

IMPLEMENTATION OF A MARKETING STRATEGY FOR A LEADERSHIP
CONSULTING AGENCY

by

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Abstract

Putting a marketing strategy in place take a great deal of work and research. Implementation of a marketing strategy for a leadership-consulting agency involves an understanding of structure, systems, people and culture of all aspects of the industry. The challenge for implementation of a marketing strategy is creating an organization that can change with the times. This paper will describe ways to make it all happen.

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Organizational Structure

Once the general marketing strategy is researched for a leadership-consulting firm, it is time to lay down the plans for implementation. In order to implement the plan, an understanding of how to create an organization that truly works with its environment should be at the top of the list. According to David Aaker, author of *Strategic Market Management* (2001), the key is to develop a conceptual framework that defines lines of authority and communication fluently. “The heart of the framework is a set of four key constructs that describe the organization: structure, systems, people, and culture (Aaker, 2001, p. 288).” Consideration of organizational components can help a business identify actual and potential implementation problems, as well as determine how its organization would adapt to a new strategy. The structure of the organization, according to Aaker, allows the organization to, “become more innovative and responsive to change (2001).”

A leadership-consulting firm should consider an organizational structure that meets the needs of the customers, market, culture, products, services and organization. A small consulting firm’s organizational design is easy. There may only be a handful of people involved. Perhaps only two or three people will make up the whole organization. In this case, it will be structured like a smaller scale of the GE Corporation. GE is known for being a “borderless organization.” In a borderless organization, chains of command are eliminated, spans of control are unlimited and rigid departments give way to empowered teams. The philosophy behind it is to eliminate barriers within the company that separate employees from each other, and that separate the company from its

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customers and suppliers would be eliminated (Ashkenas, R., Ulrich, D., Jick, T., & Kerr, S., 1998). A small leadership-consulting agency will have one person in charge of operations and everyone else sharing common tasks, as will the person in charge.

The leadership-consulting agency will create alliance networks. Alliance networks will allow the firm to adapt quickly and change significantly. A strategic alliance is a type of organizational design in which two or more separate firms join their competitive capabilities to operate a specific business. The goal of a strategic alliance is to provide benefits to each individual organization that could not be attained if they operated separately. They are low-risk ways of adding new business operations and entering new markets. A consulting agency could hire someone to do the marketing or to do the research for marketing. They may have their web site produced by another company or have their products printed through an alliance arrangement.

Systems

All organizations need an accounting and budgeting system. One should be implemented that meets the financial and legal obligations of the firm. It may be a good idea to hire an outside accountant to do this. According to David Aaker, “An accounting and budgeting system that is well conceived and contains valuable historical data may not fit the reorganized structure required by the new strategy. Or a system that worked well for an electronic instruments firm may not work when applied to a new service business (Aaker, 2001, p. 291).” The consulting firm should consider its current business as well as its plans for the future to determine which accounting and budgeting systems need to be created.

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Another system that should be considered when implementing a strategic plan for a leadership-consulting agency is the information system. Computers are at the core of the information system for a firm. Databases, promotions, accounting and interactive media will all be a part of the leadership consulting firm and will need to be implemented with computers. Having the right computer systems, network and software should be a part of the planning and implantation process.

Measurement and reward systems should also be a part of the implementation process. When goals are set to meet targets, performance is increased and rewards should be given. A leadership-consulting agency could create goals for new customers or for implementation of systems.

The planning system should also be oriented toward the customers and systems that are already in place. The people in the organization and the customers should be considered highly important and be adapted to. A planning system for a leadership-consulting agency should include current company values, culture, and energy of the organization (Aaker, 2001, p. 292). Sociologist Philip Selznic says that, “Strategies only take on value as committed people infuse them with energy.” The output of strategic planning should have soul as well as logic (Mintzberg, 1994).

Maintaining an organization that is aligned with the people whom they serve and within in it should follow the following criteria of qualities that distinguish great managers (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999):

1. Communicate expectations
2. Provides proper and required materials and equipment
3. Allow employees to do what they do best

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4. Give recognition for something of each subordinate every seven days
5. Encourage development
6. Show they care about each subordinate
7. Helps subordinates progress in a six-month period
8. Shows that everyone's opinion counts
9. Communicates and supports mission and purpose of company
10. Provides an environment that promotes friendships at work
11. Creates an environment for learning and growth

When these attributes are adhered to an organization can move forward with the implementation of strategic marketing more fluently.

Obtaining Congruence

Another aspect of implementation that should be considered is aligning the organization as a whole. All interactions of organizational components should work together well. David Aaker (2001) suggests asking the following questions to assess organizational congruence: Do the systems fit the structure? Do the people fit the structure? Does the structure fit the culture?

The bottom line about creating and implementing a marketing strategy--create an organization that can successfully operate and change as needed. Reengineering may be needed for older-well established organizations. For a newly forming leadership-consulting agency—simply make it happen and always improve it when needed.

Conclusion

Implementing a marketing strategy for a leadership-consulting agency involves analyzing structure, systems, people and culture—making sure they are all aligned and working well with each other. It is also important to have a well-designed organization that defines the lines of authority and communication to fit the needs of the organization, customers and suppliers. The organizational structure can vary in the degree of centralization and formality of communication channels.

The management systems including budgeting, accounting, information, reward and planning can influence the strategy of implementation. The systems should be able to rapidly adapt to change and the needs of the organization. Each of these systems should be designed or redesigned to meet the needs of the leadership-consulting agency and culture.

Organizational culture must also be considered when implementing a marketing strategy of a leadership-consulting agency. Organizational culture includes sharing values, norms, behaviors, symbols and symbolic activities. Fitting culture and strategy may be a challenge, but necessary for effective implementation.

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