

Analysis of using the metaphors



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Organizations are integration of complex elements. To understanding organizations, there are various perspectives. Metaphors help to describe the nature and behaviors of organizations. Among all these metaphors, the brain metaphor and the culture metaphor are two effective approaches to understand today's enterprises in particular high-tech enterprises. The brain metaphor takes an enterprise as a brain which has the capacity to learn and to manage itself. Building a learning organization is the core of this metaphor. The culture metaphor takes an enterprise as a culture which influences all its members. This metaphor is of significance since corporate culture is proved to be a key to success. The brain metaphor and the culture metaphor focus on different aspects of an enterprise. However, there is certain relationship between them. This essay concentrates on the analysis of the two metaphors and makes a case study of Ultrapower Software Ltd., a listed company in China, to explain the use of these metaphors. As an IT enterprise, the Ultrapower highly depends on innovation and learning. To build a learning organization, the enterprise makes endeavors to establish an innovative and value creating corporate culture. These efforts have been proved to work well. The company presents a strong capacity of learning and developing. A series of new products have been launched continuously to the market and help to improve the market share and market position of the enterprise. Generally speaking, the case of Ultrapower reveals that the brain metaphor and the culture metaphor are very useful to guide the development of an organization.

Analysis

The brain metaphor emphasizes the learning and self managing capacity and the culture metaphor emphasizes the corporate culture and social reality. These two metaphors match the features and practices of the Ultrapower which is a high-tech enterprise pursuing for quality software service for its customers through innovation and value creating corporate culture.

Background of Ultrapower Software Co. Ltd.

Ultrapower Software Co. Ltd. is the biggest provider of IT operations and maintenance management solution and service in China. It was found in 2001 and grows rapidly since its foundation. Nowadays, the enterprise has more than 3000 employees among which 80 percent are technical engineers. It has been a maintenance service supplier of the China Mobil and developed Fetion business, a real time communicating tool for the mobiles, as its major business. In October 2009, Ultrapower became a listed company. Its stock price rose surprisingly high in 2010 with the excellent financial performance and the great potential of its business. The enterprise has realized the importance of innovation. As a high-tech IT enterprise, the Ultrapower emphasizes the importance of continuous learning and value creating through innovation. Employees are divided into self managing teams to develop new products and improve the quality of their service. Team learning is supported and encouraged by the enterprise. Each self managing team has a flexible space to develop new ideas and new thoughts. To ensure the smooth operation of such model, the Ultrapower also pays attention to construction of its corporate culture so as to create a good environment for learning and innovation. The efforts of the Ultrapower have

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been proved successful. It has established an advantage position in Chinese market and led the development of IT software in this country. In recently, the enterprise launches its new product Ultra-EOMSv4.0 to the market and plans to improve its market share further with this innovation.

Discussion of the brain metaphor and the culture metaphor

Metaphors help to understand organizations from different views. Two metaphors are chosen to analyze the Ultrapower. One is brain metaphor emphasizing its feature of learning and self management and the other is culture metaphor focusing on creating social reality (Morgan, 1998). To be detailed, the brain metaphor takes an organization as a human brain. It integrates all information together, analyzes the information, learn from it and develop its service and products accordingly. The essential thing of the brain metaphor is building the “ whole” into all parts of an organization. To build the “ whole” into all parts, an organization needs to establish and maintain its corporate DNA, network intelligence, build holographic structures that reproduce themselves, and construct holistic teams and diversified roles (Morgan, 1998). In addition, adequate diversification and surplus of labor and other resources are also of necessity. The brain metaphor is widely used in practice. Various models have been presented to explore the ways to improve the functions of the “ brain” by building a learning organization. Senge (1990) presented a model of five disciplines for a learning organization including personal mastery, improving mental models, building shared vision, team learning and systems thinking. A more specific model says five distinct elements should be integrated to build a learning organization and improve the quality of the organization, namely <https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-using-the-metaphors-analysis-paper-samples/>

learning, organization, people, knowledge, and technology (Marquardt, 2002).

The culture metaphor is the other metaphor adopted in this essay to describe organizations. This metaphor implies that an organization is influenced as well as a result of culture. From this perspective, organizations are both a part of social reality and the producers of social reality. Corporate culture is the essential element of the culture metaphor. Corporate culture facilitates management of an organization. " From the management point of view, this formalization step constitutes also the basis for the establishing of the collective rules of conducts ... The corporate culture is another example of formalization process." (Gensse, 2007, p31) These words reveal the practical value of corporate culture. Corporate culture is paid special attention by many corporations and thought to be a survival guide (Schein, 2009). No subject is more important to the success of today's business organization than corporate culture (Want and Want, 2006). Considering the influence of corporate culture in surviving the cut-throat competition, the culture metaphor is of significance.

Except for the brain metaphor and the culture metaphor, there are various metaphors to understand organizations including the machine metaphor, the organismic metaphor, the political metaphor, the psychic prison metaphor, the flux and transformation metaphor, and the domination metaphor (Morgan, 1998). However, brain metaphor and culture metaphor are the fittest metaphors to match the features of IT industry and the Ultrapower. As a high-tech enterprise, the Ultrapower has a high dependency on learning and innovation. It is also a young enterprise with only 10 years history. Thus, <https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-using-the-metaphors-analysis-paper-samples/>

it tends to see things with fresh ways. The traditional metaphors such as the machine metaphor and the organismic metaphor are not the meet with the style of the enterprise. In addition, the most valuable assets of the enterprise are intangible assets including knowledge, technology, intellectual properties, and innovative culture. Apparently, the brain metaphor and the culture metaphor reach to the core of the enterprise. Thus, it is reasonable to choose these two metaphors.

Analysis of using the metaphors

The Ultrapower has practiced the brain metaphor in its management. In fact, building a learning organization is the goal of the Ultrapower. To achieve this goal, the enterprise takes a series of measures. Firstly, the enterprise develops a model with high degree of self management. Project teams are functional units in the Ultrapower. The project teams are endowed the rights to manage themselves. Resources including human resource, financial resource and other resources are distributed to project teams. Each team has a strategic goal. The team leader and team members communicate frequently and work together to arrange the resources and the working plans for themselves. Thus, the self managed teams are flexible which can help the enterprise to adapt to the marketing dynamics. Secondly, the holographic system is established within the Ultrapower. Information system has been set up to collect and integrated all information produced by both the external environment and the internal departments. Interfaces are established for employees to use the information and retrieve ideas and rules from the tremendous information. As a result, the enterprise can be sensitive about the changes of the market situation and adjust its strategy to

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adapt to them. Thirdly, the team learning is emphasized in this enterprise. Team learning is a very important and effective way to build a learning organization. In the Ultrapower, trainings are provided to all employees periodically and aperiodically. In addition, teams have the right to decide their training frequency and contents and can make training plans for themselves. Communication and discussion are emphasized in the Ultrapower. Members are encouraged to express their thoughts and ideas. Fresh ideas may be produced in this process. Generally speaking, these measures push forward the development of the Ultrapower. Learning has been absorbed in the enterprise as an important element of its corporate DNA. Each member of the enterprise is influenced by this corporate DNA.

Except for the brain metaphor, the culture metaphor is also very useful in practices of the Ultrapower. The enterprise has presented a slogan of “Create value, persevere in goal, strive collectivity” to describe its corporate culture. Since its foundation, the enterprise aims to provide quality service for its customers. On realizing the throat cutting competition in software industry, the Ultrapower decides to create value for its customers. Innovation is a major approach. To support innovation, the construction of learning organization is strengthened. However, the tasks can only be finished with the support of corporate culture. In fact, corporate culture helps to build a quality organization by meeting customer expectations, exceeding customer expectations, delighting customers, and creating new possibilities (Fairfield-Sonn, 2001). Therefore, the Ultrapower makes efforts to improve its corporate culture. Firstly, corporate culture is taken as a strategic element determining the future of the enterprise. When a new employee enters the

Ultrapower, he or she will be told that innovation, continuous learning, creating values for the customers, and hardworking are the spirits of the enterprise. In practice, the enterprise holds activities to strengthen such a corporate culture and let the employees be impressed by the culture. Secondly, innovative corporate culture is linked with value creation. The Ultrapower aims to establish a flexible, relaxing, friendly and fair corporate culture environment so that employees are encouraged and simulated to make innovation. Communications are encouraged so that employees can exchange their ideas freely to produce the new ideas. Thirdly, corporate responsibility is emphasized in corporate culture of the Ultrapower. From the culture metaphor, organizations are closely related to social reality. In Ultrapower, corporate responsibility is thought a way to influence the social reality. It calls on the employees to contribute to the society and improve it with their technology and skills. As a result, employees get greater satisfaction from their work and are proud of their work.

Evaluation

Generally speaking, use of the brain metaphor and the culture metaphor in the Ultrapower are successful and fruitful. The brain metaphor leads the enterprise to improve its capacity of learning and innovation. Following this logic, the enterprise pays special attention to team learning and construction of self managing groups. As a result, the structure of the enterprise is flexible but orderly. It allows the Ultrapower to adapt to the marketing dynamics and keep its advantageous position in the market. In fact, the performance of the enterprise remains satisfying and grows rapidly. It now occupies a dominant market share in the software industry and shows a

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promising prospect. Its success is largely attributed to innovation and quality service. The enterprise acts just as a human brain which integrates all information together to keep sensitive about the business environment. However, there are also some weaknesses. The brain metaphor emphasizes the function of the functions of the “ brain” but not those of the body. This causes problems in the Ultrapower. The enterprise does have a intelligent brain distributing good orders. But in practice, the implementation of these orders is not so satisfying. Therefore, both some employees and some of the customer complain about the enterprise sometimes.

Except for the brain metaphor, the culture metaphor also works well. A successful corporate culture should help to build a platform of integrity (Johnson and Phillips, 2003). The practices of the Ultrapower meet with the requirements to a large extent. The corporate culture stimulates the employees encouraging and pressing them to learn and innovate continuously. This provides a source of the enterprise’s competitive advantage. In addition, the cohesion of the Ultrapower is strengthened. Many of the employees feel satisfied in working in the enterprise and willing to serve it with their technology and innovation. The internal environment of the enterprises is relaxing and friendly. It contributes to improve the social reality to some extent. At the same time, the enterprise is active in affording its corporate responsibility. It donates to help poor people and pursues the goal of improving the social reality. In spite of all the advantages of the culture metaphor in the Ultrapower, it does have some shortages. In fact, the culture metaphor provides a bridge between the enterprise and the society. However, the using of this metaphor in the Ultrapower is mainly limited in

itself. The angle of its culture metaphor using should be widened to consider more social factors so that the enterprise can be more sensitive about not only the market and the industry but the whole society. Therefore, it can develop its corporate culture as well as products and service to meet with the ever changing demands and requirements of the society.

Conclusion

Metaphors are helpful to understand the behaviors and natures of organizations. There are various metaphors providing different view angles of organizations. The choice of metaphors should consider the features of an organization. In this essay, the brain metaphor and the culture metaphor are adopted to analyze the practices of the Ultrapower, the biggest provider of IT operations and maintenance management solution and service in China. The brain metaphor emphasizes the building of learning organization and self management, and the culture metaphor emphasized the corporate culture construction and the linkage between an organization the social reality. The Ultrapower has adopted these two metaphors to strengthen its market position and leadership in the software industry. A structure of self managed teams is established to ensure the flexibility and team learning. In order to support innovation, corporate culture is improved to allow free exchange of ideas and innovations. With the guidelines of these two metaphors, the enterprise has made great achievements in market by launching new products continuous and satisfying their customers with quality service. Generally speaking, the brain metaphor and the culture metaphor are useful for the Ultrapower to keep its rapid growth. However, there are also some

weaknesses such as poor implementation of orders and limitations of corporate culture.