Harnessing New Product Development Processes through Strategic Thinking Initiatives

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ABSTRACT

This paper evaluates the role of strategic thinking to support multinational organization’s new product development initiatives. Furthermore, it emphasizes how organizational commitment to empower its work team’s leadership capability can be highlighted in the form of weak areas through specialized survey. The research outcomes highlighted the gaps in the subject organization’s NPD initiatives through drawing attention to the grey areas present in the overall corporate strategic leadership environment of its three targeted work locations (i.e. Finland, the UK, and Norway). Such areas include the potential of the company’s internal communication system, data collection and record keeping capability, management’s approach to the potential of new idea generation and employees’ empowerment. The referred areas are directly linked to the subject company’s new product development strategy, corporate initiatives and operational growth.

Keywords: Employee Empowerment, Innovation New Product Development, Leadership, Stage Gate Model, Strategic Thinking

INTRODUCTION

All corporations have strategy, embedded in their working, whether they know it or not (Zeleny 2010). The quest for new ideas to create exceptional products originates with a deeper level of understanding about customer’s desires. In addition, the traditional NPD model, in which companies are exclusively responsible for coming up with new product ideas and for deciding which products should ultimately be marketed, is increasingly being challenged by innovation management academics and practitioners (Fuchs and Schreier, 2011; Cone, 2006; Lakhani, 2006; Pitt et al., 1996; Chesbrough, 2003; Von Hippel and Katz, 2002;). It is desired that a new product or service must hold a “wow” factor or ‘aha moment’ (Dorst, and Cross 2001) by offering something that is missing from the range of products already available in the market. However, conceiving such a new product idea seems beyond the reach of most of the companies today.

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The above requires that the entire new product development team—technical, marketing, and organization’s operational teams to tactfully collaborate, design and lead a new product development strategic plan internally while additionally interacting with the real customers/users, and learn their desires, problem areas, needs, and challenges as well. The referred strategy is much different from an act of merely depending on the sales and marketing teams to obtain market demands and requirements; what is often criticised for being filtered, biased, and incorrect (Cooper, 1994). This results in connecting the industry with its customers by making them their integral part in the entire NPD process; scoping, product definition, development, validation, and beyond. Though, failure to establish the foundations of knowledge transfers from various organizational resources such as people, technologies and processes, leaves firms struggling with an overabundance of data and a paucity of knowledge (Acar, Burns, Datta, 2014).

Figure 1 depicts the targeted NPD process flow that on one hand ensures the unification of organizational internal resources to guarantee strategic production planning through strategic product manufacturing for ultimately achieving product market leadership while on the other hand, maintains up-to-date market intelligence and innovative production capacity building (i.e., market needs, client’s tastes, related economic, new inventions and scientific trends in the field as well as related political or legal realities etc.) to attain maximum and up-to-date potential throughout the life cycle of new product development (NPD) process (i.e., stage by stage). Furthermore, an optimal maintenance strategy mix is crucial for enhancing the availability and reliability levels of production conveniences without significantly increasing operational costs (Jajimoggala, Rao, & Satyanarayana, 2011). Hence, the proposed framework encourages organizational strategy to constantly align its new product development (NPD) team dynamics through transformational leadership to support new product innovation initiatives.

In today’s fast growing and vibrant businesses, across the globe, the highest demand is for the specialized profession trainings that polish the skills of the human resources; in particular the powers of communication, innovation and creativity. This is in response to the incessant need for businesses to introduce new products and services by keeping pace with rapidly changing market conditions (Robinson, 1990).
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