



STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION IN STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION:

Process Consulting for a major 'business strategy development' project where we focused on involving all stakeholders from the beginning. Objective was to bring out all available expertise and experience and to mobilize all stakeholders for the successful implementation of the business strategy.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Context : In a large organization, a small business unit, was planning to set up a 'strategy development' process.

Business Issue : This business unit was responsible for a business, although recognized as core business by the organization, it was very small compared to the 'lead activity' of the organization. (4 percent market share, where the overall organization had like 20 percent market share). From their own analysis they became aware that they needed a 'new strategy' for their (sub)-business in order to create support in the bigger organization for their development plans.

Initial Request : Facilitate our 'management team' off-site day, where we want to create that new strategy for our department.

Consulting Process / Intervention : Our initial discussions with the director (customer/initiator) were focused on the impact the new strategy needed to have and the conditions for it to be successfully implemented. After being challenged on 'why this time the strategy would work', knowing that a few times already they reformulated their strategy without success, the awareness grew that we needed to involve, from the very beginning all stakeholders.

- We decided to use the planned offsite, not to 'wordsmith a strategy' but to build the 'process' through which we could involve all stakeholders. Some of the activities of that off-site included :
 - A SWOT analysis of our department and business today
 - Awareness on why we needed to involve stakeholders :
 - *Because they needed approve the strategy and free up necessary budgets to fund the new projects*
 - *Because they were 'key players' in the implementation (here we talked mainly about the people in the department but also the distributors who had to be behind the strategy in order to build it in towards the customers*
 - *Because they had information, expertise or experience that we needed in order to be able to make solid and wise choices in our business strategy*
 - Stakeholder analysis
 - Develop a process to address those stakeholders and bring the information together.
- From this one day off-site a number of initiatives sprang :
 - interviews and focus groups with stakeholders facilitated by the management team members
 - sharing that data with the own employees
 - Large Group Interventions including all staff in order to brainstorm on how the 'expectations' of the internal customer could be met
 - Internally lead improvement projects on the issues identified during the Large Group Intervention



Move! Organizational Learning

Bankstraat 27
B-3000 Leuven
Belgium

Tel : +32 497 91 93 63

e-mail : clement.leemans@movelearning.com

- This process was largely done by the people of the organization. We as consultants supported that through :
 - Job-aids for the stakeholder activities (interviews, focus groups, data gathering)
 - Coaching of the director
 - Design of the large group intervention
 - Train 8 internal facilitators for the large group intervention
 - Facilitate meetings

RESULTS & IMPACT :

- Where initially some resistance was expected by the management team from the stakeholders, their reaction was actually very positive and they welcomed the initiative. They were surprised by the 'démarche' and pleased that they were listened to (in stead of bombarded by 'plans')
- A lot of 'participation' of staff of the department. A lot of people volunteered to take on a facilitator role in the Large group interventions, took the lead of a workgroup, etc... (the gamble not to ask management, or even worse the consultant, to do that paid off)
- A long list of 'small' improvements, brought together by staff, that increased immediately the internal customer satisfaction (the implementation was kept very simple, and done immediately, without difficult and impressive plans)
- The intervention also gave way to a larger reflection on 'strategy' but also 'how to mobilize stakeholders and in particular our distribution network, in other business unit.
- Although taking place in the midst of a severe economical crisis, the intervention allowed focusing on improvement and keeping a 'positive' drive in the organization. The business results were 'better' then expected and the impact of the process was recognized by the organization.
- The visibility of this 'small' business was rapidly improved (from the very beginning), what finally resulted in budget that was allocated in order to improve the ICT support to that business unit.



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