UNIT 11 WORKSHOPS, TASK-FORCES AND OTHER METHODS

Objectives

After going through this unit, you should be able to understand:

- workshops in analysing the problems involved in the organisation.
- task-forces, i.e., a group of employees constituted by the top management help in analysing an organisation.
- observation method helps in diagnosing the problems of an organisatioin.

Structure

11.1 INTRODUCTION

While questionnaire and Interviews are very popular and most commonly used methods, in the recent past workshops and internal-task forces are also becoming very popular. There is greater involvement and team-work involved in workshops and task forces as compared to questionnaire. External help is minimised in task-forces and workshops and sense of purpose is high as teams of employees are involved in diagnosis. Hence these methods are explained in some detail with illustrative examples. Observations and other unobtrusive measures are additional diagnostic tools. They are also described briefly here.

11.2 DIAGNOSTIC WORKSHOP METHODOLOGY

In the Workshop Methodology participants (employees) of an organisation are assembled in groups (usually ranging between 20 to 30) for purposes of diagnosis. They are divided further into small groups (usually with a size of 6 to 8) and are requested to discuss a particular issue and diagnose the situation. SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) or Force Field Analysis (Symptoms - Sources - Solutions - Action Plans) are conducted by the small groups with respect to a given issue/problem/dimension needing the study. The following procedure is normally followed in the workshop methodology.

- **Defining the Problem/Issue for Diagnosis:** First it is important to clearly state the problem or issue at hand before the decision to use workshop methodology is taken. The problem may be general or specific.

Examples of General Diagnosis

a) The organisation is wanting to improve its general performance through improving the productivity and motivation of its employees. The present level of motivation and efficiency of employees at all levels is considered to be good but there is a feeling expressed by several categories of people that it can be still better. What is contributing to the present level of efficiency and what would help improving it.

b) The organisation is wanting to diversify. New units are expected to be added in the same locations. Some of the existing staff may have to look after the new units also with appropriate rationalisation of work loads. What are the factors that should be taken into consideration for implementing the diversification decisions?

c) There is general feeling that the employee motivation is low and organisational health is poor. What are the reasons? What are the critical variables that could be dealth with?

d) The organisation is simply interested in improving itself. What are the ways in which the organisational functioning could be improved?

Examples of Specific Issues

a) The organisation is interested in changing the performance appraisal system and strengthen the open culture. What are the problems and possibilities? What do people feel about the existing appraisal system? What changes do they want?

b) The absenteeism is on increase in some departments. What are the reasons? What could bed one?

c) The organisation would like to improve the team spirit and interdepartmental collaboration. What is contributing to team spirit to-day? How to enhance it?

d) The organisation would like to introduce computers in several sections. What is the existing situation and what steps/variables should be considered for an effective implementation?

The process of defining the problem itself is important. To define the problem itself the top management team may need to have a meeting or a series of meetings. Some times even outside consultants could be used who may conduct a few preliminary interviews and make an assessment of the problem. While it is important to define the problem/issue before the workshop is convened, the facilitator of the workshop should be open enough to go beyond the stated problem if the workshop participants indicate the need for the same.

- **Preparatory Work:** In addition to developing clarity about the problem it is necessary to plan for the workshop in terms of the composition of the groups, introducing the problem, presentations, class-room facilities etc. The participants called for the workshop should be those concerned with the problem/issue, those affected by it and those who are likely to contribute to the diagnosis and subsequet improvements. The workshop participants should be selected in such a way that there are not too many levels of hierarchy present in the same workshop. This is because juniors may feel inhibited to talk about the problems in the presence of seniors. If the group is small and if people of different hierarchial levels get included the sub-groups in the workshop may be so composed to take care of any inhibitions.

- **Workshop Itself:** The workshop may begin with an introduction by the Chief Executive/Unit Head/Sponsor of the diagnostic study. However, after the introduction it should be left for the facilitator to conduct the session. It is advisable if the sponsor of the study is not present during discussions in order to facilitate free expression of views. However, he could join the workshop at the end to listen to presentations. Some times the culture of an organisation may not be open enough even for that. In such cases, the sponsor of the study could be given a presentation by the facilitator himself.

Thus the workshop itself would consist of four groups of activities:

i) Legitimisation by the top management in terms of introducing the study, the facilitators, plans for use of diagnostic data etc.

ii) Rapport Building by the facilitators in the form of explaining the meaning of diagnosis, sharing experiences of other organisatioins, explaining importance of the data they generate, assuring confidentiality, explaining the rationale for group formation, announcing the groups or forming the groups there itself on the basis of suggestions by the members, and introducing the methodology.

iii) Group work where the groups will use Force Field Analysis, SWOT Analysis or Source-symptoms-Action Plan Analysis.

iv) Presentation by groups consolidation of data and prioratisation of variables for action etc. and closing.

The atmosphere in the workshop should be free, open and informal.

The facilitator has to play a major role in creating this atmosphere.

Some examples are presented in the Appendix explaining SWOT Analysis and Force-Field Analysis, Plans Analysis. All the three are good diagnostic tools and throw up a lot of useful diagnostic information.

11.3 WHEN TO USE WORKSHOP METHODOLOGY

Workshop methodology could be used under the following conditions:

- If the problem/issue to be discussed is believed to be amenable for improvemens, solution.
- The decision-makers or the top management of the organisation are committed to bring about change/improvements in the situation and are willing to invest some resources for it.
- The organisation values partcipative processes and there is some amount of openness or willingness to participate and share organisational concerns.
- Involvement of employees becomes important for solving the problem.

11.4 TASK FORCES AND INTERNAL TEAMS

In India many organisations use internal task forces for organisational change. A number of Organisational Designers and OD Consultants make it compulsory for the organisation to appoint an internal task force to assist the facilitator in the change process. A task force is a group of employees of an organisation constituted by the top management and charged with the responsibility of working on a specific task/assignment in additin their formally assigned job specific roles. The task force when constituted should have terms of reference. Normally, each task force has a convenor, a secretary and a set of resources to complete the task. The terms of reference should contain the details of the purpose why the task force is constituted, the methodology they can use, the flexibility they have in reformulating or redefining the job given to them, the resources they have, the assistance they need/expect from other employees, the time frame and office bearers. When such task forces are constituted, it is customary to make an announcement of the task force and its terms of reference (at least a summary of it) to all employees (at least to all those concerned with the issues) of the organisation.

The task forces may work independently or under the general direction/ guidance of the Chief Executive a Top level Manager (like a Director) or a Consultant or Facilitator.

The work of the task force is time-bound. Thus an organisation can use any number of task forces depending on the problems/issues are willing to take up.

Normally, the task forces are constituted for diagnosis of spcific problems and working on specific issues. General organisational diagnosis is not entrusted to task forces as such diagnosis can be done better through the earlier outlined methods. However, OD Consultants are known to use task forces as sounding bodies when they use questionnaires, interviews and the workshop method. The task force can be used as an overseeing mechanism, guidance mechanism for analysis of data and presentation of the data gathered from other sources and preparing action plans. The following steps used by a Performance Appraisal task force are illustrative of the way the task forces function.

Appointment: The top 20 Executives including the Chief of an Engineering comany constitute an "Organisation Development" or OD Group. They meet every quarter to review the progress of the organisation specially with reference to its human processes. Every time they meet, they meet for about 2 full days to discuss all issues. In one of the meetings they identified a large number of areas needing changes, improvements for better functioning of the company. Of the 20 and odd issues/areas/problems identified size issues were listed as priority items (e.g. Performance Appraisal, Rewards, MIS etc.). They constituted six different task forces are drawn from these 20 the membership of the task force went beyond the top 20. In some of the task force junior level executives were also included. Each task force was given a terms of reference and target date for completion of their diagnosis and preparation of recommendations. The task forces were required to keep presenting their interim reports to the OD Group.

Performance Appraisal Task Force: This task force consisted of three senior executives. They were given the freedom to engage a consultant to help them. The task force is to evolve a open system of performance appraisal. They were also required to design a format and a manual keeping in mind the concerns expressed by the OD Group. They are also required to assist in implementing the system the operational aspects of which will be taken up by the personnel department.

Initial Meetings: The task force had a few initial meetings to clarify their own role and list various activities they need to undertake. They decided to commission a quick study of the attitudes of employees (officers and executives) to the existing appraisal system and their preferences for what should be included in the new system. They decided to put a couple of young MBAs to design the questionnaire administer it, analyse it and prepare a status report. They simultaneously decided to take the help of a consultant to help them design and implement the system.

Evolving a Format and Objectives: After the survey was conducted the task force had a series of meetings and identified the main and sub-objectives of the appraisal system. They have also identified the components and prepared a format incorporating these objectives.

Testing out the Format: The task-force then identified a representative sample of executives and contacted them individual for testing out the format. Each member interviewed a few executives. The interview consisted of explaining the objectives and format to each executive and taking their views and reactions to it.

Preparing a Manual: On the basis of this preliminary try out the task-force prepared an accompanying manual and also finalised the performance appraisal system.

Preliminary try-out: The task force then conducted a series of orientation-cum-trial workshops to introduce the new system. After such workshop again views and opinions of executives were obtained. Six members after the workshop another series of interviews were conducted to diagnose the difficulties experienced by executives in implementing the system.

Reporting to OD Group: Periodically the task force went on reporting to the OD Group. After the first round of trials a decision was taken to implement the new system and the task force was dissolved and other monitoring mechanisms were worked.

Although all details of the working of the task-force are presented here, the above description may make it clear the way task-forces function. Since they are drawn from the practicing world and their time is valuable, the task forces means business. Their diagnosis may be continuous and forms a part of the action plan. The task-force mentioned above went on diagnosing the mood of the people and the process support required to implement the new appraisal system. They used interviews, workshops, surveys, informal discussions and their own observations as diagnostic tools. They have also combined diagnosis with continuous action.

11.5 MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT CENTRES

A situation in which management candidates are asked to make decisions in hypothetical situations and are scored on their performance. It usually also involves testing and the use of management games.

In a two-to three day management assessment center 10 or 12 management candidates perform realistic management tasks (like making presentations) under the observation of expert appraisers; each candidate’s management potential is thereby assessed or appraised. The center itself may be a plain conference room; but it is often a special room with a one way mirror to facilitate unobtrusive observations. Examples of the simulated exercises included in a typical assessment center are as follows:

The in-basket. With this exercise, the candidate is faced with an accumulation of reports, memos, notes of incoming phone calls, letters, and other materials collected in the inbasket of the simulated job he or she is to take over. The candidate is asked to take appropriate action on each of these materials. For example, he or she must write letters, notes, or agendas for meetings.
The results of the candidate’s actions are then reviewed by the trained evaluators.

The leaderless group discussion. A leaderless group is given a discussion question and told to arrive at a group decision. He raters then evaluate each group member's interpersonal skills, acceptance by the group, leadership ability, and individual influence.

Management games. Participants engage in realistic problem solving, usually as members of two or more simulated companies that are competing in the marketplace. Decisions might have to be made about matters like how to advertise and manufacture and how much inventory to keep in stock.

Individual presentations. A participant's communication skills and persuasiveness are evaluated by having the person make an oral presentation of an assigned topic.

Objective lists. All types of paper-and-pencil tests of personality, mental ability, interests, and achievements might also be a part of an assessment center.

The interview. Most centers also require an interview between at least one of the expert assessors and each participant. Here the latter's current interests, background, past performance, and motivation are assessed.

The agenda for a typical two-day assessment center is presented in Appendix 4.

11.6 OTHER METHODS

Other methods like observation and analysis of factual information records etc. could also be used for organisational analysis. However, they have serious limitations and are not very popular in India.

Observational Methods

This method is most useful when an outside consultant is used for diagnosis. Insiders are most often blind to the events and data that are a part of the organisation. An outsider could observe a number of things. For example, the behaviour of people when the work hours begin in the morning, at the time of the close of working hours, the notices displayed, the work organisation, the behaviour of people in meetings, the kind of memos written to each other, tea and lunch breaks, canteen and the way it is organised, behaviour of employees in the organisation etc. could be observed and inferences made.

The main limitations of this method are:

i) Not all processes are amenable to observation and the observer's own biases get reflected in observations. Observation methods could be used as preliminary diagnostic tools. Unless they are supplemented with interviews or other methods a good quality diagnosis may be different, Nadler (1977).

ii) The basic strength or weakness of observation as a tool is that the observer is the data-collection instrument (as opposed to the questionnaire as the observation instrument). A sensitive observer making use of an effective structure for observation can be an effective data-collection tool. An observer who has little sensitivity and no guiding structure may spend hours observing, see nothing, and report no usable data.

Secondary Data and Unobtrusive Measures

Records maintained by organisations can be very useful sources. Now-a-days with easy accessibility of computers most organisations collect and store a lot of data. Absenteeism rates and patterns, grievances, costs, delays, work performance records, attendance at meetings, circulars and other office communications provide ample opportunities for diagnosis.

Minutes of meetings, points of view expressed in meetings etc. also offer enough insights. These methods unfortunately are less frequently used. For example, analysis of performance appraisal reports can give a lot of significant data about the problems and difficulties of employees, their competency gaps and so on. Similarly an analysis of the delays in submitting reports (MIS, budgets, appraisals, reward recommendations), leave applications complaints etc. may also provide significant insights.

11.7 SUMMARY

Every method has some advantages and some limitations. Interviews have the advantage of studying the problems in depth and offering scope for generating and testing many hypothesis. Task-forces are very useful in continuous diagnosis and implementation. Questionnaire provide systematic information and comparability with other organisatioins and of the same organisation at different points of time is enhanced. Observations and secondary data provide direct insights into the existing situation and are factual. The quality of diagnosis is likely to improve if a number of methods are used simultaneously than relying on a single method.

11.8 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1) When do you use work shop method for Organisational diagnosis? Explain in detail the process of Work shop method?
2) What are task forces and internal teams?
3) Explain the method of observation and its limitations.

11.9 FURTHER READING

D.A. Nadler, *Feedback and Organisation Development: Using Data Based Methods.* Addison Wesley Publishing Company, 1977.

Appendix 1

SIGMA ENGINEERING CONSULTANTS & CONSTRUCTION INDIA LTD.: A DIAGNOSTIC STUDY REPORT

Introduction: Sigma Engineering & Construction company a well entrenched diversified company possessing monopoly in concept to commissioning and construction areas into intrastructure development, steel plants, petroleum refining and petro chemicals, highways etc. due to highly competitive environment was facing acute order crunch. The chief Executive hired a consultant to study the cause(s) of Lower productivity of employees, compromising quality of products and services and consequent low morale of employees.

Background: Sigma Engineering & Construction Company was started way back in 1953 by a couple of enterprising engineers with a capital of 1 crore. The basic training of the 2 engineers had taken place abroad followed by around 8 years experience of working in large conglomerates in U.S. & Europe with their sound knowledge of the trade, excellent and credential excellent contacts it was not difficult to get orders form good companies. The company made steady growth for almost 20 years by remaining profit making throughout. As company expanded its operations and ventured into newer domains, its employee strength increased form 150 additional employees to a staggering 2343 employees as on the date when the Chief Executive hired the services of the Consultant. Company has come for long way form Joint Ownership Company to a Limited company with a Board of Directors and various stakeholders. Company's shares are being quoted in the Bombay Stock Exchange & NSE. However alongwith the growth, other aspects like pushes and pulls for acquisition of power at the Board level and various for like officers Association and Employees Association (Employees Union) are constantly having a showdown with the Company's management for garnering a bigger share of incentives for employees. Amidst these issues, the vital issue which are being partially side tracked and which needs urgent attention are:

i) Technological Upgradation of work processes

ii) Devising appropriate corporate strategies for remaining competitive in the face of onslaught of some MNC's who are perpetually trying for a larger share of the pie.

iii) Carving more professional company policies and work practices.

iv) Developing a motivating work culture and environments.

The employee productivity is on the decline for various reasons and the chief executive is concerned about various indicators which do not augur well for the organization and is convinced that some immediate steps in the right direction are needed to be taken. He has worked out an Action plan alongwith his Board Members. One of the areas which needs looking into is the people issues i.e. creating a motivating and invigorating work culture. Hence the hiring of the consultant. The chief Executive has given the scope of study and is waiting for the diagnostic study and the recommendations.

Modus operandi:

The consultant got down to work immediately and formed groups to start interview process simultaneously at the Head office and various regional offices. Detailed questionnaire have been devised covering all aspects which need to be studied.

1. In the first round all executives were interviewed starting with Top Management cascading down to their perception were noted, observations collated and a draft report prepared.

2. In the second round the Staff and workers were interviewed, their perceptions were recorded; observations for the consultants were also recorded and based on this report generated.
3. Immediately thereafter the Consultant undertook a SWOT analysis for the entire company in order to make available the strategic dimension which the Corporation could adopt which would provide avenues to employees for their growth. This in turn will enable the consultant to formulate appropriate strategy for enhancing employee motivation and satisfaction.

Diagnostic observations from interviews

The outcome of interviews with 150 odd executives is summarized below:

i) General morale of employees is low because of a number of non friendly employee policies of company as also lack of growth avenues. There is a lurking fear that with low order position, some employees may be asked to leave.

ii) Because of low order position often there is not enough work for all which creates a number of uneasy thoughts in the minds of employees:

a) Lack of motivation

b) Fear of being asked to leave

c) Loss of incentives/bonus

d) Erosion of authority

e) Depreciating market value

f) Lowering of image as compared to similarly placed professionals in competing organizations

g) Diminishing sense of self worth.

iii) Suggestions for improving work practices or technical suggestions from executives at Junior levels or middle levels take endlessly long before these get approved and still longer before implementation. Many a times the decision of top management are imposed recklessly without going into their merits. This makes the entire decision making process erratic and lopsided thus not giving the desired results. This also results in lot of expenditure with a likelihood of is being scrapped altogether at a later date and substitution by yet another not very well thought out decision. This creates a feeling of inadequacy and demoralization in the employees.

iv) The manner in which the decisions are implemented is yet another grey area. Normally a systematic manner of implementation would comprise of step-by-step procedure laid down/documented and not an adhoc manner. In the instant case, one find day top management would take a decision, next day would shoot orders and from third day it would be expected to be implemented. A more systematic manner would have been:

– An idea/suggestion is mooted

– The idea/suggestion would get discussed in a committee like "Suggestions Committee" having senior functionaries from various functional disciplines as members. Once the idea is found to have some worth, its practical feasibility would be studied in the context of organization.

– On the recommendations of the committee the suggestion would then get considered by the concerned department and its practical implementability, cost involved how it would impact the organization (whether it would be accepted by larger population), the likely benefits to be derived, its long term inability etc will be looked into.

It would then be put up to the top management for their final approval. Once the approval is accorded then only implementation can be taken up.

As against that, the current prevalent practice in the organization is:

– Top management roots the idea
– They take decision among themselves one way or the other without involving either the concerned department representative or even the officers/employees associations which makes the decision totally adhoc.

This has resulted in large scale frustration among the employees. Since neither their involvement in the decision making process is sought nor their technical competence is made use of.

– There are no open channels of communication available to employees. Communication is mostly one way that is top down. Open bottoms up communication is neither encouraged nor tolerated.
– Organizational culture which at one time was considered excellent stands initiated now due to infighting between the top management cadres and approach bordering on phycophancy and one-up-manship.
– Management style is biased in a way 'you show me the face and I will show you the rule'.
– Though an objective performance appraisal system is existing but the prevalent culture makes it highly subjective and due to which employees do not have any turst. Donkeys and Horses appraised on the same yardstick and at times the donkeys may outsmart the horses.
– Professionalism has taken a back seat to the extent that those close to the management call all shots – views of the experts may not be taken into cognizance.
– Strategic planning process dealing with devising long-term and short-term goals/objectives has been given a back seat. The strategic planning exercise is merely a shorn and action plans display the high – handedness and wishful thinking of top management.
– Overall discipline in the organization is a all time low with people getting away with favouritism.
– The top management team is more into routine jobs rather than urgent corporate Governance issues requiring their attentioin. In doing so they end up usurping the authority of their subordinates which has a cascading effect, adversely affecting the morale of employees at all levels.
– Job rotations and transfers at senior levels are too frequent at the whims and fancies of people in authority. This leads to lack of continuity in organizational processes with a resultant low productivity all round.
– Because of whimsical approach of senior management, employees at lower levels try to impress their seniors and spend more time in gaining favours rather than doing their duty. This further hampers the flow of work.
– Lack of confrontation with the real issues by the top and senior management. The problematic and time consuming issues are pushed under the carpet and mostly remain unattended.
– Lack of leadership qualities in the top management delays decision making and even then the decisions are taken, those are not in the best interest of the organization.
– Because of varius maladies mentioned above mere sustenance of organization has become crisis–ridden. Nobody is looking at the growth initiatives like diversifying, increasing the market share, investing in latest technology, meeting competition etc.

- Lack of systems orientation leads to wastage of time, energy of employees and infrustuous expenditure.
- There is a total lack of trust between various levels of employees and between employees and management in the organization.
- Employees are afraid to take risks for fear of being branded and of failure.
- No system is followed in execution of jobs.
- Quality standards and norms are flouted.
- Monthly, weekly and routine meetings are sporadically handled.

Strengths: Though the Organization has become ridden with problems there are a number of inherent strengths as well. These strengths if properly encashed upon can not only bring the organisation back to its glory but can take it on a sustained growth path.

The strengths which got highlighted during the interviews are:

i) A dynamic and committed professional Chief Executive who intends taking the organization forward.

ii) Highly competent professional cadres of employees with skills and competencies second to none. Organisation can build on these strengths for achieving its long term objective rather than allow these to stagnate.

iii) The brand value and image of the company is very good.

iv) The product/services image is good.

v) People are generally satisfied and it is expected that employee motivation will increase if the Management style and practices improve.

vi) Employee Welfare practices and company policy are good.

vii) The incentive schemes and productivity linked reward schemes have been signed well and the past track record is good.

viii) Company has sound personnel polices in place.

ix) The employees are treated as interval customers and given due importance.

x) The technical knowhow & technological superiority over the competitors is known and accepted in the industry.

xi) Fellow feeling among the employees, sharing and helping attitude and a family environment is the basic strength of the organisation.

xii) Long standing goodwill in industry and experience of operating in the changing global scenario.

xiii) Low turnover of employees. Highly experienced employees with long term employment in the company.

xiv) Most of the employees are having overseas experience of working on various projects abroad.

xv) Employees feel sense of loyalty towards the company having spent more than 15-20 years with the company.

xvi) Highly professional work environment with freedom to experiment with innovative ideas.

Recommendations

Looking at some of the maladies tormenting the organisation due to wrong governance polices as well as looking at the strengths thrown up by the diagnostic study, the consultant has come up with the following recommendations for proposed turnaround of the corporation.

i) Strategic Dimensions

a) It is important to devise a vision & mission statement and company objectives for the company by involving.

b) A consultant to undertake environmental scanning exercise to help develop a corporate plan for 5 to 15 & 20 years.

c) Constitute various functional committees for developing long term & short term strategies in various functional areas

   i) Corporate strategy

   ii) Marketing strategy

   iii) Operating/production strategy

   iv) Financial Management Strategy

   v) R & D Strategy

   vi) Procurement/Materials Management Strategy

   vii) Project Management/Construction Management Strategy

   viii) Human Resource Strategy

   All the above strategies should integrate at apex level with corporate Strategy.

d) Internal Environment Scanning – After conducting the diagnostic study the following observations have been made by the consultant.

   i) Need to improve the Trust which is low.

   ii) Channels of Communication which are should be revitalized by ensuring that all communication should be a two way process.

   iii) Top Management to follow practice of Openness & transparency in all matters.

e) Regular Meetings to be held in all functional domains viz. Departmental Meetings, Divisional/zonal meetings and review meetings-in areas like-

   – Production and Planning Meetings

   – Marketing

   – Human Resources

   – Project Planning

These review meetings are essential to take stock of progress made, utilization of resources allocated, production/project various etc.

f) Individual responsibility & accountability at each level to be documented.

g) Individual roles to be clearly defined without any overlaps.

h) Systems should be put in place to ensure that various work processes as well as people processes are executed through these systems viz.

   – Production Planning & Control System

   – ERP – Enterprise Resource Planning System

   – Performance Appraisal System

   – Manpower Planning System

   – Human Resources Information System (HRIS)

   – Management Accounting & Control System

   – Inventory Management System

   – Exist Management System

   – Knowledge Management Syst.

i) To curb employee turnover by introducing more employee friendly policies.

j) Introduce TQM, Just in time or six sigma quality practices for quality product/service delivery.

k) Introduce Customer Proximity or Customer Relationship Management Programme.

l) The Chief Executive alongwith other board members should focus attention on better governance and boundary management activities and delegate routine activities to senior management levels.

m) Image building exercise should be undertaken organisation wide.

Appendix II

WORKSHOP METHOD FOR ORGANISATIONAL DIAGNOSIS: AN ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE OF A FAST FOOD CHAIN

The Fast Foods Chain (FFC) is located in a metropolitan city. It has over a 100 outlets in the city and is planning to open at least another 200 in the next 2-3 years. The FFC has become so popular in the city that there are demands from other cities to open their branches. There is a master kitchen in the city where some of their popular items are made and distributed every day to the restaurants. Their Pizzas, Juices and Ice Creams are very popular. Their head office consists of about 20 officers and 30 support staff. Their employee strength is about 100 in the master plant and about 2,000 in the restaurants. Each restaurant has an officer in-charge and reports to the area manager. There are 8 area managers in the head office looking after the various restaurants. The FFC is a partnership firm. The organisation is in the process of expansion but problems are already in the rise in some of its restaurants and in the master kitchen. In order to plan better for expansion the headquarters team decided to take stock of the existing situation. An OD Consultant was appointed to study the existing strengths and weaknesses of the organisation, its ability to cope with increasing business in the coming years and the preparation required for the same. For this diagnosis the consultant interviewed all the headquarters staff individually and a sample of restaurant manager. Since he could not get to interview all restaurant managers and at the same time interested in getting as many views as possible he requested for a workshop of the restaurant managers. 3 managers were called from each region for the first workshop.

After explaining the purpose of the workshop they were divided into 3 groups distributing the managers from each region into different groups. Some of the managers worked earlier in the head-quarters office as their jobs are transferable. The following is a sample of items mentioned by the 3 groups as a part of their SWOT analysis. The list is illustrative and not exhaustive.

Strengths

1. Informality and accessibility of top management. Any one can approach them at any time.
2. Fast decision-making at the top.
3. Moderate pricing of all food items.
4. Good quality of food items supplied by them.
5. Committed managers of restaurants.
6. Good advertisements and publicity.
7. Excellent co-ordination between master kitchen and restaurants.
8. Honest and sincere top management.
9. Concern of management about the Welfare of Staff.

Weaknesses

1. Top management is conservative in financial investments.
2. Outdated kitchen machinery.
3. Lack of cleanliness in master kitchen, partly due to outdated machinery.
4. Top management is too flexible. Today's decisions may get changed tomorrow.
5. Too low salaries for staff.

6. Unionism setting in the employees.
7. No autonomy to Restaurant Managers. For every small decision they have to go to top management.
8. Too much of paper work as too many daily returns are to be submitted to headquarters office.
9. Understaffing of some restaurants.
10. No one looks after personnel development and training needs of staff.
11. Poor facilities in restaurants for staff.
12. No reward system for better performing restaurants.
13. Some of the staff are not motivated. At the same time it is difficult to get new staff.
14. People have to work too hard. No time for relaxation for restaurant managers and no compensation. Head-quarters people are less burdened.

Opportunities

1. Demand from other cities to open chain.
2. Diversification into frozen foods vegetables, bakery, cool drinks and other areas.

Threats

1. Break-up in the partners in the event of conflict. The FFC cannot afford it.
2. Competitors may enter the market and may be able to offer better environment to customers.
3. Deterioration in quality of foods with expansion.
4. Unionization of staff.
5. Increasing Fast Food restaurants in number and quality.

Appendix III

FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS AS A DIAGNOSTIC TOOL*

Force field analysis is a systematic way of analysing any given problem situation with the objective of identifying the possible solutions to improve the existing situation. Force field analysis is based on the assumption that any given situation at a given point of time can be understood as a resultant of two types of forces acting on it. The first type of forces are called the driving forces (or facilitating forces), and the second type are called the restraining forces (or inhibiting forces). Every situation or a given problem has an objective or an end state which is desirable. In order to reach the end-state a number of things may have to bedone. At a given point of time the movement towards the goal or the end-state can be assumed as stationary. This equilibrium can be understood as a resultant of the two types of forces mentioned above. Driving forces are those that push the existing situation towards the ultimate goal that is desired. These forces facilitate the movement towards achieving the goals. The restraining forces are those which hinder the movements towards the goal or act against it.

A force field analysis of the marketing of handloom products is presented in Exhibit 1. The goal the group had in mind was to increase the marketing of handloom products from 40 to 80 per cent in a single year. The analysis was done in a workshop of Managers and other Executives in charge of Handlooms.

* Reproduced with permission from Udai Pareek. TV Rao and DM Pestonjee. *Behavioural Process in Organizations*, New Delhi, Oxford & IBH, 1981, Pages 262-269.

ASSESSMENT CENTRES AT AMERICAN TELEPHONE & TELEGRAPH COMPANY

Assessment centers are used increasingly as a selection tool. They were reportedly introduced at the American Telephone & Telegraph Company in the 1950s and are still in use there.

Day 1:

Orientation Meeting

Management Game: "Conglomerate" Forming different types of conglomerates is te goal with four-person teams of participants bartering companies to achieve their planned result. Teams set their own acquisition objectives and must plan and organize to meet them.

Background Interview: An 1½ hour interview conducted by an assessor.

Group Discussion: "Management Problems". Four short cases calling for various forms of management judgement are presented to groups of four participants. In one hour the group, acting as consultants, must resolve the cases and submit its recommendation in writing.

Individual fact-Finding and Decision-Making Exercise: "The Research Budget". The participant is told that he or she has just taken over as division manager. He or she is given a brief description of an incident in which his or her predecessor has recently turned down a request for funds to continue a research project. The research director is appealing for a reversal of the decision. The participant is given 15 minutes to ask questions to dig out the facts in the case. Following this fact-finding period, he or she must present the decision orally with supporting reasoning and defend it under challenge.

Day 2:

In-Basket Exercise: "Section Manager's In Basket". The contents of a section manager's in-basket are simulated. The participant is instructed to go thought he contents, solving problems, answering questions, delegating, organizing, scheduling, and planning, just as he or she might do if he or she were promoted suddenly to the position. An assessor reviews the contents of the completed in-basked and coducts a one-hour interview with the participant to gain further information.

Assigned Role Leaderless Group Discussion: "Compensation Committee." The Compensation Committee is meeting to allocate $8,000 in discretionary salary increases among six supervisory and managerial employees. Each member of the committee (participants) represents a department of the company and is instructed to "do the best he or she can" for the employee from his or her department.

Analysis, Presentation, and Group Discussion: "The Pretzel factory". This financial analysis problem has the participant role-play a consultant called in to advise Carl Flowers of the C.F. Pretzel Company on two problems: what to do about a division of the company that has continually lost money, and whether the corporation should expand. Participants are given data on the company and are asked to recommend appropriate courss of action. They make their recommendation in a seven-minute presentation after which they are formed into a group to come up with a single set of recommendations.

Final Announcements

Day 3 and 4:

Assessors meet to share their observations on each participant and to arrive at summary evaluations relative to each dimension sought and overall potential.

Exhibit 1

Driving and Restraining Forces Operating on the Marketing of the Handloom Products Analysed Using Force Field Analysis.

Rating	
Very Strong	5
Strong	4
Somewhat Strong	3
Weak	2
Very Weak	1

Problem : Handloom Marketing

Goal Desired : To achieve 80% marketing of the products from the present level of 40% within a year and to continue it. Figures within the brackets indicate the strength of the force; 5 represent a strong force and 1, a weak force.

	Driving Forces	Restraining Forces
1.	Good foreign market available for handlooms (4)	Lack of improved designs and colours schemes (5)
2.	Liking for Indian handloom (3)	High cost of yarm (3)
3.	Delicacy in handloom texture and still in production (3)	High price of products (4)
4.	Handlooms can cater to the needs of small requirements (4)	High cost of inputs (3)
5.	Handlooms can cater to the need for special designs as per individual requirements (4)	Exploitation by master weavers (4)
6.	Providing greater employment with less investment (4)	Lack of publicity (4)
7.	Local market readily available (4)	Lack of appreciation of handloom products (4)
8.	Availability of traditional craftsmenship (5)	Lack of purchasing capacity (4)
9.	Use of new fabrics in hand-loom (3)	Competition from powerloom mill sectors (5)
10.	Flexibility and wide range of production (3)	Lack of good finishing facilities (4)
11.	Availability of sales subsidy (4)	Government requirement being met from powerloom and mill sector (3)
12.	Availability of export incentives (3)	Non-availability of yarn (2)
13.	Good demand in handloom garments and make-ups (3)	Fluctuation of yarn price (3)
14.	Government encouragement in various forms (3)	Outdated looms in utilisation (4)
15.	Preferential government purchases (3)	Lack of market research (5)
16.		Lack of standardisation (5)
17.		Lack of quality control (5)
18.		Lack of quality consciousness (5)
19.		Inadequate salesmanship (4)
20.		Lack of window displays (4)
21.		Lack of holding capacity (3)
22.		Lack of incentives to salesmen (4)
23.		Lack of commission agents (4)
24.		Lack of sales drives and exhibitions (4)

Exhibit 2 deals with the objective of bringing as many weavers as possible into the hold of weavers' cooperatives. At present weavers are reluctant to join cooperatives. It is aimed at getting at least 60 per cent of the weavers into cooperatives.

Exhibit 2

An Analysis of the Factors Influencing Weavers in Joining the Cooperative.

	Driving Forces	Ratings of the strength of the force
1.	More average income	(4)
2.	Sense of ownership	(2)
3.	Participation in democratic management	(2)
4.	Government assistance in the form of loans and subsidies	(4)
5.	Package of incentives for modernisation	(4)
6.	Continuous employment	(5)
7.	Provision of housing facilities	(4)
8.	Training and education facilities	(3)
9.	Sharing of surplus in the form of dividend	(3)
10.	Elimination of middlemen	(4)
11.	Collective bargaining powers in the purchase of raw material	(3)
12.	Supply of quality inputs which facilitates weaving	(4)
13.	Open and voluntary membership	(1)
14.	Availability of processing facilities	(3)
15.	Assured marketing facilities	(3)
16.	Financial assistance for marketing in the form of rebate	(4)
17.	Institutional finance at concessional rate	(4)
	Inhibiting Forces	
1.	Ignorance about the benefits of the cooperative form of organisation	(5)
2.	Sentimental and traditional attachment to master weavers	(4)
3.	Financial loyalty to master weavers	(3)
4.	Mismanagement of cooperative societies	(4)
5.	Dormancy of cooperative societies	(4)
6.	Obligation to contribute share capital	(3)
7.	Non-availability of consumption finance	(5)
8.	Weavers lured by higher wages by master weavers during peak season	(3)
9.	Strict insistence of quality control in cooperative societies and likely discontinuance of work for substandard work	(3)
10.	Compulsory deduction from wages for contribution to thrift fund	(2)
11.	Politicisation of managements of cooperative societies	(2)
12.	Economic non-viability of cooperative societies	(4)
13.	Availability of finance under DPI scheme	(4)
14.	Lack of interest shown by the government in managing cooperatives	(4)
15.	Lack of managerial capabilities in those managing cooperatives	(4)
16.	Lack of personal touch	(5)

New Forces (Brainstorming)

1. Enrolment of project weavers wherever feasible.
2. Provision of consumption finance from government through cooperative societies.
3. Obtaining contribution by government to the thrift fund contribution by weavers.
4. Director of handlooms to be vested with all powers of Registrar of Cooperative Societies in relation to Weavers Cooperative Societies
5. Fixation of minimum wages for weavers.
6. Extension of Bonus Act to handloom weavers.
7. Extension of gratuity and old-age benefits to weavers.
8. Extension of ESI benefits to weavers.
9. Strict enforcement of reservation orders.
10. Director of Handlooms to be delegated with enforcement powers in relation to reservation orders.
11. Compulsory purchase by government and semi-government organisations from cooperative societies.
12. Liberalisation of managerial subsidy and caderisation.
13. Matching contribution for rebate by centre for the duration the states give.

The above analysis was done by a group of managers employed in the handlooms sector. After the analysis the managers decided that they can not do anything about the following forces as they are not within their control:

Driving forces: 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 16 and 17.

Inhibiting forces: 2, 3, 6, 7, 10 and 11.

From among driving forces they chose the following forces for strengthening further: 3, 11, 14 and 15.

They also chose the following inhibiting forces for weakening them:

1, 4, 8, 13, 14; 15 and 16. In addition they decided to explore the possibility of adding some of the new forces suggested. On the basis of these further action plan were worked out for implementation.

The forces identified in force-field analysis may have different strength. Some forces may contribute highly towards the movement in the forward or backward direction in achieving the goal. Some forces may be very weak. Some forces may be irreversible or unchangeable. Some other forces may be easy to change.

In using force field analysis as a technique of organisational diagnosis and problem solving the following steps are followed:

1. Define the ultimate goal or objective or the desired end-situation.
2. Locate the existing situation diagramatically on a straight line where one end of the straight line represents the desired goal state and the other end represents starting point.
3. List the various forces that are blocking the movement towards its goal and those that are acting against the movement. Brainstorming in group settings has been found to be very useful in making an exhaustive list of restraining forces. As many forces as possible should be listed without debate. There

could be differences of opinion on some but it is useful to list even controversial forces.

4. Make an exhaustive list of driving forces as above using brainstorming techniques. Some of the driving forces may be just opposites of the restraining forces.
5. Using brainstorming techniques add as many new forces as possible to the existing list of driving forces. At this stage do not think of the possibilities. It is useful to suspend rationalistic thinking in brainstorming and merely list them.
6. Quantify the strength of each forces (both restraining and driving forces) a 5-point scale (where 5 indicates that the force is very strong and point 1 indicates a weak force in the direction indicated).
7. Remove all the forces one by one through discussion about which the problem-solving group has no control or can do nothing about it.
8. Select those driving forces which are very weak. Identify the mechanism of strengthening these forces through discussion.
9. Select new forces which could be added and identify the mechanism of introducing these forces through discussioin.
10. Select the strong forces among the restraining forces. Identify the mechanisms of weakening these forces.
11. Identify the mechanisms of removing some of the restraining forces.
12. Work out an action plan to introduce change to bring out the desired end-state.

Force field analysis does not require any special skills for using it. It is a systematised approach towards problem solving. The use of force field analysis is groups has been found to be an effective way of bringing about change. There have been several experiments conducted in the past which indicate that through a systematic analysis of this kind, change can be brought in easily.

Managers and administrators when faced with problems or when they find that they have not been able to achieve targets they desired, it is useful to have a group meeting of their staff or team members and do a force field analysis of the situation. They should be prepared to spend at least half a day to one day on this. Familiarisation with brainstorming techniques would help greatly in conducting such sessions effectively. Force field analysis helps in systematically analysing the problems and the invovement of those who are expected to implement change in identifying the change strategies increases commitment. It has other advantages of increasing morale, getting people to know to solve their problems at their levels, enjoyment of work and so on. A great degree of resistance to change can be countered with this techniques.

The driving and restraining forces are diagnostic dimensions of the problem or situation. This technique could be used for a specific situation or for general diagnosis of an organisation.