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The Importance of Critical Thinking in Hotel Industry and Employee Development

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Abstract:
This study explores in detail the benefits of critical thinking in helping employees maximize their self-development and sense of success and analyse the reasons for the poor effect of hotel staff training. Based on a survey of 200 employees in 5 hotels of 4 star in China. In addition to referencing already developed ideas about the stages of improving critical thinking, this study provides additional explanations to deliver the approach.
Drawing on self-determination theory (SDT), this study shows that critical thinking has a positive and significant effect on the self-development and sense of the success of employees. Based on SDT, this study deepens our understanding of the process of how critical thinking leads to self-development, and using critical thinking is a prerequisite for improving training.

Keywords: Critical thinking, self-determination theory, hotel training

1. Introduction

Hotel training is an effective way to help employees improve service quality. The service attitude and quality of the trained staff were significantly better. Trained employees focus on the task on task and consider offering a little extra to please and keep customers loyal.

The trainee's productivity, behaviours, and integral of mood and success might be measured before the training occurs and then once again after it has taken place. This demonstrates the quality and effectiveness of the training provided and enables businesses to either continue doing more of the same or pivot their approach.

The consequence of training is inefficient, which can cause serious problems for the organization. Hotels conduct training to help them build a stronger, more resilient organization and retain and engage employees. If the training does not produce these results, it is probably ineffective training. Ineffective training may be due to the approach of training.

First of all, in many hotels, training is scripted. Employees do not need to think, and no self-thinking process is difficult to produce action. Secondly, many hotels still only stay in the teacher-type training mode; employees only need to listen without the opportunity to express opinions, which also fails to motivate employees to act.

The human resource training manager of the hotel should adopt the way of critical thinking in the training process to let the employees have a deeper understanding of knowledge. This will give employees a chance to really participate in the training session, reduce emotion and make the training more open. "According to the National Council for Excellence in Critical thinking, it is means of positively conceptualizing, applying, analysing, synthesizing and assessing information collected through experience, observation or reflection, as a guide to taking actions" (Jones, 2016).

Critical thinking has become the most required skill in the 21st-century workplace. "When more than 400 senior HR professionals were asked to list in a survey the most important skills their employees will need in the next five years, critical thinking ranked first, far ahead of innovation in information technology" (Chartrand, Ishikawa & Flander, 2013). Criticality has become a key element of success in the workplace because it enables employees to see situations from different perspectives and respond to actions from multiple perspectives.

The hotel industry claims to encourage staff to develop higher level skills and critical thinking but instead uses the lecture format, which will not enable staff to think critically. Critical thinking is the appearance of formulating inferences, calculating likelihoods, and making decisions. Meanwhile, it is also a reflection of the ability to solve problems. Therefore, hotel training ought to encourage employees to express their thinking from different angles on the training subjects.

1.1. Thinking

Thinking is the basis of all cognitive activities and is unique to humans. It involves manipulating and analyzing information received from the real environment and the process of processing information. Such manipulation and analysis are carried out through abstraction, reasoning, imagination, problem-solving, judgment, and decision-making. The mind is the process by which the brain thinks while processing information, such as concept formation, problem-solving, reasoning, and decision-making.

The history of research on thinking depends upon the time when human beings recognized that they think. Thinking is one of the characteristics that distinguish human beings from other creatures. Thinking is the manipulation or transformation of some inner representation (Halpern. 2003). When we start to think, we use our knowledge to achieve something. In this sense, the ability to think is necessary for life because thinking is linked to purpose. On the other hand, Human beings have relationships in society and therefore need to think about when they relate to each other.

Descartes argued that thinking is reasoning and that reason is a chain of simple ideas linked by applying strict rules of logic (McGregor, 2007). Thinking and deed are mutually supportive and complement each other. From this point of view, such a presentation of behaviours and critical thinking is interrelated, and it is possible to combine them.

1.2. Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is based on universal intellectual values of clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, evidence, good reasons, and fairness. Ennis (1991), in his research, adds decision-making when he describes critical thinking as reasonable. Hence what you believe leads to what you do.

Halpern (1999) draws particular attention to evaluating the thinking process while making decisions or solving problems. Critical thinking refers to the possibility of using cognitive skills or strategies to achieve a desired outcome. Critical thinking is the result of the manifestation of the goals of individual thinking.

According to the Critical Thinking Cooperation (2006), critical thinking is an ability beyond memorization. The workplace is a large platform where different people collaborate for a common goal. For example, in the hotel industry, in the same hotel, employees from different cultures, backgrounds, experiences, and characteristics communicate with each other for the organization to achieve maximum profit and achieve goals. The workplace is made efficient by communication.

However, given the diversity and the need to achieve goals, employees need to communicate effectively in training, which applies beyond traditional thinking processes. Questioning is the cornerstone of critical thinking, and critical thinking is the source of knowledge formation. Therefore, in training, trainers should encourage employees to express their different views and understandings according to different training topics. Trainers should show and discuss different views with employees, and employees will be encouraged to think critically in this process.

2. Critical Thinking in Training

In textbook-driven classrooms (Sharma & Elbow, 2000), this situation is disturbing to contemporary educators, so they suggest that they prefer the latest models and methods because these models and methods are more effective in guiding individual thinking, and therefore need to reduce the traditional way of 'listening' in hotel training.

Let's use an example to understand the point above. In the workplace, employees have different personalities. However, there are also many people who attend a training session with people from different cultures and backgrounds, and their opinions may differ. If the training is just 'input,' the trainer tells the employees to listen without discussing or expressing what is said. This can be considered ineffective training.

Training effectiveness measures the impact of training on the trainee's knowledge, skills, and performance. Training depends on the employees' needs to carry on. The purpose of training is to nurture the individual and help them realize their full potential and goals. However, if the training merely adopts the mode of listening to make employees passively accept information and knowledge, it will greatly reduce their understanding of the training contents, and employees difficult to take action without sufficient understanding after the training.

When a trainer edifies employees to think critically, employees think critically. They are encouraged to think for themselves, question hypotheses, analyse and synthesize the events, and go one step further by developing new hypotheses and testing them against the facts. Questioning is the cornerstone of critical thinking, which, in turn, is the source of knowledge formation and, as such, should be taught as a framework for all learning.

Critical thinking should be used in hotel training. Critical thinking can enable employees to analyse, evaluate, and explain the training content and knowledge of the organization and apply creative thinking to form their own opinions, solve problems or draw conclusions. Therefore, the purpose of critical thinking is to promote independent thinking, personal autonomy, and rational judgment in thought and action. The purpose of doing so is to achieve the purpose of training, which is to improve employees' working attitude and efficiency to a certain extent. If employees only passively receive information, knowledge, and opinions, it is difficult for them to make behavioural changes.

In the same way, some scholars have found that "thinking involves some of the following skills: assessment and problem solving, reflection and self-actualization" (Schiering, 2016). These strengths are also what organizations expect their employees to be. Organizations expect to train employees to be productive. The ability to solve problems is, therefore, essential in increasing productivity. In addition, when employees have the ability to solve problems, their behaviours will become positive. A positive attitude, fun, and dedication of employees will help companies obtain and retain top talent.

Kurfiss (1988) quotes Henry Ford as saying, "Thinking is hard work, and that's why only a few people do it." The organization attaches importance to the cultivation of thinking skills in the training of employees, which would help employees to have a deeper understanding of job responsibilities and problem-solving ability to tap their potential, which may also enable them to perform well at the workplace.

3. Benefits of Critical Thinking in the Workplace

3.1. Critical Thinking Fosters Effective Communication

According to Facione (1990), critical thinking is linked to cognitive skills and subskills, such as the ability to communicate. Communication skills that include categorizing, decoding meaning, and analysing involve examining the idea. According to the characteristics of the hotel workplace, the hotel is a large service place where different people work together for a common goal in a common environment. Employees from different cultures, backgrounds, and experiences interact with each other to maximize profits for the organization and meet the growing needs of the business world. Every single day, there is a lot of communication that goes into the job to talk to customers to meet their needs, to solve their problems, to communicate from one role to another, and from one position to another. It can be concluded that the service of the hotel is generated by communication,

However, to achieve the purpose, employees need to communicate effectively to achieve service standards and objectives. It requires an example to understand the above points by discarding and transcending the application of traditional thinking processes. In the workplace, employees have different personalities. However, hotel guests come from different cultures and backgrounds, and ineffective communication may lead to unsuccessful service and discomfort due to communication. This again becomes a barrier to communication.

Some employees create an unpleasant atmosphere in the workplace because of communication. This is the hallmark of non-critical thinkers, who generally tend to avoid communicating with people whose ideas they do not agree with. However, critical thinkers are great communicators. They understand the importance of cross-cultural communication in business and tend to build successful relationships with everyone. They think critically about how dysfunctional relationships can make workplace functions ineffective and chaotic and try to break through barriers to create a working atmosphere.

As a listener, Chase and Shamo write, critical thinking will help you identify unstated assumptions. As a speaker, it will help you formulate precise statements and embody your ideas. So, one conclusion is that critical thinking puts individual ideas in a broader context, showing how they relate to other things you already know or believe." Thus, critical thinking can assist in choosing the right words for a better language statement, especially in hotel service.

3.2. Critical Thinking Enables Better Decisions Making

Every day, the work content of the hotel is very complex. Employees and managers have to make countless decisions in the workplace for the benefit of the organization and the future. An example of a decision could be listening to the various outputs of employees on issues important to the hotel and deciding on the best suggestions to choose. Since employees work on the front line, they are the most aware of guest needs and requirements.

Other examples can be identifying. For example, the employees can find that the new dishes provided by the hotel restaurant are not liked by the guests, and in the process of developing the new dishes, the catering culture of the hotel customers may be ignored. Perhaps in the process of launching new dishes, there is a lack of survey of the hotel's customers. Therefore, it is decided to cease further production to reduce the huge loss and waste of food for raw materials.

Employees can be replete with full of ideas, but sometimes these ideas are simplified and ignored by management without thorough evaluation, which leads to the perilous result. Beyond that, the process of turning ideas into decisions sometimes comes with not being understood. This limits employees' ability to make good decisions further. At this point, the role of critical thinking has a crucial connotation. Critical thinking enables employees to make good decisions after coming to a smart and clear conclusion.

Hotels are complex workplaces where decisions are often made quickly, resulting in flawed decisions that sometimes do not lead to the desired results or breakthrough performance. Making decisions can be a stressful task for employees, especially in hotel workplaces where the most important task is to choose the best alternative from a myriad of angles. In other words, the fact that decisions are made in more than one domain, such as family, friends, workplace, neighbours, and society, when it comes to making important decisions in these realms, they may set up their thought processes in a similar way, and critical thinking may be more helpful for individuals to make rational and effective decisions in different domains.

When a decision is accompanied by critical thinking, the results are positive because critical thinking skills enable the decision maker to analyse and evaluate the situation several times, and then compare the theory with past experience, and finally make a decision after careful consideration. Paul and Elder view, "When critical thinking is applied to decision making, it enhances the rationality of decision making by elevating decision patterns to consciousness" (Paul and Elder, 2013, p. 184). In addition, critical thinking can guide one to revise decisions when needed.

3.3. Critical Thinking Assists in Problem-Solving

In the daily work of the hotel, there will be a variety of problems in the workplace, such as conflicts, ethical issues, executive decisions, job role ambiguity, and many more. Some problems are easy to solve. However, some problems are difficult to solve and cause disappointment and dissatisfaction.

Let's look at an example to understand this. Many times, disagreements among employees can lead to negative results, such as poor work performance, negative work atmosphere, etc. These negative behaviours can have serious consequences. Employees may be unable to deal with disputes independently, which may cause tension in the relationship between employees, deteriorate customer service quality, or some violations. Such conflicts will be endless until employees who practice highly critical thinking are likely to get out of this dilemma.

Rickards discusses the nature of problems and divides them into two types, namely:

- Close-ended, and
- Open-ended

He writes: "The answer to a closed question is a logical consequence of the nature of the question." Open-ended questions do have no right answer because different people see them in different ways or because of differences in understanding the nature of the problem (Rickards, 1997). While the problem can have different qualities, solving it requires thinking beyond the logical method, and this thinking is achieved through critical thinking.

Critical thinking includes many approaches to problem-solving. The first step is to identify the problem by gathering as much background information as possible. The second step starts with the solution to the problem, identifying relevant prior knowledge that is applicable to the task at hand and monitoring, including tracking or concentration. Butterfield believes problems can be solved 'intuitively or systematically' in two ways. When you solve a problem by intuition, people will immediately react instinctively but not follow specific procedures and systems to solve the problem of the solution from a prior problem and apply it to the current situation (Butterfield, 2016). Paul (1989) studied the adaptability of critical thinking tendencies in learning environments. Paul suggests that self-directed thinking can be taught. He maintained that critical thinking consists of skills such as spotting conclusions, examining premises, forming conclusions, and diagnosing fallacies. Therefore, he proposes that critical thinking should be structured as 'disciplined, self-directed thinking.'

The final step is to monitor the solution, which ultimately leads to the resolution of the problem. In his book *With Your Faith Walker*, Goetsch concluded: "critical mind will enable you to become a better problem solver. This is important because today's artificial intelligence is constantly replacing human jobs. However, the only constant is that our minds cannot be easily replaced because problem-solving is the key to success in the competitive workplace (Goetsch, 2008).

4. Conclusion

From the above discussion, critical thinking is undoubtedly necessary for every realm of life, especially for professions that occupy people. For employees to learn critical thinking in training, organizations must be committed to developing a sense of criticism of employees in training. Bareham suggests, "If we can relate new information to our existing knowledge and put it into an accurate context, we can express meaning and significance if we can understand it" (Bareham, 2012). Therefore, trainers must encourage employees to express their own opinions and propositions. Contextualization is beneficial because it provides previously unrealized results and outcomes, thus providing new ideas to continue to find better solutions to make positive actions. When there is substantial relevant knowledge or information, the connection will be formed, and it is possible to positively influence the behaviours of employees through hotel training to move forward with the result.

Critical thinking forms thoughts and beliefs related to employee actions, decisions, and choices. Critical thinking governs an individual's automatic thinking and empowers the individual to learn, explore, and resist bias, fallacies, and errors. Critical thinking forms thoughts and beliefs related to employee actions, decisions, and choices. Critical thinking governs an individual's automatic thinking and empowers the individual to learn, explore, and resist bias, fallacies, and errors and work hard for it. Critical thinking teaches employees to consider the events happening in the workplace from multiple angles and to think and make decisions without prejudice, which can effectively improve their problem-solving ability and develop their competitiveness in the workplace.

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