

Synthesis of Discussion Topic 7: The influence of your organization on its external environment

Topic discussed from Monday April 12 to Friday July 23, 2010

Introduction to topic:

One of the goal of organizational assessment is to see the extent to which an organization impacts on its external environment. Indeed, the external environment also influence the structure and the management of an organization. Yet, the Reflect & Learn team is curious to discover how the organizations themselves are influencing their external environment.

Topic Question:

How does your organization influence the external environment within which it operates?

Lessons learned from comments received:

The general direction of the comments received indicates that not only does the environment influence their organization, but also, they influence their environment. Organizations are influenced by their environment's social, political, legal, economic, demographic changes. So for example, changes to the tax laws related to providing charitable giving, will (or could) affect those engaged is raising money for tax exempt organizations. Changes in population trends, taste and preferences, political leadership and so forth all have the potential to influence how organizations operate.

Our commentators rightly point out that organizations are not passive entities. Not only are they are affected by environmental changes but they also help create change. This is not a simple or an unimportant issues. Influencing the environment so that it is less hostile or more supportive are important roles for Boards and senior managers to play. In some organizations they have advocacy groups created to influence change.

Regardless of whether your organization is influenced or whether you are influencing—the environment is an important area for Organizational Assessments to analyze.

Comments received:

Submitted by Patrick on Thu, 05/27/2010 - 14:19:

Just as the Organization as a living entity is affected by the environment around it, so it also affects its environment.

Organizations mainly affect their environments through the services that they offer directly and indirectly.

The Organization I belong to, being a faith based organization is involved in many community services which include the following; Health facilities and services, legal support to Women and Children, empowerment to women, the disabled and disadvantaged groups of people.

Through all these areas, the communities are affected positively in the sense that their needs and requirements are met and this has promoted the well being of the people. The case in point is the example of the Church's contribution in the area of health services in Zambia which is almost 40% of the total health services provided to the population.

Education is another critical area where the Church has played a great role. In fact I can safely state that most of the best schools in the sense of everyone wanting to take their children to them are ones that belong to the Church.

The work culture, discipline, Commitment displayed by such Institutions always attract a lot of people to them. A lot of people have therefore a lot of trust and confidence in Church run institutions in this case.

The Church is also known for the advocacy role that it plays as it makes its voice heard on behalf of the many people that are not able to be heard. This has made a lot of people to run to such institutions for help.

Many hospices, Children's homes, physically and mentally challenged people are taken care of by the Church. Everyone in the communities where we are aware of such services.

There has also been a lot of collaboration with the government institutions in many of these services thereby creating partnerships.

Furthermore, with all its institutions, the Church has provided massive employment thereby contributing to the welfare, livelihood and economy of the nation.

This has on one hand given support to the government of the day as it has supplemented to the welfare of the masses.

I am also aware that organizations can also impact negatively on its environment depending on the kind of services offered.

Submitted by Shahzadi Tunio on Tue, 06/01/2010 - 04:00:

Organizations no matter working on small or large scale do have positive or negative impact on the environment depending on their initiatives and vision of their organizational leadership. But the sustainable development organizations have positive impact on the surrounding environment.

Conclusion:

This was the 7th and last topic of our website. Thank you all for your participation and do not hesitate to let us know if you would like to have the discussion area reopened or if you would like to have it replaced by another interactive option: feedback@reflectlearn.org.