**Weeks Trailers**

This company made agricultural trailers for the farming community in the 1960s and 1970s. The firm evolved from very humble beginnings. One of the two brothers who started the firm was asked, by a workmate, to make a towing box to fit on to the back of a bike as a Christmas present for the co-worker's daughter. On production of this an order followed for a pram. The quality of the products was such that other orders quickly followed and the brothers opened a workshop in Hull to meet the demand.

One day a friend asked if they could make a trailer for the back of a tractor. Again the quality was good and word got round and further orders followed. Their premises were adequate and the existing staff were fully occupied. Their capacity utilisation was high. One day an enquiry from the Coventry based firm Massey Ferguson created an enormous problem for the brothers, Fred and Harry. To fulfil the order they would have to double their output. Even with an extra shift this would have been impossible in the existing premises - trailers take up a lot of space.

They had recently added hydraulics to their trailers and demand locally was increasing. They decided to buy larger premises which were purpose built. At the old premises steel was delivered to the front door but had to be moved to the far end of the factory where the cutting machine was situated. In the new factory a large entrance was organised so that lorries could disgorge their load of steel at the point where it was first needed.

This improved the productivity of the firm; at a stroke more operations could be carried out in the same period as before, without production staff having to work any harder. The better layout created more space for storage and capacity could be increased leaving a better chance of fulfilling even more orders.

Massey Ferguson's trailers accounted for half the order and one of the brothers, Fred Weeks found lucrative markets in Africa. I worked at his company for two years and as I was leaving the company went public. Sadly Fred Weeks died not long after this and the business never fulfilled its huge potential. It closed down some years later.

**Questions**

1. Explain the terms under- and over-utilisation of capacity

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1. What problems would have faced Fred and Harry Weeks when they had to decide whether to move to bigger premises? (In answering this question consider, among other things, degree of control, suitability of premises, problems of existing workers when moving, finance and optimum size.)

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1. Weeks Trailers changed the layout of their factory in order to improve productivity and capacity utilisation. What other possible steps might they have considered to improve capacity utilisation?

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