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Enscaling the mission statement as a procedure for organisational diagnosis

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In this article a description is given of how an organisation's mission statement was used as the first step of an organisational improvement intervention. From the mission statement a thirteen-item scale and twenty open-ended questions were developed. The scale was applied to a stratified sample of 664 employees while the questions were used in 107 focus groups. When the mission statement scale scores were analysed, significant differences were found which reflected varying perceptions between organisational levels and divisions of the extent to which the core values of the mission statement were being enacted. Through a content analysis of the focus group responses, majority themes were identified, which shed light on the origins of the different perceptions. In this way, substantive data, of use to the organisation, were obtained. The findings were submitted to the company's directors, to all managers, and to all shop stewards, in the form of a verbal presentation, which was videotaped, and a comprehensive written report. A summary report was made available to all survey participants. The video was shown on request. Lastly, working sessions were held with each divisional director and his executive team, whereafter various divisional task forces were established to follow through on the findings of the survey. Some of the broader trends have also been related to published research literature. This method of mission statement analysis holds promise as a diagnostic technique for organisational development.

In hierdie artikel word beskryf hoedat 'n organisasie se missiestelling gebruik is om inligting vir beplannings-doeleindes te verkry. Uit die missiestelling is 'n skaal met dertien items asook twintig ongestruktureerde vrae ontwikkel. Die skaal is op 664 werknemers toegepas en die vrae is by 107 fokusgroepe gebruik. By ontleding van die skaaltellings is beduidende verskille gevind tussen vlakke, sowel as tussen afdelings in die organisasie, wat uiteenlopende persepsies aandui ten opsigte van die mate waartoe die kernwaardes van die missiestelling in werklikheid uitgeleef word. 'n Inhoudsontleding van die fokusgroepresponse, waardeur verskillende temas ge-identifiseer kon word, kon lig werp op die verskillende persepsies wat gegee is. Langs hierdie weë is substantiewe data wat van nut vir die organisasie was, uitgelig. Bevindinge is in die vorm van 'n omvattende verslag, toegelig deur 'n voordrag wat op videoband opgeneem is, aan die direkteure, alle bestuurders, en aan vakunieverteenwoordigers oorgedra. 'n Verkorte opsomming is ook aan almal wat aan die ondersoek deelgeneem het, beskikbaar gestel. Die video is op versoek hervertoon. Ten slotte is 'n werksessie met elke afdelingsdirekteur en sy bestuurspan gehou, waarna verskillende taakgroepe aangewys is om probleemareas aan te spreek. Sommige van die breë neiginge is ook in verband gebring met gepubliseerde navorsingsliteratuur. Hierdie metode van missiestellingontleding hou belofte in as diagnostiese benadering met die oog op organisasieontwikkeling.

Introduction

In its mission statement, an organisation typically clarifies and operationalises its basic mission, its reason for being, (David, 1989: 90), against the philosophies, values, and assumptions which it purports to follow in most of its activities. The preparation of a mission statement is generally acknowledged to be an important first step in the strategic management process (Cochran, David, & Gibson, 1985: 4; Byars and Neil, 1987: 32; David and Cochran, 1987: 59). Pearce (1982: 15) suggests that a mission statement should address eight important issues: target customers or markets, basic products or services, primary location, principal technology, concern for survival, growth and profitability, company philosophy, company self-concept and concern for public image. David, Cochran, Pearce and Gibson (1985: 11) add three further criteria — the ability to inspire, the extent to which it is reconciliatory toward the organisation's diverse stakeholders, and readability.

Some research into the nature and value of mission statements has been reported. Pearce and David (1987: 112) found that higher performing firms had more comprehensive mission statements, which more often included the components suggested in the literature. Philosophy, self concept, and public image emerged as especially important. A study by David (1989: 92) revealed the nine components

included in the mission statements of 75 large companies, and showed mission statement profiles of manufacturing and service firms. Boshoff and Du Plessis (1989: 532–537) reviewed and discussed the mission statements of selected, listed South African companies.

Per definition, a mission statement is a forward-looking, visionary document. However, to determine whether its espoused policies have been operationalised, an organisation would from time to time need to look backwards for indications of the extent to which its core values are being practiced in its corridors and on its shop floor. In this paper is described how one organisation attempted to determine whether the values espoused in its mission statement were in fact being operationalised. Using the mission statement itself as the main data gathering instrument, employee perceptions regarding its enactment were obtained and analysed. The data gathered in this manner was fed back to the organisation and used by them for organisational development purposes. As this is a long-term project, only the data collection aspect and findings are reported at this stage.

Client organisation

David and Cochran (1987: 59) believe that a mission statement should distinguish a particular organisation from all others and should serve as a framework for evaluating both current and prospective activities. The client company's

mission statement (Figure 1) had been designed three years earlier to reflect its objectives, culture, and the societal values which it represented. These were based on elements of the Peters and Waterman (1982: 119–325) 'Excellence' paradigm, and on the company's belief in a post-apartheid, non-racial society. Its industrial relations policies were progressive and pluralist, while advancement policies stressed equal opportunity. The company, located in a major industrial area, was active in community affairs with a view to improving quality of life, encouraging self-help rather than handouts. There were 22 quality circles operating, involving about 2% of the labour force.

The mission statement had been made known to line managers down to the level of foreman by facilitators from the Human Resources division through mission statement workshops. Foremen were thereafter expected to continue this information process by taking the mission statement and its core values of quality, service, trust and respect, down to the shop-floor workers reporting to them.

In 1989, three years after this exercise had been started, the company wished to take stock of its progress.

To this effect, the author was requested to undertake a survey of the organisation, to elicit employee perceptions of the extent to which the mission statement was being enacted. This information would subsequently be used as a basis for decision-making.

Research method

In this section, the way in which the mission statement was employed as a basis for gathering data from the client organisation is described.

The study was conducted in three phases over a nine-month period using diagnostic methodology, which Alderfer (1980: 459) defines as a process for publicly entering a system, collecting valid data about the system, and feeding that data back to promote increased understanding of the system by its members.

During Phase I, entry meetings were held with executives to discuss and finalize the study. A fourteen-person steering committee representing all the divisions of the organisation was formed. It was designed to allow the researcher interaction with a cross section of employees and to encourage organisational support. During the first meeting, the study was introduced, and the role of the steering committee was clarified.

Phase II consisted of 'empathic' questionnaire development (Alderfer & Brown 1977: 456), in which an attitude scale and a set of questions for focus group discussion were derived from the mission statement. Both procedures were approved by the steering committee.

Phase III included questionnaire administration to the sample, group discussions, then analysis, and written and oral feedback. A comprehensive written report was provided to each member of the board of management, to each manager in the organisation, and to union stewards. Verbal presentations were made to all managers, and to all union officials. The steering committee attended the management feedback session, which was video-taped and made available to every employee. Feedback sessions were conducted

Our purpose

XYZ is striving for an image in the South African market of an organisation which delivers outstanding product quality and customer service, with people well motivated and trained to serve the customer.

We are committed to equality of opportunity and the development of our people to their full potential, the development of local industry and the community with a view to the uplifting of living standards.

In pursuing these goals we aim to make a return on investment which will result in a viable company over the long term and the optimisation of the interest of our parent company.

Our goals

Maintain a leading position in the South African XYZ industry.

Make the best quality XYZ in every sector of the market in which we compete.

Achieve a customer satisfaction level that becomes a benchmark in the industry.

Motivate all people in the XYZ family by promoting a feeling of belonging and striving for goals that are recognised as rewarding and worthwhile.

Our values

Exceptional quality in our product and in what we do.

Providing outstanding customer service at all times.

Developing a feeling of trust and respect for the individual amongst all who work at XYZ.

Figure 1   XYZ of South Africa (Pty.) Ltd. — Mission statement

with each divisional head and his management team. A twenty page summary was made available to every participant in the study.

Phase IV, in which division heads acted on aspects relevant to their divisions, while the board of management addressed issues of corporate significance, was the last phase, but falls beyond the scope of this paper.

Data gathering

Sample

This research is based on data collected from a random sample of employees in the manufacturing organisation in which the author had been asked to evaluate employee perceptions of its mission statement. The sample, which was stratified by organisational level and by division to ensure that levels and divisions would be represented proportionately, comprised 226 blue-collar workers, 11 shop stewards, 170 staff employees, 113 foremen, 90 superintendents, 44 managers, and 10 senior managers, a total of 664 employees (8% of the work force).

Sample size was affected by factors of cost and practicability. While the overall sample is adequate in terms of the guidelines for sample size offered by Zemke and Kramlinger (1985: 161), the size of the subcategories does not always meet these stringent criteria. The aspect of stratification was however satisfactorily ensured.

Procedure

Data were gathered through focus groups and the questionnaire. Focus groups were used in addition to the questionnaire because of their potential to add significantly to the structured scale responses (Kamfer, 1989: 8,11). Both procedures were intended to obtain employees' perceptions into various aspects of their company's mission statement. Both were applied on company premises and in company time. Groups contained employees from the same organisational level only.

At each session, the group discussion was conducted first. Twenty open-ended questions derived from the company's mission statement were shown by overhead projection and discussed. Responses were taken down in writing by the researcher, and updated immediately after each discussion. Discussions typically lasted sixty minutes. The author, who acted as facilitator and recorder, started each session by introducing himself. Participants were welcomed and thanked for their presence. The objectives of the study and of the focus group discussion were explained. Personal confidentiality was guaranteed and permission requested to take down what was said. This was always obtained.

The facilitator led the discussion in terms of the guidelines suggested for focus groups (Kamfer, 1989: 8). The questions used were of the following type: (a) What is your reaction to the news of this survey? (b) Can you tell me what this company's core values are? (c) Do you believe that this company strives for exceptional quality in its product and in whatever it does? (d) Does this company achieve its quality goals? (e) Do you believe that this company tries to provide outstanding customer service at all times? (f) Do you feel that you are treated with trust and respect? (g) Are these core values the correct ones for a company like this one? (h) Is there anything else that you would like the Board of Management to hear about? (i) How useful do you expect the survey to be? In all, twenty questions relating to the mission statement were used. Focus groups were conducted in English and Afrikaans.

At the conclusion of each discussion, participants completed a 13-item questionnaire designed to measure employee perceptions of the extent to which core values were being striven for. The questionnaire actually was the company's mission statement rewritten into the following 13 attitude scale items: (a) This company always strives for exceptional quality in its products and in what it does. (b) This company tries to provide outstanding customer service at all times. (c) This company always tries to develop a feeling of trust and respect for the individual. (d) This company always treats every employee with trust and respect. (e) My boss treats all his people as prescribed by the company's core values. (f) In the department where I work, we all try to follow our core values. (g) I always feel motivated to work for the company's goals. (h) This company really is an equal opportunity employer. (i) This company tries to develop all employees to their full potential. (j) This company offers equal opportunities to all its employees. (k) This company advances people on merit regardless of race, sex, creed or colour. (l) This company is

serious about improving the living standards of the communities from which its employees are drawn. (m) I feel that I belong in this company.

Items were all presented in five-point, Likert-scale format. The sum of the item credits represented the individual's score on the scale. The scoring system was so designed that a higher score would indicate a more positive, and a lower score a more negative perception of the extent to which the company's mission statement was being enacted.

After a pilot study to test the procedures, 107 sessions were conducted over a period of two months. The average number of workers attending a session was five. Questionnaires were completed anonymously, each questionnaire providing data on organisational level and division only. Afrikaans and Xhosa versions had been prepared and checked through independent reverse translation. These were always offered to groups and used when requested. Prior to commencing the study, the approval and support of both the unions represented in the company had been obtained. There were no queries as to the legitimacy of the procedures, and all participants appeared to co-operate readily.

Analyses performed

Focus group responses Focus group scripts were typed, then content analysed, using the principles for content analysis as outlined by Crano & Brewer (1986: 257–277) as guidelines. The coding unit was the theme or themes contained in each contribution. Only themes reflected in 50% or more of the responses were recorded.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was item analysed. Each item was correlated with the scale score minus that item. All items showed positive and significant correlations. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach's alpha. A satisfactory internal consistency coefficient of 0,83 was obtained. Questionnaire means and standard deviations were calculated for the seven levels of the organisation, and for the eight divisions. Means were compared by one-way analysis of variance and multiple t-tests.

Findings

Questionnaire

Perceptions of the mission statement are represented by respondents' total scores on the mission statement scale, which are made up of the sum of the scores of the thirteen scale items. In Table 1, the scale means are shown for the seven organisational levels across the eight divisions upon which they were applied.

It can be seen that various statistically significant differences existed in perceptions across levels and between divisions. Within divisions, no common trend was found. In two divisions (Finance and Quality Assurance) there were no differences between levels. In Product Engineering, Information Services, and Marketing, manager perceptions were higher than two or three of the levels below them. In three divisions (Technical, Human Resources and Supply),

Table 1 Mission statement scale scores by level and division

	n	Marketing (a) n=64	Finance (b) n=38	Technical (c) n=277	Quality Assurance (d) n=93	Human Relations (e) n=23	Product Engineering (f) n=68	Supply (g) n=61	Information Services (h) n=40	Total (i) 664	Significant differences between divisions
1. Division head	10	3,92	—	3,74	—	—	—	—	—	3,87	a,d*
2. Manager	44	4,20	3,39	3,82	3,42	—	4,27	4,19	3,80	3,77	a,b* g,b*
3. Supervisor/ Superintendent	90	3,15	3,90	3,46	3,32	3,41	3,43	3,69	3,56	3,44	a,b**
4. Foreman	113	3,90	—	3,86	3,10	—	4,23	3,47	—	3,62	c,d** f,d*
5. Shop steward	11	—	—	3,20	—	—	—	—	—	3,20	
6. Staff	170	3,28	3,65	3,16	3,28	4,07	3,09	3,36	3,36	3,36	c,e**b,f**g,e** a,e**d,e** b,c**f,e**h,e**
7. Hourly paid	226	3,55	—	3,80	3,41	—	3,13	3,86	2,94	3,58	a,h* c,h** d,d**f,g** c,f**g,h** b,f* c,h* e,f**g,h*
8. Total	664	3,48	3,64	3,66	3,33	3,83	3,23	3,66	3,29	3,52	c,d**d,e* e,h* c,f**d,g* f,g**
Significant differences between levels		3,2** 6,2*		4,3* 6,2* 6,4** 5,2* 5,4** 7,3* 7,5**		6,3**	6,4* 6,2* 7,2*	7,6*	7,2*	7,6** 2,6** 2,3** 2,5**	

* p < 0,05

** p < 0,01

the trend of more positive perceptions at the higher level was not always found.

Between divisions, differences among employees at the same level emerged, as well as differences between divisions overall. Human Resources employees had more favourable perceptions than those in Quality Assurance, Product Engineering, and Information Services, for example.

Focus groups

Five questions from the focus groups, dealing specifically with recall of and beliefs regarding enactment of the three core values, and which could be analysed numerically, are reported in Tables 2 and 3. The chi-square statistic was used to determine the significances of the differences between the groups. The critical values of chi-square for Table 2 are 15.09 (p 0.01) and 11.07 (p 0.05), for five degrees of freedom, and for Table 3, 18.48 (p 0.01) and 14.07 (p 0.05), for seven degrees of freedom.

It can be seen that levels as well as divisions differed in their recall of the core values. Quality was recalled best, then service, with the poorest recall for trust and respect. When told what the core values were, most respondents be-

lieved that quality and customer service were striven for and largely achieved. Table 2 also shows that employees at all the levels of the organisation were in agreement that the core values of quality and service excellence were being striven for. Differences existed between organisational levels as well as between functional divisions on all other aspects. For example, the fact that employees directly involved in the production process were least aware of the quality emphasis, and that some employees directly involved in the marketing of the product were largely unaware of the service core value, were important findings. Perceptions regarding the enactment of the core value trust and respect were markedly less positive.

Content analysis

From the content analysis, themes reflecting employee perceptions of the mission statement were extracted. An arbitrary cut-off of endorsement by 50% of the respondents was applied to ensure that only themes which represented a majority view would be reported. Ten such majority themes are presented as subheadings and illustrated by means of one or two expressive quotations selected from the focus groups responses.

Table 2   Recall and perceptions of core values by level

	n	% Correctly recalling core values			% Believing quality is really striven for		% Believing product quality is achieved	% Believing service excellence is really striven for		% Believing trust and respect are really striven for
		Core value quality %	Core value customer service %	Core value trust & respect %	In product %	In whatever the company does %	Quality in product %	Service externally %	Service internally %	Trust & respect %
Managers	44	67	74	26	90	81	40	93	57	45
Superintendents and supervisors	90	67	64	29	95	53	57	90	33	34
Staff employees	170	53	42	24	97	56	77	93	45	41
Foreman	113	59	41	12	99	87	47	94	48	38
Shop stewards	11	73	27	33	93	64	77	100	40	40
Hourly paid employees	226	36	15	7	95	82	70	92	64	52
Total sample	654	59	44	22	95	70	61	94	48	42
Chi-square value		38.97	105.25	37.28	7.78	62.58	43.03	2.13	31.34	11.99
Significance, 5 DF		**	**	**		**	**		**	*

* p < 0,05

** p < 0,01

Table 3   Recall and perceptions of core values by division

	n	% Correctly recalling core values			% Believing quality is really striven for		% Believing product quality is achieved	% Believing service excellence is really striven for		% Believing trust and respect are really striven for
		Core value quality %	Core value customer service %	Core value trust & respect %	In product %	In whatever the company does %	Quality in product %	Service externally %	Service internally %	Trust & respect %
Marketing	64	34	39	15	90	56	70	91	59	60
Finance	38	66	73	13	100	82	23	100	25	47
Technical	245	47	26	10	88	85	65	90	48	40
Quality assurance	93	76	53	30	92	74	50	96	48	31
Human resources	23	84	59	74	100	76	80	100	75	60
Product engineering	68	63	35	13	92	57	46	80	40	39
Supply	61	26	21	6	95	68	80	90	40	41
Information services	40	73	42	19	100	57	80	100	55	39
Total sample	632	59	44	22	95	70	61	93	48	44
Chi-square value		69.97	56.96	79.33	14.84	42.93	56.47	24.82	21.78	16.86
Significance, 7 DF		**	**	**	*	**	**	**	**	*

* p < 0,05

** p < 0,01

Acceptance of the core values as relevant and applicable. Employees accepted the core values in the mission statement as valid for the organisation. It was felt that if these were actualised, no others were required. A typical quotation indicating this sentiment follows: 'Yes, they are appropriate. They are not unique to us, but relevant to every type of company in a free market system — therefore to us also. The mission statement emphasises them, that's all'.

Provides workers with a wider perspective. In a company

where production tasks had been fragmentised, the mission statement provided individual workers with a perspective beyond their jobs. This could benefit workers' job attitudes. Two quotations which represent this view are given: 'Do we achieve quality for the product? Yes. In everything that we do? No. Because people in a department do not understand the bigger picture'. 'That we have a mission statement to which we are sticking — showing the big adventure for which we are going.'

This refuted a minority view which implied that shop-floor workers did not need a perspective beyond their immediate job: 'People down there need to do the job, they don't need mission statement stuff if they know what they have to do.'

Impact on organisational behaviour. The view was expressed that the mission statement had impacted on employees' behaviour. 'Core values have led to an improvement in communication in our division.' 'I know that the mission statement is referred to in meetings.' However, regular reinforcement was believed desirable. 'Many of us have been on a core values workshop, but we need more meetings to discuss the mission statement and its impact on our actions in our daily job.'

It was also believed that the mission statement could be used to remind people of their responsibility for enacting them. 'Core values can be used as tools to alert people to their actions if these are not up to standards of excellence.'

Enhancing commitment. Acceptance of the mission statement had a powerful effect on the commitment of individuals who identified with the values of the organisation. 'I've never been happier in any place before, because I can identify with the company's stance on value issues.' 'The positive orientation the company has adopted: Its progressive, political approach — post-apartheid society. I can identify with that.'

Difficulties in measuring. Employees recognised that core value enactment was difficult to measure. 'Core values are intangibles. Actions have to speak to show whether they are being used.' Aspects which could be measured, were likely to be emphasised beyond ones more difficult to measure — the human values of trust and respect being the typical example given. 'How are the "immeasurables" of the people value and its applications measured? Because it is hard to measure, it is less respected and less acted out in reality. Measurability impresses people, provides authority, which this subjective discipline lacks. People values, as in the mission statement, need to be concretised and achievement against the people values also measured.' 'The measurable ones are addressed: quality and customer service, but we fall short on the less quantitative ones like motivation etc.'

Equating core values with being soft. Human resources staff felt that trust and respect were simplistically equated with making concessions. When this did not always happen, there was a perception that trust and respect were being violated. 'When people don't get *carte blanche* they think the core values are not being applied.' 'People misuse the "trust" and "respect" core value in dealing with us in

Human Resources division. If you have to say no, they say "Where is your trust and respect?" We are expected to be do-gooders and yes-sayers. The idea of having to be firm is misunderstood.'

Difficulty in verbalizing the human values. The human values in the mission statement were found to be hard to verbalise and operationalise. 'It is difficult to answer whether we achieve trust and respect. They are such vague terms and not clearly defined. Does it mean whether they recognise you as a person or what? Nothing tangible about it.' 'We will have to re-word the trust and respect value. We have to rephrase to say what we mean, so all can understand, and be able to use it as something to push for.'

Focus of attention on core values. The mission statement drew employees' attention to the procedural and value commitments it contained. Corporate or individual actions were commonly related to relevant aspects of the mission statement. Six such instances were indicated.

Equal opportunity: 'Personnel have to hire so many per race. Some reverse discrimination does occur but perhaps with good reason'. 'Their thinking is good — post-apartheid society statements impressed me during my induction, but management must be educated to practise equal opportunity; to counter the daily discriminatory influences from outside.'

Quality goals were also underlined in this way. 'In the old days, we used to go for quantity. Now we go for quality. The mission statement has helped in re-establishing our concern for quality.'

The company's industrial relations stance also reflected its philosophy. 'Our ideological stance on industrial relations is more honourable and progressive than that of our competitors.' 'We are light years ahead of other companies in the way we handle our labour relations problems. Over the long term we are better situated. One day we will reap the benefits while others erupt.'

A sensitivity to corporate culture was another consequence of the mission statement. 'It could also be that they want to see if there has been any change of attitude towards the company and management. We had a bad slump some years ago. Then they introduced the new mission statement, in an attempt to solve the old problems. Now perhaps they want to see if anything has happened regarding the attitudes and the loyalty of staff.'

Improvements regarding the company's service core value, as experienced inside the organisation, also drew comment. 'Internally the service awareness is improving. People are aware of the service requirement. They feel guilty if not providing it.' 'The core values have introduced something like a constitution to which you can refer and get things done, if they are not done.'

Lastly, it was reported that the corporate mission statement had led to the development of similar statements at divisional level. Where this had not occurred, the need for such an exercise was felt. In the following example the Human Resources division expressed their needs for an own vision. 'We don't succeed in getting to grips with the nuts and bolts of the core value which is especially pertinent to us as human resources professionals. Our vision of our own

responsibilities and visions of our core value (the people value in the mission statement), have not been spelled out clearly in our own minds.' 'We must have a vision of our own, which we don't have. How do we translate our people values into behavioural guidelines for ourselves and for others?'

Formulation, communication, and acceptance. Interesting debate was heard as to where the mission statement should be formulated for best acceptance by all employees. In this case, it had been done at the top, then passed down to all levels above that of shop-floor worker through so-called core value workshops. Because of the size of the workforce, workers were supposed to have been informed by their foremen. This had not always happened. When asked about the mission statement, workers who had not been told about it, were resentful. A group of six hourly-paid workers reacted very forcibly to questions about the mission statement: 'How can you ask us to respond to the mission statement when we have no idea what that is? Because it has never been defined for us? We don't know what it means. How can we react to something you think we know but do not?'. 'It is very unpleasant to be in a position where you were not told this important thing. No-one ever tells us about a mission statement. We are just hands that are put to work. There were no workshops whereby it was conveyed to us. We were just "employed". We should have an opportunity to discuss the important things that need to be done to achieve the goals. We are just told "do this", without knowing any more. How can we be building quality?'

A problem which has to be overcome whenever a mission statement is formulated by the strategic apex is that of communication, but more importantly, ownership or inclusion at the lower levels. 'Most people don't know the mission statement. Senior management has it in mind clearly, the other ranks know and feel less about it. We don't feel included in it. It loses momentum as it goes down the organisation.'

Sanctions in the case of violations. Core values should be practised by all. Employees mentioned the need for some kind of sanction against others, especially seniors, who were seen to violate the core values. 'Managers who violate the core values are not disciplined.' 'Managers are not measured by division heads and senior managers on how they achieve the human core values.'

Conclusions and discussion

The procedures followed in this study provided substantive information that was of considerable significance for the client organisation. So, for example, it was shown that, of the three core values in the mission statement, employees recalled quality the most often, followed by customer service, then trust and respect. There were differences between levels and between divisions, indicating that the mission statement workshops had not been uniformly effective. Few hourly-paid workers appeared to know what the core values were, showing that the system whereby foremen were expected to pass on the mission statement to the people reporting to them had not been successful. Divisionally,

Human Resources employees were most familiar with the core values, followed by Quality Assurance and Finance. Supply, Technical Division, and Marketing employees were the least familiar.

The study showed that the great majority of employees sampled by level and division believed that the company did actually strive for quality, while two-thirds believed that these quality objectives were also achieved. All believed that excellent customer service was striven for externally, but fewer thought that the company's internal service orientation was as good. Less than half the respondents believed that trust and respect were practised. Superintendents, staff and foremen had the lowest perceptions of the various levels, while Quality Assurance, Product Engineering, and Information Services were the divisions with the poorest perceptions.

The core values contained in the mission statement were generally accepted as relevant. Employees who had not yet been made familiar with the mission statement were resentful of their exclusion. The mission statement was found to perform various functions. It was reported as providing a wider perspective, enhancing the commitment of those employees who identified with its core values, and impacting on organisational behaviour in numerous ways. The human core value was experienced as difficult to operationalise and to measure. It was often misinterpreted as implying softness.

The study also bears out relevant trends reported in recent research literature. So, for instance, Berger and Cummings (1979: 201) have shown that organisational level and workplace attitudes are positively associated. Ford and Noe (1987: 45–49) showed how level and function were related to organisational perceptions. Kossek (1989: 273–275) showed that level and function affected reaction to various company programmes. The findings of this study did not support any linear relationship between organisational level or function and favourableness of perception. In this instance, an unexpected negative view was found at what could be described as middle management level. The particular differences found were of considerable interest to the client company. As a reflection of current perceptions, the information obtained through this mission statement analysis was important for the further development of the organisation.

The findings of this study also have wider relevance. The technique of enscaling the mission statement, and of using it as a basis for focus group discussion, thereby combining structured and open-ended approaches, represents a contribution to research method in this area of application. Lastly, three functions which the mission statement was found to fulfil for organisation members, namely providing a wider perspective, enhancing commitment, and affecting behaviour, supplement the literature on the nature and value of mission statements.

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