A report on managing across cultures management essay

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The new wave of internationalisation and globalisation demands that businesses operate across the globe promoting the exchange of trade investment emigrations and the like. To remain competitive businesses must be equipped to operate across the globe which invariably means across different cultures. Consequently, adequate measures creating the right environment to conduct business successfully across the different cultures of the world in this new age is definitely imperative.

The following report briefly attempts to address these recurrent inadequacies that often derail lucrative global business endeavours by trying to highlight a simple structure of initial planning, followed up by proper positioning and the final execution that can serve to assist in the management of the people that are the driving force that engineer businesses across the different cultures of the world.

The methodology employed in collating this report from introduction to conclusion was via research into provided materials to decipher the required data and information that could allow the required findings emerge to shed light on more information on managing across cultures with a view contribute to this predominate predicament.

INTRODUCTION

Managing, it can be stated, is simply the process of directing, organising or controlling in a desired way, while culture, in very broad term is the way of life of people characterized by, amongst others things, their behaviour, beliefs and traits.

The aim of this report on " Managing Across Cultures" is to identify and explain some best practices that can be applied by managers in business when managing cross-cultural staff. It is by no means an exhaustive account of all the practices that can be applied when dealing with cross-cultural staff. The term cross-cultural staffs, simply implies staff that come from different cultural backgrounds.

In this report three key stages will be used to signify the vital processes required in managing across cultures. These stages are as follows: (1) Innovation, (2) Preparation and (3) Implementation. These stages follow each other sequentially in the management of cross cultural staff and there is an attempt to show a correlation between all three stages whilst discussing the guiding principles involved in each stage.

The research is sourced from renowned online academic books, journals, blogs and newspaper articles provided by the resident librarian at the university of Bedfordshire Luton park square campus Peter Godwin.

Finally due to adherence to strict word limitation set for the report the explanations at each stage of the key guiding principles and application of given theories are reasonably concise but still effective.

FINDINGS

1. Innovation

The original convention that all management ideas and principles being generated from the core albeit suggestions from all other parts that make up the entire management chain is now proving less tenable when it comes to managing cross cultural staff successfully. Morden day practices now call for contributions from different parts of the management chain to put together ideologies that will apply adequately to cross cultural staff.

There are two forms of management ideologies: Cultural control and Bureaucratic control, practiced by multinational businesses that manage cross cultural staff on a regular basis, with the cultural control being more successful than the bureaucratic control (Berry et al, p. 381). The former, on the one hand, involves the use of trained managers sent from the headquarters of the business to different locations to manage staff with policies modified to suit the local cultures of these locations. A good illustration of this managing ideology is presenting the text of company policy in the local language or languages where the company is located. For example, an English or American multinational company located in France will present the text of the company policy and all other correspondence to staff in French language though the original communiqué to the manager may be sent in English language. The latter, on the other hand, involves issuing guidelines for all aspect of staff activities from the headquarters to all the branches of the business at different locations where managers are expected to manage staff with policies based on these guidelines.

However, it should be noted that from surveys conducted, although the bureaucratic control model is more cost effective than the cultural control model in the short term, the latter will stand the company in good stead in terms of productivity, profits and staffs turn over in the long term (Berry et al, p. 381).

There are other management ideologies that stem from propositions of convergence, divergence and the culture specific theories (Vecchi and Brennan 2009, p. 151). The convergence proposition supports the position that in a global age managers of cross-cultural staff adopt successful practices of their colleagues that manage other cross cultural staff to attain a high level of quality management, a practice that will work positively for cross cultural management in conjunction with the cultural control pattern of management.

The divergent proposition that stands negatively against cross cultural management being more akin to bureaucratic control pattern seeks to support the position that maintaining one basic national management practice as prescribed from the central controlling body thereby disregarding the inputs of local cultures.

The culture specific proposition serves to illustrate the significant influence of culture on management practices when managing cross-cultural staff. When this proposition is applied using Geert Hofstede (1980) five cultural dimensions as a comparative index, it is revealed that managers are able to appreciate the different responses of cross cultural staff based on the nature

of the cultural frame work that could be either power distance, individualist, masculine, uncertainty avoidance or long term orientation.

Accordingly, based on the above principle an analogy of staff from a culture with a comparatively higher power distance index may share a less cordial relationship with the manager than staff from lower levels of this cultural dimension (Vecchi and Brennan p. 151). Staff from an individualist culture may tend to work better alone on most tasks while those from collectivist cultures may tend to perform better in a group. Masculine cultures may produce staffs that are target focused while feminine cultures may produce staffs that are customer centred. Those from cultures with high uncertainty avoidance will tend to be more emotional and structured in their actions while those from low uncertainty avoidance may tend to be more spontaneous and adapt quickly to change. The staff from cultures with long term orientation may tend to be tenacious and prudent while those from short term orientation may tend to be more retentive of habitual values and commitments.

2. Preparation

The preparation process that is borne out of the management innovations comprises of cross cultural training. This practice follows naturally as the second step when operating a management ideology of cultural control with a convergence type attitude taking cognisance of the cultural framework of your cross cultural staff. The training is required for every employee to prepare them for their future cross cultural environments.

The training of the staff can be conducted through a computer based interactive programme that each staff is mandated to take individually, a successful scheme that Accenture have conducted with relative success (Murray, 1985).

Also, the training can take the form of re-enactments of actual culturally sensitive scenarios that have occurred in the work place by professional artists to heighten their effect with a view to correcting what ever misconstrued notions, attitudes and behaviours that the employees may have developed as a result of this cultural misunderstanding. This training pattern was successfully conducted by Lehman Brothers (Murray, 1985).

There are other patterns of training involving, spontaneous on the spot addressing of cross cultural incidents born out of cultural misunderstanding that occur within the work environment. This training solution has been successfully deplored by a London based inter-cultural training consultancy, Future Considerations (Murray 1985).

The training of managers to apply western styled management techniques to others cultures and vice versa (Berry et al, p. 383). The personal and impersonal domain patterns of leadership techniques include technocratic and charismatic leadership and participative leadership, team work and reward schemes respectively. The personal domain will be easily appreciated by cultures that are of low power distance index, uncertainty avoidance and long term orientation but are individualist and masculine, while the impersonal domain will appeal more to cultures that are of the reverse.

3. Implementation

The implementation process of actualizing the foregoing stages also follows naturally from the preparation stage. At this stage, all employees,' managers and staff inclusive are encouraged to put the training brought about by the ideologies into practice to reflect the desired management direction. The idea of cultural collaboration, it has now been discovered, to be the end result of innovative management ideologies reinforced through inter cultural training. A simple illustration can be drawn from an exercise where an anthropologist observing staff of a company with cross cultural staff who regularly meet in a designated section of their office that was scheduled for reorganisation that would relocate certain furniture that the staff had cause to deliberated over thereby individually expressing their ideas on work related issues borne out of their cultural background that usually led to positive results arrived at harmoniously. Based on the advice of the anthropologist, the furniture was not relocated instead more designated sections were created in other sections of the company to promote cultural collaboration amongst cross cultural staff (Marrewijk, 2009). The idea of cultural collaboration as a positive tool in management across cultures cannot be over emphasised because it creates a harmonious environment where acceptance of cultural diversity can thrive without reprove.

CONCLUTION

In this report, the focus has been on an attempt to present key stages that are by no means exhaustive or independently distinctive, involved in the process of managing across cultures in a concise and effective way.

As a result, three stages: innovation, preparation and implementation were identified. The innovation stage is where the ideologies on cross-cultural

management are formulated, the preparation stage is where these ideologies are developed and the implementation stage is where these developed ideologies are manifested.

In sum, innovation leads to developed ideologies and the result: desired better successful management across cultures and of cross-cultural staff.