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Management in human and societal development: images of organization analysis

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Abstract

The objective of this paper was to examine the management techniques that can be used in an organization by applying Morgan's "images" as it relates to the history of management thought, represented by major schools of thinking (such as scientific management). Also, this paper discusses Microsoft Corporation using four of Morgan's organizational metaphors (organization as a culture, machine, organism, and brain) and how these images can be useful to managers, the consequences of stakeholder relations, and their views of organizations in an environment of sustainability. Main advantages, pitfalls, and possible future research are discussed.

Keywords: Images, organization, culture, machine, organism, brain

Introduction

In today's business environment, for an organization to be successful, managers should be fully responsible for thinking about the plans for designing the work, whereas employees are left with only the task of actual implementation. A scientific management approach reflects the organizational metaphors suggested by Gareth Morgan in his 1986 textbook. The scientific-management approach to management emphasized the development of the directorate solution. Its principles are to be carried out by managers in a particular fashion. The main fundamental implication of scientific management is that managers are solely responsible for increasing an organization's productivity, yielding major consequences for the U.S. economy due to lack of competitive productivity and GNP growth. The major contributors to this school of thought are Frederick Winslow Taylor and Frank and Lillian Gilbreth.

Frederick Taylor first developed the concept of scientific management. Taylor performed exhaustive experiments on worker productivity and tested what he called the "task system," later developed into the Taylor System, and eventually progressing into scientific management. His experiments involved finding the best method to perform each work operation, regarding the time it required, materials needed, and necessary steps. He established a clear division of labor between management and employees. His management methodology depends on a fundamental belief that management, the entrepreneurs in Taylor's day, were not only superior intellectually to the average employee, but had a positive duty to supervise them and organize their work activities to eliminate what Taylor called "the natural tendency of workers to soldier" on the job (Taylor, 1911/1967) ^[9].

In 1911, Taylor presented a paper to the American Society of Mechanical Engineers that was later published as *The Principles of Scientific Management*. Taylor suggested that scientific management was the best management approach to achieve productivity increases. The approach rested on the manager's superior ability and responsibility to apply systematic knowledge to the organizational work setting. Taylor proposed the following four principles of scientific management:

1. The company develops a scientific-management methodology.
2. Managers assume the responsibility for selecting, training, and developing the employee.
3. Managers fully cooperate with the staff to ensure the proper application of the scientific management method.

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4. Managers become involved with the work of their employees as much as possible (Taylor, 1911/1967) [9]. Scientific management involves the art of supervising employees, improving work methods, and providing incentives to employees through the piece-rate system. Although Taylor assumed an unquestioned necessity to supervise employees, he also sought the best way to perform a job as well as to provide financial incentives for increased productivity by paying employees by the piece through the piece-rate system (Taylor, 1911/1967) [9]. Taylor's principles became immensely popular in North America and Europe, providing organizational theory an aura of science (Taylor, 1911/1967) [9].

Background information about Microsoft corporation

The computer giant, Microsoft Corporation, is the largest, successful, well-managed computer software company in the world with over \$108.70 billion in total assets, \$17.37 billion in revenue as at June 2, 2011, recording a 33.01% growth rate from the previous year. Microsoft Corporation was founded in 1975, Microsoft (NASDAQ "MSFT") and is the worldwide leader in software, services, and solutions that help people and businesses realize their full potential. Microsoft markets several products and service, including the Windows operating system, Microsoft Office, video game consoles known as Xbox, Internet access, and interactive television (Yahoo! Finance, 2011) [11].

Despite all these successes, Microsoft continued to expand with solid results driven by strong, broad-based demand; strength in the enterprise annuity business; Office 2010 momentum; Continued cloud momentum led by Office 365 and Xbox LIVE; and double-digit EPS growth. Revenue increased primarily due to strong sales of the 2010 Microsoft Office system and server and tools products. Revenue for the three months ending September 30, 2011, included a favorable foreign currency impact of \$409 million (Yahoo! Finance, 2011) [11].

Microsoft Corporation's headquarters is located at One Microsoft Way, Redmond, Washington. Microsoft currently employees more than 90,000 people worldwide, with over 54,000 in the United States. Currently, William H. Gates III is the Chair of Microsoft Corporation and the founder of the company, whereas Steven A. Ballmer is the Chief Executive Officer of Microsoft Corporation. Table 1 provides employee demographic information.

Table 1: Employment Information

Gender	Employees	Percentage
Male	41,715	76.3
Female	12,972	23.7
Age range ¹		
29 or Under	8,323	15.2
30-39	22,492	41.1
40+	23,872	43.7

Average age: 38.5 years. Source: *Microsoft Corporate Company profile*, by Yahoo! Finance, 2011 [11], retrieved November 17, 2011, from <http://biz.yahoo.com/ic/14/14120.html>

Morgan (1986) [8] proposed eight metaphors, each providing a different way of thinking about and viewing organizations: As a goal-seeking machine with interchangeable parts; as a biological organism that continually adapts to change; as a central brain that can respond to and predict change as a centering on a set of shared values and belief; as a centering

on power and conflict as a means whereby individuals achieve their aspirations or mutual self-interest; as centering on norms of behavior, so the organization is likened to a psychic prison; as flux and transformation; and as an instrument of domination (Morgan, 1986) [8].

The four metaphors that relate to the computer giant Microsoft Corporation are represented in Figure 1.

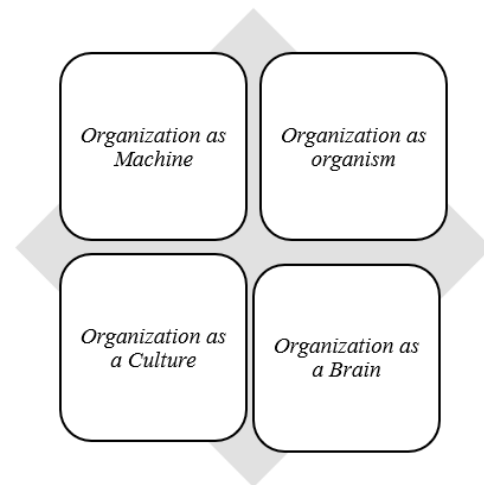


Fig 1: Four metaphors that relate to the computer giant, Microsoft Corporation

Organization as machine

This paper discusses only four of the metaphors as they relate to the computer giant, Microsoft Corporation. The metaphors include organization as machine, organism, brain, and culture, each of which offers a different way to think about an organization. Regarding the organization as a machine, goal setting and goal seeking are key elements that contribute to Microsoft's success. This notion also reflects on their mission statement. Microsoft Corporation developed its work with their employees in mind that reflects Maslow's self-actualization and Morgan's organizational metaphor as a machine. "Their mission and value are to help people and businesses thought the world to realize their full potential" (Microsoft, 2011a) [5]. Microsoft Corporation demonstrates components of a machine through their involvement in innovation, expansion, and excellence (Morgan, 1986) [8]. Microsoft is a well-organized organization, setting up the structure of clearly defined activities that link through clear lines of communication, coordination, and control. Microsoft managers have the responsibility to manage and design jobs other employees must perform, which a clear reflection of a mechanistic approach to management.

In a 2001 Microsoft settled an antitrust decision against them because they monopolized the computer industry such that no other manufacturers could compete against Windows software (Jenkins and Bing, 2011) [3]. Despite the court decision against Microsoft in the antitrust lawsuit, they remain the leader in the industry and a very goal-oriented organization. As a mechanism organization, Microsoft has been very successful in instituting a system of corporate citizenship. They use resources and influence to positively impact the world and its people. Microsoft's Global Citizenship Initiative focuses on mobilizing resources across the company and around the world to create opportunities in the communities where they do business, and to fulfill their

commitment to serving the public good through innovative technologies and partnerships (Microsoft, 2011a) ^[5].

Organization as organism

This common metaphor focuses attention on understanding and managing organizational “needs” and environmental relations (Morgan, 1986) ^[8] from the perspective of a biological organism that continually adapts to change, centered on the biotic aspect on life functions. Microsoft as an entity was able to adjust to the variations in market demand for their products. They were able to adapt to the court decision on antitrust, agreeing to allow competition in software products and reduce their control of the market. Despite the antitrust settlement, Microsoft continued to expand and increase their revenue. All these achievements reflect on their mission statement and value “innovation and responsible leadership” (Microsoft, 2011b) ^[6].

Organization as a brain

The metaphor as a central brain that can respond to and predict change draws attention to the importance of informal learning, processing, understanding, and assessing current organizations in these terms (Basden, 1997; Morgan, 1986) ^[8]. Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft Corporation, exhibits those characteristics of an organization as a brain metaphorically. He is the architect behind the success of Microsoft Corporation. In 1980, Microsoft introduced the Z-80 Soft Card, Steve Ballmer joined the company, and they announce XENIX OS, a portable, UNIX- based operating system for 16-bit microprocessors. All these innovation and developments are a typical example of organizational metaphor as a brain. For Microsoft, 1983 meant the end of an era with the resignation of Paul Allen, the introduction of MS-DOS 2.0, and the formation of Microsoft Press, a trade-book publishing division specializing in computer books (Microsoft, 2011a) ^[5].

Organization as a culture

Viewing an organization as a culture focuses on corporate culture, the way the organization is managed and designed by looking at the values, ideas, beliefs, norms, rituals, and other patterns of shared meaning that guide organizational life (Morgan, 1986, p. 6) ^[8]. For example, all these shared values are commitments Microsoft made to their employees, reflected in their company’s mission statement. Microsoft’s mission and value statement read as follows: “Our Mission: At Microsoft, our mission and values are to help people and businesses throughout the world realize their full potential” (Microsoft, 2011b) ^[6].

Our Values: “As a company, and as individuals, we value integrity, honesty, openness, personal excellence, constructive self-criticism, continual self-improvement, and mutual respect. We are committed to our customers and partners and have a passion for technology. We take on big challenges and pride ourselves on seeing them through. We hold ourselves accountable to our clients, shareholders, partners, and employees by honoring our commitments, providing results, and striving for the highest quality” (Microsoft, 2011b) ^[6].

Microsoft is not the same company it was a decade ago. It is growing so fast that it experienced a 17% increase in hiring during a recent 4-month period. In fact, the Microsoft mission and values statement encompasses all the diversity

at Microsoft Corporation, such as Microsoft Black Employee Resource Group.

As a manager, my understanding of Morgan’s images of organization helps me to see organizations in a new way that reveals new creative possibilities. Images are considered to be the missing link between lay and scientific discourse (McCourt, 1997; Tsoukas, 1989) ^[7, 10]. According to Lambert (2009) ^[4], *images of organization* offers managers and leaders the opportunity to stimulate ideas and potential solutions from every level of their organization.

The images that would be most compatible with a stakeholder view of agencies in an environment of sustainability consciousness is that of the organism because stronger organisms survive while weaker ones get increasingly weaker and disappear. Organisms that fight best survive while others die. Stakeholders may perceive the main consequences of these images as contradictory. Morgan’s (1986) ^[8] work assesses that it contributes to the understanding of organizations, suggesting it is pivotal to view organizations through multiple metaphors and images.

Major advantages

Viewing organizations through images gives managers and leaders the opportunity to develop the ability to interpret situations with different scenarios in mind and to forge actions that seem appropriate to the understanding obtained. Also, it helps managers and leaders become skilled in the art of analyzing the situation they are attempting to organize or manage. Presenting ideas and situations as metaphors helps the receiver develop the opportunity to understand the message being communicated to them, in their terms (Green, 1996) ^[2].

Summary

The use metaphors can be beneficial to practitioners and researchers. Managers and leaders can give clear pictures of how working in an organizational environment is seen in the literature and how they see it. The images managers have about given situation can influence on what they choose to focus their attention. Further research is required in not-for-profit organizations to know which metaphors stakeholders perceive as contradictory, and which they see as overlapping, which may result in the refinement of the original set of eight metaphors identified by Morgan (1986) ^[8].

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