Schools of Strategy

Hughes, Beatty, and Dinwoodie (2014) observed that the market place is increasingly becoming uncertain and sophisticated, making it difficult for the top leadership of organizations to design long-term plans. It calls for agility and resilience on the part of a leader to steer an organization on such rugged terrain. Northouse (2016) explains that leadership, in its basic form, refers to the process of influencing people to achieve a pre-determined objective or goal.

Hughes et al. (2014) posited that organizations have to align their teams and processes in a continual learning mode. The main focus should be to achieve an organizational strategy that is practicable and suitable in the long run. Corporate strategy is a learning process through which leaders review the current status of a firm and design new ways for achieving the set vision continuously. The top management's priority is to align available resources to the organizational vision and maintain commitment from the various stakeholders to meet and exceed customer satisfaction. A strategy aims at positioning an organization for competitiveness, according to Kluyver & Pearce (2011). It is the determination of the choices that improve the value proposition of an organization and how to make the firm remain an engine of transformation in the long run.

Strategic leadership as argued by Thomas (2008) is a long-term journey where leaders pursue growth and capabilities and to extend the range of situations they can address in an organization. A strategic leader involves the intentional development of leaders that creates a thirst in them to embrace change and confront disruption: Leaders who dedicated to unwavering productive change.

Kluyver et al. (2011) observe that strategy formulation has both the value chain infrastructure perspective and the management perspective. The management teams align corporate resources to achieve organizational intent. Strategic leadership aims at reducing risks that would jeopardize the long-term survival of an organization. Such leadership calls for the ability to leverage existing relationships with various stakeholders and configure a learning organization (Daft, 2012). Strategic leadership aims at designing interventions that steer a firm to remain relevant throughout the organization's lifecycle. Northouse (2016) mentions that top leadership has to develop strategies that manage threats posed by the famous porter's five competitive forces. Threat from customers, suppliers, new entrants, existing competitors, and substitutes. Kluyver et al. (2011) argue that hypercompetitive strategies are necessary in industries where disruption is the order of the day as an example.

There are twelve schools of strategy according to Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel, (2008); design school, planning school, positioning school, entrepreneurial school, cognitive school, cultural school, environmental school, and configuration school to mention but a few.

i. The cultural school of strategy hinges on a dichotomy of self-interest and common interest. Organizational culture is also referred to as the corporate mind by Mintzberg et al. (2018). A homogeneous set of beliefs may keep a team together and maybe an excellent base for rallying all behind the corporate strategic intent. However, shared beliefs may, at times, discourage an organization from embracing change. The top leadership should adopt a culture of continuously reviewing the match between the corporate culture and the operating environment. Conducting customer satisfaction surveys and employee satisfaction survey every year would gauge whether the current organizational culture

supports customer expectations. The practice of mystery shopping would help our organization receive feedback in comparison to the culture of our contemporaries. Socializing new staff would make it easier to make them feel part of the corporate family and mission.

An organization has to be intentional in the way it responds to the various forces in the operating environment for it to be successful.

ii.   The environmental strategy school hinges on the contingency theory of leadership. The top leadership has to scan the environment with the lenses of stability, complexity, market diversity, and hostility before determining the strategy to deploy at any point in time. Mintzberg et al. (2018) argue that an organization has to remain adaptable to the changes in the environment, otherwise risks extinction: referring to the population ecology of an organization's perspective. The context refers to an interaction of a set of variables like suppliers, customers, various regulators, and competition. The organization should continuously scan such an environment as a guide to strategy formulation. Environmental scanning may, at times, delay decision making and must be done with the cost-benefit analysis in mind to avoid losing valuable opportunities. The ecological theory may be applicable in my organization by having research and development teams to provide environmental feedback to top management for strategy formulation.

iii.   The design strategy theory proposes the modeling of strategy that matches internal capabilities and external possibilities of an organization: Basically SWOT analysis. The strategy must characterize an adaptive reaction to the external environment and the perilous changes occurring within it" (Mintzberg et al., 2008). The design approach

proposes that strategy formulation should match the resources at the disposal of an organization. A noteworthy drawback of this approach is that it may narrow an organization's perspective. It's important to note that the design process assumes that there is no need for incremental formulation of strategies: The grand strategy perspective. My organization applies SWOT analysis as a guide to leveraging the corporate strategy on the strengths and working effortlessly to reduce the weaknesses that reduce the chances of achieving organizational goals. We hinge the balanced scorecard on the results of the SWOT analysis. It would be essential to track the relevance of the strategies periodically to avoid running on old ones.

Genesis 41:46-57; 47:13-26 highlights how Joseph whipped all and sundry to store adequate food for use during the famine. Pharaoh used the advice from Joseph to design what would be called a food policy aligned to the strength of Egypt as a food basket of the time. Their prowess in building and construction might have been used to construct large food storage silos. Joseph's action is a demonstration of long-term planning and SWOT analysis in ancient times.

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Applicability of various schools of strategy in the workplace.

Hughes, Beatty, and Dinwoodie (2014) noted that strategic leadership has long-term

implications and often involves a turnaround change that affects multiple aspects of an

organization.

Kluyver (2011) posited that many strategies don't see the light of the day, especially

when the plan for execution is not well-thought through. Policies that empower research and

development have a positive correlation to organizational performance. The R&D department is

a valuable tool for the development of high-quality products and services. A firm may focus on a

mass production strategy and take advantage of the economies of scale and economies of scope.

Mintzberg (2008) noted some deadly sins to strategic planning. Notable is the staff over-analyzing the processes at the expense of the insights generated by each scenario. Also, failure to consider the culture of an organization during the process of strategic planning way increase the chances of resistance to change.

The school emphasizes the need to analyze the strategic planning process into steps. The management team considers each step from the determination of objectives to actions to the setting up of goals. This process involves carrying out intentional audits on both the internal and external environment and forecasting to appreciate likely environmental shifts in the future.

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How a leader graduates to become strategic

Hughes et al. (2014) argue that leadership occurs when two or more people focus their energy towards meeting set objectives by way of influence by another person. This argument does not explain the nature and the effect of the influence. A strategic leader has to influence people towards executing practices broad in scope, have long-term influences and often call for organizational change.

In a family set-up, for example, a parent may demonstrate leadership when they persuade their children to attend school every day but would be strategic if they help their children to set up a career plan and make them appreciate what sacrifices and choices they need to make along the way. The parent would then review the implementation of the program jointly with the children. Hughes et al. (2014) observe that a strategic leader makes decisions with a holistic perspective of cause and effect of each choice to the whole enterprise. Also, a strategic leader focuses on influencing change through periodic transformation. In the family case above, the parent would need to answer what each of the children's career choice would mean to the family resources and the like.

Kluyver et al. (2011) posited that a strategic leader should consider a combination of elements within and in the external environment and anticipate their interaction and overall effect on the achievement of the long-term goals. Kluyver et al. further argues that a strategic leader has to be intentional, exercise discipline in his planning thought-process and remain disciplined in action. In conclusion, there is a likelihood of having an effective leader who may be weak in strategy.

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Monitoring and evaluation process

The exercise aims to review the level of implementation of the strategic plan and highlight any fundamental shift in the internal and external environment.

Mintzberg et al. (2008) noted that an organization should monitor the external environment with a view of determining what foreseeable social, political and other macroeconomic variables might affect the achievement of the corporate goals. The review also evaluates the degree of movement of internal weaknesses. For example, one of the gaps in the organization was a weak core-system which affected the quality of reporting and decision-making. We would, therefore, review the progress of system implementation; a strategy adopted to mitigate the identified challenge. This culture has yielded positively in our journey of execution.

Our organizational structure has an R&D department that acts as an intelligence tool to guide the M&E process and help anticipate probable future shifts in customer expectation. Kluyver et al. (2011) observe that investment in R&D strongly correlates to performance and

profitability in many industries. The Board of directors provides oversight on the actions of the top management. The presence of a board in our organizational structure is internal strength. The senior management presents the strategic document to the board for review and approval before execution.

The design school is specific and contextualized to the firm's environment. Two firms in the same industry will more often than not operate in different contexts. Mintzberg et al. (2008) point out that the positioning school applies more generic an approach even when the internal and external context of various organizations differ. Positioning school is very analytical, an aspect that would lead to analysis paralysis in my view.

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A strategic leader should keep a keen eye on the evolution in the operating environment. On top of the fact that the leader would capitalize on opportunities in the background, each situation calls for a diverse type of leadership as per the contingency model of leadership. As the environment changes, so do the employees in their ability to cope or unwillingness to act. Situational leadership requires the leaders to dichotomize the employees to understand which strategic intervention would yield employee commitment and motivation (Bolman and Deal, 2017).

Kluyver et al. (2011) posited that a company should improve its policies and capabilities to enhance its value proposition in the marketplace. The company should carefully select and assemble internal capabilities fit for the changing environment. Kluyver further urges strategic leaders to be intentional in the way they design the organizational structures. There should be a fit between the target market and the management team's capabilities for the Chief executive officer to increase the chances of positioning the firm strategically in the marketplace.

I finally wish to comment on your call for strategic leaders to leverage modern technology as an engine for improving efficiency, communication, and productivity. Kluyver et al. (2011) define technology as the connective tissue that supports growth and diversity. We have, in the past, recommended a business intelligence tool to one of our clients; a device that has revolutionized the firm's decision-making process.

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Porter's model remains applicable by the modern strategists to design the path of positioning the firm ahead of the competition. The porter's model considers an ecosystem of five forces that affect business strategies. Kluyver et al. (2011) favor an ecosystem-based strategy perspective arguing that it highlights the importance of interdependency of various variables in the modern business environment. An organization should critically examine the impact of the threats of new entrants, existing competition, substitutes, buyers and suppliers before determining what intervention best suits the risks. Not all battles are worth fighting from a cost-benefit point of view. Kluyver argues that the cost of capital should not exceed its benefits.

In the year 2000, the entry of South African castle breweries into the Kenyan market, the new entrant would sell its products at very subsidized prices to the extent that Kenya breweries realized that the budget they projected to incur to fight the completion exceeded the decision for a buyout. They also explored barriers to deter the growth of the competitor, e.g., Kenya breweries bonded majority of barley farmers; hence, the competitor would only survive by importing their barley at high prices. The two strategies worked in their favor at the time.

Mintzberg et al. (2008) observe that an organization has to be deliberate in anticipating the chances of future threats materializing. Management should also choose among alternative strategies they would invoke when any of Porter's five competitive forces strikes. Modern enterprise risk management practices support such kind of thinking.

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