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Development of Resource Management, Productivity Enhancement and Performance Based Effective and Efficient Sustainable Leadership Initiatives: A Case Study of WeWork Inc.

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Abstract

This paper provides an analysis and evaluation of challenges and opportunities within WeWork business operation. Some of these challenges failure to defend the interests of all stakeholders, issues with operation management /Resource management, leadership issue, and managing the change. Methods of analysis encompasses a number of different theory, framework and influential contributors to enhance maximum productivity and performance of employee. The

evaluation of area of improvement focused on sustainable leadership enhancement in terms of culture, politics and organizational structure, management change and talent management. The report covered improvement areas in depth such as sustainable leadership, talent management and change management. In terms of culture management, Human Resources and management of change recommendation will be made.

Keywords: Sustainable Leadership, Organizational Structure, Resource Management, WeWork, Productivity Enhancement

1. Introduction

WeWork Inc. is a US-based Co-working company, with business presence in 528 locations across 29 countries. Approximately 8,300 people were laid off, going by estimations based on the company's approximately 12,500-person employment in June 2019 and as of right now, there are over 700 sites worldwide (Trivedi, 2022) ^[33]. This company was founded in 2010 (Cheng & Maiden, 2021) ^[11] and offers the example of a high profile corporate breakdown giving the way the company's valuation of \$47 billion plummeted by about 70% following public and media scrutiny of its corporate governance as well as discovery of allegation of self-dealing coupled with the board well-documented failure to control its overbearing CEO, Adam Neuman (Campbell, 2019) ^[12]. Using the Stakeholder theory on WeWork, the company's stakeholders will be identified as the landlords whom WeWork rent space from (Platt & Edgecliffe, 2020) ^[30], clients, employees, shareholders (Bloomberg Markets, 2022) ^[7], the CEO and members of the public who were seeking to invest in the company, including women groups and the press. shareholders. The lack of stakeholder perspective in WeWork's corporate governance makes the company appear un-investable to investors (Ulaga, Niessing, & Brandwein 2019) ^[38] and is the major reason why it failed the public scrutiny test (Harvard Business Review, 2020) ^[22]. However, Performance and productivity are the cornerstones of successful companies (Aula & Mantere, 2020) ^[2]. The aim of this assignment is to develop an efficient and effective sustainable leadership initiative for improving resource management, performance and productivity in WeWork Inc. Theoretical area to be included in this work are resource management, culture, operation management, data and decision making, knowledge management, politics, power, organizational structure and sustainable leadership. Recommendation will be made into making relationship to change management approach with in text citation of one of the influential contributor in guided learning.

2. Analysis of WeWork main challenges

2.1 Operations management / Resource Management

2.1.1 Operations management

Wework has a simpler supply chain or operation system than manufacturing company as operation do not involve raw material. In wework case study, the organisation needed to lead and manage their mode of operation around employees to enhance the company products and profit with available resources. Operations management encompasses the function of managing the resources to create and transfer goods and services. Operation management covers three essential functional areas: Marketing, production and Finance. The marketing function, which is the primary activity to sell the firm's goods or services to its target markets in order to generate demand from customers. Product/service development, which aims to advance client interests by creating new goods or making changes to those that already exist (Heizer and Render, 2014).

2.1.2 Human Resources Management

Generally, people are involved in all organisational process. People are involved in getting knowledge to company in form of research, store company data in accordance with some legislation and partake in the future directional goal of the organization. In order for organization to get the right people in place to get a right knowledge much needed for the organization there may be a need for technology to get real time result. However, Human resources is a key part in knowledge retainment in any organization. According to (Bratton & Gold, 2017) ^[6], Human resource management is a strategic approach to managing employment relations that emphasises the importance of utilising employees' competencies to enhance performance and productivity. Wework in 2019 had issues with Human resources. The company considered laying off nearly one-third of all employees because of cash flow concerns and potentially their business could still need to lay off some people. Previously, people have been laid off and any attempt calling them back after expansion do not make people to trust. They were struggling with how to get the people they have laid off to come back. One of the immediate effects of Wework failed IPO bid was the loss of revenue which resulted in the company taking the decision to let go of about 67% of its staff by 2021 (Trivedi, 2022) ^[33]. Working in an organization that keeps retrenching its staff in order to save costs is a daunting task for any employee who will be uncertain of their future in the company. As it is trying to keep the company afloat it is important for the new management to adopt corporate practices that will keep its remaining staff motivated and committed to the job. This will be the new challenge the company will face. To improve on its staff retention capacity and the ability to keep the employees people performance model can be adopted.

2.1.3 Applying the People Performance Model

The people and performance model originated from the conduct of 12 in-depth case studies by John Purcell and his colleagues on how Human Resource practices can improve. The model is anchored on two assumptions. First, the model posits that all employees have the ability to engage in discretionary behaviour. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the firm to encourage or stimulate this discretionary behaviour among employees so that they can perform at an

optimum level (Purcell *et al.*, 2003). Second, the model identifies line managers as playing a vital role in enhancing the level of job satisfaction of employees. This view is informed by the idea that line managers exercise discretionary powers in the way they Human Resources Management practices as well as their manner of behaviour with regard to other employees. To this extent, the model viewed line managers as essential for not only improving job satisfaction but for stimulating discretionary behaviours among the worker. This will help the line manager at Wework. The features of the model are presented below.

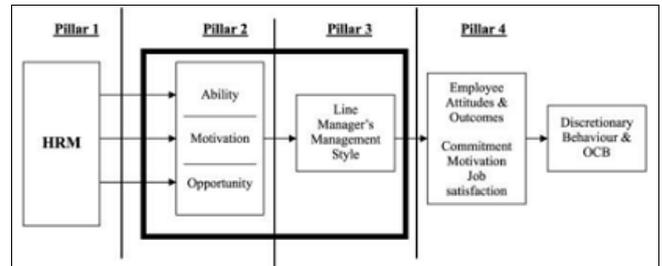


Fig 1: Matching Model (Purcell *et al.*, 2003)

Applying the people performance model to wework revealed that the company did not make use of this HRM model. Rather evidence shows that HRM practice at the company was centred on the personality of its enigmatic CEO. To this end, the influence and roles of line managers with regard to stimulating discretionary behaviour in an organisation were not appreciated at Wework under Neumann. The organizational culture at Wework during the period did not encourage the exercise of discretionary powers by any employees no matter highly placed (Denning, 2019). Many human resource managers who disagreed with the founders resigned from the company as a result of lack of power to exercise discretionary behaviour (Denning, 2019). It can be stated that the core assumptions of the people performance model were observed in the breach at Wework.

2.2 Leadership Challenge

After co-founder Adam Neumann opted to stand down from his position as CEO, the WeWork Board of Directors announced the following leadership changes on September 24, 2019. Sebastian Gunningham, formerly vice chairman, and Artie Minson, formerly co-president and chief financial officer of WeWork, have been named co-CEOs of the business. This is a big challenge for the company. To understand how to address this leadership changes, and implement appropriate approach to enhance productivity and performance, (Etzioni, 2019) ^[14] and Robbins (1986) coercive, reward, legitimate and expert power identified four types of power can be considered. In particular, Wework might use a mixture of legitimate power and reward power. In reward power, the leader may use rewards to influence employees for their activities when those behaviours match or surpass performance objectives. Examples of these incentives could include wage raises or bonuses, promotions, increased accountability and independence, as well as acclaim and adulation. When a manager has legitimate influence over his or her staff, they voluntarily comply with requests because they feel the management has the right to make such decisions. Neumann leadership style as CEO of Wework was frequently described by the media and investors as a charismatic leader with the capacity to

persuade people to adopt his ideas (Brown, 2019). WeWork's top management was heavily influenced by Neumann's mystifying personality and his grandiose plans for the business. As a compelling leader, Neumann is reputed to be able to win over skeptics of his visions into followers who are emotionally connected with him (Adeigbo, 2019) ^[3]. The CEO's enigmatic personality and the lofty ideas he supported were more responsible for the company's success in luring investors than any tactical choice made by the board. Conger & Kanungo (2010) ^[9] assert that charismatic leaders exhibit the capacity to challenge the status quo by employing innovative strategies to achieve their objectives. WeWork's marketing strategy and Neumann's relentless drive to advertise and brand the company as a technology company, despite that in reality Wework's business model aligned more closely to real estate company than a digital firm, serve as examples of his charismatic leadership style (Govindarajan & Srivastava, 2019 ^[19]; Trainer, 2019).

2.3 Failure to protect interest of all stakeholders

According to the stakeholder theory, a stakeholder is an individual or group of people who may influence and are influenced by the accomplishment (or lack thereof) of organizational goals (Freeman, 1984) ^[16]. Applying the theory to Wework Inc. helps to reveal the company's shortcomings with regards to its inability to manage the relationships among its primary and secondary stakeholders. Using the Stakeholder theory on WeWork, the company's stakeholders will be identified as the landlords whom WeWork rent space from, clients, employees, shareholders, the CEO and members of the public who were seeking to invest in the company, including women groups and the press. When analyzed from the stakeholder's perspective, it is clear that Wework prior to its Initial Public Offer (IPO) evaluation did not take cognisance of the interest of all its stakeholders (Conservative Business, 2019) ^[10]. Rather, the company favoured the shareholder's perspective in which only the interest of the shareholders is championed. In other words, Wework's corporate governance structure before IPO took the views and interest of the shareholders as opposed to that of the stakeholders who are involved in creating value for the company. According to one of the core assumptions of the stakeholder theory, a firm is only successful when it incorporates the interests of all its stakeholders in decision-making. This was not the case at Wework and this explained why the company's market valuation plummeted by over 70% within days of the public offering. Many investors voiced their dissatisfaction with the company's governance structure which caters mainly for the interests of the shareholders (Isidore, 2019) ^[23]. To buttress this point, the multiclass stock structure that gave Wework CEO and other shareholders more voting powers is a reflection of corporate thinking that favours and prioritized only the interests of the shareholders. The lack of stakeholder perspective in Wework's corporate governance makes the company appear un-investable to investors and is the major reason why it failed the public scrutiny test (Peregrine, 2019) ^[28]. The stakeholder theory connects ethics with capitalism (Chang *et al.*, 2017) ^[18]. In this way, the theory help to resolve the conflicts of interest among stakeholders by executives in such a way that tradeoffs that benefit all stakeholders are made. In case of the Wework Inc. this very aspect of ethical consideration was absent.

Adam Neumann, the CEO of the company failed to manage stakeholders' relationships in such a way that made trade-offs acceptable to all stakeholders possible. As the CEO, he extracts value from Wework for himself at the expense of the company's other stakeholders. To cite an example among numerous ethical breaches, Neumann engaged in insider dealing that saw him leasing his private properties (which he bought from loans sourced from Wework) to Wework at a cost. (Aydin, 2019) ^[4].

2.4 Managing the changes

During times of organizational transition, culture frequently comes to the forefront of discussion. Six interrelated characteristics were found in Gerry Johnson and Kevan Scholes (1992) Cultural Web to enhance sustainable leadership at Wework and identify a new way to operate. For the purpose of this assignment four most relevant characteristics related to this assignment will be discussed.



Fig 2: Cultural Web (Johnson and Scholes, 2010)

1. **Stories:** During the infant stage of the Wework, the company was making billions of dollars as evidenced in appendix 1 which show how successful it has been until working capital issue emanated in 2019. This is an important story which when changing the culture they can still promote the story. The leaders of Wework need to be aware of the old story that staff were laid off. In addition leaders need to be aware that staff don't trust them but with new culture address this. New culture of hybrid working system is a form of trust and with this they can show workers that they can be trusted.
2. **Rituals and Routines:** There is a little bit of routine in the case of wework time of resumption and closing. They intend to go for hybrid working which culturewise will attract talent into the company and safe them from shortage of human resources. The area of managing individual culture by leader of Wework might need to be improved on for sustainable leadership. Some of the opportunity that will be provided by wework workers working hybrid is that it gives a bit more choices for workers as some workers might need those ready to work at home. It is potentially cost saving, gives an opportunity for employee to work in their best working time. The new hybrid system will show trust.
3. **Symbols:** For every Wework office there is a logo that bears the company name. A case of corporate governance issue was identified where the company logo was bought by one the leaders and sold it back to the company at higher price.

4. **Power Structures:** The new hybrid system will empower workers and address the trust issue. In the past the leaders of Wework have too much power may be there can be a case of fare system. The intensity of Wework leaders power was evident when staff were laid off. They were unable to give staff better pay off but at the same time gave millions of dollars to their leaders. This is an abuse of power.

2.4.1 Major Cultural Challenges in implementing hybrid working system

After Wework had laid off, wework intend to introduce hybrid working with employee working at home and away which is an opportunity for Wework. According to (Zimmermann, 2022) ^[40], Hybrid way of working means working from home and office. At a time in the case study hybrid way of working was intended by wework. The balances of hybrid working was not shown in detail, from the case study but it was obvious that they might work face to face and at home. Some of the challenges this could bring to wework might be in terms of managing the culture of new way of working, technology issue and tracking of performance. In a situation whereby a new issue arise tackling the challenge in the real time might be difficult. Moreso, the challenge could be may be the working environment is not conducive, therefore there is a need to be aware of individual as some may find working at home more challenging than the other. Moreso, some of the opportunity that will be provided by wework workers working at home is that it gives a bit more choices for workers as some company might need those ready to work at home. It is potentially cost saving, gives an opportunity for employee to work in their best working time.

3. Improvement Area to Enhance Performance and Productivity

3.1 Management Change

Implementing any changes is always a challenge for leaders. Wework need to take this into consideration, for this reason I am suggesting change kaleidoscope tool of Hailey and Balogun 2002. The organizational context must be considered while implementing a change for it to be effective. Based on (Hailey and Balogun, 2002) Change Kaleidoscope framework, there are three rings: The outer ring pertains to the larger strategic change context, the middle ring denotes change plan formulating factor, and the inner circle provides design choices that are available to change agents.

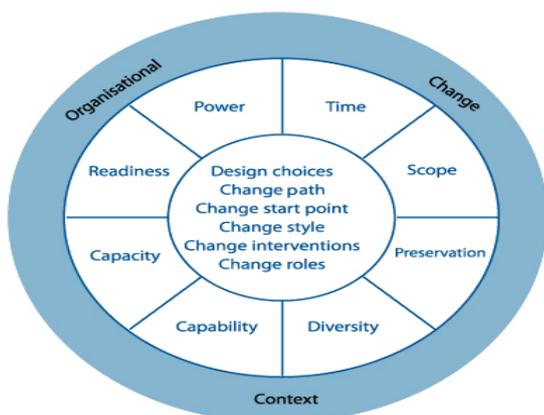


Fig 3: Change Kaleidoscope tool (Hailey and Balogun (2002)

The four most important area of fig 3 change kaleidoscope associated with Wework to be addressed for the purpose of this assignment include: capacity, scope, power and readiness.

1. **Capacity:** Even though Wework laid off staff and potentially more to lay off. The company is still lacking in the area of getting the right skill and at right place. However, they need to think about getting laid off staff back with the right skill.
2. **Scope:** The contextual feature's scope determines how much of the Work will be impacted and takes into account the change's nature. The trust issue might be a challenge for the leaders of Wework as staff might not trust them based on past experience.
3. **Readiness:** Wework Staff members' understanding of the need for change and their dedication to it are significant factors in the management of Wework change.
4. **Power:** At Wework, the scope of the power and autonomy given to change agents to suggest changes must be clearly specified. Based on the case study there is an evidence of abuse of power.

3.2 Talent Management / Human Resources

While every business entity requires financial capital to operate, without human capital (the employees) there cannot be a business venture. According to matching model designed by (Devanna *et al.*, 1984) ^[13], the human resource departments as well as the structure of an organization are to be administered in such a way that is in line with the company's overall strategy. In this way, the model introduced the notion of strategic Human Resources Management by incorporating the implementation of strategic corporate objectives and human resources. The matching model highlights three vital elements that are necessary for corporations to function well, these are mission and strategy, organizational structure and Human resource (Devanna *et al.*, 1984) ^[13].

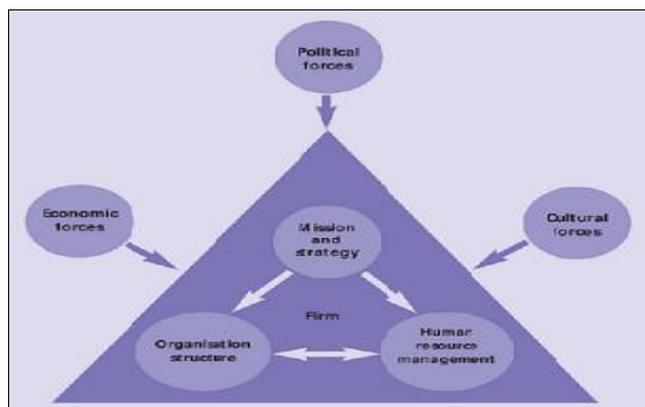


Fig 4: The Matching Model (Devanna *et al.*, 1984) ^[13]

At Wework, under the leadership of Neumann, the matching model was deployed. The company's mission statement of "elevating the consciousness of the world" influence the operation of its HRM. Employees at Wework were developed towards the realization of its strategic objectives. The organisation of seminars, parties and other pep talks hosted by Neumann as CEO was aimed at developing Wework employees' adaptation to the company's philosophy and corporate culture. The reason for hosting the parties was

to develop the workers in line with the objectives of WeWork as a company for the future. At WeWork a unity of purpose between the employees and employers is often emphasized. While this is essential in all corporations, it is most certainly one of the core assumptions of the matching model which regards conflict as something that should not exist in an organization. WeWork may choose a useful approach to managing the hybrid workforce model while creating a useful hybrid culture. There could be some virtual celebration. Members of the WeWork workforce can communicate online and engage in interpersonal interaction. To reveal the employees' latent skills, management can set up an online cultural programme. It will be excellent to utilise WeWork's resources to create new plans of action and communicate innovative concepts to team members.

3.3 Sustainable Leadership Enhancement

The management of the WeWork under Neumann mismanaged the company resources in such a way that it has a negative impact on the company's future survival. In a way, there was no financial sustainability in the company because the company keep running at a loss. The management of WeWork demonstrated a case of financial recklessness which later put the company in jeopardy. The triple bottom line framework evaluates a company's performance in terms of planet, people, and the profit (Elkington, 1997) ^[15]. Applying triple bottom line framework developed by (Elkington, 1997) ^[15] to enhance sustainable leadership means that at WeWork means considering the three Ps addressed in the theory. People, Planet and Profit. From the evidence gathered from case study it shows that the profit aspect of the three Ps was the major focus of WeWork while stakeholders were neglected. WeWork might have to hold the planet first and redirect their attention to people (stakeholders) and profit.

Even if WeWork has shown its dedication in this area, the business will gain from its sustainable leadership programme by implementing the triple bottom line. WeWork has shown that it is committed to this cause, but it will gain from its sustainable leadership programme by using the triple bottom line approach when analysing the effects on the environment, people, and finances. With this strategy, the business will be able to assess how its actions affect the world, profit, and people from three different perspectives. Both the company's brand and competitive advantage will be strengthened by the strategy.

3.4 Knowledge Management improvement

At WeWork those individual with knowledge power, process and technology might be paying a political game. According to (Tryon, 2016) ^[36], the skills, experience, and information that individuals employee and workgroups employ to carry out their tasks collectively make up an organization's knowledge. Promoting knowledge expansion, communication, and preservation are the three basic goals of knowledge management (Steels 1993). At WeWork, organizational knowledge management team must take into account both the soft knowledge held in people's thoughts and the hard knowledge stored in databases (Hildreth and Kimble, 2000) and ensure regular update for performance and productivity. A robust knowledge management system (KMS), will offer a way to gather, store, and share knowledge assets amongst and among organisational actors (e.g., employees and information systems). KMS will

address a number of stages of the knowledge life cycle, including identification, acquisition, development, diffusion, use, and preservation (Abecker *et al.* 1998) ^[11]. At WeWork, decision-making should be supported by data management and statistics. Competency should be permitted at all levels of operation in order to obtain a valid result, each piece of data should also be examined using standard techniques. A three-layered architecture for managing organizational knowledge has been proposed by (Abecker *et al.* 1998) ^[11] which can be adopted by WeWork. Due to this, the Organizational Memory will act as the user's intelligent assistant and handle both formal and non-formal knowledge pieces in a task-oriented manner.

4. Conclusion

Adopting WeWork Inc. as a business case study, the assignment analysed the issues of failure to defend the interests of all stakeholders, issues with operation management /Resource management, a leadership issue, and managing the change challenges. Based on the analysis of the stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984) ^[16], it is evident that WeWork did not consider the interests of all of its stakeholders because they found it different to offer reasonable pay off to staff when they were laid off whereas millions of dollars were given to their leaders which show high level of abuse of power (Conservative Business, 2019) ^[10]. In addition, people and performance model was not adopted by WeWork while justification were provided to area to be addressed to manage the change based on change kaleidoscope tool (Hailey and Balogun (2002). At WeWork a unity of purpose between the employees and employers is often emphasized. While this is essential at WeWork, it is most certainly one of the core assumptions of the matching model which regards conflict as something that should not exist in an organization. The report has also justified the company's brand and competitive advantage will be strengthened by adopting triple bottom line framework (Elkington, 1997) ^[15] which evaluates a company's performance in terms of planet, people, and the profit. In the case of WeWork while holding planet, people (employee) and profit can be focused on.

5. Recommendations

The following recommendations will enable WeWork to enhance performance and productivity

1. Since WeWork is planning to introduce hybrid they also need to be aware of culture in doing so. I will suggest they use people performance model (Purcel *et al.*, 2003) of HRM practice by the new management at WeWork. Adopting such HRM models will encourage discretionary behaviour which help to enhance job satisfaction.
2. The stakeholder perspective should be incorporated into the company's philosophy. The approach will enable the management to reflect and promote the views and interests of all its critical stakeholders. More so, the triple-bottom-line approach which made firms to consider and evaluate the impacts they have on the planet, profit and people, will be of immense benefit to the company, particularly, in the area of sustainable development. In this regard, issues that border on the environment, people and finances will be effectively dealt with thereby promoting sustainable development. While, it is to be noted that the company is already

active in addressing environmental issues, on matters relating to people and finances the company fared poorly. Going forward, the leadership position in the top management needs to be diverse and also reflect equal gender representation at the board level.

3. Wework's well documented failure is the consequence of a weak corporate governance that could not hold the CEO accountable. It is expected therefore that reform of the company's corporate governance should be instituted to enhance the board's power in checking the excesses of the CEO. Most importantly, the board should be empowered to ensure that corporate ethics are complied with.
4. In order to promote and enhance employees' job satisfaction, there is a need to adopt the people performance model of Human Resources Management practice by the new management at Wework. Adopting such Human Resources Model will encourage discretionary behaviour which help to enhance job satisfaction.
5. For long-term sustainability, the Wework need to come up with innovative ways to generate revenue and making-profit.

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