

Organizational structure: w.l. gore



Organization Structure Introduction: The dynamic marketplace has necessitated organization to develop organizational structure that would enable them to cater better to the needs of the consumer, produce consumer-centric products, manage their internal processes more efficiently and enhance overall progress of the organization.

W. L. Gore and Associates with its unique lattice structure characterized by hierarchy-less organizational structure is a depiction of the success of a flat organization in today's competitive marketplace. Gore's organization structure facilitates a hierarchy-less working environment enabling the employee to work to their best and produce high quality products. The direct one-to-one communication endows employees with the ability to make timely, informed decisions and get products to market very quickly. The organization however, at times is faced with certain challenges related to leadership and also the human factor. In the absence of managers or a hierarchy it was essential that the associates working at all levels understand the objectives of the organization and make wise judgements. Gore's organization therefore needs to plan its employee selection carefully to ensure selection of the right candidates to work in their company. Also due to the fair compensation process at Gore's organization, employees who don't work towards the organizational objectives would no longer be with the organization due to its fair pay policy. The organization also required that employees knew each other on a one-to-one basis, therefore whenever a new employee was inducted into the company, it took him quite sometime to integrate with the main stream of the organization. (Anfuso, 1999)

Analysis:

Gore's organizational structure is characterised by (1) Less hierarchy and

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bureaucracy which enabled creativity and adaptation (2) Open communication in the form of informal channels takes place (3) Small staff to enable information sharing and foster teamwork (4) Decentralization of authority (5) Joint specialization with employees working together and coordinating tasks.

Gore's organizational structure is organic characterised by the emphasis on teamwork. W. L. Gore and Associates product portfolio consisted of products like heart patches and synthetic blood vessels to air pollution filters and fuel cells; all of which are technology-based. The structure was therefore appropriate for its growth as the company was involved in dynamic and innovative industries.

Employees with an analytical style personality would not respond very well to Gore's lack of hierarchy as these employees work best when the elements of a situation are organized and directions for implementing are provided by others. Employees with a driver style, amiable style and expressive style of personality would work best in Gore's organization structure. The unconstrained working environment would facilitate the working condition for employees with driver style. With emphasis on joint specialization with people working on projects together, the working environment would be relatively free from time constraints and pressure thus enabling employees with amiable style working to their fullest capability. With open expression and communication employees with an expressive style would also work best.

Gore's organizational design does affect the relationship of external companies more hierarchical in nature. The general absence of titles and the fluid roles in Gore's organization would create friction with the hierarchical

cultures during communication as hierarchies' organizational participants would have static roles and titles; especially in cases where the external organization would wish to escalate a problem to a supervisor or director.

Conclusion:

Although Gore's lattice structure has worked well for W. L. Gore and Associates enabling steady progress of the company for many years now; it does have inherent limitations such as its inability to meet a crisis situation in the absence of a hierarchical organization without management structure. Therefore, the structure may not be appropriate for all types of organizations; however may work well for small organizations.

References:

Anfuso, Core values shape W. L. Gore's innovative culture and workforce, 1999