



RESEARCH ARTICLE

APPROACH AND EFFECTIVENESS OF ORGANIZATIONS IN SOLVING BUSINESS PROBLEMS

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ABSTRACT

Organizations exist on the basis of continuing businesses and they do so because of their ability to serve customers and find solutions to their problems. This is a dynamic situation because the organizations go through the vicissitudes of the changing business environment making them more and more demanding. The organizations cannot remain static and so they continuously evolve to face the realities of the environment. This depends on the organizational resources and their approach to problem solving. Organizational posture and behavior will determine how successful they are on this effort. Present research paper will attempt to examine how organizations approach such problems and their effectiveness on solving them. Organizations need to reorganize, reinvent and streamline the operations so that business is as usual and continues to make an impact in the market. Present focus of research through this paper will be to find out the key result areas and how various companies succeed in their efforts. This process will involve the changes in strategy, structure and business plans. May be the organizations need to reinvent themselves to be more relevant and successful.

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INTRODUCTION

When you choose to operate a business, you have to deal with the problems that will inevitably occur. As a business owner and a business leader, it is your job to try to mitigate the problems that arise and deal with them effectively so as to minimize their impact. However, it can be difficult to solve the problems we are faced with on a day-to-day basis. The potential for conflict aside, it is common for multiple problems to occur at the same time, leaving business leaders scrambling to manage all of them. This can result in finding Band-Aid solutions and never really addressing the underlying issues. Clearly, this is a problem in and of itself, but there are strategies that will allow you to adequately address the problems commonly faced in a business setting. The most important thing when it comes to problem-solving in business is the ability to adapt. The need for adaptation arises whenever problems surface because, in order to solve the problem, change is required. Businesses that are not able to embrace change will ultimately be left behind, an all-too-immediate threat in today's world, in which technology is advancing rapidly.

Any business that can identify the real underlying problem to a set of problematic symptoms and delve deep to uncover the most innovative ways to meet the needs of the business and the customer will be able to take their problem-solving to a new level. It is this ability to innovatively problem-solve that will propel any business forward in the 21st century. Often, it's too easy to see something bad happening and label it a problem. It might be a problem that sales have been dropping. But, lower sales aren't really the problem—they are a symptom of something deeper. The real issue, more likely, is that you haven't changed your business model to include mobile and your competitors have, which has resulted in many of your customers switching to your competitors because of the higher level of convenience they offer.

In other words, we have a tendency to view the symptoms of the underlying problem as problems in their own right. When it comes to identifying the true problem that is affecting your business, it is absolutely critical to take the time and effort to look at the situation carefully, and fully understand it. This can be difficult when a problem seems disastrous or unimportant compared to other points of focus in the business. However, when leaders are too hasty, there is a tendency to apply ineffective or inappropriate actions that might only make the problem worse or—at the very least—prolong it. To properly handle a problem, you need to consider the broader picture. Finding the root cause of an underlying problem is a must. But, when it comes to taking care of that problem, it is important to



Figure1. How to solve business problems?

think in terms of finding an opportunity, rather than thinking of it in terms of finding a solution. The key is to look at a problem from all angles and to consider any opportunities that might be lurking beneath the surface. Of course, this is sometimes easier said than done. Businesses are always solving problems, whether rectifying operational problems or providing solutions for their customers. The traditional approach is to attack the problem with data and market research. However, innovation seems to be the key to problem-solving.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

Problem solving for businesses is the bread and butter of their existence. Businesses move from problem to problem and series of successions. A Business model is sometime created for this specific purpose of solving recurring problems. Sometimes a pedestrian approach may not help solving business problems because the complexity of business is increasing day by day and no business is proof against all developments in the market. The success and continued existence of organizations depend on their ability to anticipate business problems and be ready for solving them as they arise. This type of anticipation and problem solving attitude is to be developed by organizations. This research paper is about such business problems and how organizations meet such challenges. In order to focus on specific issues the following objectives have been identified for the fulfillment of this paper.

- A critical review of business environment and organizational thinking.
- Current challenges in the environment
- How do organizations meet these challenges?
- Approaches to solving business problems.
- Success of organizations and the learning thereof.
- Futuristic needs and suggestions.

Business environment is the key to understand the synergies of organizations and how they meet various challenges. Some of the Business challenges in the current environment are the speed of changes and the organizational adaptation, because the challenges are not the same and their nature is also changing. Organizational effectiveness will depend on the ability of organizations to meet these challenges and solve the problems arising from it. Of course, organizations exist for making a profit and contribution to stake holders and keep their interest. The present article and research paper will analyze such organizational challenges and how businesses solve the problems arising thereof.

Review of literature

A new and innovative approach to problem-solving that more creative companies are implementing is called design thinking. This out-of-the-box method of solving problems is centered on the concepts of experimentation and interaction within the real world. The first step to implementing this method is to look for the opportunity in the problem. In order to identify opportunity, observation is required. If it is a problem within the workplace, then observe the people or department involved. If it is a problem that relates to customers and clients, then observe them in a relevant, real-world setting. Then, make a list of needs that you have uncovered during observation and come up with as many ways as possible to meet those needs. This is where you can get really creative. From here, take the very best ideas—the ones that will have the most positive impact—and determine which one works the best. This concept of solving problems isn't just applicable to tackling problems that come up while running a business; it also applies to the concept of startups and taking an existing business in a new direction or diversifying its portfolio of offerings. The concept behind design thinking has been echoed by the very best in the world of entrepreneurship.

While the key is to find workable and innovative solutions to problems that come up in business, there are potential barriers to finding and implementing these solutions. According to Forbes, these barriers are related to a lack of adequate communication, the presence of silos, and the absence of strategy. Clearing away these barriers requires:

- Transparency in communications, which must occur at all levels of the organization; The freedom to express concerns, opinions, and ideas will allow people in an organization to speak up, which will move the problem-solving initiative along at a much faster and more efficient pace.
- The removal of departmental and hierarchical silos within an organization - In order to have transparency in communication, there cannot be silos within an organization. There must be cross-functional collaboration in a team setting.
- Open-mindedness in all aspects of business and communication - For the above two points to be possible, all people in the organization must be open-minded, able to embrace different ideas, and change. Open-minded people are more likely to accept risk as a part of problem-solving and innovation, which will help propel an organization forward.
- A solid strategy is needed, rather than a deep analysis that doesn't lead to concrete action - Implementing change without having a solid strategy behind that implementation will result in switching one problem for another. Collaboration and putting all the pieces in place must happen for any change to be effective and to last over the long term.

Quoting Stephen Covey, who said that “strength lies in differences, not in similarities,” Forbes also discusses the importance of diversity when it comes to problem-solving in business. The more diverse a team is, the better able they are to come up with innovative solutions to the problems faced by the organization. In fact, it has been found that groups that show greater diversity were better at solving problems than groups made up specifically of highly skilled problem solvers.

Finally, attitude is a critical factor when it comes to problem-solving. The word problem in and of itself brings with it negative connotations. The most effective problem-solving can only be accomplished by approaching it with a positive attitude. Rather than ridding the organization of something negative (a problem), it is better to view it in terms of correcting a situation. In fact, the design thinking method as discussed above requires finding the opportunity that lies at the root of a problem, and is a very positive approach. Finding the opportunity takes something that seems inherently negative on the surface and turns it into something positive; a way to make improvements that will benefit the business and help it succeed.

Design Thinking is a design methodology that provides a solution-based approach to solving problems. It's extremely useful in tackling complex problems that are ill-defined or unknown, by understanding the human needs involved, by re-framing the problem in human-centric ways, by creating many ideas in brainstorming sessions, and by adopting a hands-on approach in prototyping and testing. Understanding these five stages of Design Thinking will empower anyone to apply the Design Thinking methods in order to solve complex problems that occur around us — in our companies, our countries, and even our planet. In essence, the Design Thinking process is iterative, flexible and focused on collaboration between designers and users, with an emphasis on bringing ideas to life based on how real users think, feel and behave. Thus, the problem solver is responsible for presenting the customer with multiple solutions before fixing on the preferred option. The fundamental steps involved in problem solving are:

- **DESCRIBE** – Define the problem
- **DISCOVER** – Collect pertinent information
- **DESIGN** – Generate alternative solutions
- **DECIDE** – Choose the best solution]
- **DELIVER** – Test and implement the solution

Design thinking tackles such complex problems by

- **Empathizing:** Understanding the human needs involved.
- **Defining:** Re-framing and defining the problem in human-centric ways.
- **Ideating:** Creating many ideas in ideation sessions.
- **Prototyping:** Adopting a hands-on approach in prototyping.
- **Testing:** Developing a prototype/solution to the problem.

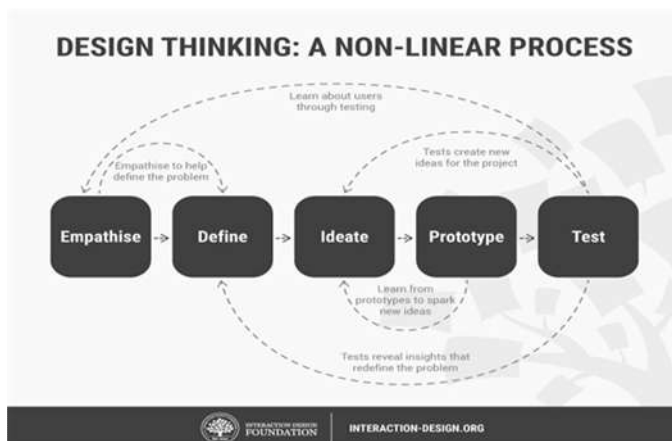


Figure 2. The Process of Design thinking

The design thinking approach is not about finding the most complex problems to solve, but about finding common needs within the organization and in the real world and coming up with solutions that fit those needs. In other words, when you solve a problem, be certain the solution isn't something fancy and intricate, but something that offers true value. Design thinking refers to creative strategies designers use during the process of designing. It is also an approach to resolve issues outside of professional design practice, such as in business and social contexts. Design thinking in business uses the designer's sensibility and methods to match people's needs with what is technologically feasible and what a viable business strategy can convert into customer value and market opportunity. Unlike analytical thinking, design thinking includes "building up" ideas, with few, or no, limits on breadth during a "brainstorming" phase. This helps reduce fear of failure in the participant(s) and encourages input and participation from a wide variety of sources in the ideation phases. The phrase "thinking outside the box" has been coined to describe one goal of the brainstorming phase and is encouraged, since this can aid in the discovery of hidden elements and ambiguities in the situation and discovering potentially faulty assumptions. Another frame work for design thinking has 8 steps as given below:

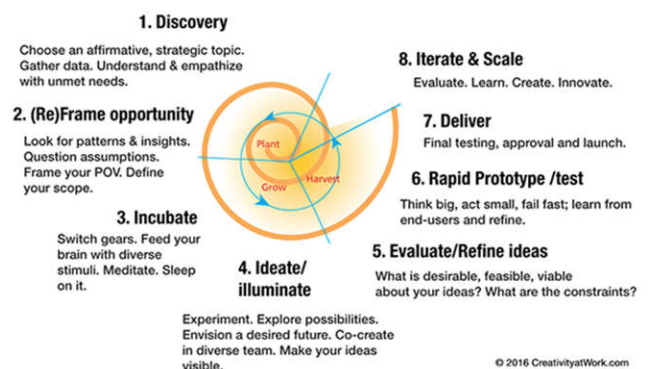


Figure 3. A Frame work for design thinking

This framework integrates classic creative problem-solving (CPS) with art and design methodologies

Design thinking offers a structured framework for understanding and pursuing innovation in ways that contribute to organic growth and add real value to your customers. The design thinking cycle involves observation to discover unmet needs within the context and constraints of a particular situation, framing the opportunity and scope of innovation, generating creative ideas, testing and refining solutions. Design thinking is also closely aligned to co-design, a form of design thinking where stakeholders associated with the product or service are directly involved in the design process at each stage. This process has been shown to produce more innovative solutions than more traditional perspectives of non-group based stakeholder consultation. Problems keep mounting so fast that we find ourselves taking short-cuts to temporarily alleviate the tension points – so we can move onto the next problem. In the process, we fail to solve the core of each problem we are dealt; thus we continuously get caught in the trap of a never-ending cycle that makes it difficult to find any real resolutions. Problem solving is the essence of what leaders exist to do. As leaders, the goal is to minimize the occurrence of problems – which means we must be courageous enough to tackle them head-on before circumstances force our hand.

We must be resilient in our quest to create and sustain momentum for the organization and people we serve. But the reality of the workplace finds us dealing with people that complicate matters with their corporate politicking, self-promotion, power-plays and ploys, and envy. Silos, lack of budgets and resources, and many other random acts or circumstances also make it harder for people to be productive. Competitors equally create problems for us when they unexpectedly convert a long-standing client, establish a new industry relationship, or launch a new product, brand or corporate strategy. Mergers & acquisitions keep us on our toes and further distract us from solving existing problems by creating new ones. One of the most influential 20th century philosophers of science, once eloquently stated, “All life is problem solving.” The best leaders are the best problem solvers. They have the patience to step back and see the problem at-hand through broadened observation; circular vision. They see around, beneath and beyond the problem itself. They see well-beyond the obvious. The most effective leaders approach problems through a lens of opportunity. Leaders who lack this wisdom approach problems with linear vision – thus only seeing the problem that lies directly in front of them and blocking the possibilities that lie within the problem. As such, they never see the totality of what the problem represents; that it can actually serve as an enabler to improve existing best practices, protocols and standard operating procedures for growing and competing in the marketplace. A leader must never view a problem as a distraction, but rather as a strategic enabler for continuous improvement and opportunities previously unseen.



Figure 4. Leadership is about problem solving

Whether you are a leader for a large corporation or a small business owner, here are the four most effective ways to solve problems. Problem solving requires transparent communication where everyone's concerns and points of view are freely expressed. I've seen one too many times how difficult it is to get to the root of the matter in a timely manner when people do not speak-up. Yes, communication is a fundamental necessity. That is why when those involved in the problem would rather not express themselves, fearing they may threaten their job and/or expose their own or someone else's wrong-doing – the problem solving process becomes a treasure hunt. Effective communication towards problem solving happens because of a leader's ability to facilitate an open dialogue between people who trust her intentions and feel that they are in a safe environment to share why they believe the problem happened as well as specific solutions. Once all voices have been heard and all points of view accounted for, the leader (with her team) can collectively map-out a path toward a viable and sustainable solution. Transparent communication requires you to break down silos and enable a boundary-less organization whose culture is focused on the betterment of a healthier whole.

Unnecessary silos invite hidden agendas rather than welcome efficient cross-functional collaboration and problem solving. Organizational silos are the root cause of most workplace problems and are why many of them never get resolved. This is why today's new workplace must embrace an entrepreneurial spirit where employees can freely navigate and cross-collaborate to connect the problem solving dots; where everyone can be a passionate explorer who knows their own workplace dot and its intersections. When you know your workplace dot, you have a much greater sense of your sphere of influence. Breaking down silos and communication barriers requires people to be open-minded. In the end, problem solving is about people working together to make the organization and the people it serves better. Therefore, if you are stuck working with people that are closed-minded, effective problem solving becomes a long and winding road of misery. There are many people in the workplace that enjoy creating unnecessary chaos so that their inefficiencies are never exposed. Discover the lifters and high-potential leaders within the organization and you will see examples of the benefits of being open-minded and how this eventually leads to more innovation and initiative. Open-minded people see beyond the obvious details before them and tackle problems head-on and get on with the business of driving growth and innovation.

Without strategy, change is merely substitution, not evolution. A solid strategy must be implemented in order to solve any problem. Many leaders attempt to dissect a problem rather than identify the strategy for change that lies within the problem itself. Effective leaders that are comfortable with problem solving always know how to gather the right people, resources, budget and knowledge from past experiences. They inspire people to lift their game by making the problem solving process highly collaborative; for them, it's an opportunity to bring people closer together. Effective leaders connect the dots and map-out a realistic plan of action in advance. They have a strategy that serves as the foundation for how the problem will be approached and managed. They anticipate the unexpected and utilize the strengths of their people to assure the strategy leads to a sustainable solution. You know that you have great leadership in your organization when problem solving becomes a seamless process that enables the people and the organization to grow and get better. If problem solving creates chaos, you may have a serious leadership deficiency.



Figure 5. Leadership by Example (enabler for growth and opportunity)

Problem solving is the greatest. This is why they say failure serves as the greatest lesson in business and in life. Be the leader that shows maturity, acts courageously, and requires accountability. Applying each of these lessons can help you

become a master problem solver. Each experience teaches us all new things. Embrace problem solving and the many unseen treasures it represents.

Data analysis and Conclusion

Businesses have been created to find solutions to human problems through organization and collective efforts. Problem solving has been a key organizational function ever since they came into existence. The environment, in which organizations have been created and exist, has changed considerably, over the last few decades. The present environment is very competitive with many organizations vying with one another for a piece of cake. The competitive pressures are so much that organizations have to strictly control their size where as their role has become more complicated and intensive. Organizations have been compelled to strategize their operations, so that they may continue and make progress in serving society. There are several challenges for organizations in this environment.

One of the current challenges critical for organization is their very existence. Organizations have to compete for their product and services in the market and this competition is severe. Since there are many players in the same category of Products and services or at best they are optional, companies have to be always vigilant, and control their cost of operations and product positioning. While cost pressures can be managed in a market where there is enough volume for all, Product position is very critical and always subject to competitive advertisements. While the TV and entertainment industry is smarting under the new found niche for advertisement, people are not complacent and resist unethical advertisement by rejecting products. So, the companies are challenged and with the mobile and internet services becoming very extensive and affordable, new challenges are seen in the horizon.

In the review of Literature section we have seen how companies are organizing though new Problem solving techniques. Organizations have to be flexible to make suitable changes to meet the new realities in terms of Product position, Design and operating convenience and service. The whole thing needs to be conceived and executed with speed before competition can catch up. Design thinking is one of the latest techniques adopted by organizations to meet this challenge. This thinking provides solution based customer approach and is found very effective. Various alternative methods, within the scope of Design thinking adopted by organizations also have been highlighted. This is a way forward for many organizations. Success of organizations will depend on how well they integrate design thinking with corporate strategy. Companies progressively are learning that corporate structure and strategy are closely linked in the design thinking. Leadership of company management is critical in implementing critical thinking and a habit of design thing inculcated in their habit and operating procedures. Problem solving capabilities are closely linked to leadership styles in the company and successful companies easily and quickly adapt a style suitable for participation by employees. The future is always made of the past. A constantly learning organization and a culture where every employee feels committed and contributes will see success.

Recommendation

Data Analysis and Conclusions give enough evidence that companies have to be very nimble footed. Companies and

markets evolve continuously and Leadership is challenged at every stage. So, it is clear that the challenge is on the Leadership of companies to direct and shape the future. Leaders are not only just charismatic but they solve critical problems for the company and step in wherever and whenever their services and contribution are needed.

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