

Eden project case study essay sample

Environment



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Introduction to Eden

Eden Project is one of the largest greenhouses in the world, it is a top Cornwall's tourist attraction and an educational charity that attracts millions of tourist every year to come and see an outstanding collection of plants placed inside huge artificial biomes. Eden Project is not only a popular tourist attraction, it is a social enterprise that aims to “inspire people to go on a journey of discovery about the kind of society we want to live” (Eden Project, 2011). The Eden Project was constructed in a 160-year old fatigued china clay mine in Cornwall and the original idea came from Tim Smit, who decided to do everything in his will in order to involve people in creation of this project.

His efforts paid off as after 2.5 years of development, on 17 March 2001, the world's largest greenhouse was opened attracting 1.7 million visitors in their first year (cornwall-calling. co. uk, 2006). The success and reputation of this organisation as well as its great cause make it an attractive topic of investigation.

Therefore the purpose of this report is to explore the nature of Eden Project as a social enterprise organisation, considering its approach to measure their value and effectiveness in terms of their triple bottom line. The second part will investigate into the organisation working as an open system, looking into their aims and objectives and how they interact with the external environment. Additionally, the report will also access Tim Smit's management style, focusing on how it has contributed into the major success of the organisation and also limited it at the same time.

Eden as a Social Enterprise organisation

Social Enterprises (SE) are businesses trading to tackle social problems, improve communities, people's life chances and the environment. This might be a similar description to a charity, but social enterprises are business and they operate for profit and when they profit – the society profits (SocialEnterpriseUK, 2010). SE are organisations with primarily social or environmental objectives whose profits are re-invested for the purpose of community. They are not driven by the need to maximise their profits for shareholders, their focus is to make a change and bring benefits to the society and that's what makes social enterprise different from other, profit driven businesses (Paterson, 2011).

Eden Project is more than just a botanic garden; it is a social enterprise with a mission to promote public education and research in various aspects of the natural environment and inspire them to protect the environment. Eden addresses social problems, such as the decreasing amount of time that children spend playing outside and how damaging it is for them and it is dedicated to creating innovative solutions to resolve these issues, such as “Mud Between Your Toes” programme for children.

A specific feature of social enterprise organisations is the way that they measure their value and organisational effectiveness. The framework they use is called a triple bottom line. It is an accounting framework that that incorporates three dimensions of performance: social, environmental and financial. The triple bottom line dimensions are also commonly called the three Ps: People, Planet and Profits (Slaper and Hall, 2011).

Example of Eden's triple bottom line:

1. Planet : Concern with the environment it's in the Eden Project's nature, the managers are putting their best effort into making sure that they run their operations in the greenest way possible, the organisation is raising public awareness around environmental issues. But “ It's not just about the planet. We make sure the charitable work we do makes a difference to people's lives too” (Eden Project, 2011).
2. People: The organisation is dedicated to educating people in a fascinating and entertaining way, running transformational social and environmental projects and inspiring them through various music and cultural events. They also work with homeless, disengaged and excluded groups in society providing them with unforgettable experiences.
3. Profit : Similarly to Jamie Oliver's “ Fifteen” , a profit-making, commercial organisation that inspires young people to better their opportunities, the Eden Project is also a profit making business, where its main profit comes from admission charges and visitors donations and they are spend mostly on maintenance and development of the site.

Eden Project's open system model:

Aims and objectives (goals that are planned to be achieved): * To promote the understanding of relationship between people and plants * To engage and inspire people about environment in creative way * To give customers support, training and network they need to effect change * To develop new income flows to support the educational work of the charity * To be more

involved in the local communities (Eden Project Annual Review, 2008/09).

Environmental Influences:

- * Social attitudes towards plants and education
- * “ Green” environmental issues + climate change
- * General economic activity
- * Development in new technologies
- * Customers and their income
- * Status and attitudes of the local community

INPUTS:

- * Information from the environment
- * Technology
- * Customers
- * Management
- * Staff
- * Finance

Transformation or Conversion processes:

* New programmes of education for young and older customers * Using new technologies and new developments to make educational projects more inspiring and creative * Use sustainable resources and look after the environment * Provide customers with quality service and value for money so they want to come back * Managing projects effectively and in a creative way

- * Training and development of staff, making sure that they are committed to what they do
- * New, creative ways of gaining funds and encouraging people to volunteer
- * Greater emphasis on volunteering and donations by informing people about Eden's mission

OUTPUTS:

- * Society's awareness of the environmental issues
- * Good reputation for entertainment and creativity
- * Customer satisfaction
- * Sustainability
- * Example of environmentally friendly organisation
- * Further site developments

Open system theory was initially developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1956), a biologist, but it was applicable across all disciplines, such as computing, businesses and economies. Open system refers to a flexible system that can adapt and change by interacting with other systems or the external environments. The businesses that run under the open system model take inputs from the environment, process them through transformation and conversion and send them back to the environment as outputs (businessdictionary. com, 2011). .

The diagram above portrays the Eden Project's open system model which includes the environmental influences (taken after carrying out a PESTE analysis) that affect the inputs that come into the system to do the transforming or to be transformed in turn to acquire a list of outputs that Eden returns back to the environment with in order to achieve its

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organisational goals (Mullins, 2010a). It also evaluates Eden's aims and objectives as they determine the nature of inputs, transformation process and achievement of outputs.

Tim Smit – the creative leader of the organisation

The original idea of the Eden Project came from Tim Smit who once had a dream of this design and decided to introduce it to others. He was born in Holland on 25 September 1954 and read archaeology and anthropology at Durham University. Tim worked for ten years in the music industry as composer/producer in both rock music and opera (Eden Project, 2011).

He has a very hard task of managing this large organisation in an efficient way, which means that he needs to adapt an effective management style. Hersey and Blanchard in 1977 identified four different leadership styles and according to their study Tim's style would be a "selling" style. (Hersey and Blanchard, 1977) This means that Tim is attempting to encourage members of staff to buy into his idea and the tasks that need to be performed at Eden. He puts an emphasis on the relationship within the organisation and tries to keep it positive, the selling approach to management is to be used when people are motivated and willing to work and this is the case with Eden as people chose to work there because they believe in what they do (Mullins, 2010b).

Tim's style is very much about team work and believing in what they doing hence Eden's psychological contract is based on team relationships where both the organisation and the employees need each other. Employees are valuable and they are all treated with respect. Eden has many different

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departments; however they are referred to as “ teams” in order to make them all seem equally important and motivated to work.

Tim is very creative and he puts a lot of effort into the entertainment in Eden, he arranges various events in order to gain customers during off-peak times. He is quite idiosyncratic, which on the one hand is very inspirational and creative, making it a popular venue for all age visitors. Although on the other hand it causes various conflicts within the organisation.

Some teams, such as the Green Team of horticultural curators don't agree with Smit's philosophy on making Eden exciting and entertaining and they feel that by the various events the plants are suffering and Eden its losing its original value. Tim declares that he is not into horticulture but his job is to make people excited about horticulture. This approach can be risky for the organisation as it potentially damages the morale of staff and could even lead to strikes or protests.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Eden Project is an organisation with clear social and environmental values, working for the good cause. This report suggests that a dynamic nature of a social enterprise such as Eden is very complex to manage in an effective way, achieving all the goals set. There are various difficulties and problems arising, such as external environmental factors or internal conflicts, however adapting an appropriate management style and good team work can lead to a great success.

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