

The manager's technical skills

Business, Management



Technical skills are one of three main skills he requires. They are the knowledge and proficiencies needed for the specific job (Robbins et al, 2008). One needs technical skills to understand specialized tools, processes, methods, procedures and techniques of the required job (Peterson & Van Fleet, 2004, p. 1299). Mr. Crossan is a combination of middle and lower-level management, so technical skills are very important in his line of work. Without them, he would not have been promoted to sales manager.

He needs to understand the full operations of the company like organisation structure, sales policies, financial obligations and policies, etc. Crossan does not only need technical skills for his managerial position, but also as a sales representative. He needs full knowledge of the company's product line (like specifications, abilities, and of course price). Without which, he would not be able to sell anything that he does not have any technical knowledge about.

Devoid of this information, the manager would not be able to train the sales employees on the new equipment that arrives on the product line either - one of his managerial functions - and the entire organization could be hampered. The Manager's Human Skills To train the sales staff, Mr. Crossan needs human skills. Interpersonal skills are the most important and universal skills needed for any level of management as illustrated in figure 2, and are a major definition of management.

As technical skills are mainly involved with working with objects and processes, human skills are primarily concerned with performing with people (Levinson, Three-Skill Approach, 1999, p. 33). To be any manager, one requires the aptitude to cooperate with others, dissipate conflict, effectively

communicate, and of course be a "team player" (Peterson & Van Fleet, 2004, p. 1299). As a manager, Mr. Crossan needs interpersonal skills by definition. He utilizes them as the dominant medium of transferring his functions across to others.

He sets regular meetings with staff to communicate his plans and objectives for the organization and the workflow processes that the staff must meet. The manager also has talks with the staff to motivate them to work as optimally as possible, and to help them when they find difficulties in certain situations. He later communicates performance reviews to the employees to let them know if they are meeting organizational goals and to improve imperfections in their processes, and as mentioned earlier, he also uses interpersonal skills to lecture new sales strategies and to train others on new equipment.

In his non-managerial roles, Mr. Crossan uses human skills to set meetings with clients and organise new contracts and settle old ones. This is his most important skill as he must convince people to buy his product over another. He needs to sell himself every time or he does not make money. The Manager's Conceptual Skills In management, he too requires some conceptual skills. To have these skills, a manager claims the capability to see the entity as a whole (Peterson ; Van Fleet, 2004, p. 1300). He must also recognize how the different functions of the business depend on one another.

This skill broadens to visualizing political, economic, social and technological forces, so to be able to act for benefit of the organization (Levinson, Three-

Skill Approach, 1999, p. 35). Mr. Crossan is able to recognise the different functions of the company and how they depend on one another. For instance, the sales department needs to report to the finance department in order to acquire correct financial information and standards, and the finance department needs information from sales, or they will have nothing to record.

The same goes to the work-shop department, as the sales staff rely on them to repair damaged equipment or they lose client confidence, and the work-shop relies on the sales staff to send in client's equipments or they receive no income from their services. As a sales person, Crossan executes strategic planning as he needs to predict environmental events that may affect him and the organization, so he can plan ways to counter or work with these changes. He accounts for changes in currency which affects the price of the equipment he sells and for petrol price increases as he spends most of his time travelling to customers.

There may be changes in legislation like the implementation of Broad-based Black Economic empowerment and changes in tax reforms which he must change and adapt his work towards. Crossan also conceptualises the changes in customer tastes and demands and technological changes, like when colour photo-copiers came to market he made sure he had the equipment that clients wanted, and recently he predicted the demand for multi-functional machines, so he ensured he had stock on hand when demand came. Mr. Crossan's Approach to Management

As mentioned earlier, Toshiba Copy-type Electronics matrix structure does not have these pre-determined organizational levels, as exemplified in figure 3. There is just first and second level management. This is because of the reasons mentioned above In the Typology as Proposed by Katz and because this was the structure when the organization began with just a handful of staff, and it has worked for them ever since. The organization utilizes a modern approach. All the second level management have employees under them who report to them.

These functional managers also report to each other and the CEO, hence the matrix structure. As stated by Clegg, Hardy and Nord (1996, p. 57) the contingency theory says there is not one organizational structure that is very effective for all organizations. It recognizes the structure that is optimal as changes in certain factors such as organizational strategies and goals, size, technology, environmental pressures etc (Thompson, Zald, ; Scott, 2003, p. ix). Therefore, " the optimal structure is contingent upon these factors which are called the contingent factors" (Clegg, Hardy, ; Nord, 1996, p. 57)

The finance department uses the administrative theory for management as they have set structures, reporting and recording standards that they need to regard due to legal requirements and to keep uniformity. The workshop department on the other hand use scientific management in their operations. This is to warrant strict processes and work quality to guarantee the most efficient and timely repairs as possible, to ensure customer satisfaction. Mr. Crossan's sales department however uses the contingency approach. It is a mix between the administrative and organizational theories.

He uses the administrative approach to record order forms, client contracts and any other financial information that he transfers to the finance department to conform to their practices. The rest of Mr. Crossan's operations are done utilizing the behavioural approach. Because human resources are the most important asset to the organization, the manager ensures that they are happy, and that they socialize with others when they can. This makes their attitudes more positive and it is reflected across to their clients who become more confident in Toshiba Copy-type Electronics as a supplier and continue their investment.

All the sales employees, although in the same company, compete against each other for clients and do not want their sales strategies to be spread to others, but when they socialize the staff share strategies which improves all their operations, benefiting the organization in return. Influence of Organizational Size As an organization increases in size, coordinating problems occur (Robbins, Bergman, Stagg, ; Coulter, 2008). The size usually determines the organizational structure. Even though this company is large, which usually requires a classical approach to ensure it is efficient; it is split into small manageable groups of people.

Even the large sales force is divided amongst six sales managers to ensure socialising and monitoring of individuals. This is again where the organization's uniqueness comes into play. In the case of organizational size, this factor does not really affect Toshiba Copy-type Electronics or the work of Mr. Crossan. If the company gets larger, more functional (sales, financial,

etc) managers will be implemented, and all these second level managers report to each other to ensure uniformity.

The only affect organizational size has on Mr. Crossan's organization is space. If too many people are employed, space will become limited and a new office building will need to be purchased. Influence of Technology on His Approach Technology on the other hand has an enormous influence on the organization and Mr. Crossan. Technology empowers employees, influences flexible work arrangements, mobilises the workforce, creates virtual workplaces, and shifts organisational boundaries (Robbins, Bergman, Stagg, ; Coulter, 2008, p. 23). The major influence technology has on the company is its product line.

When technology improves, the organization acquires new products to sell. This increase in recourses also requires an increase in training. For every new product on the market, Mr. Crossan has to be trained and then he must train his employees how to use it themselves. This is time consuming, and limits the time he has to sell and make money. New technology also changes the way things are done around the organization. Many years ago Mr. Crossan had to post his quotes and contracts to customers.

When fax machines arrived, the process was made much faster. Now emails have improved the process even more. The disadvantage is if there is a powerfailureor server error, the manager's entire operations are halted, where postage was never affected by these circumstances. With the arrival of the internet, the organization has become more globalized, and its marketing capabilities expanded, but this increases the means it can be

attacked by others, via viruses, and the destruction and theft of confidential data.

The arrival of the cell phone however was positive all round. It improved Crossan's sales dramatically. When he is on the road toward a customer, he can now communicate with another and make more sales, whereas before cell phones, he would have lost all the sales from the phone calls in the office that he did not receive while on the road, and he now has ongoing communication with the company, even when he is not there.

Environmental Uncertainty and its' Influence There are many other environmental issues that influence the work of the manager.

One of which is the economy. The impending possibility of our economy going into a recession can lead to weaker confidence in the capital and money markets, leading to a loss of income for many businesses (du Plessis, 2008). The impact on Mr. Crossan's organization will be the bad debts due to customers not being able to pay their accounts. Also, when the weakened economy decrease profits of other companies, they therefore cannot afford to buy new equipment from Crossan's organization and he makes less money in return.

This might mean that he must tighten credit control by approving fewer contract transactions, while at the same time increasing his collection efforts to minimize arrears and ultimately bad debts. Petrol prices also affect Mr. Crossan. When it increases, his transport costs go up, so going to clients costs him more money. This also increases his delivery costs and customers feel less obliged to buy his products. To combat this, Mr. Crossan does not

increase product costs, but makes less profit as a sacrifice in order to keep hold of his customers until the economy strengthens and costs improve.

He and the organization also buy more fuel-efficient vehicles term to reduce costs in the long. Toshiba Copy-type Electronics is also in a very competitive market, competing against companies like Nashua, and third party companies like Hi-Fi Corporation And Incredible Connection. Mr. Crossan must always keep ahead of these organizations and hold onto his existing clients, but also try to acquire new customers away from his competitors. His competitors have very strict classical structures due to their large size and security procedures.

This is again where Crossan's contingency approach benefits him as he can adapt to changes to satisfy different customers. Conclusion In the manager's organization, the structure plays a very important role. Because of its contemporary approach, the managers required skills and functions are slightly different than that of others, giving him a competitive advantage over his more classical orientated competitors due to the combination of the behavioural approach in human skills management (at the end of it all improves customer satisfaction) and the administrative approach in finance (at the end of it all being very quick, and uniform).

As illustrated in the essay, Mr. N. Crossan's use of this modern structure is very flexible and forms the core of his organization's success. Always change processes and structures while they still function. As Peter Drucker (1909, as cited in Advise on Management, 2009) stated: " No institution can possibly survive if it needs geniuses or supermen to manage it. It must be organized

in such a way as to be able to get along under a leadership composed of average human beings." This is where the contemporary approach thrives.

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