THE USE OF METAPHOR IN DESIGNING ORGANIZATION OF THE FUTURE

Presenter: Aminat Ahmadu Abubakar
Venue: Stratford University, Falls Church, VA
## AGENDA

### Agenda 1

| Introduction  
| -- |  
| Icebreaker  
| -- |  
| • Unique Things  
| -- |  

| Discuss - 1  
| -- |  
| • The Spider Plant Metaphor  
| -- |  

| Discuss - 2  
| -- |  
| • Centralized Organization  
| -- |  
| • Decentralized Organization as a Spider Plant  
| -- |  

| Break  
| -- |  

| Group Exercise - 2  
| -- |  
| • The Spider Plant Exercise I  
| -- |  
| • The Spider Plant Exercise II  
| -- |  

| Discuss – 3  
| -- |  
| • Successful decentralization depends on the development of good “Umbilical Cord”  
| -- |  
| Video – 1  
| -- |  
| Steve Jobs talks about managing people  
| -- |  

### Agenda 2

| Discuss – 4  
| -- |  
| • Making organizational design decision  
| -- |  

| Break  
| -- |  

| Discuss – 5  
| -- |  
| • The Umbilical Cord Strands Strategy  
| -- |  
| • The Umbilical Cord Strands  
| -- |  

| Group Exercise - 5  
| -- |  
| Management 3.0 Game: Meddlers  
| -- |  

| Q & A, Evaluation  
| -- |  

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The goal of this workshop is to focus on the Spider Plant metaphor, which provides a powerful visual imagery on how to develop a new design of management and organizational structure. It shows how the decentralized organizational design promotes flexibility, which significantly drives high performance in operations. Participants will reflect on how the metaphor fits in with their current organizational structure, and the new awareness it creates.

**Workshop Activities**

1. Icebreaker
2. Discussions
3. Group exercises
4. Refresher break
5. Watch video
6. Workshop reflection
7. Questions and Answers
8. Workshop evaluation
9. Workshop wraps up
INTRODUCTION – CONT’D

Workshop Topics Overview
1. The spider plant metaphor
2. Centralized organization
3. Decentralized organization as a spider plant
4. Successful decentralization depends on the development of good “Umbilical Cord”
5. Making organization design decisions
6. The umbilical cord strands strategy
7. The umbilical cord strands

Workshop Learning Objectives
1. Describe a decentralized organizational structure using a visual imagery in the form of the Spider Plant metaphor in organizational design.
2. Use design Spider Plant metaphor to help leaders understand an organization’s characteristics and impact on management practices.
3. Differentiate between a centralized organization and a decentralized organization.
4. Compare and contrast the current state of the organization with a Spider Plant metaphor.
5. Create an organizational structure.
ICEBREAKER - UNIQUE THINGS

Group Size: Pairs
Duration: 10 minutes

1. Introduce yourself to your partner and interview each other for a few minutes each.
2. Each participant should introduce their partners by name to the group, and to share at least two unique characteristics about them.
THE SPIDER PLANT METAPHOR

• A word or phrase for one thing that is used to refer to another thing in order to show or suggest that they are similar

• An object, activity, or idea that is used as a symbol of something else

• The use of metaphor in the design of the organization of the future allows for a better insight and aids in the visualization. It helps to interpret what is now and how you want the future to be.

The Spider Plant metaphor is a powerful imagery introduced as a way of rethinking organizational design and managerial styles to promote flexible, decentralized modes of operation.

- Gareth Morgan author of the book *Imaginization*
Centralization is the degree to which decision-making authority is concentrated at higher levels in an organization.

1. A centralized organization is bound to be a victim of slow decision making because of the painful and lengthy bureaucratic route that will be involved in passing one decision.
2. The main decision makers become like bottlenecks of the business. They make every decision, take feedback, strategize and then take the decision.
3. Procedures, processes, policies and management style is stringent with a strong reluctance to adapt or change.
4. Leads to frustration, and lack of motivation by employees.
The spider-plant provides an idea on how to approach decentralization in an organization design.

Decentralization is a type of organizational structure in which daily operations and decision-making responsibilities are delegated by top management to middle and lower-level managers within the organization, allowing top management to focus more on major decisions.

1. Decentralized organizations evolve and self-organized in an open and controlled way.
2. It creates the space and independence for new initiatives that flourishes.
3. Respect the need for integration and accountability within the organization.
4. Spider plants begin to grow new shoots when they outgrow their pots. As the plant reaches out to search for new ground it receives nourishment from the mother plant.
BREAK
THE SPIDER PLANT EXERCISE - I

1. Select your organization or an organization, or focus on a department or network of organizations.

2. List as many of the characteristics of the spider plant as you can. (e.g., Spider plants begin to grow new shoots when they outgrow their pots. As the plant reaches out to search for new ground it receives nourishment from the mother plant. When the new plant has established roots and is able to sustain itself, the linking shoot is no longer necessary.)

3. For each characteristic, identify where there are, and where there are not, parallels in your organizational unit.

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<th>Characteristics of the Spider-Plant</th>
<th>Parallels in my organization</th>
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4. How well does the image fit?

5. Does it grasp the nature of your organization?

6. Does it create any new insights?

Consider how well the metaphor fits your organization, and the new insights this creates.

THE SPIDER PLANT EXERCISE - II

1. Use the Spider Plant image to interpret as a new basis for a new organizational design.
2. Describe the organization/department/network of organizations as a spider plant. What parallel can you find with the spider plant above?

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3. What are the differences between the new organization and the one you described in Part I of this exercise?
4. Do any new insights for shaping the management process emerge?

SUCCESSFUL DECENTRALIZATION DEPENDS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF GOOD “UMBILICAL CORD”

1. As CEO think of how you want to run the organization, divisions and employees. The Chief Executive Officer represent the “Central Pot”, employees, projects represent “Offshoot”, and connecting line represent the “Umbilical Cord”.

2. How do you define the umbilical cord?

3. Now begin to think.

4. Do you want to design your organization as a decentralized collaborative organization with a define set of principles and parameters that will create a controlled space that allows people to self-organize on their initiatives?

Or

1. Do you want to design your organization as a bureaucratic organization that is tight reigned that has full control and on top of everything?

2. Do you define the umbilical cord alone or as a team where discussions and feedback are held before setting the parameters.

3. What does the offshoot need to survive and flourish?

4. What is the mutual requirement for sustenance and development of a health and growth of the whole plant?
Steve Jobs talks about managing people
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f60dheI4ARg&list=RDxcTtQ0hiHbE&index=5
MAKING ORGANIZATION DESIGN DECISIONS

What matters most in organizational design its alignment with the business strategy and the market environment in which the business operates. It must then have the right business controls, the right flexibility, the right incentives, the right people and the right resources.

1. **Strategy** – The organization design must support your strategy. If your organization intends to be innovative then a hierarchical structure will not work. If however, your strategy is based on low cost, high volume delivery then a rigid structure with tight controls may be the best design.

2. **Size** – The design must take into account the size of your organization. A small organization could be paralyzed by too much specialization. In larger organizations, on the other hand, there may be economies of scale that can be gained by maintaining functionally specialist departments and teams. A large organization has more complex decision making needs and some decision making responsibilities are likely to be devolved or decentralized.

3. **Environment** – If the market environment you work in (customers, suppliers, regulators, etc.) is unpredictable or volatile, then the organization needs to be flexible enough to react to this.

4. **Controls** – What level of control is right in your business? Some activities need special controls (such as patient services in hospitals, money handling in banks and maintenance in air transport) whilst others are more efficient when there is a high degree of flexibility.

5. **Incentives** – Incentives and rewards must be aligned with the business's strategy and purpose. When these are misaligned, there is a danger that units within the organization become self-serving. Using the earlier example of a company that wants to grow by acquiring new customers, the sale team is incentivized on customer retention, and therefore is self-serving rather than aligned with the business purpose.
BREAK

15 min
1. Successful decentralization depends on the development of good “Umbilical Cord”. As CEO think of how you want to run the organization, divisions and employees.

2. Develop different “cords” for managing different situations. Most organizations are highly diversified, and different cords can be used for different situations.

3. Encourage a culture of collaboration and coordination across board the organization to enable shared information, ideas and innovation. Inter divisional meetings funded and encouraged on a regular and consistent basis.
The Umbilical Cord Strands

1. Agreement and understanding of the shared vision and direction of the organization plays a very important key role. While divisions self-organize their activities independently, there must be synergy between divisional work activities and the organizational goal.

2. Both sides understand their accountability. Though independent the divisions understand their responsibilities and are accountable for their actions. Operational parameters, boundaries, and general obligations are set. Seek clarification on any matter that might arise.

3. Resources flows in both direction. A shared understanding of financial and other resources bottom line is reached. The kind of financial support to be provided to the divisions, and what the divisions would provide in return.

4. Information system effective communication is very important for a successful collaboration, motivation and growth of the organization. Having a robust information system flow in a timely manner helps alert on “early warning system”…crucial for developing “hands off” styles of management that still lend a measure of control. Implementation of a new technology such cloud computing and big data.

5. Rewards. “Pain of accountability, and …pleasure of appropriate rewards” (Morgan, 1997, p. 78) should be in place. Will profits be shared, or just by CEO and senior management? Reward based on personal effort or team work? How will accomplishment be celebrated? How can reward be sustained?
MANAGEMENT 3.0 GAME: MEDDLERS

Meddlers’ objective is to facilitate an exercise that allows players to visualize and discuss organizational structure, where multiple teams work on multiple projects in a way that matches the concept of value networks.

1. People are forced to work on a flat surface. This means they cannot grow the organization as a hierarchy. They must grow their business as a value network.

2. The game concentrates on teamwork limiting the size of teams to fewer than ten.

3. This game makes it easier for managers to let teammates invent their own team structures and to have them discuss the benefits, risks and value teams are providing to each other.

4. The exercise has no clearly defined outcome in terms of winners and losers. When players better understand how to grow their organization as a value network, then everyone is a winner!

https://management30.com/product/meddlers/
HOW TO PLAY MEDDLERS WITH YOUR TEAM

Get creative with how you play it!
1. Create a legend to remind yourselves what each face, hat and hexagonal function tile means to you. Cut the pictures.
   - Faces represent individuals
   - Hats are roles
   - Function tiles represent the different teams coming together for a certain project, but it is up to you and your team!

Pick out one of the four challenges below to start playing the game:

1. You have a business unit of 18 people, responsible for two big customers and two small ones. What could the organizational structure look like?
2. You have a start-up of 15 people, offering Software as a Service (SaaS) to a hundred different customers. How will you grow it?
3. You are a development manager in an enterprise, responsible for distributed teams in three countries. How will people collaborate?
4. Design the organization structure for a popular, local coffee bar.

The result of the exercise should be an organizational structure, consisting of one or more teams, where each team contains one or more roles.

Rules of the game worth pointing out:

1. A functional team contains only people with the same role. A cross-functional team has people with different roles.
2. By connecting the sides of teams, you visualize that the teams are collaborating and providing value to each other.
3. Players can deviate from the rules and bend the constraints in any way they like. Some people add extra roles to their structures. Some people connect tiles in creative ways. Some people position roles across boundaries or outside of the teams. Some people combine roles into one. Everything is allowed, as long as the players can explain what the benefits and the risks are.

https://management30.com/product/meddlers/
MEDDLERS GAME – CUT OUT 1

Function tiles represent the different teams coming together for a certain project

https://management30.com/product/meddlers/
Hats are roles

https://management30.com/product/meddlers/
MEDDLERS GAME – CUT OUT 3

Faces represent individuals

https://management30.com/product/meddlers/
MEDDLERS GAME – CUT OUT 4

Faces represent individuals

https://management30.com/product/meddlers/
MEDDLERS GAME – CUT OUT 5

Faces represent individuals

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MEDDLERS GAME – CUT OUT LEGEND

https://management30.com/product/meddlers/
• Q & A
• Contact Info
• Evaluation
REFERENCES


• Ragni (Director). (2010, June 12). Steve Jobs talks about managing people [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f60dheI4ARg&list=RDxcTtQ0hiHbE&index=5
Thank you