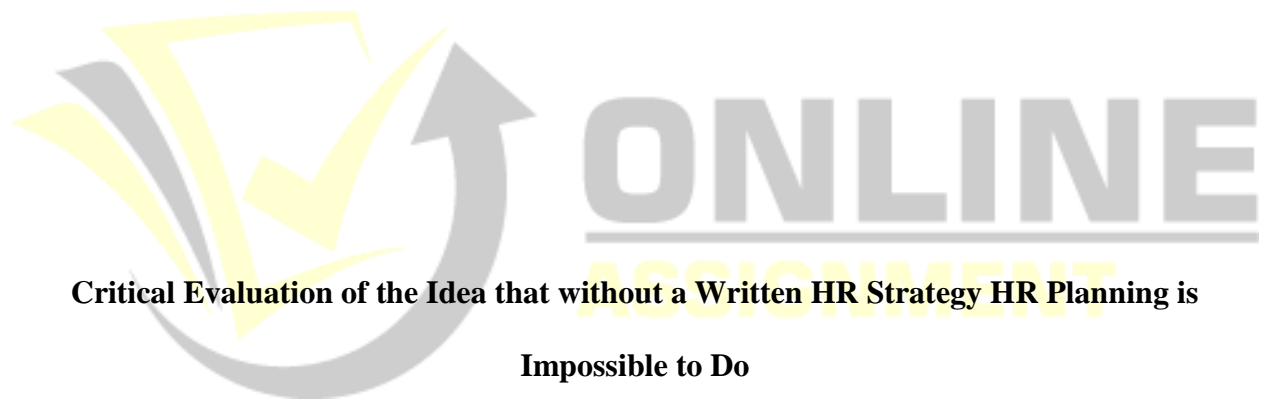**Critical Evaluation of the Idea that without a Written HR Strategy HR Planning is Impossible to Do**

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Critical Evaluation of the Idea that without a Written HR Strategy HR Planning is

Impossible to Do

Introduction

A Human Resource strategy is like any other strategy though it must have two fundamental

aspects. One must comprise of the goals that the strategy intends to achieve while another must

express a process, a way to follow, a number of moves to be taken to attain the objectives stated.

At the very base of it, strategy is an expression of intentions and obtaining strategic fit by

distributing or designating resources to options available (Chew, & Chan, 2008).

Discussion

Human Resource Strategy

The strategic capacity of the organization determines the efficient evolution and application of the strategy, which includes the capacity of not only forming objectives but also evolution and application of strategic plans through strategic management and strategic planning. The following are the key elements of human resource strategy (Chew, & Chan, 2008).

The first element is the strategic intent. Simply defined, a strategy is a mere expression of the organisation's intents. It defines, what the oganisation plans on doing and how exactly is it going to make it happen. Strategic intent is a rather broader term for the vision or the mission of the organisation that explains the organisation's long-term objectives and goals.

The next is resource-based strategy. Here, the resource capacity of the business determines its strategic capacity. It means that the organisation ought to have the capability to develop an inexhaustible source for resources and those should be such that competitors cannot make usable copies of it.

Another important element of strategy after resource-based strategy is strategic capability of the organisation. This is more dependent on the personnel hired by the business. This is largely affected by the Managers that exhibit high levels of strategic capacity (Chew, & Chan, 2008). These people know exactly what they want, what they are aiming for and know exactly how to reach out for whatever it is they're aiming.

Strategic management, a rather final stage to strategy, is where several decisions and actions are taken that help in the formation and application of the already formed strategies. It acts as both the final outcome and as a process. As a final outcome it exhibits more of a vision of the effects of the strategies to be applied and as a process it exhibits how such strategies are to be applied and how with their help the designated vision can be obtained (Ulrich, et. al. 2012).

Human Resource Planning

It is a procedure in which the recognition, determination and planning of an organisation's human capital needs is performed. It is conducted for both short-term and long-term needs of the organisation. This is necessary not only to identify the existing human capital needs of the organisation but also the anticipated future requirements that may compel the organisation for hiring (Dowling, Festing, & Engle Sr, 2008).

The core concept on which human resources planning has been built is that human capital is the most essential resource in any given organisation. It does not just perceive the targeted requirement but also incorporates in the plan, the quality of the personnel hired. Through it, two basic questions are answered first being, how many people are required and the second being what kind of people can work with the organisation.

Human resource planning focuses on two dimensions. One being the hard human resource planning while the other being the soft human resource planning.

From a quantitative measure, what human resource planning does is that it arranges the correct number of personnel precisely when they are needed by the organisation. It also helps ensuring that the correct kind of people have been selected, the kind of people that would be able to work

with the organisation not apart from it, people who would embrace the policies, procedures and culture of the organisation. This is called as the hard human resource planning.

While hard human resource planning arranges the hiring of personnel that would respect and abide by the existing culture of the organisation, soft human resource planning is rather concentrated on establishing and moulding the culture of the organisation to develop a clear unification of the goals of the business and values, beliefs and behaviours of the employees (Ulrich, et. al. 2012). The soft human resource planning is rather similar to the entire topic of human resource management.

Human Resource planning consists of five main objectives that have been specified hereunder.

1. The attraction and retention of people with the organisation-specified competence, dexterity and mastery.

2. The evaluation of expected and prospective gains and losses of personnel in the organisation.
    3. The evolution of such a team that is not only well trained but also pliable to the altering and ambiguous environment of the organisation.

4. The depletion of reliance on outside recruitment for the purpose of fulfilling the needs of essential skills when the organisation faces their shortage. This is usually done by developing the rate of keeping long term employees and introducing programmes for their professional progress.

5. Employing the human capital well to gain maximum benefit out of them. This can be done by bringing in more pliable methods of work (Dowling, Festing, & Engle Sr, 2008).

Critical Analysis

Human resource specialists have differing opinions about the formulation of human resource strategy. On one hand, it is believed that a 'written' approach to making a human resource strategy is what supports the human resource planning in the best possible way. On the other, however, human resource strategy is believed to be quite different when understood on realistic grounds (Ulrich, et. al. 2012). It signifies that a strict pre-planning of events ought not to be considered as the best way for human resource planning, it ought to base itself on the happening events. It can be related to the example that unlike usually rather than decisions stimulating action, it should be actions compelling decision-making process. In this regard, the written approach can also be called as deterministic view of strategy and the other realistic approach can be called as non-deterministic view of strategy respectively (Garavan, 2007).

Here, we will critically evaluate both of these approaches and perhaps will have a better idea of whether it is really impossible to do human resource planning without a written human resource strategy or the realistic approach trumps it. We may also come to know of other approaches that have been developed to avoid adopting only one of the above mentioned approaches taking into account, attributes from both the respective approaches.

'Written' Human Resource Strategy

Theoretically, the procedure for a written strategy consists of the following steps:

1. The mission of the organisation is specified.

2. Objectives of the organisation are agreed upon and settled.

3. A SWOT analysis is conducted where the strengths and weaknesses that are the internal factors and opportunities and threats that are the external factors of the organisation are both examined (Ulrich, et. al. 2012).

4. An analysis of the strategies already applied in the organisation to determine whether the organisation holds the required amount of human and financial capital resources. An analysis can also be carried out to know whether these resources can be made available if urgent need arises for these (Dowling, Festing, & Engle Sr, 2008).

5. An explanation of the distinguished capacities of the organisation keeping in view the above analysis.

6. Specification of problem areas in the strategies as per the prior analysis relating to product-market scope, improving shareholder value and resource capacity (Lengnick-Hall, et. al. 2009).

7. The identification of functional and corporate strategies that could attain objectives and competitive advantage, keeping in mind the above mentioned problem areas. These may be the strategies relevant to business for the purpose of its expansion or diversification, creative addition, improvement of quality or reduction in cost (Brown, 2010).

8. Assembling of a unified strategic plan for the application of the developed strategies.

9. Application of the strategies.

10. Supervision of applied strategies and revision and evolution of old and new strategies as per need (Lengnick-Hall, et. al. 2009).

This approach provides room for repetition and a feedback whether negative or positive, however, it is profoundly linear and deterministic. Here, a sequential series of events formulates and implements strategy, taking logic with it, where every step in the sequence depends on the previous one, which had been carried out flawlessly, which is not the case in real life. Therefore, although, a written human resource approach sets things out clear, in the real world, it is not applicable on every case, as ambiguity is quite a common trend in practical life (Brown, 2010).

The 'Realistic' Approach

From a theoretical perspective, strategy can be referred to as a systematic procedure. It seems more like a step by step process where first we think and then we perform the thought through action. Practically, though, a newly developing scenario can lead to the unfolding of a strategy which can counter such a situation (Perry, & Kulik, 2008). The planner in such case impersonates the role of a learner. He learns to conceive certain visions deliberately.

The practical approach to human resource strategy signifies that this type can lead strategists to go above and beyond to discover strategies in accordance with the requirements of the changing or evolving needs of the organisation. According to this approach, strategies ought to be left under a broader spectrum of meaning, not exactly connected, to better accommodate the consistent changes occurring in the organisation (Crumpacker, & Crumpacker, 2007).

Other writers have criticized the deterministic concept of strategy, for example:

Managers interpret business strategies as per their own capacities, individual encouragement and particulars of data that they can refer to. To them, the strategies are never simple or anything that can be called as logical (Lengnick-Hall, et. al. 2009).

Quantitative factors come into play while formulating the formal planning approach, which is largely at the cost of the qualitative factors that quite often become the cause of organisational success (Chew, & Chan, 2008). Undeniably, the formal strategies can prove an excellent approach for several large organisations prefer using strategies that use procedures which are divided to fit to organisational needs, contently evolving with the organisation and vastly led by intuition (Garavan, 2007).

The decision-makers that are capable of generating the most efficient results are creative people that believe in intuition and employ a habituating and pliable procedure. Furthermore, as the most strategic decisions are driven by the occurring events instead of being already programmed, the decisions are generally unplanned (Panayotopoulou, Vakola, & Galanaki, 2007).

Keeping in view the realistic view the concept of emergent strategies has surfaced. The main idea behind it is the introduction of something new to the organisation even if it is evolved by a step by step process as appreciated by the corporate planners (Teo, & Rodwell, 2007).

Strategy is largely believed to be of a developing, growing nature. Often the most efficient strategies are evolved by the market trends than by great visionary executives. It clearly communicates the idea that strategy should not be taken as a whole rather as a process that takes its time (Ulrich, 2013).

Realistically, strategy has always been evolving and pliable. It is always about what is going to happen rather than what is happening. Strategy is never about the present, it is usually about the future. It is always expressed by actions and reactions not just formal statements. It is an explanation of the future-orientated plan act that is always directed towards some sort of alteration. It is taken care of the by the procedures of the management (Chauhan, Sharma, & Tyagi, 2011).

Although, both have their own merits and demerits the strategic human resource management supports the written human resource strategy (Chew, & Chan, 2008).

Strategic Human Resource Management

Here, the managers strive to follow the already designed strategy even in the extreme situations of ambiguity, alteration, turmoil and sometimes even havoc. As much as this approach is desirable, it is quite hard to implement (Paauwe, 2009).

According to Reilly (2012), strategic human resource management is a procedure that revolves around the utilization of other development strategies that unified vertically with the business strategy and horizontally with each other.

Organizational considerations such as its effectiveness and people management from various angles are specified and explained by these strategies. Also, other areas of explanation may include resourcing, learning and development, reward and employee relations (Siller, et. al. 2009).

The goals guided by strategic human resource management may seem like only rhetoric and not even close to reality (Welch, Welch, & Tahvanainen, 2008). Generally, there is wide gap between the rhetoric and the reality. It may be adopted with good intentions but all the good

intentions are not always realized as is the case of reality. Management may end up realizing

that the objectives set by strategic human resource were rather far-fetched and impracticable in

reality (Ngo, Lau, & Foley, 2008). Application of theory usually tends to be much more

difficult. This is generally due to the differences constantly arising in contextual and procedural

issues (Gond, et. al. 2011). This may also be affected by other business related issues such as

short- termism, lack of support from line managers, an inadequate infrastructure of supporting

processes, lack of resources, resistance to change and a climate in which employees do not put

complete faith in their managers (Reddington, Martin, & Bondarouk, 2011).

Disadvantages of 'Written' HR Strategy

The most common demerits associated with the written human resource strategy are that:

- It may have several competing goals

- It may have disregarded several situations which may be faced by the organisation in

  times to come (Ulrich, 2013).

- The menu approach is used while writing down the strategy. Nothing has been

  prioritised.

- The desired future position of the business has not been communicated properly

  (Truss, & Gill, 2009).

- The strategies have made promises that cannot be fulfilled.

A properly formulated strategy does not only express the true intention behind it but on a

negative point also spells out anything that has not been considered in it, for instance, a priority

that has been omitted or something that was supposed to be a part of it but has been left out

unintentionally. A common flaw in a strategy is that it is irrelevant, static in proportion and is not aligned with the strategies of the organisation (Chen, & Huang, 2009).

A written strategy can be a cause for several pitfalls. It spells out the vulnerability of the manager quite easily as his work can be seen in written by everyone and any erroneous approach might be the end of his career as a leader (Liu, et. al. 2007). The written strategy must be revised from time to time as it has to take the new developments into account as well without which it might prove to be obsolete (Truss, 2009).

Conclusion

Human resource strategy whether in a written formal way or in a rather intuitive manner can ultimately and largely lead the organisation to several benefits. It converts the organisation's strategy into an efficient and actionable human resource strategy, stating priorities and defining business plans. It converts the employee into essential human capital and a programme that actually benefits the entire organisation. It recognizes the best ways to lure, encourage, and retain new and existing workforce departments.

An efficient human resource strategy establishes value via its team and teamwork, utilizing itself as a map that simply guides it to its intention. It acts as a comprehensive guide for the organisation in respect of acquiring new personnel or even retaining the old one. These guidelines cover a wide range of problems, for instance which skills and capacities are most essential for attaining future goals and objectives, how talent grows or is enhanced, and how is high-performance culture not only created but also maintained in an organisation.

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