Understanding the complementarities between strategy thinking and strategic plann...

It is now pretty clear that success in the highly dynamic global environment is a composite function of sound strategic thinking and analysis, strategy insight, continuous development of an enterprise's resources, competencies, capabilities, and ability to align and re-adjust the enterprises strategies to the demand of the global audiences and ever-changing internal and external business environments. However, having a good strategic insight is not the necessary and sufficient condition for success. A business organization should be able to specialize in the areas of the business that it has relative competitive advantages over its rival firms, and opt for strategic alliance or other strategic options in areas where it has relative competitive disadvantages.

To achieve this, sound strategic analysis of both the internal and external environments is the critical success factor that should never be underestimated. Integration Discussions on Understanding the Complementarities between Strategy Thinking and Strategic Planning – Graetz, F. 2002. According to Heracleous (1998, p. 82, 485, cited in Graetz, 2002, p.

457), ' the ability to think strategically provides another dimension to the process of strategy making. It recognizes that strategic thinking and planning are " distinct, but interrelated and complementary thought processes" that must sustain each other for effective strategic making'. In line with the above view of Heracleous, strategic planning serves as the framework that aligns, integrate and ensure a best fit between the plans developed through the thinking processes to the objectives which a business enterprise is expected to achieve. The link between a good strategic thinking

and strategic planning is an effective and efficient strategy management. This particular line of Heracleous could be extended by viewing the strategic thinking processes as the ability that resides in individual employee of an organization.

The planning is more or less the task of the strong leaders of the business organization. This implies that to encourage he thinking ability of organizational employees, leaders have to first of all recognize this innovative and creative potentials, and ensure an enabling workplace environment that facilities the thinking processes is put in place. Hence, it can be concluded that the tool to ensure perfect complementarities between the strategic thinking and strategic planning is an effective and efficient strategy management processes within the business enterprise – solely a responsibility of the strong leaders. How is Strategy Thinking and planning relevance to the Business Environment? Recall that most of the weekly discussions done so far one way or the other mentioned the word " environment". When we talked about strategic thinking and analysis, we mentioned the business environments, when we talked about resource, capabilities, competencies, generic strategic considerations, additional strategic considerations etc, we didn't avoid mentioning the word " environment". Hence, the environment in which an organization operates can either break or make it.

However, ' in the face of an unpredictable, highly volatile and competitive marketplace, the capacity for innovation, divergent strategic thinking at multiple organization level is the central to creating and sustaining

competitive advantage in the advantage in the market place' (Liedtka, 1998, p. 32, cited in Graetz, 2002, p. 456). The key point in the above statement of Liedtka is that, to survive and succeed in the highly volatile business environments, firms must be swift and smart to encourage innovative thinking processes among its employees, and this processes should be coordinated in such a way that a corresponding strategy plan is crafted to explore the opportunities put forward by the ever-changing business environment. Hence, there is no short-cut to sound strategy thinking and planning, as this is necessary for flexibility in the turbulent market environments. The business environment is expected to be analyzed continuously as it holds competitive forces and factors that have strong strategy impact on business organizations.

Schoemaker (1991, cited in Graetz, 2002, p. 457) has identified Scenarios Planning as the tool to overcome the uncertainties in the business environment. ' Scenario planning is a thinking tool and communication device that aids the managerial mind rather than replaces it' (Schoemaker, 1991, p. 551, cited in Graetz, 2002, p. 457).

In line with the definition given by Schoemaker, the concept of scenario planning is very helpful in passing across the internal culture of an organization to the employees. Also, it could help in encouraging the innovative and creative capability of the different employees within an organization. The principles of the Life Time Assessment Test conducted on employees of Communications Co. clearly explains the role of leaders and thinking processes by ensuring the development of the whole brain of

employees in strategic planning and thinking processes (Graetz, 2002, p. 58).

For example in my organization, one of the cultures we try to imbibe in our employees is that everybody is a " boss of his own" – this implies we allow employees to manage their time and carry their respective tasks with little supervision, but we always remind them to blow the whistle and ask for help whenever they are encountering challenges with assigned tasks. By this singular culture of ours, am very sure we have been able create an atmosphere that promotes creativity and imagination – ' The Upper Right Quadrant' – (Schoemaker, 1991). Though we are still struggling with trying to achieve a balanced of both the left – and right-brain thinking styles. In particular, in January 2009 when we had a lot of production staff. We encountered challenges trying to ensure a team work effort among employees.

We discovered we had some employees who are more comfortable doing things on their own (I could say the producer), some who are still acquiring the workplace skills, and cannot work alone yet, and required others to support. We managed to balance up these disparities of personal attributes of employees by making them carry out a team weekly production tasks. In this way, everybody was carried along; everybody gets the praise and everyone gets the blames as well. In other words, the strength of one complements the weakness of the other. References Graetz, F. (2002) ' Strategy thinking versus strategy planning: Towards understanding the complementarities', Management Decision, 40 (5), pp.

456 – 462. [Online]. Available at: https:// www. emeraldinsight. com.

ezproxy. liv. ac. uk. /insight/view PDF (Accessed: 1 December 2010).

McMordie, S (2010) ' Week 1B Lecture Notes: strategy thinking and the

external environment'.

Corporate Strategy [Online]. Available at: https://elearning. ol. ohecampus.

com/bbcswebdav/xid-252447_4. (Accessed: 10 November 2010).

McMordie, S (2010) ' Week 3 Lecture Notes: Additional strategic

considerations: external analysis and the wine industry'. Corporate Strategy

[Online]. Available at: https://elearning. uol. ohecampus.

com/bbcswebdav/xid-223648_4 (Accessed: 25 November 2010).

Thompson, Jr. , A. A. , Strickland III, A. J ; amp; Gamble, J. E, (2010) Crafting

and Executing Strategy – The quest for competitive advantage, concepts and

cases.

17th International edn. New York: McGraw-Hill Irwin. ISBN: 987-0-07-018260-

8. pp. 4 – 99, 164-205, 206-237, 385-413.