Business metaphors

Metaphors have been widely used in the corporate world as a competitive strategy. In particular, cultural metaphors have been used to establish identity in business. A cultural metaphor refers to any specific phenomenon with which members of a particularcultureare emotionally or cognitively identified with. For that matter, cultural metaphors are usually used to represent the fundamental values of a given culture. Such cultural identities as American Football and Japanese garden are a good example of metaphors. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), the manner in which people think, their experiences and day to day activities is a subject of metaphor (p. 1). It therefore implies that individuals usually make comparisons between uncertain situations and situations they are comprehensively familiar with in order to develop a clear understanding of the situation.

In an organization, one of the popular metaphors usually used is the concept that an organization is a machine. This result into a situation where business managers build their organizations based on the theories and codes pertinent to physical machines such as automotives. As a consequence, subordinates would only have a restricted authority and subjected to rigorous supervision and many organizational hierarchies.

This approach of designing business organizations is not congruent with stiff global competition, rapidly emerging technological developments, and reduced life cycle of goods and services. A more relevant metaphor might be that of a guerrilla warfare employing flexible troops, prompt changes in planning, and a strong ideological devotion and culture of the organization. It

is therefore important to correctly select metaphors in order for success in businesses to be achieved (Gannon, 2002).

A cultural metaphor as already demonstrated above refers to a unique phenomenon through which a particular culture can be identified emotionally or cognitively. As a consequence, metaphors reflect the fundamental principles representing the culture in question. Most often, individuals outside such cultures find it difficult to understand the underlying principles of the culture. Culture is important because it helps in filling blanks, often automatically, when actions necessary, and cultural metaphors allows for the values leading to such actions to be seen. This represents an exciting characteristic of culture.

Humans use metaphors in their every day life, and when the question of culture arises in the process, then it becomes a cultural metaphor. For instance, American Football has become the most famous sporting activity in the United States. It is critical that the citizens of the United States have a clear understanding of this sport and its intricacies so that they would be able to understand the way business is carried out by United States managers. For this reason, certain social critics such as Camille Paglia have argued that women should actively participate in studying football instead of attending feminist discussions (Paglia, 1997).

Many managers all over the world have arrived at a consensus that American Football is an important metaphor for gaining adequate knowledge about the increasing complexity of today's business. At the start of the 20 [th] century, many managers recognized baseball as the most effective business metaphor in the United States.

However, in the modern businessenvironment, many managers identify themselves with football. This has significantly made American Football as the major cultural metaphor in the United States. Metaphors provides a fascinating approach of processing language and how it cam help to improve the performance of a business. Since language forms the underlying principle in everycommunicationbetween businesses, an organization can gain a competitive edge by understanding how language is processed by people (Rice, 2005).

A cultural metaphor presents a mechanism of obtaining insight into the culture of an organization or a nation. In establishing these insights, it is vital that research be based on broader cross-cultural issues. Cultural metaphors should therefore be reinforced by dimensional and communications outlook.

These metaphors provide a basis for understanding the culture of any business organization or a nation because of ease of use. In addition, they do not require in-depth thought and therefore inappropriate stereotyping is limited. Most outstandingly, these metaphors allow business managers with time limitations to have a comprehensive knowledge about the culture of an organization that can be useful in solving numerous problems faced by businesses all over the world (Gannon, 2002).

Customer character and situations are important tools which can be used by business organizations to maintain their customers. In the past years, character and situations were basically considered as a process step in an interactive process of development. However, in the modern world, they provide a basis for communicating insights and modeling solutions to problems. These stories have gradually grown to become a fundamental

vehicle for data analysis and guidelines for strategic businesses. Character and situations can adequately provide tales of change over a period of time.

They can demonstrate stories about the experiences of brand that customers currently have and anticipation of their future experiences. These stories are important because they predict the nature of relationships between the business and the customer. The use of storytelling in business organizations is expected to continue broadening in dimension and the impact in creates on businesses. Storytelling strategies that are used to gauge the opinion and behavior of consumers in the process of interaction with business organizations are important in the extent of any business framework (Hanna, 2005).

Irrespective of business industry, metaphors and storytelling techniques are useful for transparent communications, and comprehensive plans that are essential in organizations. Many organizations have employed customer character and situation story telling techniques as part of their business strategy.

No matter who the audiences are, storytelling should be effectively used to attract their concentration in order to apply them in business frameworks and future success stories of a business. Business managers should therefore identify relevant connections that metaphors and storytelling have on customers. They should be able to assess whether the metaphors provide connection with customers or disconnection. After establishing this connection, business managers should be able to demonstrate how these products satisfy the needs of the customer.

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