

Chapter 3

Workforce Management Practices in Volunteer–Based Operations for the Generation of Social and Economic Value

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, hybrid organizations have been spreading in the competitive landscape, combining characteristics from both private and social sectors. To be successful, they need to do a great job managing limited resources. To this end, an effective operations strategy must be at the core of their priorities. Most of these organizations often rely on volunteer work to conduct their activities; therefore, mobilizing and engaging volunteers on a continuous basis is a key issue for many hybrid organizations. The present chapter aims to identify relevant workforce management practices in hybrid organizations. Building on the literature, the chapter offers a presentation of the main concepts underlying the setup of an operations strategy, highlighting the main particularities and challenges faced by hybrid organizations, and focusing on workforce management decisions. The chapter then identifies and discusses three workforce management practices employed by two hybrid organizations, whose operations are based on volunteer work.

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INTRODUCTION

Operations strategy is a main topic within operations management field. According to an extensive literature review of survey research articles published between 1980 and 2000 in operations management conducted by Rungtusanatham, Choi, Hollingworth, Wu, & Forza (2003), operations strategy emerges as one of the most addressed topics. An operations strategy is made of a set of decisions regarding aspects such as the production process technology, the degree of vertical integration, as well as elements related to the facilities and plant location, planning and control systems, organizational structure, workforce management or quality management (Díaz Garrido, Martín-Peña, & García-Muiña, 2007; Espino-Rodriguez & Gil-Padilla, 2014). These decisions represent how the organization uses its resources and technologies to reach a sustainable competitive advantage in the sector (Lowson, 2002) and achieve the expected performance (Espino-Rodriguez & Gil-Padilla, 2014; Martín-Peña & Díaz-Garrido, 2008).

In the last years, there was a diversification of the existing organizational models and a spread of hybrid organizations in the competitive landscape (Walker, 2015). Hybrid organizations usually combine characteristics from both private and social sectors (Ebrahim, Battilana, & Mair, 2014; Pache & Santos, 2012), although there are some authors arguing they may also incorporate characteristics from the public sector or the civil society (e.g., Doherty, Haugh, & Lyon, 2014). Hybrid forms are attracting a growing interest from academics and practitioners (Doherty et al., 2014). Their emergence has been explained in a great extent by the economic crisis that has spread in the last years especially over some European countries, and that has resulted in substantial shortenings in the financial support provided by the State to non-for-profit organizations. Thus, the financial sustainability of such organizations is put at risk, forcing them to find alternative ways to fund their activities and keep pursuing their mission (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Smith et al., 2013). Social enterprises are also an example of hybrid organization, combining since their inception social and economic concerns in the same extent. Along the chapter will be used the term “hybrid organization” as it covers a wide range of organizations.

Hybrid organizations face many challenges. For instance, the separation between commercial and social activities may lead to a higher risk of mission drift (Ebrahim et al., 2014; Santos, Pache, & Birkholz, 2015) as well as to some ambidexterity in the field of operations management, depending on the level of integration of both types of activities. Examples of potential operational challenges include the need to deliver products or services to actors with different requirements and expectations about the organization (i.e., beneficiaries from social activities vs. customers for the commercial activities) as well as the need to effectively manage human resources

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