

# Assignment 4-2

Family



Decision Making and Problem Solving The process of decision making for solving a problem involves initially identifying exactly what the problem is; identifying and evaluating the alternative solution paths, and selecting a particular solution path that seems to have the maximum chance of success. A further step that can be considered a part of this process is that of evaluating the results of the chosen solution path after it is implemented. This evaluation helps us understand the extent to which the chosen solution met the need of the problem situation; as well as helps us decide whether to continue with the original choice or to select a new alternative solution process to implement. This decision making process is used both consciously, and unconsciously by all individuals on a continuous basis. When the process of decision making is practiced consciously, it can be used to resolve work – place problems effectively. Every manager is constantly required to provide solutions to a number of task and people related problem situations. The manager is also required to give solutions that are to the best advantage of all parties concerned – a task that is often Herculean. Using the steps of decision making and problem solving consciously can sometimes help in ensuring that vital information is not missed out while trying to resolve a problem. A case in point would be a situation wherein it was found that a new employee from a minority community was being made the butt of jokes by many other employees behind his back. Although there was no malice involved, the clandestine manner in which the jokes were made had given rise to a communal stereotype, and the minority employee (Mr. R) was constantly evaluated using that stereotype. Such racial or communal attitudes are frowned upon in the organisation, as they have the potential of creating strife between co-workers, and affecting the mental peace of the

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target employee. Given the situation, it was first important to identify what behaviour lay within the problem area. It seemed that the behaviour that caused most concern to the manager was the casual but regular passing of stereotypical statements and the tendency of some employees to expect that Mr. R would behave in a stereotypical manner. Possible solutions to this situation were to warn or penalise the perpetrators of this behaviour; issue a distinct warning to the entire staff that using communal stereotypes to judge someone at work was unacceptable, but not single anyone out; give Mr. R the power to pick out individuals who may have troubled him for a meeting with the management; try and identify the reasons for such behaviour and understand if there was any legitimate concern underlying it. Conduct a diversity sensitivity workshop for the employees. Initially, it was decided that certain staff members who were on-lookers to the entire situation should be isolated and questioned about the origin of the problem, and the extent to which it was considered a legitimate situation. The interviews brought to light that when Mr. R had joined the department, his communal background had been used to identify him amongst others; and what had started as harmless jokes from no particular source had become blatant stereotyping over a few months. That Mr. R was somewhat shy and did not mix easily and mostly kept to himself only added to the problem. It was also identified that while the situation did occasionally cause Mr. R distress, there was no visible intention to harm. It was decided that there was no immediate need to penalise anyone; but a general warning should be issued against stereotyping. Some weeks later, evaluating the situation showed that some employees were still making communal jokes since they did not consider it as stereotyping behaviour. It was then decided that a short workshop should

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be conducted for the office so that everyone would be sensitised to what constitutes the use of stereotypes in the work-place; what the law said about such behaviour; and what the organisation's policy was in the matter. Thus, a 3 hour interactive workshop was conducted which also covered the ways in which such behaviour should be identified and reduced by the staff itself.

Resulting from this new understanding of policy, it was found that the amount of stereotypical jokes had significantly reduced and employees were helping each other in getting over stereotypes. The manager also had a talk with Mr. R to encourage him to interact more with his colleagues so that they would know him as a person and not simply by his communal background.

This experience was different from the previous exercise in that the decisions taken needed to be applied and the personality of each player in this situation was important to the final decision being successful.

Knowledge of the personality types did play an important role in identifying pitfalls and also in the success of the final solution. References: Charles H. Kepner, Benjamin B. Tregoe (1965). *The Rational Manager: A Systematic Approach to Problem Solving and Decision-Making*. McGraw-Hill Myers, I. (1962). *Introduction to Type: A description of the theory and applications of the Myers-Briggs type indicator*, Consulting Psychologists Press, Palo Alto Ca. Facione, P. and Facione, N., (2007). *Thinking and Reasoning in Human Decision Making*, The California Academic Press / Insight Assessment.