

## MANAGEMENT PROBLEM SOLVING TECHNIQUES : AN OVERVIEW

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### **Introduction :**

Problems exist in all organizations and they can take many forms. Most of the managerial problems arise out of disagreement, hostility and contradiction of interests or incompatibility between individuals and groups in the organization. Some of the problems are due to the policy differences and scarcity of resources in the firm. These problems can be controlled by the people at the same levels or at the immediate superior levels and they will not frustrate the results of the enterprise as a whole. But when a problem is purposefully created to block the attainment of organizational objectives or to disturb the interests of others in the firm, it lead to a complicate situation. It is true that “not all the problems can be solved only by the management of enterprises”. There are problems occurring in the organization due to the forces operating outside the organization. These problems are difficult to solve by the powers within the organization. In these cases the authorities at the helm of the enterprise should be able to convert every problem in to possible opportunity for furthering the business scope.

### **Managerial Problem Solving- A sketch**

Cooperation is essential for the successful functioning of every organization; it implies mutual trust and confidence among the employees of a firm. To some extent managerial problem is the opposite of cooperation and take place in a situation when major parties are not willing to help each other in achieving the goal. Many of the managerial problems occur when two or more parties to a problem situation pursue mutually exclusive goals and values and possess a deliberate behavior of not to give up.

Problems exist in all levels and only few of them are detrimental to the survival of the organization. When the main stakeholders of an organization fail to see the common objectives in a broader sense, problem arises within the organizational level. If the authorities at different levels become too much attached to their narrow personal goals it will lead to a lot managerial problems.

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When the external forces connected to the business play a key role in the creation of problems the management can do little in sorting out these types of problems. It is to be noted that each problem, whether internal or external, provide huge opportunity to the administration to find novel ways to think about the problems first and to make innovative solutions to the problems arising in different areas and from various angles. Depending upon the nature of problems and behavior of people involved in them, many of the managerial problems can be solved. There are several scientific and modern before understanding it in full. methods available in the area of Managerial Problem Solving. All the approaches to problem solving are to be supported by the following common procedure:

1. Examine, explore and understand the problem thoroughly.
2. Define the entire problem clearly, in precise manner.
3. Verify the understanding of the problem, with parties connected to it. Do not make any statement about the problem
4. Prioritize the problems in proper order.
5. Understand the exact need for rational thinking for problem solving.
6. Break a complex problem in to small parts.
7. Look at the potential causes of problems
8. Consider each problem as an opportunity to develop and hope something can be done to resolve the problem.
9. Find out the wide range of choices and alternative approaches to solve problems.
10. Select an approach to find solution to the problems which is acceptable to the majority of people concerned with the problem.
11. Plan the implementation of the best solution to the Problems and provide the necessary resources needed for implementation.
12. Review the implementation of prescribed solution and make corrective actions, if needed.
13. Verify if the real problem is really solved or not.

Managerial problem solving is a dynamic process consisting of a chain of events which tend to unfold in a particular sequence. An analysis of above points and their sequential application will help in reaching at correct solutions to the problems.

### **Scientific Managerial problem solving Techniques:**

Problems disturb the equilibrium in the organization and no organization can exist in disequilibrium for long. Generally, every problem is a test of ability of people to learn and develop. It motivates them by providing challenges. But these positive effects of problems are few and limited. Negative effects are so many and potentially serious. So the organization and its management must proceed with clear understanding about the effects of problems while devising the correct technique to resolve them completely. As quoted earlier, there are many approaches and techniques available to solve the managerial problem. Some of the key techniques are given below:

1. Lead to another why.
2. Drift Down method Break Systematic Inventive Thinking (SIT) used to resolve the problems in different range of activities.
3. Appreciative Inquiry Model applied to simplify the problem and based on assumptions by extracting maximum information from facts.
4. Heuristic methods involve trial and error method of application of choices. This method can not guarantee a solution to the problem.
5. Algorithmic methods which can provide a recipe and procedures to systematic problem solving and guarantee a solution to the problem given/identified.
6. Public Solution intellectual process of asking for solutions and suggestions. It is an act of posting the problem to public discussion and stimulates interest among the general public towards problem solving.
7. Five Whys method It is a simple technique developed to reach the root cause of the problem, under this method, arriving solutions to the problems, the answer to one why the problem in to manageable and convenient parts and finding solution to parts first and then a comprehensive solution to the whole problem.
8. Cause and effect diagram method It is a structured way of identifying the causes and effect relationship to any problem working out the major factors involved in the problems and finding out the real causes to them are the key elements of this method.

Apart from the above, there are techniques like systems diagrams, SWOT Analysis, Risk Analysis and PEST Analysis which are useful to the process of

managerial problem solving. Even though the primary objectives are different from problem solving, these techniques can help the organization in finding out a right solution to the problem.

### **Merits and Limits of Scientific Rationality:**

The basic principle of scientific rationality is based on the assumption that the organizational problems can be solved in a logical manner. The solutions to the problems should be orderly arrived in a logical and rational method. Almost all the scientific rationality methods of managerial problem solving are extensive, systematic and accurate. Briefs about cause and effect relationship of problems are known and the decisions are arrived by maximizing the choices. The preferences of the parties concerned to the managerial problem solving are consistent and the mechanism available to sort out the problem is standardized and applicable to a vast majority of situations.

However, the scientific rationality methods in managerial problem solving are not free from drawbacks. These methods can be applied only in organizations operating in a stable environment with well defined systems. Many of these techniques are of less significance in conditions of uncertainty, disagreement and poor or lack of information. In the present complex business environment, management of organizations has to take decisions on the prevailing conditions rather than proceeding with preconceived notion. Also some of these scientific tools require parametric change (modifying one aspect) and concept change (complete replacement) to implement the curative measures for problem solving. Whatever may be the techniques and how powerful it is, problem solving requires active and willing support of the people connected to it. Not understanding the business problem in its fullest sense and try to find solutions under these scientific methods will only aggravate the problem instead of solving it. Some organizations fail in understanding the problem and some others lack in getting into a right alternative to solve the problem. These lapses will lead to wrong selection of scientific tools and the final result will not be positive. Falsification and hiding the important information about the problem also leads to undesirable consequences in arriving at correct solution. Most of the scientific methods of problem solving are rigid to the rules. Any attempt to bring down the problems is to be supported by mutual trust and willing cooperation. Question of who is right or who is wrong is to be avoided. But in an organizational climate, it is really difficult to socialize the characteristics of various people coming from different background. These human factors in managerial

problem solving is not fully encompassed in scientific rationality

**Carnegie Model :**

This model was developed by American Management Association. It emphasizes the art of mastering the capabilities demanded in tough business environment prevailing in the global and domestic market. It makes the ordinary manager into highly equipped problem solver who can generate better ideas to solve complex issues. This model recommends the usage of proven problem solving techniques by creating consensus building exercises. This method suggests innovative tools for successful negotiating to control conflict situations. For this to happen, adequate training on new Carnegie system, as advocated by American Management Association, is to be provided to the concerned people.

**Garbage can model :**

The garbage can model of organizational choice and problem solving was conceived in 1972. It is basically deals with developing an information system through which strategic decisions can be made to increase organizational performance. It describes a decision making process in the area of organizational anarchies. It encompasses the view that decision makers in any enterprise are only somewhat rational in their choices. Also they are bounded by the uncertainties of changing market and technology. They have to quickly adapt to the advancements taking place in the market which leads to difficulty in prediction of future events and control of past events. This method reveals three basic conditions for its operation, viz:

1. Problematic goals
2. Unclear technology and
3. Fluid participation by organizational members

The above premises of Garbage can model leads to four key streams of variables, they are;

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|-------------------------|---|--|
| 1. Problems             | : | Concerns of the parties in the Enterprise                                  |
| 2. Solutions            | : | Answers to the problematic questions                                       |
| 3. Participants         | : | Attention of the concerned people on how to manage the problem effectively |
| 4. Choice opportunities | : | Choices/occasions expected to Produce a right decision.                    |

### **System Intervention Strategy (SIS)**

SIS is a rigorous and formalized way for solving the problems, with due consideration to creativity in the process. It is a new methodological framework for dealing with complex managerial issues pertaining to the organization. It is also called as Integrated System methodology (ISM). It operates in both content and context levels. It combines the qualitative and quantitative modeling techniques for solving the problems and aimed at overcoming the limitations of many established methodologies used for this purpose.

### **Conclusion:**

No problem exists unless it is perceived by somebody. The traditional view offers simple approach to managerial problems problems are inevitable and unavoidable in any organization. Recently, Oliver Blanchard, the International Monetary Fund's Chief Economist, warned that the worst of global financial crisis is yet to come and that the situation will not improve until 2010. A lot of time is needed before the global financial condition becomes normal, he added. In the present globalised, competitive environment, rethinking of yesterday's solution is not an adequate response for the today's problems. Many of managerial problems arise due to the absence of will in managers and not because of *lack of resources*. If the management works effectively, there would be reduction in the number problems. A consistent approach and innovative methods to problem solving may help the organization in reaching the optimum level of performance.

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