

MSCI 102 Introduction to Operations Management

Task for Seminar: Operations as a System

Aim

The aim of this task is to encourage you to think of organizations you come across as being operations systems – as having a particular logic in the way they function, creating the problems characteristic of the operations management discipline.

Cases: Greggs and Stagecoach

You are asked to think and make conjectures about two relatively simple, local service operations: the Greggs retail outlet on campus and the Stagecoach bus service in Lancaster. Unlike many manufacturing operations, service operations are often at least partly visible to members of the public, particularly their customers. You can see some of the functions they must perform and some of the problems they encounter. But you are also encouraged to think about what other functions must be taking place in the operation in order for the visible functions to be possible.

Questions

The questions follow the topics dealt with in the lecture on Operations as a System. Please attempt these before you attend the seminar.

1) Purpose

- What is their relative emphasis in each operation on objectives like cost, quality, speed, dependability, flexibility – and are there others?
- Which of these are 'order-winning', 'qualifying' or 'other' factors?
- In what ways is the operation holding the firm back? making it as good as its competitors? making it the best in the industry? redefining industry expectations?

2) Transformation

- What does each operation transform?
- What are the main transforming resources?
- What does it transform its inputs into – as main products and by-products?
- Is it a material, information or customer processor – or some combination?
- How would you describe its variety and volume?
- What type of operation does this variety and volume describe?
- What are the problems in being this type of operation?