Chapter 3
Seeing Business Strategies

ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on business strategies and reminds the reader that strategy is an important leverage point. We need a good inventory of our business strategies before we can align and shape cultures. Strategies at all levels of the organization are essential – not just those at the top or leadership level. We need to understand our strategies across all functions and the strategies of individuals. It is essential to see and understand all of the forms that a strategy might take, including those that are well-formed, documented, and published; and those that are hidden, false, learned, or only partially developed. Aligning culture with poor strategies will not prevent strategies from failing. In the knowledge economy, business strategies should be assessed in terms of their treatment of information assets.

WHY WE CARE ABOUT STRATEGY

Strategies and the strategic planning process is an essential point of leverage for ensuring that our business and information cultures support our business goals. In order to leverage strategies, we need to know how we define a strategy, what kinds of strategies we have, how to find them, and see them across the organization. The word – strategy – is an essential and frequently used term. People use the word strategy to refer to a formal statement, a planning or management process, or a general agenda or a business approach. Most organizations have a rich repertoire of strategies – some formal and explicit, some informal and tacit, and others invisible but understood.

"Seeing" strategies in this way reminds us that culture and strategy play out at all of the same levels. Strategy and culture must align and support one another at all three levels – the organization, the unit or team, and the individual. A risk exists at every level. Addressing risk at only one level will not have a sustainable effect.

Figure 1. Business strategies in the framework

The challenge of designing a good fit is more complicated than merely ensuring that the top-level organization strategy and cultures align. Additionally, it is essential to understand and "see" the organization's business strategies at all three levels because we cannot assume that all strategies and all cultures will be in harmony. If we assume that all strategic planning and strategy translation is harmonized, and design a fit to the culture from that assumption, there may be unforeseen conflicts and risks.

We cannot assume that only those explicit documents that are labeled as strategies are the only ones driving our organizations forward. We cannot assume that only those strategies that are created by senior leaders – at the enterprise level – are the essential strategies. Strategies exist at every level of the organization. A strategy is such a standard management method – we

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