

Managing Different Cultures in Competitive Environments

Every organization has a unique working environment where its employees interact with one another and perform their tasks. It is important to understand these environments, specifically the competitive and working aspects of them, to have a greater idea of the diverse situations that managers have to deal with.

Companies with high levels of competitiveness require that their employees be the best that the market has to offer. Due to the importance of the mission of competitive companies, their operations require high levels of skills and responsibility. Furthermore, the professional development opportunities that these type of companies offer their employees, makes the search for exceptional talent easier than other companies, and thus these organizations are made up of people of unquestionable professional quality, which encourage some competitiveness among senior colleagues.

Notwithstanding, the working environment in competitive organizations is, in most cases, neither hostile nor insensitive to the needs of employees, however it is very strict when it comes to job performance. One aspect that should always prevail in the working relationship is that employees should have the opportunity to talk with their superiors, without many obstacles to overcome, regardless of the size of the organization. This aspect makes demanding jobs much easier to deal with, by giving the employees the feeling that they have the support of the company at all times; making them feel more secure in their positions and this in turn intrinsically enhances morale and performance.

An important consideration in managing people in competitive organizations is the fact that employees come from different cultures and backgrounds, which requires very skilled managers capable of dealing with diverse and essential aspects of this type of labor environment. Other consideration is the stress that this type of organization produces. This stress is related to the fact that everything is linked to demanding schedules and perfect timing in the execution of processes, which can create situations where control and thus equanimity are lost. Unchecked, this can lead to organizational conflicts that can seriously hamper operations, morale, motivation, management and execution of the daily work schedule due to poor communication.

To achieve a greater level of communication and achieve skills to manage cultural differences, several changes are required in various sections of the organization. These changes require both managers and employees to have a greater commitment to work within one unique organizational culture, independent of their own personal cultures and beliefs. For this it is useful to develop a system that managers and employees can trust, which will forge strategies for better control, communication, performance and negotiation. This system requires a great deal of training, practice and support from upper level management for implementation and success. The bigger idea should be to develop, in the future, an organizational culture-based system, that can be flowed down to every employee in the company.

The barriers that are often found when managers try to achieve the implementation of these types of systems are related to the lack of definition that exists regarding the organizational culture as a system across the enterprise. This could very well end up causing some resistance since the organizational culture has not been developed from headquarters

to then be flowed down to branched throughout the entire organization. At the same time, developing such a system would require many lines of communication such as forums and bulletins, as part of the deployment strategy, which can be very complex and expensive to create, and which requires people who are specialized in this subject.

Furthermore, in big companies, their size could very well be considered a barrier to successful implementation due to the fact that in order to maintain control, these companies need to be bureaucratic, systematic, and structured in their procedures. This bureaucracy can end up being a hindrance in the development plan of the system, causing delays due to studies that they might want to do on the subject for further approval.

I suggest hiring a consulting firm, responsible for formulating the system and responsible for fully implementing that system. The implementation of the system by a consulting firm is fundamental, since if it is not properly implemented, this can lead to loss of time and money invested in the previous stage of formulation.

The implementation of this system is important and achievable, and also generates several benefits for the organization. These benefits can be explained by the increasing cohesion that the people of different sections will achieve in the work place. This cohesion will make setting objectives, planning, and controlling much easier, and will also improve the sections' communication among colleagues. All this will positively affect the performance of the employees.

The development and implementation of this system will help upper level management achieve the organization's objectives by spreading along the entire company a better way of dealing with cultural differences. Once the system has been used by a "test group" within the organization, other sections will incorporate it as well, creating a bigger cohesion among employees of the entire company. When employees from a company feel they are understood, and that their opinions are taken into consideration for setting objectives, the company benefits as a whole. These benefits can be seen in the employees' increased attitude and morale. They tend to work harder, with greater commitment to the company, which in the end makes the company more competitive in the marketplace. For a company, more competitiveness in the marketplace translates into new and satisfied customers, who represent more revenue, and the achievement of the organization's objectives.

The first step of this system should be developing the system itself, and by this we mean:

- A. Defining the adequate lines of communication to be used;
- B. Understanding the common aspects of the different cultures within sections to start elaborating the premises of the system;
- C. Looking for employees that might help coordinate and assist the project;
- D. Defining the way to deploy effectively the information to the employees; and
- E. Gathering the employees to inform them about the project and ask them for suggestions to improve it.

This system will help dealing with the problems that occur in some sections of organizations, and will implement a new way of facing issues of cultural differences, by

guiding managers and employees in managing their work relationship to achieve excellence in operations and thus the company's overall objectives.

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