

Mintzberg assignment

Business, Management



The manager I chose to interview for this assignment, I shall call him A, is an Australian male in his late 20's. He works in the private sector as Finance Director of an Australian based organisation which is a joint venture with a large non-Australian-based multinational organisation. It is a comparatively small organisation in the manufacturing sector, employing approximately eighty people.

A is part of the Top Management Team, consisting of the CEO and three other specialised managers, who are the directors of Marketing, National Accounts and Logistics. The final member of the top management team is the Personal Assistant to the CEO whose role is somewhat difficult to define as they perform a broad spectrum of duties. A reports directly to the CEO of the organisation and has two people, the Senior Commercial Analyst and the Commercial Analyst reporting directly to him.

The other Directors have varying numbers of middle managers reporting to them. The interview and questionnaire process was interesting and informative for both of us, as A initially considered that he could complete the questionnaire in a very short period of time, but upon reflection, found that the extent and complexities of his role required considerable thought and time to analyse. It is interesting to note that although this questionnaire is based on Mintzberg's (2006) managerial theory, A's management skills can also be defined in other ways.

However, this does not necessarily imply he is a bad manager or lacks the right education and knowledge required of a person in his position. The fact that A has reached his position at his young age suggests that he has the

combination of education, training, skills, personality, and, above all ability to carry out his role successfully. As Tenglad (2006) observed Mintzberg “ attacked a specific form of management education as exemplified by the full-time Master of Business Administration degree in Great Britain.

Furthermore, he stressed that the requirements needed for an effective management should include the general intellectual skills gained from a good higher education, the technical knowledge about organizations, and managing skills. He stressed that most business schools are concentrating on the technical side of educating managers”. The complexity of A’s role is evident in the fact that although his management style does generally fit into the categories suggested by Mintzberg; Interpersonal, Informational and Decisional roles, there is a great deal more that he does that can not be so “ easily” summarised.

There is also a lot of overlap between the categories and tasks he performs, causing them not to fit easily into one particular category but rather into several. An analysis of A’s responses to the questionnaire will illustrate the following: Question 1(i) although participating in these tasks, A assessment of the extent of his input was “ moderate” and he fairly described it as part of his involvement as a team. Whilst he researches and prepares recommendation papers he then presents them to the board for approval.

Therefore while initially it appears as though this fits into Mintzberg’s (2006) Decisional category possibly as entrepreneur and resource allocatur it is not wholly appropriate to either since A does not make the decisions alone. Question 1 (ii), this part of A’s job fits more comfortably into Minzterg’s

(2006) Decisional - resource allocation category and he describes it as a major part of his role. It is an aspect very appropriate to his position as he has a number of important duties to carry out and needs to be able to allocate and delegate tasks to his subordinates effectively, knowing that the work will be satisfactorily carried out.

Again, however, it should be noted that in terms of the company structure, A's role is a part of a larger team so that he is not solely responsible for the allocation of resources or the making, or even approving, of organisational decisions. Question 1 (iii) this, again is a significant part of A's role, comes under Mintzberg's (2006) category of Interpersonal - leader but without the responsibility for staffing, training and any other duties outside his own department. There is some cross over with the previous question as it is an integral part of achieving organisational goals as well as having elements of the entrepreneur, the monitor and the disseminator. A refers in his comments to the very important question of bonuses and incentive schemes to drive results which shows a further similarity and knowledge by A of marketing strategies adapted to the Finance role. Question 1 (iv), is, with respect to Mintzberg (2006) essentially a restatement of the previous three questions. This is evident as defining of goals and how best to achieve them; arranging work and motivating staff can not be achieved without monitoring and correcting.

Therefore it is not surprising that A, again refers to this as a major part of his role. Question 2, is not based on Mintzberg's categorisation, but in fact that of Katz's (2006) skills. The information given by A, whilst not assisting in

categorising the various aspects of his role is, it is submitted, very helpful in listing the skills that a senior manager should possess. The exercise carried out with A's assistance was more illustrative of Menkes (2006) view that "new work-practices are combined with older practices, both in a complex and context-specific ways.

Therefore, there is a need for better integration between theoretical development and empirical investigations in this field of inquiry". It is significant to note that, whilst A refers to the need of a moderate amount of conceptual skills and a larger amount of technical skills, he reserves the highest score for " Interpersonal skills or the ability to work with individuals and groups" and in his comments on this points to " partnering with other departments as well as influencing management".

This shows the real difficulty with Mintzberg's categorisation in that it does not weight categories or distinguish between categories which are vital, necessary or desirable. For example, there is little benefit in having a Figurehead with no social skills, a disseminator who can not communicate effectively or an entrepreneur who cannot " sell" his or her projects. In contrast to question two, question three is specifically based on Mintzberg's (2006) managerial roles. On closer examination, Question 3 (i) is slightly ambiguous. While A states that he performs routine activities of a legal nature, his duties are not merely symbolic.

He is not just a " figurehead" and his duties are vital to the company's legal compliance and, as A claims, to " good corporate governance". Question 3 (ii) A suggests this is an important part of his role (See comments under

Question (iii)). A, as a senior manager takes responsibility for aspects of motivation relevant to his finance specialty, being particularly involvement in enforcing incentive and bonus payments. Question 3 (iii) and (iv) although separately categorised by Mintzberg, both fundamentally refer to the necessity for managers to keep themselves informed and up to date using all means available.

Question 3 (v) Again, part of the Informational role but under the subtitle of Disseminator, A reserves the highest score for this question, implying this encompasses a large part of his role in the organisation. This is evident by the fact that he leads the department of the organisation that provides 95% of all organisational and management reporting nation wide. Obviously there is little point in a manager being well informed from a variety of sources if such information can not be effectively disseminated to those in the organisation best equipped to use it.

Mintzberg's categorisation creates uncertainty as A is a very important "spokesperson" for the company, not in the sense that is implied by Mintzberg, but because he is required to report to ASIC and the companies bankers and insurers. Therefore the information that A provides has to be of great accuracy and of a high quality. The remaining responses of the questionnaire all fit into Mintzberg's Decisional category, although again rather uneasily. Mintzberg (2005) also concludes that "strategy cannot be planned because planning is about analysis and strategy is about synthesis".

As is clarified by A's comments, and as indeed might be expected in most organisations, whilst A has input into these matters, and on occasions may

himself initiate or decide certain matters, he is not the “ decision maker” for the company but part of a team. Having examined in depth, not only the work of a member of a senior management team, but also his perceptions of his work, it is evident that Mintzberg’s system of classification is far too simplistic.

In defining and illustrating roles and activities, more regard needs to be had to the individual manager’s place in the whole organisational structure, the company’s culture and the legislative framework. Mintzberg (2006) seems to be able to find evidence to support some very sweeping conclusions. Another example is in his book “ The Nature of Managerial Work,” where he claimed to show that managers rarely employ rational or linear approaches to problem solving, where as questioning A, who may be regarded as a fairly typical senior manager, illustrates the care which is necessary in carrying out all aspects of the role.

However, in fairness to Mintzberg as Chia (2005) observes his book is actually more “ a provocation than a simple description or analysis”.

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