

Exercise 6b

Problem Cause Investigation – Brain-writing

Name: _____

Date: _____

Instructions:

1. Review the background information.
2. Conduct a brain-writing session using the “card” method and generate ideas that include:
 - a. Problem areas to improve
 - b. Consequences from the problem
 - c. Possible causes of the problem
 - d. Ways to eliminate causes of the problem
3. Record the ideas on the Brain-writing Template provided.

Background Information

A general manager of a grocery store was at his store on a Saturday morning, his typical day off, waiting in line at the cash out because he forgot to bring home milk the night before. The customers also in line around him were not happy. He listened as some customers talked:

“This is always like this on weekend mornings.”

“Why aren’t all the checkouts opened? There’s 12 registers but only 5 are opened.”

“Look, they don’t even have enough clerks to pack up the groceries at each check out that is open!”

“But they have plenty of people working on stocking the shelves making it hard to get around them in the aisles.”

The general manager looked around and realized that what the customers were saying was indeed true. He realized these issues need to be addressed and resolved.

To immediately assist the current customers waiting in line, he found the on duty weekend manager and had him open more registers, also assigning personnel to help pack the groceries on each line. He knew this was a temporary fix and a more permanent solution needed to be found.

On Monday morning he reviewed the store policy for weekends and noted that stocking was scheduled for weekend mornings. He also looked at the weekend scheduling for staff and noticed that a majority of the checkout staff was not scheduled to come in until noon.

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He decided to have a brain-writing session and identified the topic as “reasons why customers wait so long in line”. The general manager needs your help to participate in the brain-writing session.

Brain-writing Session Steps

Note: Use the Brain-writing Template provided

1. Identify the problem.
2. Use the card method to launch ideas.
3. Write your ideas in the Individual Ideas section of the template as clearly as possible.
4. Pass your template on to allow other participants to add their ideas to realize the benefits of combining ideas or further developing them.
5. Discuss and evaluate the ideas then combine and sort into groups or classes, either by theme or decreasing potential.

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Brain-writing Template

Problem (or topic):
Individual Ideas
Idea Groups