

Good example of essay on organizational behavior: analysis of southwest airlines

[Business](#), [Company](#)



The airline sector has in the past contributed greatly to the economic growth of countries due to increasing demand for travel services both in developed and developing countries. The reason behind the increasing demand for flying is because it is one of the greatest achievements on this earth. This paper evaluates Southwest Airlines in terms of its mission, strategic leadership, corporate culture, systems and organizational structure because the overall organizational behavior comprises of these identifiable components. Understanding the long-term and short-term effectiveness of strategies as well as their impacts on political, psychological, fiscal and environmental arenas on behavior is important because these aspects directly affect productivity of the organization (Muse 28). The manner in which South Airlines applies theories of organizational behavior and design will be explored. The paper also evaluates how behavior is likely to influence the future of Southwest Airlines. Success of Southwest Airlines is attributed to its approach to organizational behavior and design. Organizational behavior is a function of organizational design implying the two aspects are inseparable. Organizational design involves selecting and managing structure and cultural aspects to enable the organization to have control over activities necessary for accomplishing its goals and objectives. Organizational design explains why and how various means are selected. Leadership, culture, mission, job design and structure are major driving forces that influence behavior at Southwest Airlines. Proper manipulation of these aspects has given the company competitive edge over competitors in the market (Grubbs-West 65).

Design Strategy

Organizational behavior is the outcome of design strategy and principles of operation. Design strategy requires that strategic managers strike a balance between internal pressures as a result of choice of factors such as technology and external pressures originating from organization's environment. Design strategy causes organizational members to respond and view the environment in a different way. Organizational design exerts pressure on individuals and work groups to behave in a particular way. Success of organizational design is influenced by political, psychological, fiscal and sociological aspects of behavior. This assignment will focus on Southwest Airlines organizational structure, leadership, job design and culture elements of design because they affect organizational behavior directly (Mansfield 107).

Organization's Mission

The organization's mission influences organizational behavior directly. Southwest Airline's mission has been divided into 2 categories; one focusing on expectations of customers and the other focusing on expectations of employees. For customers, Southwest Airlines mission is to deliver high quality services with some sense of friendliness, company spirit, individual pride and warmth. For employees, The Company's mission is dedication is providing employees with a stable working environment and equal opportunities for personal growth and learning. Southwest Airlines fosters innovation and creativity to improve the effectiveness in serving customers. The company accords the same caring attitude, concern and respect for

employees to enable them share externally with company's customers.

These mission statements were drafted back in 1998 and are relevant up to this day.

Strategic Leadership of Southwest Airlines and Theories

Organizational leadership is critical in shaping behavior of organizational members at all levels. Southwest Company has for the past three decades grown significantly from a small company serving three airports only to one of the largest airlines in United States operating in sixty four cities. The company's success is behind Colleen Barrett, the CEO and Gary Kelly, the board of directors' chairman. The board of directors makes decisions and oversees implementation for the company. Vice president of people and leadership development is responsible for monitoring and establishing human capital procedures to accomplish organizational goals and objectives. All company's managers, supervisors and officers oversee the implementation of affirmative action at their respective departments. The company leadership ensures equal employment opportunities are available to fulfill leadership obligations to the current and future employees.

Leadership structure of Southwest Airlines is rational which prompts employees to behave in a manner calculated to accomplish desired goals and objectives. Rationality resides in organizational structure as opposed to individual participants. The leadership structure guides individuals in making decision, in controlling arrangements that evaluates performances and detecting deviations, in rewarding systems that motivate individuals to work hard, and in recruitment, selection and promotion of employees at all levels

of Southwest Airlines operations.

The leadership of this company follows the theory of Henry Fayol that is administration-based developed in 1916 from his experiences of working at an industrial site. The leadership places high value to its employees because the organization is classified as a service company. It has upheld a leadership structure that reflects concerns and ethics for employees.

According to Fayol's type of administration, the focus should be on the total organization as well as developing the principles that prompt managers to become more efficient when carrying out duties. The administration of Southwest Airlines is specifically committed to ensure that unity of action, order, discipline, anticipation, activity, etc, exist in all managerial functions; recruitment, directing and organizing the workforce; building good and long-lasting relationship between departments as well as outside world; coordinating all efforts to achieve the overall goals; satisfying employees and shareholders through maximization of wealth and the value of the share; planning what is to be done to solve problems facing the company.

Organizational Structure and Applied Theories

Southwest Airlines has a sophisticated organizational structure that plays a crucial role in shaping the organizational behavior of its members.

Organizational structure comprises of several aspects including product division, authority, communication, team, control, market and geographic structure issues. Southwest Airlines has defined these aspects and has demonstrated a strong capability on these aspects. Organizations start as functional structures and then expand along with their structures and

Southwest Airlines is not an exception. The company has an extremely complicated, multi-divisional and hybrid structure based on increasing vertical and horizontal differentiation but concerned about customer relations because it is a service-centered enterprise. Southwest Airlines contends with several factors that have influence on its design such as consumer relations, different divisions and different airports. The biggest challenge facing the organization with regard to its structural design involve taking into consideration that airlines have become consumer centered. As it operates in its current 64 distinct locations, each branch operates as a business as well as part of its corporate structure. Each location operates separately and is at liberty to apply product division structure but it must report to the corporate headquarters that is a multi-divisional and diverse structure. Each division in the multi-divisional structure is considered a different entity. It is the responsibility of divisional managers to design their own divisional structures that meet the customer needs of their division. Advantages of a multi-divisional structure include increased control, organizational effectiveness, availability of labor internally and profitable growth. According to this structural theory, organizational members' behavior is controlled in an upward mobility. There is an incentive of promotion to a higher office if a divisional manager performs exceptionally well. A multi-divisional organization possesses wide internal labor that acts as a motivation to managers to perform well to increase the effectiveness. The biggest challenge for an organization dominated by high consumer demand involves how to maintain customers happy so that revenue flow increases. An excellent way to structure such a company is putting customer

needs first and making decisions that are based on consumer satisfaction and reactions. A consumer-centered structure is unique because the leadership makes decisions after closely monitoring reactions of consumers. Southwest Airlines has realized this and extensively uses this kind of structure as part of its design (Bakke and Chris 254).

Corporate Culture and Applied Theories

Culture reflects the past behavior of an organization. Southwest Airlines takes pride of its culture that it has built for over 40 years of operation. The company has a culture of progressive growth and innovation that gives it a competitive advantage over competitors. In 1987 for instance the transportation department at Southwest initiated a program of rating and tracking customer level of satisfaction in all its locations. This program made the company become a market leader because the program helped the company have the lowest number of complaints for every passenger that boarded its planes. Many upcoming airline companies have copied Southwest model of operation and their culture has been emulated and admired by organizations across the whole world. Through its innovative capabilities, the company engineered senior Fares facility and introduced ticketless mode of travel. It was the first airline company to design a website, southwest.com that posts updates and news for its customers across the world. In addition, Southwest airline was the first company in the industry to design a corporate blog that caught the attention of many people. Southwest has clearly defined its culture that has been used as a yardstick by many corporations both in the airlines industry and other sectors.

Southwest culture is a unique one due to the spirit of its employees. Southwest's employees are known for their giving nature and warm hearts that make the company a leader in the industry. Employees of Southwest are famous for doing what is right and their commitment to giving back to the society they serve and contributing positively to the environment under which the company works is their way of doing business. The strong culture exhibited by Southwest Airlines is attributed to the commitment of its leadership to mission and vision of the company. Working in this company demands that you follow their vision of quality customer service at all times. The company leadership has a special commitment and loyalty to employees because it recognizes the contribution of competent staff to the success of the company. The organization has relied on a culture that encourages employees to have entrepreneurial spirit and has put emphasis on initiative, personal responsibility, use of good and independent judgment, and maintaining high ethical standards in all its dealings (Singh 2006).

Job Design and Applied Theories

The manner in which an organization defines its job design from individual employees to broader cultural aspects influences how divisions relate with others and the organization at large. Southwest Airlines has been on the forefront in demonstrating its ability to promote diversity and foster creativity in its job design. Job design has to do with defining and envisioning work specifications and systems related to a certain job. It deals with issues such as job methodology, individual responsible for certain job and place of doing the job. The process of job design assists in making prevailing work

systems and jobs more exciting and challenging for employees. Southwest Airlines is very concerned about its employees and looks at them as key to performance of the organization. To reinforce employees satisfaction, the company describes its programs and creates a diversity council that is responsible for supporting the company's efforts on; improving advancement and recruitment of women and minority groups, increasing supplier diversity, implementing education and training programs to meet the organization's growth needs, creating awareness and showing appreciation for cultural and lifestyle differences amongst the workforce, organizing and amplifying issues that improve diversity and inclusiveness among other tasks (Buchanan 319).

Environmental Forces Influencing Organizational Behavior at Southwest Airlines

In studying the Southwest organizational behavior, internal and external forces affecting it is very important. The company started its operations in 1971 by Herb Kelleher and Rollin King. It was originally called Air Southwest Company but after incorporation later in 1971, the name changed to Southwest Airlines. The company has a humble beginning of starting small in Texas only flying between San Antonio, Dallas and Houston. After the airline sector was deregulated in 1978 by FAA, Southwest expanded its operations to California and other regions. As we speak, Southwest is the number four largest airlines in United States with more than 500 aircrafts serving the sixty four airports and recording over 104M passengers every year. The company celebrated 40 Years of existence on 18th June, 2013 (Freiberg and Jackie 103). Its revenue has increased progressively implying the expansion is not only confined to geographical regions but financial too. Southwest

Airline was named a major airline back in 1989 when revenues were in excess of \$1bn. It has been the most successful high frequency, point to point and low fare airline in the world operating over 3500 flight per day. Due to its focus on customer needs and preferences, Southwest market share has been increasing significantly. The great milestone that occurred on 11th September 2001 still affect the public feeling about the company's security and safety of air travel. A major challenge affecting the effectiveness of Southwest Airlines and the overall airline industry is the rising price of fuel. The increase in fuel prices has inevitable consequences of increased freight fare (Muse 36). This is exerting pressure on the company to look for alternative areas where it can curtail services to avoid losing business.

Analysis of effectiveness Design of Southwest Airlines

Understanding an organization's approach to organizational behavior is important as it equips you with the necessary skills to put theories and aspects learnt in class into practice. Broader knowledge of organizational behavior enables one become outstanding in the face of employers who are seeking for people with unique skills that will turnaround their organizations. Thorough knowledge of this course guarantees someone a managerial position in a company that desires to take the most out of its human capital as well as progressive growth.

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