

Appendix two

ADDITIONAL CASES

On the following pages there are a number of small case study problems on which you can try out your creative problem solving skills. Use whatever aspect of the CPS process seems most applicable to the case in hand

DA International

DA manufactures electrical goods in Malaysia and supplies them to agents and distributors in a number of different South-East Asia markets. Recently it has decided it would like to open a manufacturing plant in Europe so that it can access nearby markets. It is trying to decide between a site in the UK and one in France. It is presently trying to enumerate the facts it would require to help it deliberate and choose between alternatives.

Question

What facts do you think the company should try to obtain and how should it set about obtaining them?

Recruiting management trainees

Management has a policy that all new graduates joining a company should start at the bottom of the organisation and gradually work their way up to more important jobs. This policy has been adopted because of the complex nature of the business and the perceived need that all executives should fully understand the workings of the business in detail. The firm anticipates that its management trainees would hold a first level managerial post within five years of joining the company.

Many new graduates who have joined the company have left after a very short space of time because other companies do not impose such a stringent requirement on their new recruits.

Question

What action do you think management can take to rectify this situation?

London furniture company

The firm is a furniture company situated in an area of London where the majority of the population is made up of adults aged between 21–40. The company manufactures and markets furniture to the local population. Some years ago the firm designed a new

type of furniture which proved very successful, but recently its sales have taken an unprecedented tumble.

The initial statement of the problem is:

- The firm wants to increase its furniture sales volume and is looking for ways of doing this.

Using the boundary examination technique the firm restructures the problem perception as follows:

- The firm highlights the words *furniture* and *looking*. In the case of the *furniture* it is felt that there are hidden assumptions about shape, size and style. In the case of the word *looking* it is felt that a more proactive stance is in order and that one needs to create ways rather than just look for them.

This leads to a new problem redefinition:

- How can the firm improve the style of the furniture in order to stimulate people to buy it.

The next step is to generate some insights or possible solutions to the problem. The Gordon–Little variation of brainstorming is chosen for this purpose. In this case only the leader of the creativity session knows the real problem and introduces the problem to the group in the first place in abstract form. The problem is gradually introduced through a number of stages of revelation – moving from the abstract to the concrete and original problem. In the final stage the group re-examines all previously generated ideas and tries to turn them into tangible ideas relating to the original problem.

The following episodes ensued:

1 Think of ways to improve something:

make it larger

make it smaller

polish it

change its shape

add more features

make it interchangeable

use new technology

2 Think of ways to improve something in order to stimulate people:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| put wheels on it | make it easy to pick up |
| make it lighter in weight | make it curvy |
| add some sugar | add some colours |
| attach a winning lottery ticket to it | use new material |
| give it a face lift | |

3 Original problem: How can the firm improve the style of the furniture in order to stimulate people to buy it:

make it of stainless steel (from ‘polish it’)

use computers to design it (from ‘use new technology’)

design a chair which can also be used as a small table (from ‘make it interchangeable’)

paint it with an unusual type of varnish (from ‘add some colours’)

create a table lamp from wire (from ‘use new materials’)

While the firm felt it had generated some useful insights it decided that it would use the morphological analysis approach as well to see if this would produce further new ideas (Table A2.1).

Table A2.1 Morphological analysis matrix

| <i>Shapes</i> | <i>Kinds</i> | <i>Material</i> | <i>Function</i> | <i>Style</i> |
|---------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| oval | Chairs | Wood | sleeping | period |
| Square | Beds | Metal | eating | deco |
| Round | Tables | Plastic | resting | modern |
| rectangle | Desks | Stone | sitting | Italian |
| pentagon | Clocks | Glass | reading | western |
| hexagon | Stools | Leather | thinking | campaign |
| cylinder | TVs | Foam | entertaining | regency |

The next step combined two or more sub-elements of the matrix to find useful ideas. The following were suggested:

- A circular, glass television with four screens capable of revolving for entertainment.
- A modern style plastic chair with storage space under the seat and behind the back.

- A hexagonal stone TV cabinet.
- An oval metal imitation regency style kitchen table.

The next stage involved evaluating the ideas in terms of their time and money requirements. Ideas were categorised into three groups: simple, hard and difficult. Simple ideas are those which can be put into action with the minimum of expenditure of both time and money. Hard ideas require more expenditure of time and money, while difficult ideas require substantial expenditure of time and money. Using this method ideas were classified as shown in Table A2.2.

Table A2.2 Evaluating the ideas

| <i>Simple</i> | <i>Hard</i> | <i>Difficult</i> |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| Paint it with an unusual type of varnish | Oval metal regency kitchen table | Use computers to design furniture |
| Design a chair that can be used as a small table as well | Modern plastic chair with storage space | Hexagonal stone TV cabinet |
| Create a table lamp out of wire | Circular glass TV with screen along edges | |
| Make it of stainless steel | | |

This led to further possible practical solutions:

- Design furniture out of cheap material (wire, glass, etc.).
- Design strange shapes and styles (hexagonal, triangular, etc.).
- Invest in computer technology

Question

Evaluate the methods adopted by the firm in this instance.

Pink skirts

A manufacturer has had to stop production of skirts because there is no place to store the skirts. The problem is caused primarily by the fact that there is a large stock of unsold pink skirts which have been in the warehouse for a considerable amount of time taking up costly space. The firm has considered finding extra premises for storage but this does not really solve the problem. The pink skirts, 350,000 of them,

cost around £5 each to produce. This means that not only is the firm having critical storage problems but it has around £1.75 m tied up in stocks!

The problem is so acute that immediate remedying of the situation is essential.

Question

What action should the firm take?

Universal creativity

It is 3575 and the Androids have taken over control of all commercial enterprise on the earth and in most parts of the universe which has been explored to date by mankind and other intelligent life-forms. Androids run all the businesses and all intelligent life-forms enjoy an existence of enforced idleness and pleasure. Disease has become a thing of the past and most earthling beings now live to at least 110 years of age. Moreover, poverty as it was known in the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries on earth has disappeared. Affluence abounds everywhere and all human beings have a standard of living at least equivalent to the very richest people in the twenty-first century on earth.

The Androids are looking for ways to provide new entertainment for human beings and other intelligent forms on distant galaxies. Time travel is now possible, though it has only been experienced by relatively few intelligent beings who live on the planet A6183 in Galaxy 918. In addition, instant means of transportation over distances of thousands of light years has been made possible during the last decade as a result of new technologies.

Question

Can you think of any ideas which might be helpful for the Androids in their search for new ways to entertain intelligent life-forms throughout the galaxies?

Taylorism revisited

‘The young people seem to like it but old hands resist it and any newcomers over 40 don’t seem to stay long’, John said dryly.

‘Yes and I think we need to have a spread of all ages in the organisation. People have experiences from all walks of life that have relevance to banking. It isn’t just young inexperienced people we need, it is older ones too’, Jayne answered.

‘I blame this “pay-related” work business. Banking is a profession; it isn’t just about selling services. We need to offer people advice about their needs not sell them things that they do not want.’ John spoke from thirty years’ experience of banking.

‘True, but you know banking is more competitive nowadays. The invasion of the building societies into our industry has made it much more competitive. If we don’t keep abreast of competition, we’ll all lose our jobs’, Jayne smiled.

‘Well, I’ve only a few years to go. But I don’t agree with what is happening. In my younger days one joined the bank for a secure job. A hire and fire mentality seems to be the norm these days’, John replied.

‘Well, that’s not really true, is it?’, Jayne asked, somewhat irritated by John’s negativity. ‘The only difference that I can see is that those who work harder for the organisation get better rewards. And, in my opinion, that is how it should be.’

Question

How might banks seek to achieve their multiple objectives of professionalism and competitiveness?

St Jude’s

St Jude’s college stands on a hill overlooking the M6 not far from Wigan. It is, or rather was at one time, an establishment for the training of priests. In more recent years its extremely spacious accommodation has been host to a number of local events to do with ecclesiastical matters, but its role as a training establishment has long since been defunct.

The driveway to St Jude’s, nearly a quarter of a mile in length, is bordered by dense rhododendron bushes which hide extensive gardens to their rear. Beyond the building itself there are many acres of woodlands and even more extensive gardens. The building is imposing. Its ivy clad walls, huge front door and gothic towers making the visitor tremble with apprehension when first it is seen. Inside the building there is a maze of corridors, rooms of all sizes, no less than five different floors and a basement, a chapel and extensive well equipped toilet and bathroom facilities. In addition there is a very large kitchen equipped with modern cooking equipment.

Of course, St Jude’s is a problem for the archdiocese. Expenditure on maintaining the buildings and gardens far exceeds the meagre revenues which it generates. The Archbishop is opposed to the selling of the building but wants to find some way of keeping it and using it for ecclesiastical purposes, while at the same time trying to at least balance income and expenditure.

Question

What suggestions can you come up with in this case?

Super-liners

The 'queens' were the largest and heaviest ships ever built. Their working lives were curtailed by the advent of jet-powered air passenger services across the Atlantic. It was not the end of large passenger ships, however, for a new type of holiday became fashionable – the cruise holiday. Smaller, though very substantial ships were built to ply cruise routes around the Mediterranean, the Caribbean and other attractive holiday areas of the world. Modern day cruise liners are like floating hotels, offering many different forms of entertainment, accommodation and ranges of prices to suit the needs of customers.

Recently, a new breed of cruise liner has appeared on the scene. These are super-liners, larger than the old 'queens' and designed to be much more spacious. They even boast golf-courses! These are mini floating cities, not just floating hotels. Even-larger super-liners are planned and there seems to be no limit to how large these vessels can be.

Question

How might the new super-liners be suitably equipped to make best use of their size to provide entertainment and other facilities for customers?

Place marketing

Liverpool developed as a seaport during the nineteenth century. It was famed as a departure point for transatlantic traffic. One of the main attractions today is the Albert Dock, which has been redeveloped as a tourist attraction. It features a museum, art gallery, shops and restaurant facilities. Liverpool is a city with first class Victorian architecture. The waterfront, which incorporates the Pier Head and the Liver buildings, is a landmark as well-known as the New York skyline or Sydney Harbour Bridge. The liver birds are the city's logo, and Liverpool Football Club and the Beatles have enjoyed international fame exceeded by none.

However, when it comes to commercial development into the twenty-first century the story is somewhat different. While Manchester, less than 40 miles away, boasts an international airport second only to Heathrow in terms of importance in the UK, Liverpool's airport is much smaller and has regular flights mainly to the Isle of Man, Eire and Ulster. While Manchester was able to get permission to build a second runway, in the face of much opposition from local residents, Liverpool can hardly make best use of the facilities it has already. Yet Liverpool airport does have

considerable potential for development as a centre for serving the North West of England.

In the 1970s there was sustained government intervention in the area of urban regeneration and place marketing. Development area status was granted to some areas of the country and special Enterprise Zones were established where there was high unemployment and failing industries. Such areas were able to offer financial inducements and other incentives in order to persuade firms to relocate there. Today place marketing is an integral aspect of urban regeneration policies which strive to rebuild and redevelop local, regional and national economies. Over the last ten years a number of towns, regions, and cities have undertaken expensive marketing campaigns in order to promote themselves, and amongst these are Manchester and Liverpool.

Questions

What sort of things do you think the marketing of places should aim to promote? How might the marketing of a city like Manchester be different from that of Liverpool?

What they don't teach you at business schools

Business schools teach leadership, planning, control, decision making and problem solving. But is it this that enables aspiring executives to climb the organisational ladder? It will be remembered that Blake and Mouton in the book the *Managerial Grid* (1964) noted that the people most likely to get promoted were those who paid most attention to the work and least attention to their colleagues – although the book suggested that attention to both was the best way to manage. Perhaps there is a darker side, then, to success in the workplace – an aspect which is not recorded anywhere in writing and only spoken of in whispers, out of earshot of colleagues.

Of course, murder and assault is not common in the workplace – at least not in the physical sense of the words. However, metaphorically speaking, the reality is that this is often what does happen. People deliberately tell lies, or fail to tell all, simply to give themselves an advantage. Moreover, if one spots that a colleague is trying to make a threatening move against one then it is only fair play that one should anticipate the oncoming blow and mount a counter offensive. Maligning one's direct competitors for promotion in the workplace and plagiarising the ideas of others are seen as part of the game. After all, work is only a kind of game and no one really needs to get hurt – do they? And perhaps the most important skill of one-upmanship is

deceit – convincing others that you really do know what you are talking about when you don't understand the subject matter at all.

Then there are 'cliques' and 'hole in the corner' meetings. Managing cliques is a world of its own. Off to the pub every lunch-time or after work to talk shop – or rather plot and counter-plot against other groups and individuals in the organisation. And, of course, kidding the other members of the clique that you really do have their personal interests at heart.

Most of the foregoing relates to being adept at political manoeuvring: the art of manipulating balance, power, rights, responsibilities, relationships and resources for the benefit of oneself, with no regard for its effect on others, is the name of the game.

Question

It is not advocated here that one should apply the above in an organisation; rather, it is argued that – being aware that such things do take place in organisations – one needs to know how to deal with these organisational misdemeanours when they occur. Can you suggest how you would deal with the above 'problems' in a manner that avoids meeting like with like?

Neural networks

Neural networks are not a new idea. We can trace some of the fundamental ideas behind neural networks in the work of the distinguished psychologist William James more than a century ago. The field of neural networks, and the development of neural network tools for personal computers, has developed rapidly since 1987. The list of applications has expanded from biological and psychological uses to include applications as diverse as biomedical waveform classification, music composition and prediction of the commodity futures market.

A neural network is constructed by connecting many simple computing elements that, as the name suggests, resemble the neurons found in the human brain. Each neuron has a single output whose value depends on the value of each input multiplied by a weight factor:

Input 1 ? weighting ?

Input 2 ? weighting ? NEURON (summates) ? output

Input 3 ? weighting ?

This weighting can have a value of form anything from -1 to +1. If its value is zero, then that particular input will make no contribution to the neuron's eventual output. If, for example, the weighting is 0.01 then the contribution will be only marginal. The neuron produces an analogue output that varies continuously between a minimum and maximum value.

Such neurons can be connected in a multitude of ways. However, the pattern seeming most productive now is the 'three-layer feed-forward network'. It is called 'feed-forward' because each connection is towards the output of the network. A feed-backward network is where the output of a neuron can be directly or indirectly connected to one of its own inputs.

A network is not capable of predicting anything until it has been trained. Again there are several ways that training can be done, but the most promising appears to be supervised learning by back-propagation. Supervised learning means that the network is taught by presenting it with both the input data and the output this data is supposed to produce. Each record has to be presented to the network in turn and the desired output compared with the actual output.

Back-propagation is a particular algorithm that is used to adjust the weights on every neuron back down the network to minimise the error. Once the weights have been adjusted, the next record is presented and the process is repeated. This is repeated for all cases again until the error for every record drops below a certain target threshold. The algorithm incorporates what are termed 'learning rate' and 'momentum' factors. How fast a network learns will depend on the 'learning rate' and the 'momentum'. The 'learning rate' determines to what degree the weights can be varied each time and the 'momentum' adds a smoothing factor to stop the network oscillating around a solution. Optimum values have to be determined by experiment.

Besides being able to learn number patterns, neural network programs are also able to learn binary data patterns.

Question

Suggest application for neural network programs in management and business.

Oil crisis revisited

Some of us will recall the oil crisis of the early 1970s. One day the availability of oil seemed endless and cars buzzed tirelessly along the newly built motorways. The next day we were told that oil was a precious commodity that had to be conserved. Output

in the principal producing countries in the Middle East was restricted to conserve supplies, a 50 m.p.h. speed restriction was imposed on the motorways and the price of oil rocketed on international markets. Businesses and private citizens felt the pinch on their pickets and inflation took on proportions that had not been seen for many years. Since that time the coming on-line of North Sea oil and the discovery of potential oil deposits in other areas has taken the sting out of the 'need to conserve' argument. Nevertheless, motor vehicle manufacturers have taken note of the need to conserve and introduced more efficient engines and are actively researching for ways of improving fuel consumption requirements even further. There is also, of course, a drive towards finding viable alternative fuel sources – such as that provided by solar power and electrical battery power.

However, it seems inevitable that during the course of the next few centuries oil resources will eventually dry up. The resources are finite relative to consumption. It takes much longer for Nature to create oil resources than it does for the human race to consume them.

Question

Imagine the time when oil eventually runs out. What will be the implications of a world without oil? What substitutes need to be found that will provide for the myriads of uses of oil – quite apart from fuel and lubrication for the petrol engine?

Homes for the Elderly

The traditional providers of homes for the elderly have been local authorities. They have managed such homes successfully for many years. The funding of the running of such homes has been from the accumulated wealth and retirement incomes of those making use of the facilities afforded by the homes. Any shortfalls in terms of costs have been met from the local authority budget, which itself is a mixture of money collected from rates or council tax and a grant made available from central government.

During the 1980s and 1990s local authorities were squeezed with respect to their spending power. Central government not only effectively reduced the size of grants made available to local authorities but also prevented them from raising revenues from local ratepayers in the form of increased council tax. This led to local authorities seeking to make cuts in expenditure wherever possible and to look for more efficient and economic ways of dealing with the services it had to provide.

As we know, specialisation is thought to lead to increased efficiency through the effects of the well known 'experience curve'. The more experience you have of something the more proficient it is thought you become at doing that something and the more cost-effective is the expenditure of your effort – or so the theory goes. Many local authorities therefore decided to look for private providers of these services and to share the cost of running the homes with providers who had management experience and skills which exceeded their own. In this way it was believed that better use could be made of the proportion of the budget that they had available for these services.

Among those local authorities which opted to seek help from the private sector to run its retirement homes was Belford council. It enlisted the help of a specialised company called 'Homes for the Elderly' to manage a number of its homes. The council retained ownership of the premises and agreed that a set amount of money would be made available to the company on an annual grant basis to subsidise the running of the homes.

The arrangement ran reasonably well for a number of years. However, central government cuts and rate capping eventually forced the council to reconsider all its expenditure. At a meeting of the council it was decided to cut the grant made to Homes for the Elderly completely. The chief executive of Homes for The Elderly was stunned by the news. The local authority had in the past paid its employees in these homes above the average going rates in terms of salaries and wages. This was a policy which he had maintained after taking on the contract. The grant made by the local authority was sufficient to enable him to do so. The withdrawal of the grant, he felt, forced him to review the situation and he immediately announced that all wages and salaries of staff employed at the homes would be very substantially reduced. Various figures were floated about, but of course the chief executive had to take account of the impending legislation regarding the minimum wage.

The response from employees was not really surprising. Talk of strike action ensued and this in turn led to the chief executive threatening to send out dismissal notices to those workers who opted for strike action. Indeed the whole situation looked quite awkward and incapable of solution.

Questions

Suggest how the issue might be resolved. What actions might have been taken by both the council and the company to avert the crisis in the first instance?

The hinterlands

‘Majorca, Alicante, Malaga, Biarritz, the Canaries, Goa, Madrid, Paris, Barcelona, and so on: that is where holidaymakers seem to want to go to. They enjoy the bright lights or the beaches; they bask in the sun, swim in the pool and eat English food. All of these things can be done back home at a fraction of the price.’ Rebecca sighed.

‘And when they come home they often complain that where they have been is not that much different to Brighton or London or Blackpool.’

‘Culture, is what holidaying is all about’, Marianne said knowingly. ‘Experiencing different cultures. Take Turkey, for example. If you go to Turkey you can visit Kusadasi and just up the road are the ruins at Ephesus. Now that is a sight worth seeing. It’s all about past civilisations and it makes you appreciate the history of the world.’

‘Same in Egypt’, Martha added. ‘There’s the Pyramids, the Valley of the Kings and all those tombs.’

‘I don’t think that culture is just history’, Rebecca rejoined. ‘Culture is about people of today as well. Take Turkey, for example, how can you really get to know what Turkish people are like? What are their homes like? What sort of interests and values do they have?’

‘I knew someone who went to France for a holiday. She took an apartment in a small town thirty miles south of Paris. She stayed there for a month and learned a lot about the culture’, Martha interjected.

‘But that’s France. I mean everyone speaks French – we learn it at school. But who speaks Turkish!’, Marianne contributed.

‘Hmmm. I see what you mean’, Martha mused.

Question

Assuming that there was a sizeable market segment of holidaymakers who would be interested in going on holiday to find out more about local cultures what could tour operators do to exploit such a marketing opportunity?

The bully

‘I cannot put up with him any longer. I think I will leave – or go sick.’ Bill addressed the door, as if it were his best friend. ‘Ever since he arrived he has been persecuting

me. It is not as if I did anything wrong. He just doesn't like my approach to the job and wants me to go. He is rude, arrogant, pigheaded and at times plain stupid. I cannot stand the way he looks at me as if I am an idiot.'

The door remained firmly shut.

'Then there is his face – he looks like a criminal. Give him a machine-gun and he would make a fitting gangster.'

Bill looked through the window. It was raining and darkness was about to descend. His desk was covered with memos from the target of his aggression, demanding improved performance, correcting his letters which had never even left the building, and announcing a new schedule of meetings to take place at 7.00 p.m. after work on Tuesdays and Thursdays for the next six weeks.

Bill's new boss had arrived two weeks ago. He had summoned the whole of his staff – some 90 employees – and told them that he was going to issue new contracts with new terms and working conditions. There had not even been a murmur. All staff were white collar workers and none belonged to a union.

'I expect to make you all accountable', the new boss had said. 'Anyone who is failing in his work will receive my personal attention.'

In only his second week in the job the boss had hauled Bill's friend Alan over the coals for something over which he had no control. 'If that happens again, you're fired', he had said.

Bill sat hunched up over a coffee. Alan had left on the spot after the boss had given him a public dressing down for forgetting to sign a letter to a client. Now Bill had lost his best friend, though there were others with whom he had a good rapport.

Bill looked through the window again. The boss's white BMW was parked on the double yellow lines. The telephone rang. 'Come to my office immediately was the message.' Bill went. The boss sat smug behind his desk. 'I don't like the way you dress', he said. 'You look more like a hawker than an executive. Get a new suit and do something about your hair. It's too long.' Bill left the office. A cold wind blew through the open window. He felt as if he could take no more.

Question

How can Bill and his colleagues get to grips with the new boss?

The only one

At tea breaks Sally preferred to sit alone. She was the only female computer programmer in the building. It wasn't that she didn't like her male colleagues, it was just that they always spoke in a patronising way to her, talked about football all the time except when the conversation was interspersed with sexist jokes or sexist remarks. She could complain, she knew, but what good would it do? She wanted to keep her job.

Sally had taken to bringing the morning newspaper into the office so that she had something to read during the breaks. One day she left the newspaper open on the desk at the situations vacant pages while she went to the toilet. On her return she was teased by her colleagues about looking for another job. She thought nothing more of the matter, putting it down to the clownish behaviour of her male colleagues. However, it soon became a topic of conversation amongst her colleagues, which she could not help but overhear. Sally, they said, was looking for a new job because she was the only woman in the office. It soon became monotonous. Every day the same remarks would be made and Sally would simply smile, but it began to get on her nerves. So much so that she began to lose sleep, waking in the night from dreams in which she was anxiously searching for jobs while listening to the taunts of her colleagues.

Question

What action should Sally take to deal with this problem?

Creative accountants

'No matter how hard I try,' began Jules, 'I just cannot see any application for creative thinking or creative problem solving in accounting matters. All the problems with which we deal require logical or vertical thinking and not lateral or creative thinking.'

'But there must be some problems that require creative thinking!', Angelica exclaimed. 'It can't all be logical thinking.'

'Well look at it from a manager's point of view then', Jules replied. 'What kind of financial problems does the manager need solving? As far as I can see it is all figure work where numbers rather than words are the name of the game. Who needs creativity where numbers are concerned?'

'I see what you mean', Angelica said, doubtfully.

Question

Can you think of problems in accounting that require creative thinking?

Problems with the tunnel

The tunnel was built over sixty years ago and in its time was one of the small 'Wonders of the World'. It is over a mile in length and connects the city centre with large residential areas on the other side of the estuary. It carries two lanes of traffic in either direction and has been essentially unmodified since it was first opened. A standard toll of £1 is paid by all cardrivers to use the tunnel and higher rates are charged for commercial vehicles.

Some ten years ago or so a second tunnel was opened about two miles further along the estuary to relieve the congestion that was occurring in the old tunnel. The effect of this was to reduce the amount of traffic passing through the old tunnel by a considerable amount. Now, however, traffic has begun to build up again in the old tunnel at peak hours. This is particularly the case in a morning between 7.30 a.m. and 10.00 a.m. when commuters are heading into work. A temporary solution to this problem has been to restrict traffic leaving the city centre at these times to using only one of the four lanes and to allow traffic coming into the city to use three of the lanes. The problem, however, is becoming worse and outward bound traffic flows around 5.00 p.m. in an evening are now becoming a problem. It is anticipated that in the next ten years the problem created by heavy usage of both the road links under the river will have become critical once more. While building a third tunnel is not altogether out of the question its siting and cost do not look very attractive propositions. The city has hovered on the verge of bankruptcy for years and has extreme difficulty in balancing its books.

Crossing the river by road is not the only option available. An electric railway winds its way under the river bed, linking the city centre to stations at most of the residential centres on the other side. At the time the old tunnel was first built there were also frequent ferry services over the river to three destinations on the other side. At each of the three landing stages there were excellent bus services to all the residential districts which were not actually sited on the bank of the river itself. Over the years the ferry services were curtailed and bus-links severed. People switched to using the tunnels as the commuters came to own cars and use them to go to work in the city centre. The ferry service has almost closed down altogether on more than one occasion over the last twenty years.

Questions

How do you think the congestion problem should be approached? What actions do you think should be taken in the next ten years? What problems do you see arising with respect to the implementation of your ideas? Are there any ways of getting around these problems?

The conference

‘It’s to be a conference on creativity and innovation’, Dennis announced.

‘What sort of conference is that?’, Maggie asked, seeming to express both interest and surprise.

‘Well, anything to do with creativity and innovation really, I guess.’

‘Well that can include a multitude of very diverse subjects. Is it for managers, artists, writers, politicians?’

‘It’s for managers or, rather, business executives.’

‘That narrows down the scope a bit, I suppose. And where and when is it to be held?’

‘Dunno, I haven’t worked that out yet. Somebody, said Paris in the spring would be good.’

‘It is something else you need to think about, Dennis. Why are you making it a conference? Why not an exhibition, seminar, or symposium?’

‘I just thought a conference was ...’

‘The only thing you could think of, I guess. Well that’s something else you may need to think about again.’

‘Hmm!’, Dennis grunted. ‘I suppose you are right, as usual.’

Questions

What would the purpose of the conference? What ideas have you got to help answer the kind of questions that Maggie has raised for Dennis to consider.

C-Bio

C-Bio manufactures biological products and is based in Liverpool. It employs twelve staff (some part-time) including the chief executive and his wife. The latter sees to all the accounts and oversees the work of a part-time secretary.

Most of the sales are in overseas markets and marketing amounts to giving sales literature to the distributors, and meeting up with them at international exhibitions and

occasionally in the market place. The principal distributors are in France, Germany and South Africa. The firm is currently redeveloping its web-site.

The firm produces a catalogue, and a safety sheet but at the present time does not engage in e-commerce. 75% of the firm's sales go to export markets with 2/3rd of export sales being made via a UK export house. The company rates as its competitors three British firms, two Turkish firms and a small number of Indian companies. The market is dominated by one very large supplier and somewhat smaller supplier and the remainder is supplied by firms very much of the same size as C-Bio. The two largest firms account for over 95% sales in the industry. The firm sends out small amounts of sales literature as required by distributors and agents. These are generated in-house using Word for DOS.

The firm keeps contact with distributors by email or fax – as required. Some of its price lists are ¾ years out of date. The firm is under pressure to reduce prices - e.g. in Romania. The firm recognises that it needs to improve its labelling / appearance and that there is a need to get its outside appearance right. Some of its distributors are much larger than C-Bio itself.

The firm's sales and profits have stagnated for the past three years at a level of £360,000. It aims to grow to £1 m. in turnover in the next five years. It sees its prime need as a requirement for new products. New products are seen to be ones which would make use of the existing distributor network rather than its manufacturing capacity. The firm has a company to partner in the South of England and it feels that it might be able to buy finished kits from that source. As volume increases it would like to take in bulk raw material and repackage. Finally it would take over the full marketing under license. Expertise would be acquired over time.

The company engages in no marketing effort apart from selling and minimises expenditure on marketing. It is the smallest of all the suppliers to the market. Its strategy is one of low cost and low price. The firm can vary the sizes of packaging of the product - e.g. litres of the product produced. It carries no stocks and manufactures only to order. There is a clear need to compromise between the level of

service offered and the carrying of stocks. The firm feels that it is not carrying enough ex-stock items. The standard size is ½ litre but it can supply other sizes if required.

Question

Analyse the situation what action might the firm adopt to improve its situation?

E-commerce

John Pardoe has developed computer software which he wants to market over the Internet. He is trying to come up with a really good way of marketing the goods and as a result has undertaken a survey of friends and acquaintances to determine what they think represent key concerns over trading over the net. Payment and delivery of software seem to be the key issues. Many of his respondents had experienced long waiting times for software to be delivered from places that were a long distance away and most were concerned about giving out banking and credit card details over the Internet.

Questions

What might John do to allay potential customer concerns and make it easier for himself to market his software.

Corporate image

Innovations in organisations often develop from people lower down in the organisation structure. University web servers, for example, are often created within Computer Science departments by graduate students. As a result of this, the way in which the University is presented to the outside world rests on the ideas, perceptions and concepts of one person. As the website popularity increases, and it becomes more apparent how powerful the website is as a portrayer of information about the University, other people get in determining what is presented, how it is presented, and the nature of the various links to include. A major question then becomes : how does a large, diversified, distributed organization such as a University begin to collect

this information and provide a mechanism by which web offerings could be presented in a similar way?

This then raises the issue of what should be the corporate image presented to the outside world?. It would appear that some sites have tried and succeeded, some have tried and failed, but many web sites are not really addressing the issues involved. The management of the institutions has not recognised that the information superhighway has arrived. There is no doubt that much of web material today is created by computer scientists and as a result the web has the distinctive appearance associated with computer games with no thought given to order, discipline or professionalism, nor to how best to promote the corporate image.

Question

What kind of questions might a university or other type of organisation seek answers to when considering the question of portraying its corporate image on its website?

What kind of insights might these questions lead to?

Knowledge Creation in the organization

The view has been expressed that organizational memory of the past is a reliable predictor of the dynamically and discontinuously changing business environment. Most such interpretations have made simplistic assumptions about storing *past* knowledge of individuals in the form of routinized programmable logic, rules-of-thumb and archived best practices in data bases for guiding *future* action. There are, however, major problems with adopting this view. First, there is the view that knowledge management technologies can deliver the right information to the right person at the right time. Such an assumption reflects the notion that businesses will change incrementally in an inherently stable market, and that executives can foresee change by examining the past. However, in the 21st century business environments are characterized by fundamental, not incremental, change. Businesses cannot any more plan long-term but must shift to a more flexible "anticipation-of-surprise" approach. It is not possible to build a system that predicts who the right person at the right time even is, let alone what constitutes the right information. Second, there is the view that knowledge management technologies can store human intelligence and experience. Technologies such as databases and groupware applications are unable to store the

rich schemas that people possess for making sense of data. Moreover, the same assemblage of data can evoke different responses from different people and even reviewed by the same person at a different time or in a different context could evoke differing response. The storing of a static representation of the explicit representation of a person's knowledge is not the same thing as storing human intelligence and experience. Third, there is the view that technologies can distribute human intelligence. This assumes that organizations can predict the right information to distribute and the right people to distribute it to. Nor does bypassing the distribution issue by compiling a central repository of data for people to access solve the problem since having information archived in a database does not ensure that people will necessarily see or use the information. A further point is that the data archived in technological 'knowledge repositories' is rational, static and without context and such systems do not account for renewal of existing knowledge and creation of new knowledge.

Not long ago technologies such as intranets were being considered as enablers of knowledge management. The more recent interest is on technologies related to knowledge portals. However, despite significant advancement in technologies, most organizations are still trying to find answers to simple questions such as: How to capture, store and transfer knowledge? How to ensure that knowledge workers share knowledge? There is a *strategic* distinction between *knowledge* and *information* and this has critical implications for managing and surviving in an economy of information overabundance and information overload.

Question

In the context of enabling e-business strategy how might the conceptualization of innovation and creativity needed for renewal of archived knowledge be operationalised?.

Creativity in football

Football ('soccer' in Japan and the USA) is the world's most popular sport. Its popularity in Japan received a boost during the country's highly successful co-organizing of the FIFA World Cup in 2002. In time football is likely to supplant the nation's current number one sport: baseball.

Both the Japanese and co-host South Korea's national football teams rose to international prominence under foreign managers: in Japan Philippe Troussier of France. Troussier's successor is another foreigner: Zico, a Brazilian and world footballing legend. Zico had helped to develop Japanese football to world standards, and became a legendary figure in Japanese sport.

An article in *The Japan Times* (8 November 2002) describes Zico's early attempts to train individual creativity and tactical flexibility into his players. Zico was dismayed by how his players arrived at pre-match meetings with notepads, took notes, and then tried to memorize the notes before going on to field. 'No, stop it. Soccer is not like that' he proclaimed. While recognizing his players' strengths in terms of tactical discipline and team cohesion and spirit, he struggled to make clear how 'the game changes according to the flow of the play, not exactly in the way that your manager told you beforehand.' In his role as national team manager, Zico concludes that: 'Players need to make decisions on the field by themselves, not by trying to do only what their manager told them.' He goes on: 'One thing I want them to remove from their game is the fear of making mistakes. They seem to be obsessed with the idea that they shouldn't make a mistake. But I want them to understand that if they try things and make a mistake, they can try again and try to do better next time ... The important thing is that they take on challenges. I want them to be more positive and creative.'

The changing face of Japanese Management, Keith Jackson and Miyuki Tomioka,, London: Routledge, 2004 p.127

Question

Can you suggest ways in which the team can be made more positive and creative in the way they play.

Chinese contracts

Enquiries at one construction project in 2001 revealed that the installation of most of the facilities had been contracted to companies owned by government regulatory bureaux. The municipal environment bureau was building a waste water treatment pool, the power bureau was building a transformer station, the water authority was laying the pipes, the public security bureau was designing and installing the security cameras and the fire station bureau was designing and constructing the sprinkler system.

'We did not award the contracts to them, they forced themselves upon us,' the project manager complained, 'otherwise they will not approve our design. In fact, they are bastards. They insisted upon us changing our design to use expensive systems the project does not need.'

Fieldwork notes, 2001

The changing face of Chinese management, Jie Tang and Anthony Ward, London: Routledge 2003, p.62

Question

Suggest ways in which the firm might be able to get better terms with the different bureaux with which it has to deal.

Healthcare

In a study of an electronic patient record developed for use in the care for hypertensive patients, for example, we found that the designers, in close cooperation with one or two leading hypertensive specialists, had opted for a very structured interface. The record consisted of several screens in which doctors could enter (coded) complaints, diagnosis, blood pressures, examination results, medication and so forth. The IS professionals and specialists had designed this record to facilitate their research: in this way, the structured information they required for their clinical investigations could be drawn directly from the databases of the patient record. For this purpose, the system functioned well: in this sense, the system was successful. In the everyday processes of outpatient care, however, the system appeared to be less functional. Many physicians complained that the system was too rigid to capture the essence of a patient's visit. The list of coded complaints, pressures, examination

results and so forth was very useful to track some overall parameters - yet it could not capture that the core reason of the patient's visit was his increased anxiety about his hypertension, for example, triggered by the recent death of his father. To overcome this limitation, many physicians started to use the one small free text section that the system had ('conclusion') as a field to enter such information. This resulted in a somewhat awkward use of the system, with physicians maximally using the limited amount of text they could put in this small field, and having this lower right corner of one of the screens function as the central focus during patient visits.

Health Information Management, Marc Berg, London: Routhledge, 2004, p.183

Question

How might the system be improved?

Teleworking

Paul and Pauline are both professional workers and have been married for eighteen years. They are generally contented and secure. Their children are at school all day and Pauline already works from home. Paul decides to give up his regular job and telework from home. Things start well, very well. They revel in a new intimacy and have time to spend together during the day for a chat and even a visit to the local pub and café while doing their daily shopping. They enjoy more time together chatting, and Paul appreciates Pauline's visits to his work room. He does not feel alone and is delightfully free from office politics and commuting. After three months the agreeable periods fade as Paul becomes progressively busier. By the time six-months has passed there are fewer outings shopping as Paul works round the clock, alone in his room. Pauline feels excluded, 'resentful and angry and very jealous about the seductress [Paul's virtual work contacts] behind the closed door'. For his part, Paul is angry and perplexed about this hostile and suspicious woman. Why is she so interested in his work, given she has never been before? Why doesn't she simply get on with her own work? And what, they both think, has happened to their love life?

Question

What possible insights or solutions can you find for this problem?