Production scheduling and control

Business

A Stimulating Experience with Simulation The science and art of operations management enables managers and other heads of operations to effectively and efficiently run a business or an organization in such a way that efforts are minimized while output is maximized (Meredith & Shafer, 2007). The Benihana simulation accessed at the Forio website (http://forio. com/simulation/harvard-business-school-benihana-operations-management-sim/login. htm) is a good way for Business majors and even struggling managers or laymen to appreciate the intricacies of operations management and the great advantage that such a simulation system can offer. Personally, it has made me realize that simple changes in an existing system may actually boost profits while wrong decisions may result to big company losses as well.

A simulation is a made-up world run by a user (student) within the conditions and parameters set by the programmer (instructor) (Saskatoon Public Schools). It is designed to allow students to think critically and practice their decision making skills with very minimal risks involved. The simulation offered an insight on the benefits that batching could do for a business, particularly a restaurant business like Benihana.

Batching or letting clients in by groups or “ batches” (Shim & Siegel, 1999) is greatly effective during the peak hours. This is so because restaurant space is maximized by having clients stay at the bar and wait to be seated until there are enough to be seated on a free table. Because of this practice, all the seats for a particular table are used and no excess space is wasted. When this happens, costs for running two to three separate tables are reduced because one table would be enough for two to three small groups of diners. In addition, clients would not wait too long, lessening the chances of

them walking out of the restaurant. All these would eventually translate to higher throughput, or sales per hour (Meredith & Shafer, 2007). On the “ human” side of the experience, clients get to meet new people as they may be seated with diners whom they do not know at all.

I have a new dimension of appreciation for simulation because it allows a manager or any other head of operations to try out a number of scenarios and their possible outcome without the costs that would come along if such scenarios were tested out in an actual setting. Computer-based simulation allows managers to foresee possible difficulties that a given scenario may produce and allows for them to adjust appropriately, test and effect improvements at very low costs.

In general, computer-based simulations are very effective as a learning mechanism because it gives the learner an almost-hands-on experience in running a business, as he / she plays with the different variables in running the business. Of course, the student must also realize that computer-based simulations may also produce very different results when applied to a real-world scenario because there may not be a simulation that can account for all the myriads of variables in the real world (Bicheno & Elliot, 1997). Still, computer based simulation, particularly the Benihana simulation system, is a great way to practice one’s theoretical learnings in operations management.

References

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