Free research paper on playing to win

Business, Company

Playing-to-win is a strategy that any company or organization that seeks to succeed should adopt. The model lays down strategies that the organization needs to embrace to realize its goals. In essence, the play-to- win approach is based on the concept of strategic management. Many companies have a set of aspirations, normally set out as a mission statement and a vision. These two corporate artifacts are important to strategy; their limitation being lack context and are abstract. Mission statement and vision often paint a good picture of the company and a possible happy future, however; they do not refer to competition forces, to customers and to winning. For an organization to sustain its operations, it must make strategies of how to win in a certain place and in a particular manner, which translates the abstract happy future into precise winning aspirations. Therefore, playing-to-win is defined as setting specific strategies of how to carry out the company's duties to achieve particular set goals (Lafley & Roger 4).

When setting a play to win strategy, a company needs to be precise, and goal-oriented. This includes detailing well-defined and attainable goals. It is a tradition that many companies make strategies that focus on maximization of output, increasing market coverage and a broad customer base. However, playing-to-win illustrates that a company should focus on certain core market and particular markets and customers. These are not just the areas to consider in playing-to-win; others do exist. The point is that a company should be specific in its strategies and have certain core areas to win. On the other side, if a company simply makes strategies without considering core items, that is termed as just playing but with no winning aspect in it. For us to include the winning aspect in our discussion the company has to consider its core items in the industry, for example, core brands, core customers, core geographical areas and core channels, which takes into account that a company can engage in many brands, sell to many customers, distribute to many geographical locations and use different channels. However, with playing to win, not all this is possible; the company should only operate basing its strategy on the core items. Every organization needs to conceptualize on what it means to win; aspirations to winning are however different in different businesses, for example, winning aspirations are different for a consumer brand, a market research department or a community hospital. For a market research department, winning aspirations could mean to be the service provider of choice for its internal customers. Winning could also mean becoming a trusted advisory body to organizational leaders, or to own the most sophisticated and successful set of consumer insight resources in the industry. However, this is mediocrity because it is simply serving the needs of internal customers (Malkiel 17).

Playing-to-win is an important recipe for any organization’s perceived success. As apparent in this discussion, when a company simply sets to play in the industry, the strategy just presents as a fulfillment of its mission and vision. However, this may fail to translate to desirable outcomes. The implication of such a situation is that planning should be accompanied by thrilling implementation of the proposed strategies. For a company to realize its full potential, it must employ a playing-to-win strategy. A company has to consider several aspects in implementing this strategy. One of the areas of discussion is where to play. In considering this factor, the organization determines where it will compete- in which markets, with which customers, the channels to follow, the product categories among others. Where to play, in other words, represents the sets of choices the company makes that narrow the competitive scope. When selecting on where to play, the company should select a competitive playing field where it can maximize on all its potential. It is important to determine where its capabilities are decisive and where not, that is, what is truly core and to invest appropriately in those areas. A company should build from its core strengths in order to win: which includes core brands, the core geographical areas, its core customers and channels, its core technologies and innovations and finally its core consumers. Other areas and businesses that do not fall within the core are left out. A company considers a set of possible occurrences when deciding where to play. This is with the intention of establishing the possible risks involved and the viability of the proposed strategy. The practice is of high relevance since investing in unviable strategies is not a wise undertaking. For example, a hospital may choose to have a narrow geographical base if its choice is to offer a broad scope of general services to the surrounding community. Conversely, if it wishes to specialize, it may choose to cover a broader geographical area to extend the specialized services to many different people in different locations (Malkiel 28 & 29).

The approach of winning and where to play are intimately tied and these two form the heart of this strategy. How-to-win is different from where to play since it involves determining the methods to use to win on that field. They are related in the sense that we should consider the win within the context of where to play the choice. It is not just a win achieved under any context; it is under consideration of a given where to play the choice. Therefore, where-to-play and how-to-win are closely related and reinforce each other. For example, a company that chooses to compete for the loyalty of young women needs to build a desirable brand produce products and distribute them in a manner that distinctively and strongly addresses demographic. The company needs to fit the where-to-play and how to win favor from its consumers in order to make it stronger. A company considers several factors that will help it in determining how to win. These factors will enable it to create distinct values, and the company can sustainably deliver that value to its customers in unique ways from its competitors called competitive advantage; a way in which the company uses specific, unique methods in production and distribution to reach more customers and increase its returns. Success of how-to-win choices depends on their uniqueness from one organization to the other. These choices should be appropriate to the specific organizational context and should be almost impossible to copy. The company should understand its core consumers and create differentiated brands in consideration to this understanding. On the playing fields, a company has selected; it should relentlessly build its brands and produce distinctive and innovative products and services (Lafley and Roger 19). It should also leverage global scale and deep partnerships with suppliers. This is with the aim of delivering services that accounts for the market needs. However, determining how to win begins with a single and crucial choice. This choice is whether the organization will win based on having lower costs than other players have in the industry. There are two strategies under this: low-cost strategy and differentiation strategy. In a low-cost strategy, the driving force to profit is by having lower costs than competitors have. In a differentiation strategy, the driving force to profit is a price premium, derived by the fact that the company’s goods and services are seen to be of more quality value to their customers than those offered by other competitors. These two strategies produce a sustainable winning advantage. However, cost leaders and differentiators do not behave the same based on which approach they are using to win. Managers who are cost leaders work to understand the cost drivers, remove cost pools from the system, standardize, and rationalize operations. On the other hand, managers who are differentiators work to deepen their customer understanding, build brands with customers in mind, delight existing customers, and create new ones. These two sets of managers use different strategies, but both work towards a common goal, to win (Duggan 16).

Lafley and Martin have come up with a set of five fundamental strategic choices, which when companies address in an integrated way can help a company gain competitive advantage over its competitors. Despite an organization doing many things, these activities truly matter; they make the difference between winning and losing. These simply refer to the organization’s core capabilities, which when performed at the highest levels enable the organization to win. However, the five fundamental strategic choices include;

- Deep consumer understanding- this is the company’s ability to know the consumers in a better way than the competitors do. This understanding helps it in knowing unarticulated needs and to harness opportunities before others see them.
- Innovation- this is the company’s ability to transform deep comprehension

of consumer needs into desirable brands, goods and services, its relationships, distribution channels and business systems.

- Brand building- this involves building and deploying a unique heuristic for creation of strong consumer relations and loyalty. It is a very essential feature to sustain business existing customers and to source for new ones.
- Go-to-market ability- this feature considers channel methods and consumer relationships. The company should focus on reaching its customers and consumers in time, in the right place and the right channels. The company invests in building relationships with retailers to consistently deliver its products.
- Global scale- this is an essential in which the company relates to the power of working together; acquiring, studying, purchasing, testing, and selling together to enjoy the global benefits of scale. These five essentials are fundamental strategic choices that are of great benefit to an organization when performed well (Lafley and Roger 23).

Playing-to-win strategy comes out well as the best strategy that any company that wishes to succeed can use. This strategy, however, involves several steps of implementation as discussed, which includes determining the reasons why the company needs to play-to-win, where to play, and how to win. Finally, the organization ought to understand the fundamental strategies to employ alongside others to win.

Works Cited

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