The Role of Leadership in Organizational Development

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Abstract

An organization is a social and economic group which distributes tasks for a collective goal. It is systematically structured and managed to pursue collective goals on a continuing basis. All organizations have a management structure that determines relationships between functions and positions, and subdivides and delegates roles, responsibilities, and authority to carry out defined tasks. There are a wide range of different organizations within our social structure that allow our society to function and fulfill their public duties; governments, corporations, Universities, companies, armed forces and any other types that are similar that cover the public sector and the private sector. There are also what is known as hybrid organizations which are a combination of two of the above such as a combination of a corporate organization and the government. The aim of this qualitative research will be to look at organization leadership in state corporations taking the postal corporation of Kenya as a case study. At the end of this research, we will be able to observe that leadership in state corporations is as it should be in any organization for these organizations to flourish, grow, expand and be rated competitively like the private sector. However, they face challenges in political interference that dwarfs their performance.

Key words*: Ethics, Communication, Direction, Motivation, Fairness, Boldness*

Introduction

What is Organizational Leadership?

The Article from Africa News Service of December 12, 2001 had a bold heading 'Hussein Dropped as Posta Boss'. This was the first Postmaster General of the new Postal Corporation of Kenya after the split in June 1999 of Kenya Posts and Telecommunications Corporation. The Post Master-General, Mr Bishar Hussein, was replaced. Since this is a political appointment, The Ministry of Transport and Communications on behalf of the Government, who is the sole shareholder of the parastatal, informed the

board of the corporation that a deputy secretary in the ministry, Mr. Douglas Odette, was to temporarily hold the position as the government looked for a suitable replacement.

Mr. Hussein left in the wake of a major controversy between Postal Corporation of Kenya (PCK), and communications regulator, Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK) over the withdrawal of the popular telegraphic money order service. He was to replace the service with a new Express Money Order Service.

This picked my curiosity to examine organization leadership and its role in our organizations with specific reference to the Postal Corporation of Kenya.

A Humble Beginning

The post office is the first organization to establish its network in East Africa formally. The Postal history in Kenya dates from the early years of the 17th century. A Portuguese governor was installed in Mombasa in 1592 and official correspondence between the town and the outside world has been recorded from 1610 onwards, carried by ship to Arabia and India and transmitted to Europe by the overland route. Early letters from the interior of Kenya date from about 1848 when the missionaries sent their correspondence by native runners to the Coast for onward transmission.

By 1877 some letters from Coast were being taken north from Lamu to Aden by ships of the British Steam Navigation Company, although the bulk of mail was being transmitted via Zanzibar. A system of mail-runners was developed and expanded by the British East Africa Association, while individual traders and concessionaries organized their own service. That enjoyed the use of distinctive postage stamps in 1889-90.

A regular postal service in British East Africa was introduced in May 1890 and post offices opened in Mombasa and the island of Lamu. Two years later offices were opened at Malindi and Wasini and by 1897 an office was to open at Kilindini, necessitated by the construction of the railway. On 1st July 1895 control of the territory in British East Africa was transferred from the company to the imperial government. The Postmaster of Mombasa was responsible for running the postal service in the territory and in 1901 the Postal Services of British East Africa and Uganda were amalgamated.

This progression of the first communication system in East Africa with the rest of the world was only maintained and sustained due to proper co-ordination of its activities as a communication organization.

Early Postal Development

As organization Postal services were, at the beginning of the last century developed rapidly compared with the 1890s, mainly as a result of the construction of the Uganda railway. In 1895, for instance, mail took a fortnight to cover the 394 km between Mombasa and Machakos; ten years later from Mombasa to Nairobi (426 km) it took 28 hours, currently it can be same day service or overnight depending on the premium paid. Although the railway greatly facilitated the carriage of mail, runners were still employed, while the steamer "Juba" served a number of places on the Coast. In the early years of the last century fewer than 30 post offices, as well as a number of postal agencies existed in the East Africa protectorate at one time or another, although they were not all open at the same time and several of them were short-lived. The post offices in Kenya at this time included; Baringo, Eldama Ravine, Karungu, Kikuyu, Kilindini, Lamu, Machakos, Makindu, Muhoroni, Mombasa, Malindi, Mumias, Nandi, Nairobi, Naivasha, Nakuru, Rabai, Takaungu, Taveta, Voi, Wasini and Port Ugowe (now Kisumu). This expansion

programme signals the presence of a team in the organization that was forward thinking, not afraid to take risks, and they had a vision for the future of the organization.

An East African Postal Service

We are able to observe here that the postal services were affected either by the leadership within the organization or from the government who has always been the sole shareholder.

On 1st July 1933 a Postal Union of the three East African territories came into operation and was further strengthened by the East African Customs and Postal Union formally introduced on 1st May 1935. Although the East African countries became independent sovereign states between 1961 and 1963, they continued cooperating closely with one another in a number of ways, not the least being their common postal services which culminated into the formation of East African Posts and Telecommunications Corporation (EAP&T) under the Treaty for East African Cooperation which came into effect on 1st December 1967. In 1977, due to the breakup of the East African Community, the Kenya Posts and Telecommunications Corporation (KP&TC) was established. In the EAP&TC and KP&TC eras postal services were provided under a department of the larger Corporations.

Establishment of PCK

Due to emerging market and economic trends and spearheaded by the Universal Postal Union (UPU), efforts to separate postal services from those of Telecommunications were initiated in the late 1980s. They bore fruit in Kenya and in July 1999, the KP&TC was split to create, among others, the Postal Corporation of Kenya (PCK) whose mandate under the Postal Corporation Act of 1998 is to provide and operate postal services, postal financial services, and perform other functions and duties as the minister of communications may assign.

In pursuit of this mandate, PCK operates a network of 31 Head Post offices 472 departmental postal outlets and 204 postal agencies (sub-post offices). The population served per post office is 55,630. This is against a universal standard of 6,000 persons per post office. This network is served by a staff complement of 4,114 as at June 2009. Among the products and services of PCK are; letter post, parcels, Expedited Mail Services (EMS), Philately, Postal Financial Services (Money Orders and Postal Orders), Agency Services (Third party payments and receipts) and technology based money transfer services. Those planned for introduction are postal savings service, postal giro services and hybrid mail.

Inter-Regional Cooperation

The Post in Kenya currently cooperates with other postal administrations within East Africa in the provision of Postal Money Transfers through the UPU's electronic International Financial System (IFS). It also has the International Postal System (IPS) that enables track and trace facilities for mail and EMS within UPU member countries. A number of neighboring postal administrations use Nairobi as their transit point for international mail. Postal Corporation of Kenya in this connection has plans of putting up a modern International Mails Transit Centre at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA), Nairobi.

The port of Mombasa serves as a gateway for international surface mail destined not only to Kenya but the larger Eastern Africa zone of Uganda, Tanzania, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Zambia and now South Sudan. Between 1990 and 2010 the three East African countries maintained a tripartite agreement where they have issued postage stamps with the same theme together, and combined their international surface mail routes for synergy to build volumes. Hence, Kenya has handled all Eastern Africa zone mails destined to Europe, America and Canada, while Tanzania has handled all Eastern Africa zone mails

destined to to Far East, Asia and Australia. This was the era of containerization and the countries realized their mail will suffer delay if each sent their containers.

This is an indicator that the leadership of this organization has always tried to find ways to improve the quality of service. In fact the post office idea of sharing the container by combining mails was only adopted by the shipping fraternity in the years after 2005.

In 2010 the postal organizations of Kenya and Tanzania started to make their own dispatches and the arrangement of sharing a container was withdrawn. This was because now it was possible to get local exporters to share the container with hence there was no need of confining the arrangement within the postal sector. This has greatly improved international surface mail services.

Meaning Of Organizational Leadership

Organizational leadership is a dual focused management approach that works towards what is best for individuals and what is best for a group as a whole simultaneously. It is also an attitude and a work ethic that empowers an individual in any role to lead from the top, middle, or bottom of an organization. While discussing every component of organizational leadership would be well beyond the scope of this document, five key components of organizational leadership are identified below.

Worldview

Organizational leadership requires developing an understanding of your own worldview as well as the worldviews of others. Worldview is a composite image created from the various lenses through which individuals view the world. It is not the same as identity, political stance, or religious viewpoint, but does include these things. It incorporates everything an individual believes about the world, combining the tangible and the intangible. An individual's worldview is defined by that individual's attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and the outside forces the individual allows to influence them. Worldview is the "operating instructions" for how the individual interfaces with the world. One who does not take into consideration how individuals interface with the world is in a much weaker position to lead these individuals. Furthermore, organizational leadership requires an understanding of the composite worldview of the organization, which consists of the many diverse and sometimes conflicting worldviews of the individuals within that organization.

Strengths

Successful leadership requires capitalizing on strengths and managing around weaknesses. The post office boasts of its strength in network superiority. It has over 700 post offices, the highest number of outlets second only to the government. Strength can be defined as consistent, near perfect performance in an activity. An individual should perform an activity at around a 95% success rate in order to consider their performance of that activity. Strength is not necessarily the same as ability: ability is strength only if you can fathom yourself doing it repeatedly, happily, and successfully. The building blocks of strengths are:

- Talents – naturally recurring patterns of thought, feeling, or behavior
- Knowledge – facts and lessons learned
- Skills – the steps of an activity

Ethics

Organizational leadership requires ethics. In the post office the service charter lays the ground rules in serving the customer. Ethics aids leaders in balancing truth and loyalty, individuals and communities,

short-term and long-term, and justice vs. mercy. Ethics is not an inoculation or a compromise. It is a process and a lens by which leaders approach a problem situation. Ethics call on us to be impartial, yet engaged. Effective leaders utilize ethics to look for the "hidden alternative" in ethically questionable situations. It is the compass by which leaders navigate not only right vs. wrong, but also right vs. right.

Communication

Communication is a tool for individuals to interface with one another, with groups, and with the rest of the world. It is not a text, email, phone call, or personal visit: these are methods/mediums of communication. Effective communication requires an understanding of the VABEs (Values, Assumptions, Beliefs, and Expectations) of those whom with we communicate. Understanding someone's worldview and VABEs enables leaders to acknowledge but look past differences, focus on areas of agreement, and to effectively listen for and hear the messages of others. Leaders are able to move beyond communication barriers (appearance, vocabulary, stutter, lisp, accent, etc) and focus on the message of the speaker.

Championship

It is often the case that people don't want to be leaders for fear of rejection. Leaders are able to rise above this natural fear and lead by the example of adding value to an organization. Managers and leaders are not the same. Leaders possess strategic thinking, understanding of the vision of an organization and also the ability to effectively carry out and communicate that vision. Anyone, anywhere, at any level can be a leader. The cornerstones of leadership are:

- Telling the Truth
- Keeping the Promise
- Respecting the individual
- Be Fair

These four cornerstones combined will determine how the individual leader is perceived by others, and in the case of organizational leadership, perception is reality for all effective purposes. A manager may have been delegated responsibility over many individuals, but in failing to exhibit the cornerstones of leadership or not possessing the requisite strength, ethics, communication, or grasp of worldviews, that manager is not a leader. In fact that manager may very well manage a leader who does possess leadership traits. A simple test of leadership is to "look behind yourself, do you see anyone following you?" If you do not, you are not a leader!

Theories of Leadership

While there are many theories of leadership, Douglas McGregor, a social psychologist and Management Professor at MIT, identified two prominent management approaches/theories which he coined as "Theory X" and "Theory Y":

- Theory X – "Hell or high water, we're going to get it done!" Assumes that workers are largely motivated by the lower order needs of Maslow's hierarchy (physiological and safety needs) and that effective management requires strict and often punitive micromanagement.

- Theory Y – "I need your help…how are we going to do this?" Assumes that workers are largely motivated by higher order needs of Maslow's hierarchy (belonging, esteem and self-actualization)

and that effective management requires creating the right conditions and organizational culture which motivates workers to pursue those needs by adding value to the organization.

Effective leaders identify the appropriate leadership theory for a given situation. In some instance a leader may use a combination of Theories X and Y. This determination is context sensitive. Consider the following levels of James G. Clawson's "Level Three Leadership" and associated tactics:

- Level One – visible behavior: Orders, commands, threats, intimidation, incentives, bonuses. This level is purely theory X.

- Two – conscious thought: Arguments, rationale, data, citations, references, evidence, and manipulation. This level can be a combination of theories X and Y.

- Three – VABEs: Visioning, purpose definition, honesty, openness, emotional storytelling, anecdotes, tender emotions. This level is purely level Y.

Leaders may employ various methods of leadership. Some of the more important methods are:

- Model the way (set the example)

- Share your vision (let others know)

- Challenge the process (look for ways to grow)

- Enable others to act (empowerment)

- Set goals/build trust (direction)

- Encourage the heart (positive reinforcement)

Key takeaways

Successful organizational leadership includes:

- Understanding the worldview of others as well as yours.

- Recognizing and develop your own strengths

- Looking for the "hidden alternative" in decision making.

- Focusing on the message, not the messenger

Current Position of PCK

Since the selection of its first CEO the organization has received and saw off five CEOs making an average tenure of less than three years each. The normal contract for the CEO is a renewable contract of three years.

Discussion with some members of staff - on condition of confidentiality and anonymity - shows a view that the shareholder is not committed in steering this organization to success. There is frequent political interference in the selection of the leader. This has stunted the growth of the organization since none of the PMGs has carried through a strategic plan while in the office. From the above qualities that are required in a leader the absence of a stable leader makes this organization unstable.

The frustration of the worker was seen clearly when on 2 December, 2011 postal workers went on strike demanding higher wages. Their feeling was that the strike was not an affront to management, but the delay in finalizing the collective bargaining agreement talks due to the frequent changing of the guard.

The current talks had gone through three PMGs without settlement. While the management view, and by extension the view of the shareholder was a lack of funds due to slow growth in the business, the workers view was a delay to review the salary package due to frequent referrals in the talks.

All postal organizations have undergone radical changes since the 1990s. The U.S. Postal Service was to shut down 3,700 Post Offices by 2010. In Kenya the post office has undergone regular and systematic metamorphosis so as to;

1. Improve quality of service
2. Re-structure to optimize on unit output of the workforce
3. Adjust with competition in the products that have been liberalized
4. Change technology to maintain the products' relevance in the market
5. Improve efficiency by investing in fleet, equipment and training.
6. Reduce costs by flattening the hierarchy, outsourcing and divesting in excess property

Internally the organization has undergone periodic structural adjustment to fit the current situation. The geographical boundaries have been re-defined time and again to be able to deliver superior service as envisioned in the strategic plan. All this has been championed by charismatic leaders, the board and the post master general, executive management and supported by all staff.

Conclusion

From this research the following conclusions were drawn;

1. With the introduction of performance contracting in the public sector the perception by many - especially in the private sector - has been that of relief in that the public sector was now forced to perform its duties as is required. However, the challenge in the public sector in performance has never been the lack of will but the bureaucracy and political influence the leaders in the organizations face on almost a daily basis.
2. There is a direct relationship between good leadership and performance of an organization. There are clear indications that most business circles are willing to do business with those organizations whose leadership is stable.
3. As a case study, the post office was found to be an established organization with well set- out structures that are reviewed and improved periodically. These are key qualities in good leadership for growth in an organization.
4. The recent performance development contract was implemented in full in the PCK and has seen it move from second from bottom in the 2009/2010 performance rating to a rating of 'very good' standing at number 113 out of 178 listed state corporations in 2010/2011. This is encouraging as well as a note of concern considering the fact that the tenure of the current Post Master General - Maj. Gen. (Rtd) Hussein Ali is due to end in 5 months time and given the trend of turnover of past PMGs the renewal may not be forthcoming more due to political than performance reasons.. If there is a change of leadership yet again – given the elections next year – this progress will regress and the organization will move back to square one.

Recommendations

Casual discussions and interviews with staff and some customers offered various recommendations. Most people are loyal to organizations that have stable leadership. From this research the following recommendations are made;

1. Much as the appointments of state corporation heads is political, this political influence should be to benefit the organization and not for political publicity.
2. Tenures of the heads must be considered on grounds of performance and not political play.
3. Renewal of a contract should be on the basis of performance. There is need for state corporations to emulate successful companies like Barclays Bank – Kenya, who's Managing Director; Adan Mohamed will be in the office for the tenth year this July.

KEYWORDS

PMG   -   POSTMASTER GENERAL

PCK   -   POSTAL CORPORATION OF KENYA

VABE   -   Values, Assumptions, Beliefs, and Expectations

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