

Barbara and electra case study

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- How might top management have done a better job changing Elektra Products into a new kind of organization? What might they do now to get the empowerment process back on track?

Analysis of the case study

Main issues

- Declining of Market shares
- Few new product ideas or far between
- Poor staff relationship
- Low staff morale

Weaknesses

- approach in change management
- Organizational culture
- creating problem solving team
- the process of employee involvement and empowerment
- the facilitation by Martin Griffin

The attempt to do staff empowerment is a nice try but it alone is not the complete solution for the root cause of the problems. In order to reach to the solution of all these issues, they have to find out what are the underlying causes of these issues. The newly hired Martin Griffin mentioned in the opening speech that “ As we face increasing competition, we need new ideas, new energy and new spirit to make this company great. And the source for this change is you—each one of you. ” Though he mentioned that each of the staff is important, he failed to allow everyone actively participates and play important role in the program.

He neglected the importance of each and everyone's contribution and effort to the program. He should have made understand what does it means by employee involvement and empowerment; how it will help the company solves the issues and, the ways to do and requirements for the staff involvement and empowerment program. It was worsen when the main facilitator, Martin Griffin, had excused from the session at the time Barbara and team enthusiastically presented their innovative ideas to department heads. The facilitator also fails to aim what kind of outputs he expects at the end of the session.

For the successful empowerment program, the organization structure and its enabling environment is very critical. Trust building is very important part of the program especially in this situation where staff relationship and morale is poor. It is not only important for the top management level but also the department heads or managers from all other departments are important to accept the concept of staff involvement and empowerment. As the company is on its way of changing to a new era, every staff will have different perspective of interest on how it will affect their current roles, responsibilities and job security.

All of which are worth to take in consideration in managing the change process. The managers are not so sure why they require these changes as they have been doing well in the past and they believe they can do it again. On the other hand, every staff has a different management theory and surely they are not on the same page with other management staff or with the company's current management. It is quite critical to ensure that every

management staff equipped with relevant knowledge and skills that will contribute the company's strategic goals.

The staff must have a common understanding of the organizational value, culture, strategic goals and how the empowerment process will add on the success of the organization. Instead of creating problem solving team with managers selected by top management, allow all managers to voluntarily work as cross-functional teams and come up with innovative ideas and opinions. By doing so, each team will have a representative from each specialized departments who has his or her own perspective and issue on the ideas.

Contribution from different expertise and background will provide the ideas reach wider scope and reality. Then, each team should discuss the ideas with other teams which may require some modification and negotiation process. If everyone satisfies with the ideas, the staff involvement will be improved and the ideas will become action. It is natural that someone could resist the ideas or changes made by others. But if they are put in a position to be part of a cross-functional team that needs to come up with an innovative idea, the discussion environment among the team will tend to be more constructive.

In addition, since the company is to undergo a big change, the top management should have implemented a good change management strategy and plan. They should also prepare a communication strategy and plan to inform the staff accordingly. So that it will be clear what is going to happen, why, how and who will be responsible in the change process. The

communication strategy and plan is also important as the staffs are very concerned with the change and restructuring process.

If the staffs are not well communicated about the changes, the restructuring with many rumors will encourage the staff leaving the organization and looking for a new job which will be a lost the trained and skillful human resources of Elektra.

Recommendation to top management in changing Elektra to a new kind of organization and to get back empowerment process on track:

- Ensure all staff understands what are the vision, mission and strategic goals of Elektra.
- Recruit or train staff to ensure the organization is equipped with necessary skills for change management. For eg. Hire a skillful and experienced facilitator who can give time and have a sound facilitation plan. A good facilitation plan must aim some specific objectives, processes of facilitation and expected results
- Make sure that everyone understand what empowerment is and why it is important and how it will contribute to the vision, mission and long-term strategic goals
- Remove the process of selected problem solving team in an attempt to change Elektra and instead make them voluntarily participate in the cross-functional team which includes representative from each department, different backgrounds etc. Facilitate the department heads/managers to address the underlying causes of each problems in their sector from their perspective and reflect their past experiences

- Group the causes and brainstorm all the managers what should they do to reach a solution to these problems so that they understand and practically involve in the change process
- Create an organization structure that will encourage enabling environment and culture for the staff so that they can use their abilities and energies which can then lead to job satisfaction, motivation, commitment by employee. Implement a change management strategy and plan that will ensure the process is on track (what, why, how and by who throughout the change process) and how it will be sustained.
- Identify the transformation leadership team to steer the change and operational leadership team to manage the day-to-day deliverables.
- Set a time frame for the change process to reach its goal as to ensure the urgency of the change and effectively response to the continuously evolving environment and available opportunities.
- Make your strategy and plan be flexible, daptable, acceptable by all stakeholders and suitable for your company and operational environment so that the plan will be realistically implemented.
- Implement a communication strategy and plan to ensure staff received relevant information with regards to the changes which will reflect their interests.
- Ensure that the road map and milestones are carefully prioritize and aligned to reach strategic goals so that the manager can monitor and manage the success or failure in each step towards the strategic goals. Set your operating values in trying to achieve the goals that employee understand what the organization expect and values what kinds of behavior and attitude.

- Organize programs and trainings that could enhance the leadership, shared value, cooperate culture and trust building
- Build capacity of the staff to gain necessary skills and knowledge in implementing staff involvement and empowerment program
- Can you think of ways Barbara could have avoided the problems her team faced in the meeting with department heads?

The problems with the department heads are due to the lack of cross-functional contribution, communication, mind-set, role and planning. It could be possible for Barbara to handle the situation by; Barbara and her team should have considered the impact of their ideas and possible response by concerned departments. If Barbara has carefully analyzed what could be the challenges of their ideas, she would have prepared for a back-up or contingency plan to negotiate the departmental heads. By this way her team will have full confident on their own ideas and the department heads will feel confident that the plan was crafted carefully.

Barbara should open her mind by accepting for their active feedback with thanks as this is a good opportunity to turn the different department heads in the process. She should have faced the resistance and brought up the concern from each department heads. So that and she can start a cross-functional team to brainstorm the more realistic ideas looking from different perspective. Barbara should explain that the ideas shared by her team are only part of the solution to these problems within their scope and the team requires feedback and opinion in a wider scope from other departments.

And before Martin Griffin leaves the workshop, she has to confirm with him that when will be the next workshop to hear feedback from Martin griffin about her team's presentation. So that when the department heads resist and debate on the new ideas, she can note down the issues raised and let that the feedback from the department heads will be thoroughly discussed in next workshop. By doing so, the department heads will feel they also have a role in the process and Barbara got time to do a plan and consider possible solution to the issues so as to move forward the process.

- If you were Barbara Russell, what would you do now? Why?

If I were Barbara Russell, I will work out to keep motivate my team. I will appreciate the team for their effort and contribution toward the company. I will make sure the team understands that for our ideas to be stronger, more realistic and practical for all of us, we need to look our ideas from various aspects as we have experienced that various departments have their own issues on our ideas.

So, in order to successfully implement our ideas, we need collaboration and commitment from all other departments that we must find ways to solve the concerns of other departments. As working within our own team will limit our expertise and other resources, we require contribution of expertise from different sectors. We must find out a way to get support and collaboration from different departments. I will encourage my team to revisit our ideas, gather information from all departments, try to open our mind to accept, and respect the others' perspective and ideas.

I will discuss with Top management and Martin griffin about our team's ideas, several issues raised by the department heads. I will reflect my experience during the presentation of our team's ideas, expectation of other staff, feeling and concerns of other departments. I will discuss ways to allow all departments to work together as a whole and discuss what specific strategy and plan should we implement to manage the change process to ensure achievement of our strategic goals.