

Engaging Everyone in Contributing to a Knowledge Strategy

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Strategy development and actual strategy implementation has always been a challenge for organizations. Mainly because the people that set up the strategy have so little to do with the actual implementation and there is not enough input, involvement from the actual implementation people.

First let me clarify what I mean with implementation people, these are not to be confused with technical implementation people; these are the people that have senior managers roles, yet they work in the frontline. They know their customers inside out, yet they have little say when it comes to what the customers may want to see from the company in the year to come.

The solution is simple, yet it is on of these remedies that we know what is good for us, however we fail to follow through. In any case the benefits of involving all parties to contribute to a strategy are tremendous, companies will not only be able to foresee problems, that they were not able to see through by themselves but they will also gain commitment and loyalty from their employees. And if you think that the voices of the implementation folks are heart through their bosses and bosses, just remember the Arabic telephone. How accurate is the information that is going to be delivered to the board of directors? Would it hurt to include people with a variety of roles across the organization? Does it have to be only the say of few powerful that are most likely saying the same things anyway?

There have been many attempts to solve this issue in the past decade, with many initiatives that took place, such as the Management by Objective wave (MBO) yet, these initiatives faint away as time passes and still the inclusion of important people to a business strategy seems to be a problem.

The missing link between strategy development and strategy implementation becomes obvious and demands for an immediate remedy, in today's need for implementing Knowledge Management initiatives. Companies are heavily investing millions of dollars in knowledge management software, hardware and technical training so that these mediums (means) can actually preserve and harvest some of the organizational knowledge. Their hope is to store organizational knowledge in large depositories and make it available to their entire organization. The real question comes, How are companies making sure that they need to integrate their business strategy with knowledge management strategy and make sure that the implementation folks will actually be there to Well, how does this work?

We all know that knowledge is the fundamental basis of competition. If companies want to compete in this wild economy they need to capitalize on what they know and align their business strategy to their business strategy. KM and Business Strategy need to work together with the prerequisite that the implementation folks are present when the knowledge strategy is laid out.

Revolutionary companies across the world have begun to develop a new set of processes for coaching people on how to contribute to a business strategy. There are a lot of case studies about these companies and a great deal of information can be learnt of them. A great resource book is the Linkage, Inc.'s Best Practices in Knowledge Management and Organizational Learning handbook by Louis Carter, Phil Harkins and Amy Timmins.

So how can companies make sure that everyone is contributing to a business strategy or better a knowledge strategy, let's assume that the company decided to merge its knowledge strategy with its business strategy. Below are few helpful tips(scenarios) that illustrate how this is possible.

First goals are set with the whole group in mind, remember our implementation people, well they get the privilege of having an actually say when it comes to setting the strategy for next year. Open discussion is encouraged and people seem not to be afraid to express their opinion. Dialogue in it purest form. What a joy!

Second, the whole plan is not focused only on results. It also focuses on why they want to achieve the results that they want to achieve? How is there vision going to add value to their customer base? And also what are the means and methods for achieving this vision? The actual resources that they are going to use or engage for setting and executing the strategy.

Third, everyone understands that the environment is constantly changing; therefore they are not in love with their first strategy. Strategies need to have room for flexibility and this is not difficult once you know your

purpose of engaging in that strategy in the first place. That's why it is so clear to know the WHY you are doing anything? What is the ultimate result that you are seeking from it?

Fourth, constructive feedback is encouraged and actually recommendation are immediately implemented or included for future planning.

Fifth, these knowledge companies focus a lot on personal development and growth they understand that only then companies can actually be able to engage everyone in a strategy when people are acknowledged through the entire year not only for one day. You cannot expect people will want to work for you and contribute their best if you do not do your part. As a corporate employer, you will need to be able to see that each person within your company has the capacity of adding value to your corporate strategy. The real challenge here is to have all these people work for your strategy for the entire year. Their voices need to be heard, valued and actually given credit for. This is a radical strategically breakthrough but it is needed if you want to engage your whole company in contributing to your knowledge- business strategy.

This new thinking of managing and leading companies is revolutionary, cutting edge and it requires time, space and ongoing support. Many will argue that companies do not have time to spend time in developing, nurturing their front line managers and senior executives on how to play this new game called "knowledge leadership management." But any good coach will prove them wrong, coaches are used to challenges, like these ones and have always proved us that the time that you think you devote in developing a person is actually less of correcting the mistakes and losses of not doing so. How can you not afford of coaching these people to this new environment? It will not happen overnight; you need a lot of thinking and planning prior starting this new journey; the results are incredible once you start it. If you are one of many that think why should you bother in including these new KM Strategies and why should everyone contribute to it is very well answered with a quote from Einstein; "The thinking that has brought us to where we are today, can not take us where we want to be in the future."

1. So how well do you communicate your company's strategy to everyone involved within the organization?
2. Can people actually break down your strategy into priorities, something that they will be in a better situation of relating to?
3. How many people are currently involved in setting your company's strategy? Would it make a difference if you had a greater involvement of people into this?
4. Are all people clear of their objectives and the direct relationship (link) that their objectives have with your corporate strategy?
5. How do you encourage people of contributing their ideas to something bigger and beyond their usual job objectives? How do you make sure that they continue in growing their knowledge base?

Now, that you had an opportunity to read about the challenges and ask yourself these questions, do you think that your company is ready for involving everyone in their Knowledge Management strategy? What actions can you immediately take and make sure that your people will have the tools and resources of becoming a knowledge enabling company?



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