

Team 5 - THINKTECH FINAL PROJECT

Executive Summary

Problem Description

After a miserable shopping experience at the Orem Walmart, Jay wrote a customer complaint email to voice concerns that he thought the store should know about. The front end manager Suzie called him to address his concerns, and after some discussion with both her and our team we decided to investigate further to see if we could use our class project to help Walmart.

We each did an ethnography at Walmart to identify other problems we could solve, some of which included:

- Long lines at checkout / having enough cashiers
- Trouble training new employees
- inadequate number of self-checkout kiosks

We met with Suzie to discuss the different problems we noticed and elicit feedback on what problem she felt would be most beneficial to solve. As a result of this meeting it became clear that we could bring the most value to Walmart by solving the problem of long lines through increasing hiring of cashiers for the front end. We began to address the problem by identifying the root cause through the use of the 5 Why's, brainwriting, brainstorming, and continued meetings with Suzie and other employees. As we did this we discovered that hiring shortages were causing the long lines, but this was caused by the much deeper issue of lack of employee accountability.

Proposed Solutions

Due to the nature of the structure of Walmart and the time constraints of our project, we knew we couldn't fully address the problem of accountability. Suzie wanted us to focus on the hiring problem, and while we were addressing that problem we realized we could also take steps to increase employee accountability. Because hiring solutions could be implemented much quicker than accountability, we created two sets of solutions. The solutions that we came up with were:

Short-Term Solutions

- Creating a hiring booth in Walmart with innovative marketing to catch customer attention
- Recurring attendance at the monthly UVU job fair
- Giving employees specific tasks over which they have responsibility

Long-Term Solutions

- Signing up for repeated attendance to UVU job fairs throughout the next year
- Create a relationship with UVU Employer Relations to increase company exposure at UVU
- Assign employees specific roles / Create performance measures regarding HR practices

Results

Our efforts were well received and brought some significant results. To assist with hiring we were able to increase daily interviews from 2 to 11.3; this resulted in a significant bump in new hires. We were also able to help increase employee accountability by assigning employees specific hiring tasks that could be followed up on.

Problem Description

Two months ago Jay patronized the Orem Walmart to conduct his weekly grocery shopping. After an hour of shopping he made his way to the checkout line. When he arrived there he was not surprised to find a long line at the registers, including the self checkout line. He was infuriated with the consistently long check-out lines at the Walmart at all times of the day. As he continued to observe the environment, he noticed in addition to the cluttered checkout line there was trash in the aisles and a general uncleanness of the store. This was upsetting to Jay but after months of learning about problem formulation in ThinkTech he began to ask himself questions out of frustration: “why is this line so long at all times of the day? Why has Walmart not been able to fix this problem? Why does everyone I know choose to not shop here when possible?”

Jay recalled learning in ThinkTech that a major flaw in many companies is their inability to receive and utilize proper feedback. In an attempt to assist Walmart in their feedback process, Jay submitted a sizable and detailed email consisting of all the problems observed in his latest trip to Walmart. He hoped someone would see it and use the feedback to make changes down the road. A week later Jay was surprised to receive a call from the front end store manager of the Walmart, Suzie. After a lengthy conversation, it became clear that there was a lot of potential value to be discovered. This experience initiated the process of Team 5 working with Suzie and the HR team at Walmart.

Additional Walmart Problems

During our team’s first meeting with Suzie a list of problems with Walmart were brainstormed, this list included: general uncleanness of the store, lack of qualified applicants to hire, lack of cashiers, difficulty with employee retention, employee training issues and a disconnected relationship with UVU.

Alternative Problems

Our team regrouped to further analyze other problems external to Walmart. This effort was made in an attempt to determine if there was a more effective problem to solve with the project time constraint. Other external problems that were discussed included: Low application rate to the UVU Thanksgiving Point MBA; Wendy’s staffing, production, and sanitation issues.

Problem Finding

After reviewing various diverse problems our team decided to focus on Walmart. We subordinated several of the problems in an attempt to find their root cause. The list included some of the following:

- poorly trained staff
- not enough registers
- lack of qualified applicants
- miscommunication between associates and management about flexible schedules
- inability to communicate the needs of the store properly to corporate offices

We began our search for the root cause of long lines by first having a preliminary meeting with Suzie. During this discussion we began the brainstorming potential problems. Following that, our team met and began to generate our possible options. In order to fully understand the potential of our options we conducted research on each option to analyze the feasibility. One potential option we studied was the ailing relationship between Walmart and UVU. In order to research this option we contacted Janalee Carter, the employer relations specialist at UVU. After our conversation with her we were able to collect valuable information to take back to Walmart which we would use to determine the best option.

In our face-to-face meeting with Suzie we learned that Walmart had been generating their own list of possible options of problems we can solve and we reviewed those with Suzie to determine if any of them were viable alternatives. One alternative that Suzie proposed was to add additional self checkout stations. The Walmart already has self checkouts on both sides of the front end of the store while most Walmarts only have them on one side. Due to the smaller basket size, on average, than the typical Walmart, Suzie feels they could have a great deal of success with more self checkout stations but this alternative is very costly and the time frame to implement was a constraint for our team due to the timeline of it not fitting into the semester. She has already started working with the corporate office on the idea but she needed a quicker solution with the holiday season coming up. Another alternative we discussed for finding new hires was the possible use of a temp agency. We discovered that their efforts to market the desired positions were small signs at each checkout stating they were hiring, it was ineffective in communicating the employment opportunities.

After further analysis of these issues it became very clear that these were alternative problems and not the underlying root cause. The root cause of these problems was discovered through the use of several iterations of the 5 Why's analysis. Our final 5 Why's consisted of the following questions:

1. *Why does Walmart have such long lines?*
 - a. Because they do not have enough employees.
2. *Why do they not have enough employees?*
 - a. Because people are not applying for jobs at Walmart.
3. *Why are people not applying for jobs at Walmart?*
 - a. Because the unemployment rate is low and Walmart hasn't adapted their recruiting methods
4. *Why hasn't Walmart changed their recruiting methods to hire more people?*
 - a. Because there is no accountability to do so

5. *Why isn't there accountability?*
 - a. Poor management control systems

Our team identified the root problem with Walmart as the absence of accountability. With a recent shuffle of lower level management and the addition of new HR staff, Walmart had lost accountability among its staff. With this loss, protocols were not being followed and important tasks were being neglected. Employees also did not have a complete understanding of what their specific role and job duties were in their assigned positions. This problem resulted in a loss of customer service capabilities and decreased ability to hire new talent.

Key Insights

Our experience of studying the problems associated with Walmart resulted in discovering a variety of key insights. Due to being stationed in a college town with two major universities and a dense population, the basket size for Walmart is half of its two nearest branches. The result is a much higher volume of shoppers with less items per basket which requires a greater number of personnel to meet the needs of more shoppers.

An additional topic of interest was the irregular peak hours of this particular location. The peak hours of this Walmart are between 8:00pm-2:00am. This increases the level of difficulty with scheduling. It requires the majority of workers to be scheduled at nights. The night shift also has a differential pay which raises labor expenditures greatly compared to other Walmarts.

Finally, during peak hours customers utilized cash registers in uneven waves. This means a vacant cash register can suddenly be filled with a line of customers. This requires quick reaction by management to re-allocate employees or direct customers to available cashiers. After some discussion we came to the conclusion that accountability for the hiring process covered all the problems we came up with and could provide a basis for a plan to address their front end issues.

Proposed Solutions

Short Term

Because of the unique staffing requirements of Walmart, they need a targeted hiring strategy. The current employment market has reduced the applicant pool to an inconsistent and limited number, which hinders their ability to hire qualified applicants. In order to keep up with staffing needs they must hire 6 cashiers per week, but there is strong competition among companies who compensate within this pay range.

After our original meeting with Suzie we chose to brainstorm solutions on the short-term issues with the hiring process. Through a brainwriting session on google documents our team posted a large sum of anonymous solution ideas. Following this, our team worked the list to organize our ideas to present to Suzie. Next we made another brainstorming list of possible marketing ideas

to attract hirees. We came up with different ideas for areas that would make sure there were enough employees to operate the front end of the store.

Some of the short term ideas we came up with that would help solve the issue of long lines were: improved marketing, utilize hiring booths, additional training for higher retention rates. Our ideas also ventured outside the box with possible solutions including an assortment of marketing solutions from the common signs and social media posting, to creative ideas like flash mobs.

We recommended that Walmart use social media for marketing and job posting. We gave them suggestions as to how they could help increase the number of impressions received on their hiring posts through social media. We presented Suzie with the information we had collected, and advised her to establish a connection with UVU's employer relations department. We recommended there should be a designated person assigned to be in charge of Walmart's relationship with UVU. We then discussed our suggestion of having a hiring booth during Walmart's peak hours of 8pm to 2am. The highlights of the hiring booth included:

- Advertising
 - Flexibility and shifts that Walmart can offer,
 - No minimum hour per week requirement
 - Pick-your-shift options,
 - Time off, temporary leave, etc.
- Specific employees assigned to regularly run the booth
- Received 22 interviews, 15 hires.

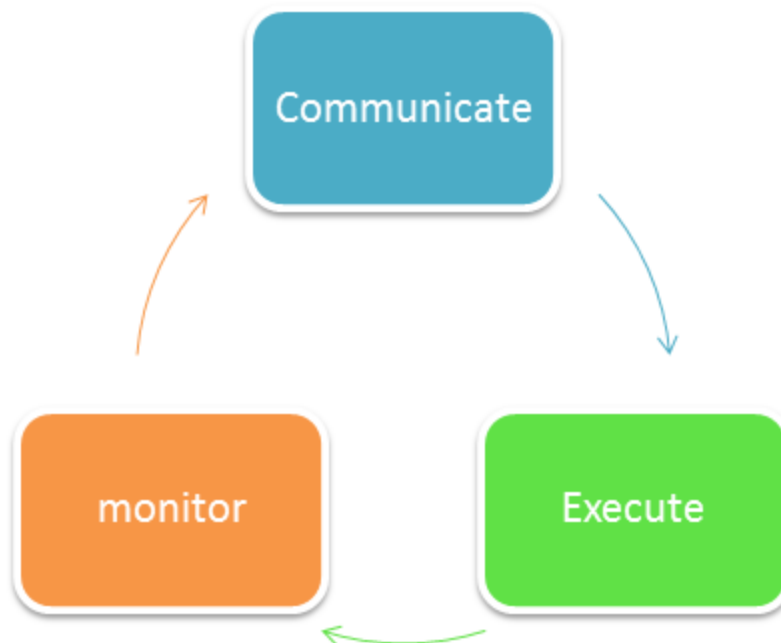
In summary, the primary recommendations to Suzie included a consistent program utilizing in-store hiring booths, UVU monthly job fairs, and social media.

Long Term

One of the surprises we discovered was that we did not just have a short term problem regarding hiring, but that a more long-term problem existed. The proposed long term solution for Walmart was to identify and delineate the tasks required to hire employees, when this was complete they needed to assign those tasks to specific employees and positions that were responsible for hiring. New HR staff that oversee hiring had to be trained on the tasks they were accountable for, ensuring a complete understanding of the scope of their responsibility. We were able to do this with Suzie by assigning the specific tasks to employees.

Currently when an employee doesn't fulfill their responsibilities, there are no systems in place to hold them accountable. Employee training has been a problem because some employees are not given the proper training before being put on a cash register alone, but those who are in charge of training have no consequences for doing this. Similarly, Suzie had a lot of different tasks that she was expected to perform, but there were only some that she was measured on. We noticed that there were no performance measures regarding any of her hiring practices, and so her focus was on other duties that she would be held accountable for. If performance

measures regarding her hiring practices were implemented, they would help increase accountability.



Communicating responsibilities and providing training to employees is a vital step in overcoming the long term issue of accountability. Those employees must then, execute their responsibilities and training and management should monitor the process, progress, and results of the employees efforts. Finally the process must be repeated. Lowell, this doesn't flow with the rest of the long-term section. Can you make it fit, find a new place for it, or else make it go bye bye?

Conclusion

When we came away from our first meeting with Jay who had visited with Suzie, we were sure the problem was not enough checkout lines. Through an intriguing discovery process we were able to peel back the many layers of the problem to unearth the real root of the problem, lack of manager and employee accountability. After we met with Suzie as a group, we accumulated several ideas from her and began our brainstorming process. There was a lot of enthusiasm and active discussion in the group as we tried to look at the problems from unique and unconventional angles. We discovered that Suzie desperately needed more cashiers. Some of her best had recently quit for various reasons and she was struggling to fill positions at most shift times. She explained this problem had snuck up on them because they had never had to worry about having enough people to work; it was a high entry, high turnover industry that relied on paying slightly higher than minimum wage and never wanted for applicants. Suzie intoned that now there were many other competing businesses paying similar or higher wages which were drawing her usual applicants away.

We made several value-adding suggestions to help improve the problem. We helped improve the UVU-Walmart relationship by helping Suzie sign up for hiring booths at UVU every month for the next year. There is a great pool of students who could really appreciate the flexibility of Walmart's work schedule. We also suggested focusing on hiring more personnel for peak hour shifts; we needed to help get the word out that Walmart was hiring for minimal amounts of shifts. We surmised that most college students would appreciate a job where they could work just once or twice per week to help with all the college expenses. Students' barrier to entry is they think that a big corporation like Walmart would have a rigorous, unyielding schedule with a high minimum of weekly hours required per employee. This was the exact opposite of the truth, according to Suzie. She would take on new employees at almost any shift time with no minimum requirement. We suggested the need to get the word out on just how flexible Walmart hours can be, and to emphasize the simplicity of the job application process.

We helped create value to Suzie by brainstorming a list of marketing ideas to create a booth in the store during peak hours. We summarized this in a brief that we sent to her a few days before we had set the event. Without our insistence, the implementation of the booth most likely would not have happened at that time. We pushed for a date and time for the booth, but were shocked to realize we had come across the root of the problem; there was no employee or employees in charge of marketing for new hires. The manager and assistant manager (Suzie) pushed the responsibility onto recently hired CRM's who were not adequately trained or aware of their duties pertaining to searching out new hires. The problem continued when we broached the issue of why Walmart hadn't had a booth at UVU consistently. We advised Suzie and right there our second joint meeting she assigned an employee to have accountability for UVU-Walmart relations. We advised her in the much needed training of the CRM's, and to set up a reporting system with them to ensure they were staying on task with this new assignment.

We realized we couldn't do a lot more for the accountability problem, and this was the long term issue. We helped implement those management solutions that we could, but turned our focus to a part of the project that could be helped immediately. This was getting the booth date and marketing for it set up. Suzie assigned two employees to man the booth and made advertising posters based off of our recommendations in a brief we sent. The booth had overwhelming success! The average daily applicants to the Walmart is just two. From the booth we received feedback that there were 17 applications that led to 12 new hires! Suzie was incredibly happy with our efforts and the booth's success. We advised her to make the booth a regular event until she has hired a stable number of cashiers from her employee pool. Suzie was happy to work with us and grateful for the help. In the short term we helped get a set booth schedule at UVU for Walmart and designed and initiated a hiring booth to generate more applicants for the employee pool. In the long term we added value to the company by: assisting the manager delegating needed responsibility and create and strengthen contacts between UVU and Walmart.

Overall this project was a huge success because the client (Suzie in this case) was very satisfied with our short and long term projects for the Walmart. We as students of the ThinkTech

class know it was a success because we started with surface symptoms and found our way to the deeper problems and were able to implement real solutions in a real company that started the process of solving the problems.

- Summarize the problem and solution and repeat your case for how much value will be created by solving your problem with your solution.
 - **Wal-mart has no one to take accountability for hiring: need to recognize they have to keep up with changing hiring atmosphere**
 - **-not needed in the past**
 - **unique economy of orem**
 - we solved the problem they needed us to solve; even though we know it was not the whole problem the client was very satisfied with a 500% increase
- Summarize the key insights about the problem and solution that were produced during the project (e.g., what did you learn about the problem and solution by engaging in the practices of the course?).
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- Summarize the key learning points about the problem solving process that arose from engaging in the project (e.g., what did the project teach you about concepts taught in this course). Include in your discussion the failures you experienced during the problem solving process and what you learned from them.

Appendices

1. 5 Whys

Why does Walmart have such long lines?

Because they do not have enough employees.

Why do they not have enough employees?

Because people are not applying for jobs at Walmart.

Why are people not applying for jobs at Walmart?

Because the unemployment rate is low and Walmart hasn't adapted their recruiting methods

Why hasn't Walmart changed their recruiting methods to hire more people?

Because there is no accountability to do so

Why isn't there accountability?

Poor management control systems

2. Problem Solving

Brainswarm

Advertise on career link

Posters

Booths
Highlight flexibility
On-campus interviews
Social media
Internet ads (ksl, indeed)
Parking Lot Flyers
On the spot interviews
Post signs next to panhandlers corners (whoever put this down is a genius -j)
Advertise pay
In-store announcements on the PA system
Inserts along with newspaper ads?
Contest for employment? (Who can demonstrate best customer service gets first pick of shifts)
Facebook
Dancing Sign Guy
Drone with a banner trailing
Produce a video for YouTube
Flash Mob at Lunch time in the food court
Qualtrics Survey
Ask me about buttons
Text pass along
Flyers in the bags of students when they check out of walmart
Create short semester long walmart internships
Walmart advertise on the led screens around campus
Adds on cork boards around campus
Signs on the grass around campus similar to the job fair signs
Post job announcements at homeless shelters
Give job applications to the people bumming on the street corners in Orem and Provo
Rent the big led billboard across the street from uvu
Advertise on front page of uv link
Put walmart employment flyers at student employment center
Have a youtube commercial competition showing how cool it is to work at walmart
Leave employment flyers at the registers at walmart
Advertise for a walmart part time job recruiting event and bribe them with pizza

Marketing Ideas:

Facebook
UVU
Booth at night- 8-12
target moms that need extra money
Emphasize FLEXIBLE
Advertise at registers
eblast

- Walmart branded email inviting students to apply for flexible part time positions
- track click through rate
 - apply for a job - be entered to win a(gift card, etc)

Facebook/Twitter/LinkedIn boosted post

- cheap and easy to reach a concise market
- track metrics - correlate to the increase of new hires
 - apply for a job - get hired - entered to win1 of 10 scholarships

UVU - Walmart Info Booth in hall of flags

- manned by a student that is studying HR
 - they can talk to students about the program

3. Hiring Numbers

Walmart Booth - 17 interviews, 12 new hires, later 5 interviews and 3 new hires

UVU Booth - 12 interviews

Interviews: 34

New hires: 27

Days with a booth: 3