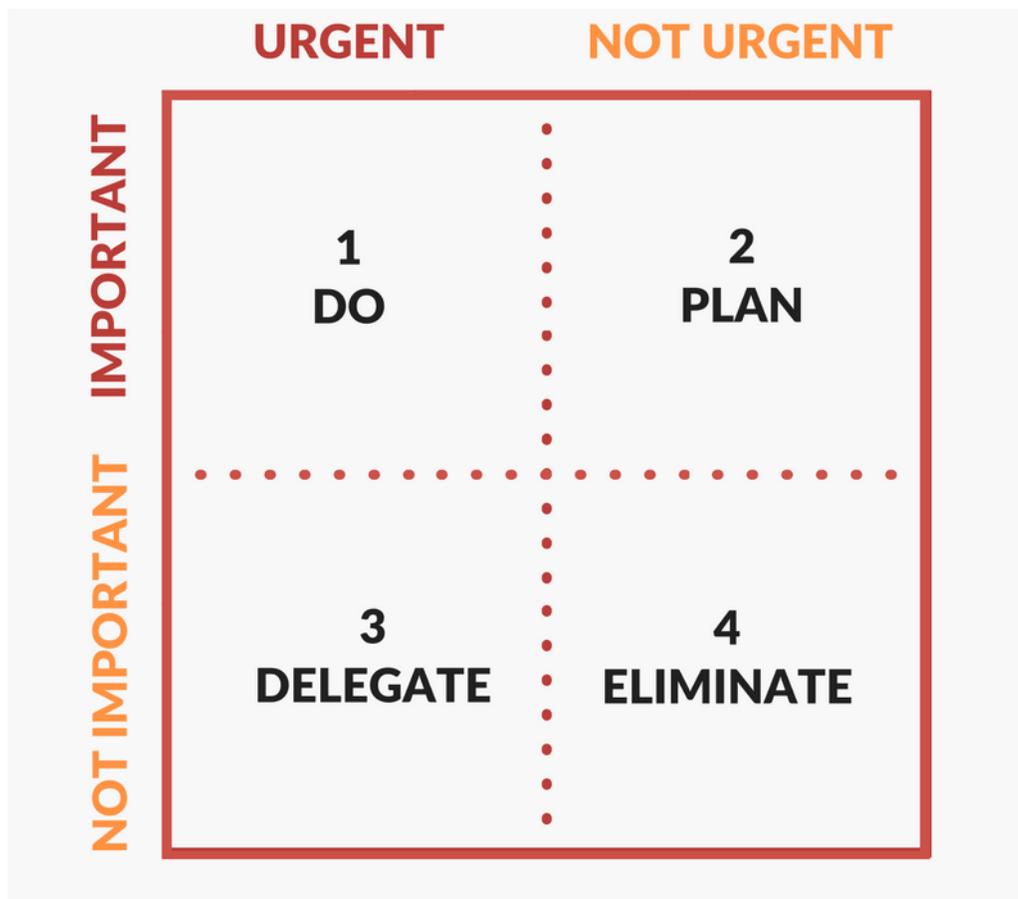


Figure 1 The Eisenhower Matrix (Eisenhower, Dwight D. 1961)

The Eisenhower Matrix may help you. It is a simple method to categorize all the tasks on your list by answering yes or no on only two questions:

- Is it important?
- is it urgent?

There are four outcomes possible, the task is:

- Urgent and important – it should be done by you right away (but in fact this kind of tasks are rare).
- Not urgent but Important – these tasks can be scheduled.
- Urgent but not important – these tasks can be delegated.
- Not urgent and not important – these tasks can be dropped.

When we know which activities are important and which are urgent, we can prevent giving in to the general tendency to focus on unimportant urgent activities (which often happen to be important for someone else). It is better to focus on what is essential for your own success.



Scenario

Urgent and Important

- a crisis
- crucial deadline
- ...

Important (not urgent)

- preparing next month presentation
- design a new department planning
- ...

Urgent (not important)

- telephone call
- a colleague needs your help with something
- ...



Activity

Find another example for each of the three categories above.

2.3 KEEPING A TO-DO LIST



To do lists...

First step: Compose a list of all tasks

For a specific task or project that lies ahead, think about all the things that have to be done to complete that. Do not worry yet about a logical order or other problems, that will come later, just list all these tasks down, just as they come up in your mind.

Review the task list, so you will not overlook something important. Are there any tasks that take much longer than other ones? Break them up in smaller tasks. Are there any vague descriptions on it? Make sure that you break these down also, into specific and actionable steps. Did you forget any tasks?

Keep different lists for different projects, for example a to-do list for work and one for home.



Tip

Decide what medium works best for you

Clearly there is nothing wrong in writing a to-do list on paper, but you might prefer using your smartphone. The general "Notes" function with its blank notes works like paper, but there are also a lot of specialised apps, like Wunderlist, Any.do or Evernote. Try different ones to see which one appeals to you.

Second step: Organise the list

Run through these tasks allocating importance and urgency as described in the previous paragraph. If too many tasks have a high priority, run through the list again and demote the less important ones. But sometimes all defined tasks are important for the end goal, as in a project like "renewal of a kitchen", and "urgency" is more about the order in which tasks must be done. Once you have determined that, rewrite the list in priority order.

**Tip**

Make your list look nice! This may sound unnecessary, but it really can help to create an appealing list that inspires you to stay motivated. Get things checked off!

Third step: time and date

Estimate and write down the time each task will take. Be realistic! Setting goals too high can be stressful, give yourself some time extra. Add due dates to it!

Using a To-Do list

Put your list somewhere, where you will see it easily. Post it on the wall or place your smartphone-app on a prominent place. Just put it somewhere where it will be in your face.

To use your list, simply work your way through it in order you planned them. Tick them off when ready. Try to spend some at time the end of each day, checking all the tasks on the list, and evaluate progress. Reorganise tasks if necessary.

**Tip**

It is a good idea to keep track of and reflect on the time it took for you to complete a certain task. You will be better able to forecast how much time that will cost you next time! One of the most effective ways of improving your productivity is to recognize time management mistakes.

**Questions**

-
1. How do you prioritize your work if you have a number of deadlines?



2.4 FURTHER READING



- Diverse tips: https://www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_HTE.htm
- Diverse tips: <https://www.thebalancesmb.com/time-management-tips-2947336>
- Life Hacking: <https://lifehacker.com/>



TOPIC 3 – CRITICAL THINKING



Definition

"Objective examination of assumptions or current beliefs to assess their correctness and legitimacy, and thus to validate or invalidate the beliefs." (Business Dictionary, 2019)



Critical thinking is the ability to conceptualize, analyze, question and evaluate situations, theories, beliefs and ideas in an active and skillful way. Critical reasoning is the opposite of the "dogmatic" approach, which does not question information critically. When we start to question our (or others') ideas and beliefs, we start to think for ourselves. We question the world and engage critically with the possibilities and alternatives it offers. This requires a critical attitude of reflecting upon how we think and act.

As citizens we need to have opinions about a lot of social or other issues to vote responsibly. However, simply having an opinion about a given topic is not enough. Critical thinking ensures that your opinion is based on fact and not on emotion about something, or a coincidental one-time personal experience. In the world of today internet technology with its social media platforms we have to deal with an overload of information, which is not always correct. Sometimes it is even unfair and meant to influence us into a certain (political) direction. Instead of "critical thinking", the terms "critical reasoning", "informed reasoning" and "clear thinking" are also used. Critical thinking involves the following three important components. These are:

- Analysis
- Self-reflection
- Logical reasoning



3.1 ANALYSIS



What do you do with a problem you encounter at work? Imagine this problem is a patient with broken arm: do you fight the symptoms with a pain killer or do you treat the cause by healing the bones?

If you only fix the things you see on the surface (the painful arm) the real problem (the broken bone) will not get solved and symptoms stay recurring. So, you need solving the underlying problem. And to do that, you need to find the cause of the problem first.



Scenario

In a factory one of the machines have stopped. It seems to have been overloaded, and an electrical fuse was blown.

- Investigation showed that the machine was very low on engine oil resulting in one of the moving parts not running smoothly enough, overheating and overload the machine.
- Further investigation showed that the oil pump did not work well enough.
- Further investigation showed that the oil pump showed wear and tear, because of small scrap in the oil,
- Further investigation showed that the oil filter between the oil tank and the oil pump was missing, allowing (always present) small scrap in the oil passing to the oil pump.

The root cause of the problem is the absence of the oil filter. The only real solution was to reinstate the oil filter (and repairing the pump and replacing the fuse).

Compare this with an investigation that did not such a thorough analysis: it would have lead to replacing the fuse, or maybe the oil pump; it would have allow the machine to function again, but only "for now". The fuse or the oil pump would sooner or later lead to a machine outage again.

There is a technique, called Root Cause Analysis (RCA), that can help you find the real reason why a certain problem has occurred. This method uses the following four steps to address this underlying cause of the problem correctly:

1. **Identification:** Investigate and describe the problem clearly.
2. **Timeline:** Also draw a timeline of all things that happened, starting with situation where everything was still working up to the time the problem occurred. This sequence of events helps understanding the relationships between causal (contributory) factors and the root cause of the investigated problem.

3. **Differentiation:** Correlate this sequence of events with all elements of the problem (qualitative and quantitative, location, timing) and possibly also with previously problems that occurred, In this way the analysis can distinguish between the root cause, causal factors, and non-causal factors.
4. **Causal graph:** Extract from the sequences of all events another sequence of essential events that explain the problem. It might be helpful to represent this in a graphical way.

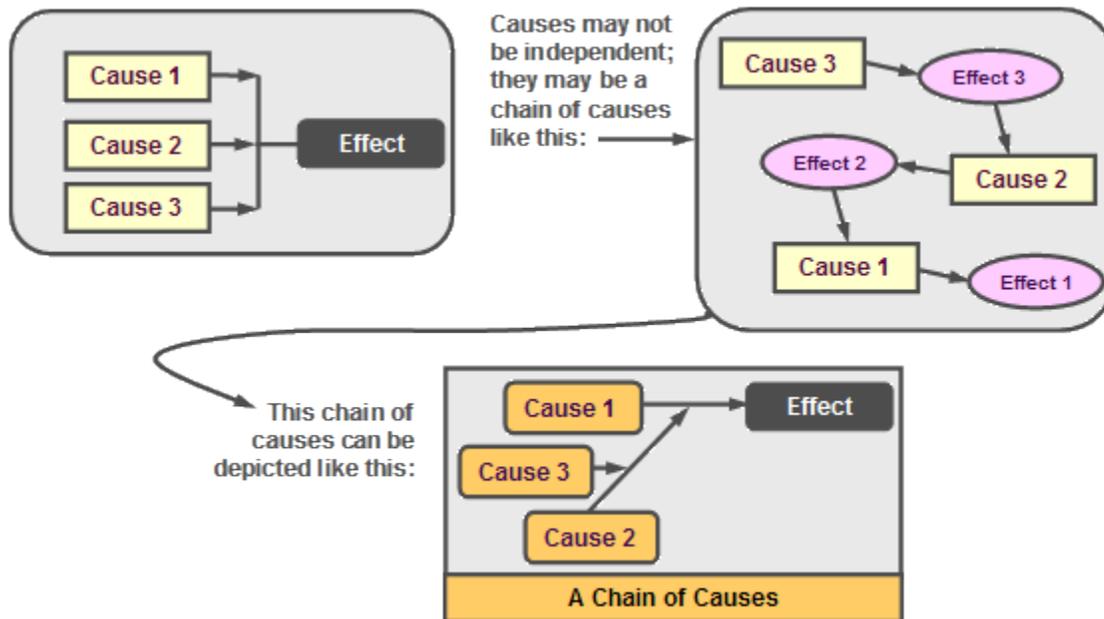


Figure 2 The Causal Graph (Wright, Sewall 1921)

RCA assumes that systems and events are related with each other. An action in one area triggers an action in another, etcetera. By tracing back these actions, you can discover where the problem started, and how it developed into the problem you have now.

Causes usually are one of the following three basic types:

1. Physical cause: a technical or material failure, such as a flat bicycle tire.
2. Human cause: some wrong action or the absence of a certain action by a human, which often can lead to a physical cause, such not paying attention to other traffic, leading to a car accident.
3. Organisational cause: a work procedure is incorrect leading to a late delivery of a product.

RCA looks at all types of causes. It investigates the patterns of things going wrong and finding hidden flaws in a system that contribute to the problem.



Questions

Describe a situation where you had to solve a problem but did not have all the necessary information to solve it.

1. What were your actions?

3.2 SELF-REFLECTION



Self-reflection is the ability to think critically about your own behavior, thoughts and assumptions. It leads to self-knowledge and self-awareness. Being able to do critical self-reflection allows you to think for yourself, instead of being indoctrinated and manipulated by old stereotypes or fake news that is so common on social media nowadays. So, it is 'think independently'. A person who thinks for herself or himself has to have a sense of modesty and relativity. You realize that other people also think for themselves and

you realize that that might be useful too, however different from what you were thinking.

In order to become an independent thinker, you must have the ability to listen to others and have the modesty to adjust your opinion as you gather more insights. The "Dunning-Kruger Effect" shows it is always good to question yourself on the amount of your own knowledge on a subject.



Definition

The Dunning-Kruger Effect is the tendency for those unskilled or uninformed in a particular area to overestimate their knowledge or skills.

The Dunning Kruger effect



Figure 3 The Dunning-Kruger effect (Dunning, David and Kruger, Justin 1999)



Activity

Develop your competence at self-reflection

Choose one or two of the topics listed below. What is your view on this topic?

- Marriage
- Raising or lowering income taxes
- The European Union
- Single parenting
- Racial differences
- Gender differences
- Homosexuality

Write down a short summary of your opinion.

Discuss your opinion on a chosen topic with someone else (practice your soft skills, so listen, ask questions, summarise).

Look again at your summary. Do you still totally agree on it?



3.3 LOGICAL REASONING



Definition

"Logic takes care of itself; all we have to do is to look and see how it does it." (Ludwig Wittgenstein)

Logic is one of the main pillars of critical thinking, the latter would not exist without the first. Something like agriculture would simply not be possible without the reasoning about sunlight and rain, in history formalized logic has appeared in both Asia as ancient Greece.

There are three types of logical reasoning: deduction, induction and abduction.



Definition

"Deductive reasoning, also deductive logic, is the process of reasoning from one or more statements (premises) to reach a logically certain conclusion."



Scenario

Deduction Example:

"If it is true that the cat always runs away when a dog is passing by and it is true that a dog is passing by, then it must be true that the cat runs away".

Deduction (also called "top-down logic") links premises with conclusions. If all premises are true, all terms are clear, and the rules of logic are followed, then the conclusion reached is (necessarily) true. This sounds perfect and simple, but the real world is not always perfect. Probably one cannot find an actual cat that *always* runs away when a dog is passing by. But this kind of reasoning is still very useful and true in more exact fields like mathematics, engineering or computer science.



Definition

"Induction is drawing a conclusion from a pattern that is guaranteed by the strictness of the structure to which it applies."





Scenario

Induction Example

"Every day the sun rises. The sun will rise tomorrow".

Induction is also called "bottom-up logic". Inductive reasoning draws conclusions of what will happen in the future, on the basis of what happened in the past. The conclusions from Induction may be probable instead of 100% certain. The example: "The sun will rise tomorrow" is based on our experiences on this in the past, (but not absolutely sure).



Definition

"Abduction is a form of logical inference which starts with observations and then seeks to find the simplest and most likely explanation for the observations."



Scenario

Abduction Example

"When it rains, the grass gets wet. The grass is wet. Therefore, it might have rained."

Abduction is drawing a conclusion that is likely, given some foreknowledge, but not totally sure. Scientists often use this type of reasoning because it can be used to develop a hypothesis. This process, unlike deductive reasoning, yields a plausible conclusion but does not positively verify it. So, the result of this reasoning can be described as "most likely."



Scenario

Abduction Example

"I observe flamingos on a lake, and from where I stand, they appear to be pink; So flamingos are pink."

Using deduction that would be: "Some flamingos are pink on at least one side."





Questions

Detective work is often described as “deductive”. In the new TV-series around Sherlock Holmes the protagonist even has a website called “*The Art of Deduction*”.

1. Do you think “deduction” is the right name of this kind of reasoning?

3.4 FURTHER READING



- Critical Thinking: <https://blog.iqmatrix.com/critical-thinker>
- RCA Analysis: <https://www.toolshero.com/problem-solving/root-cause-analysis-rca/>

GLOSSARY

Analogy. Reasoning by analogy is based on comparison with similar cases. An argument based on analogy only succeeds when the similarities between the cases or entities are relevant.

Analysing arguments. The process of dismantling arguments in order to identify their premises and conclusions.

Appeal to the masses. Fallacious reasoning based on mass sentiment, popular feelings, or nationalism, rather than offering good reasons for accepting a conclusion.

Argument. An argument is a group of statements, one of which is called the conclusion, whose truth or acceptability the argument is intended to establish. The other statements are called premises, which are supposed to support the conclusion.

Cause-and-effect reasoning. A kind of inductive argument in which it is argued that a particular event or effect occurs on the basis of specific antecedent conditions or causal factors.

Conclusion. The main claim in an argument that the premises are intended to prove.

Counterargument. This is an argument an arguer formulates in answer to another argument.

Counterexample. A counterexample is a specific example which defeats or runs counter to the claim made in an argument.

Critical reasoning. Critical reasoning involves the ability to actively and skilfully conceptualise, analyse, question and evaluate ideas and beliefs.

Critical self-reflection. Critical self-reflection is an act of examining one's own thoughts and beliefs; related to self-knowledge and self-awareness.

Deductive argument. An argument in which the premises are claimed to give sufficient support for the conclusion to follow.

Empirical argument. An argument in which the premises assert that some empirically determinable facts apply.

Evaluating arguments. The process of critically examining the plausibility of claims advanced in an argument; critically considering assumptions; and weighing possible solutions to issues.

Fallacy. A fallacy is a deceptive argument that tries to persuade us to accept the claim that is being advanced, but the reasons in support of the claim are irrelevant or inappropriate.



False appeal to authority. This fallacy is committed when someone cites an authoritative or famous person who is not an expert in the field under discussion.

Faulty analogy. The error of faulty analogy occurs when a comparison is drawn between two different cases or issues, and there are no relevant similarities between them.

Fallacious reasoning. Invalid reasoning that suppresses relevant evidence or contains questionable premises.

Hasty generalization. The fallacy of hasty generalization occurs when a conclusion is drawn on the basis of ill-considered or insufficient evidence.

Inductive argument. An argument in which the conclusion is subject to probability, even if the premises are assumed to be true.

Logical definition. This type of definition defines a term by selecting those properties that are shared by and confined to all the things that the term covers.

Preconceived idea. A preconceived idea is a societal assumption that decisively influence our thinking, but which we have not critically reflected upon.

Premise. A premise is a statement that serves as a reason in support of an argument's conclusion.

Slippery slope argument. A slippery slope argument leads one from seemingly unimportant and obviously true first premises to exaggerated consequences in the conclusion.

Social conditioning. Seeing only what we expect to see.

Sound. An argument is sound if it is valid and you accept that all its premises are true.

Soundness. Refers to the truth or strength of the premises of an argument.

Statement. A statement is an assertion that is either true or false.

Statistical extrapolation. A kind of inductive reasoning that refers to some statistical study or evidence. An inference is drawn about a target population on the basis of what is taken to be true of a sample group.

Stereotypes. Generalisations, or assumptions, that people make about the characteristics of all members of a group, based on an image (often wrong) about what people in that group are like.

Structural fallacies. These fallacies contain flaws in reasoning because their form or structure is invalid.

Validity. Refers to the relationship between the premises and the conclusion of an argument.

Value argument. An argument that asserts a claim of preference or a moral judgment about right and wrong, good and bad.



TOPIC 4 – STRATEGIC PLANNING



Definition

"The formulation of one or more detailed plans to achieve optimum results with the available resources. The planning process identifies the goals or objectives to be achieved, formulates strategies to achieve them, arranges the means required and monitors all steps in their proper sequences." (Business Dictionary, 2019)



Strategic planning is an important process for organizations. Strategic planning is about defining goals for a future direction of the organization. To meet these goals, the management develops plans like a business plan or a marketing plan.

This kind of planning increases the efficiency of an organization, identifies and reduces risks and attempts to take care of efficient use of available resources. It is also important to understand how business or societal trends can impact your organization in the coming years.



Tip

A plan just gathering dust on a shelf is not very useful. Make sure you communicate your strategic plan and strategic priorities. Make sure it stays in people's minds.



4.1 Defining long term goals

For defining long term goals and getting into strategic planning within a smaller or larger organization, we first need a mission and a vision for this organization:

1. The **mission** is the stable basis of the organization, which will not change easily. In the mission we will see questions answered like: who are we? where do we stand for? why are we here?
2. Given a certain mission, the **vision** is the direction for the next couple of years. Questions like: what do we want to accomplish? in which direction will we go? must be answered when determining a vision.



Scenario

Mission & Vision Tesla

Mission: "to accelerate the world's transition to sustainable energy."

Vision: "to create the most compelling car company of the 21st century by driving the world's transition to electric vehicles"



Questions

Suppose you are thinking about starting a bakery somewhere (or another small business enterprise).

1. What would be your mission and vision?

Based on the vision, organizational goals are identified and prioritized. Goals can be very diverse:

1. an organisation could formulate a goal to develop a new consumer service;
2. a goal to improve the quality of a certain product;
3. or define an operational goal to run the organization with less management layers.

To accomplish the defined goals, a strategy should be developed. Within strategic planning conflicts between existing goals are resolved, previous goals that are no longer necessary are abandoned.

The result of this strategical thinking is documented in a strategic plan. For your organization's management, the strategic plan is the necessary longer-term guide to steer on for reaching the identified goals, and to adjust course if necessary.

For your stakeholders and employees such a plan is very useful to know where you are heading and why you are going there.



Questions

Based on the mission and vision for your bakery, you want to start strategic planning for that. Clearly, you want to make that a success.

1. What kind of goals would you define?



4.2 PROBLEM SOLVING AND MAKING DECISIONS



Based on the defined goals, evaluate the best way to accomplish them.

Look at what needs to be solved. Define the problem. Break the problem down conceptually into its parts. Try to think about what causes the problem. Try to think about what could be done to eliminate the causes and what alternatives there are. Try to think about what steps could be taken best to reach a goal or solve a problem.

Strength and weaknesses

Throughout the strategic planning process, which is about taking decisions how to proceed, you need to take into account the possibilities and impossibilities of your organization. It is important to be aware of your strong points, but maybe even more of your less strong points. There are also external factors to consider: the opportunities and threats coming from outside. These factors are also important for designing a successful strategic plan. Once you know where you stand as an organization, and what is going on outside, then you can start to make better informed decisions. SWOT Analysis is a commonly used technique for discovering internal and external factors:

Strengths (S) and Weaknesses (W) are the internal factors:

- financial situation (what is your capital, turnover, profit or budget, perspective)
- physical resources (where are you located geographically, what are your facilities)
- human resources (employees, interns)
- status of your current business processes

Opportunities (O) and Threats (T) are the external factors, things that you can not control, like:

- regulations (e.g. environmental or economic)
- political trends
- external funding
- economic trends
- demographic trends
- societal trends, changing technology
- market trends



Questions

What SWOT analysis could be constructed for your bakery?



Activity

It might be tempting to only think of a commercial business doing strategic planning, but governmental organisations or Ngo do this too. Construct a fictional SWOT-analysis for a small primary school located somewhere in the countryside.



4.3 PLANNING AND ASSIGNING RESOURCES, MONITORING



Planning is the process of thinking about all the necessary activities required to achieve some desired result. Planning is a technique that is probably used in every organisation, but particularly used by employees with a coordination or management role. Different sectors use different types of plans to reach their goals. Some organisations with a variable workload throughout the week, will rely heavily on a personnel planning. In other companies the logistics of goods will be more of importance.

Planning is the definition of a number of actions or tasks to achieve a specific goal. If planning is done effectively, it can reduce the necessary time and effort of achieving this goal. A plan is like a map. By following a plan you are able to track progress, and predict how far away the end goal is. A plan is more than a timeline alone. A plan may contain chapters about risk management, quality, procurement and communication. For larger projects, these topics might be covered within a separate plan, if important enough.

As stated before, different types of plans exist. Earlier in this chapter about organisational skills, we covered the topic of making a to-do list. That is also a simple sort of (personal) planning. Here we cover the general concept of planning. That could be strategic planning for your organisation, or a more operational plan for your department or one for your team.

Many steps to construct "a plan" are described below. Remark: not every type of plan needs all the steps specified.

Define responsibilities

Determine who plays a role within your plan, roles often found are:

- business owner, who is responsible for the department or business process, and probably delivers the funding for the cost of your project, s such needs to approve the plan
- project leader, writes the plan, runs the project, checks on progress, costs, quality, covers risks and reports to business owner
- experts and team members, who design and/or build the products or services and produce the necessary documentation
- testers and/or end users, who have a role of approving intermediate or end products
- quality assurance specialists or financial and risk auditors who might take over one or more aspects listed with the project leader

General description of the plan



Describe when intermediate results will be delivered by the project. The more milestones, the better the progress of the project can be followed.

Describe staffing

A staffing chart describes the period and the amount of hours different people will work on the project, in which role.

Estimate cost, keep track of expenses, re-estimate cost

As soon as costs get out of hand, inform the business owner

Describe expected quality

Describe the desired quality of the project outcomes and describe the way that should be measured. Make sure the checks on quality start early, to prevent that you discover a major flaw at the end of the project, when it is too late to improve it.

Describe risks

Do a risk analysis of possible negative events that might hinder the project outcomes. See 5.2 for more info about risk management.

Communicate the plan, involve stakeholders

Explain the goals of the plan to all stakeholders. You need to get commitment and support from them, often you also need approval from a financial officer, or from other departments.



Tip

Planning is typically something you learn by doing and you really need experience to master it. The first time you might especially be very unsecure and afraid to under- or overestimated the time necessary an activity. Do not worry, just guess... By keeping track of the time you (or others) actually spent on it, the next time you will have a better shot at it.



Activity

Your house is very nice, but your kitchen is dysfunctional. Your greatest wish is a new one.
Write the plan...

4.4 FURTHER READING



- Simple planning:
<https://www.wikihow.com/Form-a-Plan>
- Strategic planning:
<https://www.clearpointstrategy.com/strategic-planning-ultimate-guide/>



TOPIC 5 – LEADERSHIP



Leadership is the art of directing subordinates to achieve a common goal. We all know different types of leaders. The best appreciated style is democratic leadership. They involve their employees in the decision make process, thus making workers feel much more motivated, as they helped around important decisions.

This type of leader motivates his employees by promotions, salary increases or other incentives.

The less loved are the so-called authoritarian leaders, who take no suggestions from subordinates and is the absolute authority on all decisions. Their way to motivate subordinates is called "big stick policy", like demotions and dismissals.

5.1 LEADERSHIP STYLE AND DELEGATION

Being a leader can be done in different ways. In the intro we introduced some types of leaders that are based on their personality type. But the Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory says it is not the personal characteristics of the leader that should be decisive, those of his employees are probably much more important.

Hersey and Blanchard describe four basic leading behaviours:

- Directing
- Coaching
- Supporting
- Delegating

The personal characteristics of the employee depends on a number of factors. Sufficient knowledge and skills, together with experience is important to know if an employee can be given the responsibility to do their job independently. Motivation is another important factor for the way how to lead them. Four combinations of these are described in the theory:

- Low competence and low commitment
- Low to medium competence and high commitment
- Medium to high competence and low/variable commitment
- High competence and high commitment.



The model combines leadership style and employee type as follows:



Figure 5 Situational Leadership (Hersey, 1975)

Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard (1969) described four styles of leadership. In the diagram on the horizontal axis the directive behavior and on the vertical axis the amount of supportive behavior that is needed for different types of employees. Four types of employees are also formulated in two dimensions: their level of competence (skills) and the amount of commitment (motivation).

S1: Directing

This is the situation where a leader has to manage new or inexperienced employees that are not competent but often motivated for the new job. But these employees are not capable enough to do their tasks independently. Good and clear instruction would be the best style of leadership in this situation. But monitoring of the tasks carried out will be necessary too. This is also called "task-oriented" leadership, with less time and concern spent on human relationships.

The employee needs a lot of direction from the manager. All the steps that have to be taken along the way to the end result have to be made clear. Be careful not to overload the employee with information, and it is good to ask the employee to repeat what he is going to do, to make sure all the needed information has landed well. Complimenting employees after monitoring improves motivation.

S2: Coaching

This style is also called "consultative leadership" At this level employees have not reached full skilledness yet. They do have more desire to work independently but are not yet capable of doing that. The lack of skills and knowledge prevents working independently and makes them insecure.

Listening, giving lots of attention and explaining decision making are important in this phase.

Hersey and Blanchard have been calling this also "selling". The manager 'sells' his instructions to the employee, while also telling that he trusts this employee is perfectly able to bring the task to a good end. Complimenting afterwards is still important, to build positively on confidence.

S3: Supporting

This is the way capable but unmotivated employees can be guided. They are qualified for the job, but might be flooded by work, which makes employees insecure, reluctant and stressed. The manager needs to give more support. It is important to explain for instance what the reasons are that the work pressure is so high at the moment and motivate them to carry on. Hopefully, this can stimulate the employee, to get back at his job and delivers again. Reminding him/her of his success in the past on this kind of work might help. Issues should be tackled together in an open discussion, to create confidence and trust. Agreements can be made together. Of course, both sides should conform to these agreements.

S4: Delegating

When employees are able and willing to carry out their tasks independently, they have a high level of task maturity. Therefore, they need much less support. Employees take initiative themselves to inform the leader, when necessary. They take also take the initiative to inform or consult the manager for important matters or unexpected problems. Through their independence, these employees are intrinsically motivated and as a result there is no need to be in contact with them on a daily basis.

Delegating in practice is not so easy as it sounds. Being able to "let go" by the manager is the first necessity. It is a good idea for a leader to discuss the "What" (the final goal) with the employee, and probably the time and funds available. Sometimes it is good to also plan checkpoints underway, to monitor progress and discuss unexpected troubles and so. The manager has to realise that delegating involves keeping distance. This employee has his own responsibilities and make many own decisions. If things go well, compliment!

More can be said about delegation, it can also be seen narrower: as a competence that is needed within other leadership styles too. You delegate because you cannot do all jobs yourself. Delegation does not mean running away from responsibilities or shoving your work on somebody else. It is the wise use of your team members to provide maximum result to the organisation. Delegation allows you also to make the best use of your time and skills, and it helps the others in the team develop to reach their full potential.





Activity

Choose an upcoming task in your organization you are responsible for, and where you could delegate responsibilities.

Before delegating tasks, ask yourself if something is worth delegating. To help you decide if the task is suitable to be delegated or if it is something you have to do yourself, answer these questions for yourself:

1. Is it possible and acceptable to delegate this task? (legal or etiquette obstructions?)
2. Is this task an opportunity to improve skills of one or more of the team members?
3. Will this task recur in the future?
4. Is there someone else in my team, who is able to complete the task?
5. Is it time effective to delegate the job? (instruction and monitoring do not exceed time it would cost yourself too much)

If most of the answers are Yes, then it could well be worth delegating this job.



Tip

“Rules” for delegating tasks:

- Clearly state the desired outcome
- Clarify all limitations, restraints and conditions.
- Review work from time to time, revise if necessary.
- Stay available for support and questions
- Motivate
- Accept that the task may not be done the way you do it!
- You still remain responsible and accountable!

5.2 RESPONSIBILITY AND RISK-TAKING



Definition

“By responsibility we mean the work or duties assigned to a person by virtue of his position in the organization. It refers to the mental and physical activities which must be performed to carry out a task or duty. That means every person who performs any kind of mental or physical effort as an assigned task has responsibility” (Allen)

Every person has responsibilities, which may differ a lot. The responsibilities of leaders and managers are probably more similar to each other.

Set and achieve business goals.

A leader thinks about the future and has a vision for that. A leader sets goal based on that vision. It has to be clear where the organisation is heading over the next years. A leader translates the vision into long term goals and planning.

Set priorities

A leaders' task is to decide what has to be done first and what later and what to not do at all. There is only a certain amount of time. Organisations need to concentrate on important tasks and try to stop doing things of low value.

Make decisions

A leader thinks about solutions for problems, can make a choice from alternatives and take action.

Set an example

A leader is very visible and sets the tone for the organisation. Everyone is observing what the leader is doing, and he should be doing the right thing.

Setting an example is also about integrity, which is also doing the good thing when nobody is watching.



Questions

1. Can you think of a world leader who you consider as someone that has set a good example?
2. Why?

EVALUATING AND MANAGING RISKS

Evaluating Risk

Also called Risk Analysis, which is a process that helps to identify potential problems that could occur, and could lead to loss of time or money or lead to damaging the reputation of your organisation. It is important before and during a project to help identifying and preventing possible problems. It might also be very helpful for the decision to continue or stop some project.

The basic technique is impact analysis. This has two dimensions: the chance/likelihood that some negative event will occur, and the severity it will have on the project. These two dimensions can be “multiplied” as shown in the next diagram.

		Likelihood		
		1	2	3
Severity	1	Low	Low	Medium
	2	Low	Medium	High
	3	Medium	High	High

Figure 6 Risk Assessment (Unknown)

Especially when possible events fall in the category “high”, they should be monitored and managed closely.

MANAGING RISK

Once risks are identified, one can start to think of ways how to manage them. Make sure detective actions are being done regularly, like monitoring expenditure, periodic testing of a product or installing sensors to give early warnings. Define actions to take to fix potential problems if or, even better, before they occur.

Other basic strategies for managing risks are:

- **Accept risk**
Your first option is to accept the risk. Sometimes there is nothing you can do to prevent a risk, or sometimes the cost to do so will be higher than the damage.
- **Avoid risk**

Involves aiming to prevent a risk situation from happening. It could be something like installing burglary protection or a firewall on your company network.

- **Share risk**

An example is to insure something; in this way you share risk with other people or organisations.

- **Reduce impact**

An example is to make sure you have a backup for something.



Activity

Suppose you are starting a web shop, where you will sell second hand analog camera's and lenses you buy at flea markets. Do a risk analysis and describe how you will manage the risks.

5.3 NEGOTIATION

Being good at negotiation in general means you have the ability and skills to take you out of a difficult situation. For this, you need to be able to take part in a discussion with others in a calm and open way, building mutual understanding and reaching a result that is acceptable by both sides.



Steps to take:

Prepare

- Know what the problem is. Make sure you understand the interests of all parties involved and try to understand why a party has a certain position on the subject.
- Define what you want to get out of the process yourself.
- Think of how to get there, what strategy would work.

Exchange Views

- Explain your needs and motivate your desired outcome.
- Listen to others'.
- Avoid making things personal-

Explore

- All sides have explained their position.
- Find areas where all sides agree.
- Find common criteria for a solution on the things you do not agree about.
- Find alternative solutions and hold them against the criteria.

Compromise

- Find proposals with concessions that are acceptable for all sides.
- Choose the proposal that satisfied all sides best.

Close the agreement

- Shake hands or set up a contract if needed, do not forget the details and have it signed by all parties. Stay committed to the agreement.

Qualities a good negotiator needs are:

- empathetic but assertive,
- self controlled and confident,
- patient and tolerant,
- showing knowledge and insight on the subject,
- unprejudiced,
- creative in finding a win-win situation,
- ready to compromise.



5.4 FURTHER READING



- Situational Leadership: <http://www.free-management-ebooks.com/faqlid/leadtheory-06.htm>
- Responsibility: <https://knowledge.insead.edu/responsibility/the-five-dimensions-of-responsible-leadership-3685>
- Negotiation: <https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-negotiation-the-five-steps-of-the-negotiation-process.html>

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