

Reignite Business Performance for Competitive Edge - From Vision to Reality

Executive Summary



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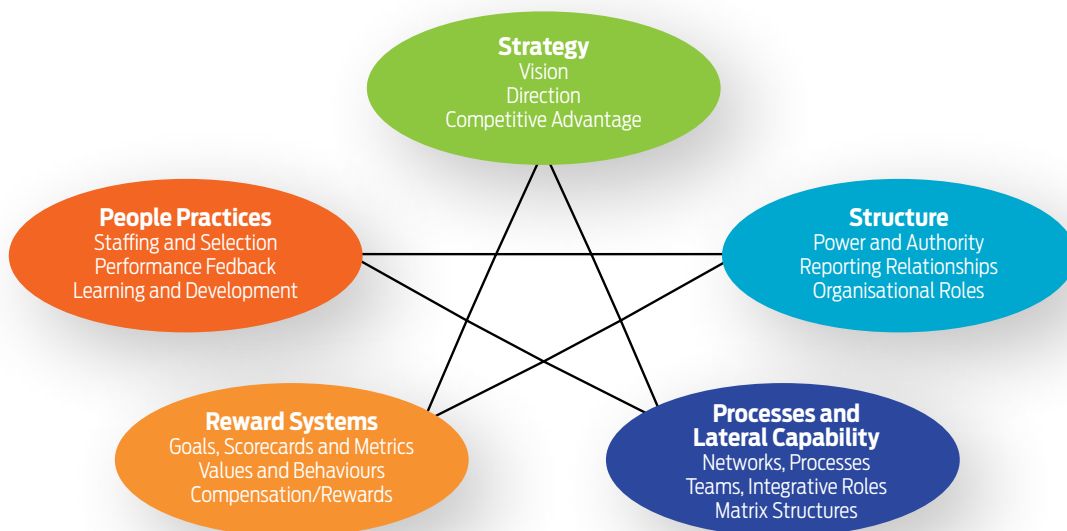
"Some companies fall short of implementing their strategic plan because the strategy doesn't trickle down to all the people who need to support the business"

Paul Swinscoe
Director of Sales and Marketing Europe , Raytheon

Introduction

At the Adam Street Private Members Club in central London, CorporateLeaders, in partnership with Raytheon Professional Services, welcomed 25 senior executives from leading multinational companies to discuss how businesses can ensure that the strategy formed at management level is successfully enacted throughout all layers of the company. As Raytheon's Director of Sales and Marketing Europe Paul Swinscoe pointed out: "Some companies fall short of implementing their strategic plan because the strategy doesn't trickle down to all the people who need to support the business. Companies should therefore train their focus on three key areas: human capital, information capital and organisational capital."

Keynote speaker, Blandine Kouyaté, Head of HR EMEA, Yahoo! not only agreed but also offered a detailed prescription of how to successfully achieve this "trickle down" affect. Using Yahoo!'s own strategy implementation plans as an example, Kouyaté identified five important ways in which her company's HR function contributes to effectively supporting and promoting business objectives.



Strategy

"Yahoo!'s vision is to be the centre of people's lives online. We want to write the most relevant and meaningful content to attract users, and then we want to connect those users to advertisers, which is how we earn revenue," Kouyaté explained.

Yahoo! was founded by two graduate students, Jerry Yang and David Filo, in January 1994 and has since grown into a multi-billion dollar company, employing upwards of 14,000 people worldwide. To achieve its goal to be the preeminent online services and content provider, Yahoo! has been broadening its reach internationally, launching most recently in markets as diverse as Russia, Dubai and South Africa. Much of this growth has been through acquisitions and partnerships, which therefore requires that businesses in all countries align with the worldwide strategy, delivering localised services through a global Yahoo! brand identity.



Structure

Behind its vision, Yahoo! has developed a multi-year strategy for employees to ensure that, no matter where they are located, they are aligned.

Yahoo!'s HR team partners directly with the company's business leaders. One of the primary issues the company has addressed is organisational effectiveness. Initially there were as many as 11 layers of reporting lines between the CEO and the lowest level of sales executives covering European country markets. HR and leaders of the company's various business units conducted a thorough analysis to identify which roles were critical to the success of the company and to surmise how it might be possible to eliminate redundant and/or unnecessary functions. The result of the exercise eventually led to a reduction from 11 lines of reporting to just eight.

Processes and Lateral Capability

HR at Yahoo! also works with its business leaders to support the development of new products and services. When Yahoo! wanted to implement new advertising solutions in Europe that would shift away from brand marketing towards performance marketing, HR created, "from scratch", a new team of 25 executives... within only six months.

"Together with the business leaders we discussed what profiles were needed, if we had the right skills internally and how we could successfully develop those skills. Because we work so closely with the business, we were able to address these issues and build a new team rapidly," explained Kouyaté. "Our close working relationship allows us to engage one another easily and implement plans within a very short period of time to achieve an earlier return on investment."

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Reward Systems

There's no doubt that incentives drive performance, but Yahoo! has explored new ways in which to define successful performance.

"In the past we had incentives based primarily on revenue, which is key of course. But the question was, 'do we also need to examine more qualitative measurements?'"

Yahoo! decided the answer was 'absolutely'. Consequently, the company defined specific rules and targets that help to measure not only how much has been achieved but also how it has been achieved.

"The aim is to make the criteria upon which we assess performance a behavioural reality for every single person within the business," said Kouyaté.



People Practices

"We aspire to grow our advertising leadership and create 'wow' online experiences. Therefore the leaders of our various business units must design goals aligned with this objective and then translate those goals into specific performance metrics. This way we can visualise a clear line between what the company wants to achieve and how on an individual level we can achieve it," explained Kouyaté.

Yahoo! organises leadership workshops to help clarify goals and align practices across the company. "This is challenging if you imagine that within my region we have more than 1500 employees spread over 16 countries. One-third of those people report directly to the regional leader and the remaining two-thirds report to global functions," stated Kouyaté. "Within this fluid matrix environment, the business must ensure that all stakeholders, no matter to whom they report, stay engaged and stay moving in the same direction."

Recognising that leadership starts from the top, Yahoo!'s CEO Carol Bartz is very much involved in transforming the company's culture and behaviour so that it's in sync with the five-prong approach outlined by Kouyaté. This includes ensuring that there are transparent and effective mechanisms that allow for the easy identification and rewarding of appropriate behaviours, and encouraging clear and open lines of communication amongst managers, and between managers and their reports.

Before concluding Kouyaté also made crystal clear that while leadership may start at the top, it should not remain only there: "When we talk about leaders in Yahoo!, we are not just talking about managers. We believe leadership qualities must be exhibited by all of us. Just because I may not have a team that reports to me doesn't mean that I shouldn't act as a leader.

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Blandine Kouyaté's Food for Thought:

1. If the STRATEGY is missing, unclear, or not agreed upon, the result will be CONFUSION
2. If the STRUCTURE isn't aligned to the strategy, the result will be FRICTION
3. If the development of coordinating mechanisms and PROCESSES is left to chance, the result will be GRIDLOCK
4. If the metrics and REWARDS don't support the goals, the result will be INTERNAL COMPETITION
5. If PEOPLE aren't enabled and empowered, the result will be LOW PERFORMANCE

How would you characterise the results of your company's strategic plans?

Blandine Kouyaté joined Yahoo! in 2002 as HR Manager, France, then gained responsibility for the HR department in Southern Europe in 2006. Throughout that period, she focussed on integrating several businesses with significant employee populations, while implementing a scalable HR function and supporting cultural transformation within the region.

In 2008, Kouyaté partnered with the VP Sales Europe as an HR Director. In this role, she drove HR strategies aligned with both the business needs and talent aspirations of the unit. In 2010, her scope was extended to support additional regional units (Partnerships, Audience and Marketplaces).

Since June 2010, Kouyaté has been acting as the interim Head of HR for Yahoo! in charge of the EMEA HR function, including 25 direct team members who support a population of over 1700 employees based in 19 countries.

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