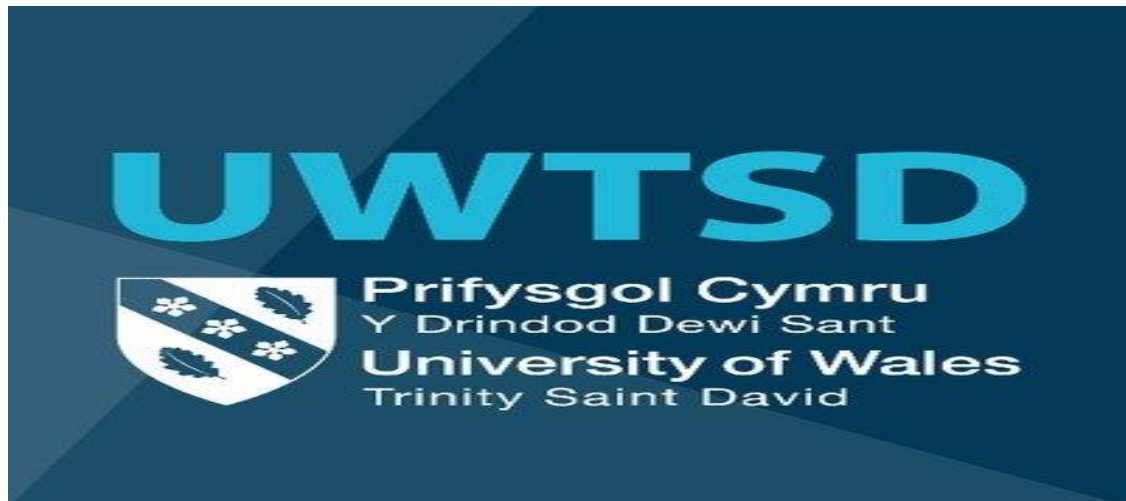




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Module Title: Developing Workplace Critical Thinking

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Executive Summary

The assignment is based on the 'Developing Workplace Critical Thinking at the Workplace' in which an analysis and critical discussion have been performed on the belief, value and attitude system in Unilever, one of the leading multinational companies dealing with consumer goods. This assignment has been prepared by a person working in a HR advisory role of Unilever UK. Unilever has its own belief in its ability to contribute to the world for making it liveable or the future. Based on its belief and objectives, the company's core values- integrity, respect, responsibility and pioneering shaped the attitude and behavior of the people of the company towards their stakeholders. These value, belief, and attitude not only shape the behavior of the individual performing HR advisory role in his workplace, rather all the employees, managers and even suppliers which facilitate the fulfilments of objectives of the company. The human relations theory of Elton Mayo supports this belief, value system and attitude of the Unilever.

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Introduction

In this assignment, at first, a brief overview has been given on the company with which I worked- Unilever. Also, a brief overview of the role of HR advisor was discussed. In the next part, the terms- value, belief, and attitude were defined and differentiated in the workplace context of Unilever. In the next section, the belief, value, and attitude in Unilever were critically discussed and the relationship between these three with the corporate culture was assessed. In the final section, the human relations theory was discussed and how it influences the people with different values, beliefs, and attitudes of the Unilever was critically discussed.

About Unilever

Unilever is a multinational company which deals with a wide range of consumer goods such as foods and beverages, personal care products etc. The company was established in 1930 by British firm Lever Brothers and a Dutch firm Margarine Unie. The headquarters of the company is in London of the United Kingdom and Rotterdam of Netherlands. Among the products, food and beverages account for 40% of its total revenue. Unilever owns more than 400 brands and in 2012 it was declared as the largest consumer products company in the world. In 2017, the company reported net revenue of \$7561 billion and the number of employees was 169,000 working in around 190 countries (Unilever global company website. 2018).

My Role at Unilever

I have worked at Unilever in the HR advisory role. There are several responsibilities I need to perform for my organization. Based on the local legislation and the company's code of conduct, I prepare and administer the policies on how employees will interact with each other. I also advise on how line managers and employees will form a bonding and manage their relationship (Cottrell). My job responsibilities also include providing guidelines to the employees regarding their career growth, flexible working, time-off etc.

Definition of Beliefs, Attitudes, and Values

Every person or firm has their own belief, attitude, and value. Generally, these three terms are used interchangeably. But they have different definitions, nature, and application for an individual or an organization.

Belief: Beliefs refer to the expectations and opinions, which are thought to be true by a person or an organization which is linked with ideas, events or others (Howe, 2010). Belief of an individual may form from different sources- his/her prior experience, culture of an organization or other elements.

Value: Value can be defined as the degree of importance of some action. The values give directions about what actions to do and in which procedure the actions should be performed. In an organization, values have a huge importance. It provides directions to the people in an organization about how to confront the problems and look for the solutions. Values may be stated or unstated in an organization, but the values are established based on the main objectives for which an organization is established or the leadership functions.

Attitude: Attitude is the tendency to respond towards a specific situation, object, event or individual (Harrell, 2013). Attitude can generate from a person's belief or value or it can generate from the peer pressure, respect for others and own convenience in a workplace.

Interrelationship & Difference between beliefs, values, and attitudes within a workplace context in Unilever

Although beliefs, values, and attitudes are generally used interchangeably, there are a lot of differences in these three elements. It is not true for an individual but also for its application in the workplaces contexts in an organization. In an organization, belief can be an idea which holds true by the individuals in an organization. The belief of a person can generate from his/her prior experience in a workplace or in his life or from the culture of the organization he/she is working with. Belief can also generate from his personal (religious or social background) or from any mentor/ guardian (Howe, 2010). A person holding his belief may be proven right or wrong but belief doesn't have to necessarily be proven by the people. On the other hand, the value is sourced from the belief of individuals; but it is influenced by the importance of such belief to certain individuals or organization. Values are different than belief in the extent that it provides directions to the individuals of an organization of which should they do or to which extent should they do. The attitude of an individual can be formed from both elements and it shows how we react to a specific object or situation or behave with any individual or any party related to the organization (Kerlinger, 1970).

In case of differentiating among attitude, value, and belief in a workplace context, I can demonstrate my role as the HR people experience to lead in my organization. My belief has been influenced by my personal experience in my whole life and the organizational culture at Unilever and my religious belief. I have come from a Muslim family in Asia where I was taught about being co-operative to others, working hard in honest ways for my livelihood and not only working for personal benefits but also for the benefits of the overall community. The culture of Unilever also strengthened the same belief within me. The culture of Unilever has been established on the belief that the mutual co-operation of all the related parties of the organization where every party works with integrity & honesty will result in the organizational success.

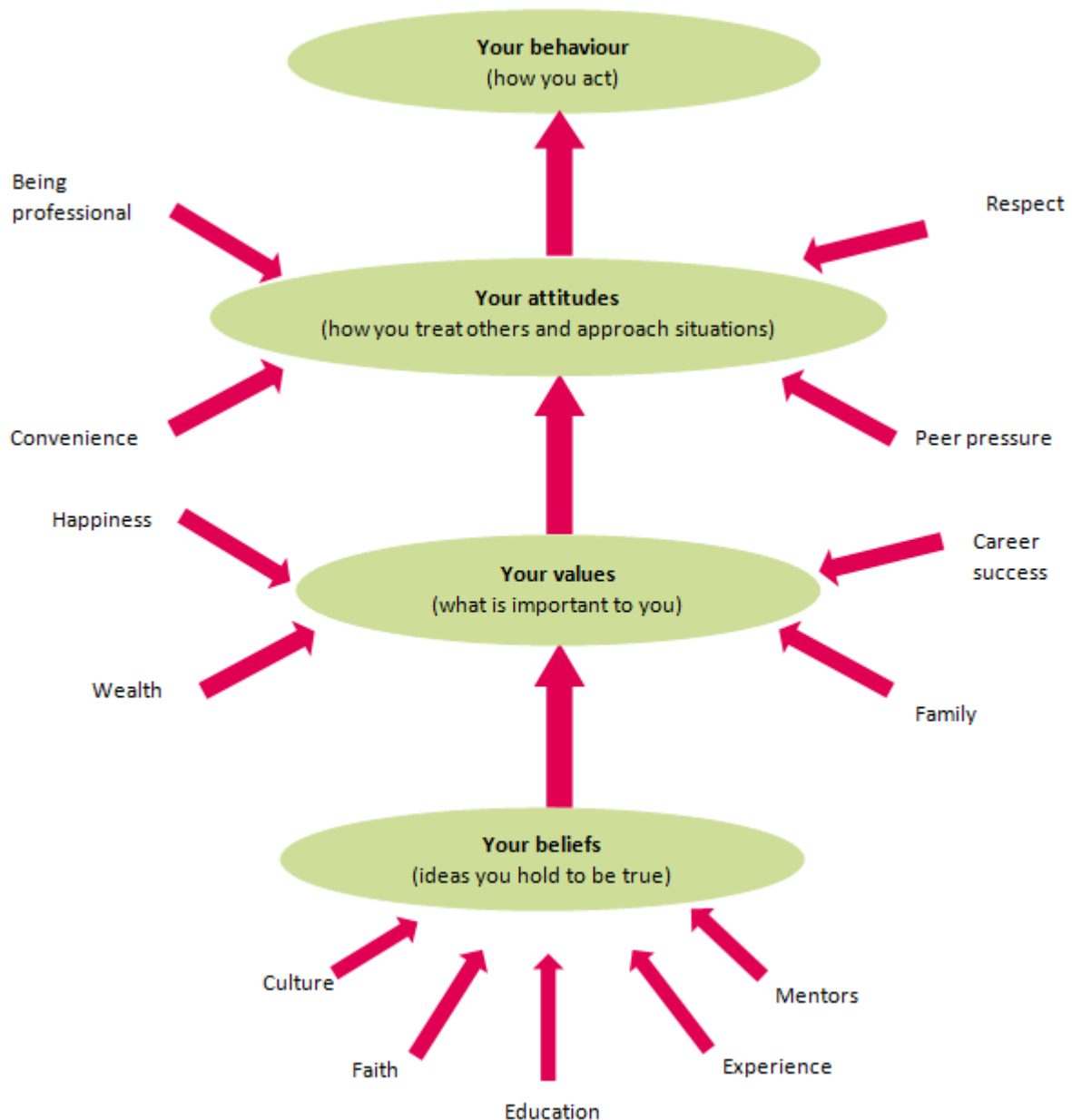


Figure: How Belief, Value, and Attitude is formed and lead to Behaviour (Govier, 2006)

Belief about my organization and the employees helped to form my values which help to make strategies on what I will do and how I will do in order to fulfill my responsibilities as an HR advisor. The belief towards helping others and mutual cooperation while doing a teamwork have influenced me to prepare a plan where I aim for preparing a team of employees who have a perfect communication channel between employees. An effective communication channel ensures that the employees will be able to interact with others which will add value to their individual and group performance. Also, during my strategy making, I also focus on the career

progression of the employees as Unilever also believes that a satisfied employee will be more committed to the organization and more focused on his performance.

As an hr advisor, I have formed a positive attitude to every relevant stakeholder I work with. According to me, every person in my branch has a certain role or contribution to the company and the needs and aspirations of every individual should be weighted while making a decision and should fulfil in maximum extent. While handling conflicts among employees in the organization, I think that everyone has their own point-of-view and a decision must be taken which will fulfill everyone's need as well as establish equality and justice in the organization.

Thus attitude, value, and belief can affect the decisions of an hr personnel like me in my workplace.

Critical assessment of beliefs, attitudes and value systems & their impact on workplace behavior

Background of the Corporate Culture of Unilever which Established its Current Value, Belief & Attitude

Unilever is an organization which is running its business for more than 100 years. The company's corporate culture didn't build within a day, rather it was shaped gradually over a long period. Before the company's decisions used to be taken by the top management of the company; from the headquarters. After the World War II, the communication and transportation system in Europe totally collapsed. So it created problems for a multinational company like Unilever to make decisions from the headquarter to regional divisions as communicating the decisions would take huge time and it would be difficult for the managers of the head division to frequently travel the huge regional areas where Unilever operated and provide strategies based on the decision. Thus the company decided to decentralize the management of the company, provided independence to the regional divisions and the regional managers to make decisions about the future of their particular company segments regarding their growth, merger or acquisitions. Thus, Unilever built a corporate culture gradually where it regionally diversified into several regions, evaluated the different needs of people in different regions for the products of Unilever and established an independent governance system (Hendry, 2009).

The corporate culture shaped the current belief the management holds, its values and attitudes towards its subsidiaries and employees. At present, the company motivates the diversity, participation of employees and independent decision making by geographically different segments or different product division organizations (Bell. 2010). Still, the company has its own codes of conduct, its business policies and values and purposes which are used as the standard benchmark for its every division in every country. The company ensures that every division will ensure these policies so that implementation of all of these will help to achieve the core objective of the company of ensuring a sustainable living commonplace not only with its products but also contributing through the better governance of the employees, CSR activities, and others.

The belief of the People involving with the Unilever

The company and its employees have a belief that Unilever has the capability to contribute to making the world livable for the future generation. This belief is not a mere thinking of the people involving with the Unilever rather it has been proved over hundred years how the company had contributed to the life of people by manufacturing and distributing quality products, created jobs and others benefits to its thousands of employees over a long period of time and help them and their future generation to live happily, contributing towards the greater goods of the society through the donations, sponsorship, and other CSR activities. Thus, the belief of contributing to making a sustainable future gives an employee a great feeling that he is more than an employee (Howe, 2010). This belief led to the thousands of extraordinary employees in different regional sections of the company who are committed to their company and focused on the greater goods of the society.

Value System of Unilever

Based on the belief of the company's people, the company has established its core four values: integrity, respect, responsibility and pioneering. The company wants to achieve growth by making the world a sustainable living place by making these values as directions. These four pillars helped the company to make the codes policies and codes of business principles.

Integrity: Integrity refers to the quality of being honest or working with strict moral principles. In the modern world where information about the activities of any organization is readily available to the general mass and where general people prefer the organizations following strict moral principles, every firm should ensure integrity in their every step-their every decision making or operational strategies (Atherton 2011). In this case, ensuring integrity is more crucial for a multinational company such as Unilever as a breach of integrity in one regional division of the company can hurt the reputation of the whole company. Unilever has a broad policy about how it ensures transparency, honesty in its every action and in its every system (Unilever global company website. 2018).

Corruption & Bribery: Unilever has a zero-tolerance policy towards the corruption and the company prohibits any kind of bribery during transactions. The company has a clear standing against corruption and all the employees have to act according to this. If the employees can assume that the transactions may be influenced by corruption, they notify Business Integrity Officer and Cluster General Counsel immediately who take further disciplinary or regulatory actions.

Accurate Records, Reporting & Accounting: Staffs of the Unilever are only allowed to report the transactions which are authorized by the company's standards. The data should be retained according to the Unilever's Data Retention Standard. The company has its own accounting standard, reporting instructions and time periods according to which the data are reported and periodic reports are published. In case of a particular country, the reporting and accounting procedure should obey by the accounting and reporting related laws (Generally Accepted Accounting Practices in the UK) and reflect the economy & stock market situations of a country.

Gifts & Hospitality: Unilever has a policy for accepting gifts and hospitality. Gifts and hospitalities can be received from the customers or other parties as a symbol of gesture. But when the employees represent an organization, gifts and hospitalities should be of certain limits. In Unilever, the employees have a local monetary limit up to which they can receive gifts. The employees can receive the hospitality but they have to ensure that it is on an irregular basis and don't influence any decision which can give unauthorized privilege towards any parties (Unilever global company website. 2018).

Data Privacy: For ensuring the privacy of the data, the employees follow several policies. At first, the employees take full consent from whom they are collecting data. The privacy of the data is maintained in several ways. The data collection procedure of the company is systematic. The paper documents are protected in stores. Also, the digital data are protected in computers using licensed software and strong passwords. Moreover, limited access to the data is allowed.

Protecting Unilever's Financial Assets and Intellectual Property: Unilever is careful regarding protecting its financial, physical and intellectual properties. Staffs at the factories of Unilever and the desk office branches are trained on how to protect the physical assets of the company such as products, machines, inventories, chairs and tables and others from damage, theft or any kind of harm. The employees also take care of financial assets such as cash by managing them properly using bank deposits and many other ways. The company has special concern towards the intellectual property and the managers carefully observe if people from other companies replicate the unique production, marketing or other ideas invented by Unilever (Unilever global company website. 2018).

Anti-Money Laundering: Unilever commits its customers and other stakeholders to maintain transparency in their operations. To prevent anti-money laundering attempts by suppliers and customers, the employees carefully screen the identity of the suppliers or customers before

making any contract. Again, the finance managers regularly monitor the activities of the suppliers and customers.

Respect: Respect is another core element of the value system of the company. Although the company wants to ensure respect for its every stakeholder, it has focused mostly on the employees who are working hard to ensure the continuous operations and improvement of the company. Currently, 169,000 people are working in the company and they are creating values in diversified ways. Giving them the respect they deserve is a major goal for the top management of the company.

Avoiding Conflicts of Interest: Unilever is an organization which promises the employees that they can maximize their benefits from the organization. But still, the employees can involve in conflicts of interest if their desires and needs converge with the needs of the organization, customers, public bodies or other employees. The employees at Unilever notifies the line manager when they face any conflict of interest such as having a family member/ friend who is a public official or a supplier. The line manager takes a further decision about how to react to solve this problem (Maltby, Day, Macaskill, 2010). The HR advisor gives guidelines on how the employees can reduce workplace conflicts and conflicts of interests.

Occupational Health & Safety: Establishing an effective health and safety system is another way to ensure proper respect for the employees and other people at the workplace of Unilever. The line managers of the regional divisions should ensure that the management takes proper health and safety approaches by following the Occupational Health and Safety Policies of Unilever. The sites should be protected from any hazard and the employees must be trained to be protected from fire, explosion or any other occupational hazards. Local laws have to be strictly followed while establishing a health and safety system (Dochy, Gijbels, Segers & Van den Bossche, 2011). In the UK, these measures should properly comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

Equality & Fair Treatment: In the workplace, the employees shouldn't be discriminated against on the basis of gender, race or any other characteristics. The employees of Unilever are strictly prohibited to discriminate between male and female employees. Unilever encourages a diversified workplace where the deprived classes such as females or black-colored people will get equal and fair treatment as the males and white people. This value of Unilever complies with the Equality Act, 2010 of the UK.

Responsibility: Although Unilever was established primarily for generating profits, its range of objectives has become broader and not limited only to making profits. Unilever conducts its operations in different societies, regions, and countries and it has responsibilities for the people of the area it serves to and its stakeholders who have a different contribution to the successful operation of the company as well as have different interests towards the company.

Responsible Marketing: While designing its marketing policies, Unilever always thinks about different issues and different people who can get affected by its marketing activities. The company abides by the local marketing practices and doesn't breach its own marketing guidelines which are established by observing the laws and legislation of different countries (Sanford, 2017). For an example, the company commits to giving fair information about the products in its advertisements. Moreover, Unilever thinks about an impact of advertisements on the women and children as well as the environment.

Responsible Sourcing: Unilever is also responsible to its suppliers who supply the necessary raw materials without which the production process would stop. The benefits of the suppliers are taken care off. Also, the rights of the workers involved in sourcing the materials are properly ensured by the company. The firm also plans for making their sourcing activities environmentally sustainable as it has a long term plan to reduce greenhouse gas effect in future years.

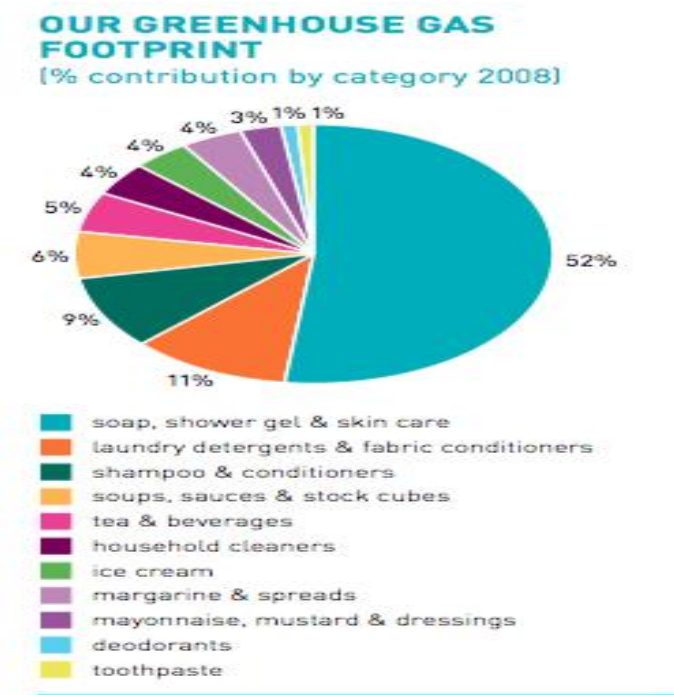


Figure: Percentage Contribution of Unilever's Products to in Greenhouse Gas Footprint
(Unilever global company website. 2018)

Also, the company holds responsible towards its competitors, governments and non-government agencies. The company abides by fair competition policy by providing quality products at regular prices. The local managers of the company organize a meeting with the local government and non-governmental bodies which help the company to abide by the laws and establish human & environmental rights.

Pioneering: Unilever is not only a leading organization at present but also has a long-term plan to remain a pioneer organization in the world. The company wants to make continuous improvements in the fields it serves and serves in more fields. So, they promote innovation and want to contribute to the life of the people so that Unilever can make itself an essential organization to continue the growth of the mankind.

Promoting Innovation: Unilever is a company deals with consumer goods and it is making magical innovation every year in the field of consumer goods by redefining the needs of the customers and innovating better ways to solve the ever-changing needs of the customers. More features are added to soaps, powders, perfumes and hundreds of products every year by the R&D team of the company (Sanford, 2017).

Contributing to Making People's Life Better: Unilever contributes to the welfare of people's life by donating to different institutions, sponsoring many organizations which help people. Also, the healthcare products of the company are keeping better care of the health of the people.

Thus the value system works within Unilever.

The Attitude of the People in Unilever

Previously, the belief and value system of Unilever were critically discussed. In different regions and different divisions, the attitude of the people working with the Unilever may be different. But the core belief and values of the Unilever shapes the human behavior of the people engaged with Unilever in general.

Positive Attitude Towards the Employees: The policies of Unilever tends a manager to think that the employees can participate actively in providing opinions or a new idea. The managers have to listen to the need of the employees and establish a system where they can effectively interact (Maltby, Day, Macaskill, 2010). This positive attitude towards the employees is a result of the corporate culture of the organization for many years.

Prioritizing the Needs of the Customers: The value of focusing on continuous improvement influenced the people in Unilever to think about the ever-changing tastes and preferences of the customers. As the needs of the customers are changing rapidly, organizations which can regularly innovate new products, new features and new processes which result in the most desired quality products by the customers can gain more success in today's world. Thus, the management, as well as the employees, react positively towards the feedbacks of the customers.

Change in Attitude towards the Managers: Previously, all the core decisions used to be taken by the management at the headquarters. Back then, the regional managers had to take routine decisions and the employees didn't give much weight to him. With the change in the structure and decentralization in management, the regional managers got more power. As the managers changed their policies and started forming positive attitudes regarding employees' rights, independence, and creativity in Unilever, the employees also considered the line managers and regional managers as a careful supervisor and believed that they will be cooperative to the employees.

Change in Attitude towards the Workplace Situations: With the increase in weight towards innovation and creativity, the employees of Unilever had greater motivation. Previously, they used to think workplace problems as burdens and faced mental pressure to solve these

problems. But, at present, employees at Unilever are more encouraged to identify a problem in the product, process or workplace situation. As the company focus towards continuous improvement, the management and the employees think a problem an opportunity to show creativity & innovate and improve the quality of the product and process and beat the competitors.

Thus the change in corporate culture made changes in the belief, value system and attitude of people at Unilever.

Human Relations Theory & Its Impact on the People with Different Beliefs, Values & Attitudes

Overview of 'Human Relations Theory'

Human relations theory has been proposed by Elton Mayo. This theory researches about the importance of human relationship in a workplace. Elton Mayo had performed a research on the employees of a factory named Hawthorn Plants where he found that workers may be discontent if the level of brightness of light in a factory is reduced (Sanford, 2017). From this analysis, he came to a conclusion that,

- Workers cannot be satisfied even with salaries and other benefits- they require more attention than these.
- Individual workers require separate attention from their managers and the organization- they want to be treated in a distinct way and they want their individual needs to be fulfilled and self-belongingness to be achieved,
- Informal groups in a workplace are expected to generate better results than the formal groups
- Managers should consider the need for social belongingness properly and engage the workers in more informal ways.

There are several arguments that human relations theory collides with the scientific management theory of Frederik W. Taylor in which he focused on the efficiency of the tasks, processes, and methods to complete a task in less time (Taylor, 2013). Human relations theory describes that rather than focusing on the efficiency, it is important to focus on developing relations with employees to generate success for the organization.

How Human Relation Theory Supports the Beliefs, Values, and Attitudes at Unilever

Human relations theory is applicable to a company where the manager believes about the independence of the staffs and their active participation in decision making and other creative idea generation. An organization with values of collective growth of both firms and individuals working with the firms and positive attitude towards the employees is suitable for applying human relations theory (Sanford, 2017).

At present, organizations know about the necessity of human relations. The employees also prefer the organizations which give more importance to an employee as a distinct human being. In large cars manufacturing companies such as Ford Motor Company or Toyota, the managers are used to build a different mindset about employees. The values of these organizations mainly

give importance to the skills of the staffs for innovation in the car manufacturing rather than developing relationships with them (Bluedorn and Taylor, 2006). As a result, they still adopt the scientific management theory of Frederik W. Taylor. But in an organization such as Unilever, Human relations theory can be positively applied for the completion of tasks and building effective employee-manager relationships.

Regarding Evaluating Individual Needs & Preferences: How does human relations theory influences people of these organizations with different values, attitudes, and beliefs of Unilever? Developing human relations generates better performance by ensuring better commitment and better participation by employees, this is true. In a company like Unilever where thousands of employees are working in different large size factories in different regions, it is more difficult for the company to know about the individual needs and preferences. According to the management of Unilever, it would take more money and more time to listen to the needs of every worker and fulfilling their needs. But Unilever's plant managers invented a creative way to take care of the workers in the factory. A device has been set up where the workers can press a green or red switch to inform the management about how the day has passed. Results of all of their reactions are shown on a Television screen in the factory premise. The managers believe that the motivated employees are more committed and enthusiastic for the company. Hence, there are many financial and non-financial rewards for the employees who perform better than others in the workplace (Brookfield. 2012). In 2013, Unilever organized a global Winning with Integrity program in which it encouraged the suppliers to operate according to Unilever standards by motivating them. In 2014, the company created Social Impact Hub which enabled the employees to participate in the social activities (Unilever global company website. 2018). Moreover, the company also highlighted the performance of the best performer in a regional area. Again, the employees get different facilities such as getting Unilever products as gifts for family members.



Figure: Device set up in a factory of Unilever for Knowing the Status of Workers (Unilever global company website. 2018)

Regarding the Importance of Participation of Workers in Idea Generation & Improving their Skills: In the human relations approach, the managers encourage participation from the employees in creative thinking and decision making approach. In Unilever, the focus is given on continuous improvement of staffs' performance by continuously nurturing them, fulfilling their needs, focusing on their career growth potential, guiding them properly and also in other ways. In 2017, Unilever launched 'My Learning' a social learning platform where the individuals know about Unilever contents and other external knowledge which will enable them to contribute for the organization in better way. Also data visualization facility helps the managers at every level to analyse the data and make a decision himself by not relying on the top management. Thus Unilever ensured participation of management and employees from every level.

Regarding Formal/ Informal Work Groups: Being a multinational company, Unilever always emphasized on the performance as informal work groups. The company offers huge varieties of products and these have different demands in different regions. All of these division can not be controlled by the management of head divisions. So, the managers in the Unilever are given formal training and they are educated about company background, culture, structure, company policy and others. These managers work with a team of skilled people in a specific region in an informal procedure but at the same time ensures that the company's policies aren't violated.

All of these help the employees of Unilever to feel better about themselves. Their need for social belongingness improved and they also gained recognition from their organizations, their supervisors which made them more committed to the organization. Thus the company's beliefs, value, and attitude have been supported by the proper application of Human Relations Theory.

Conclusion

Unilever had a journey of more than hundred years. The shift in the corporate culture of the company after World War II built the current belief, value system and attitude of the people of the company. The belief of the company to contribute to the greater community made it one of the most popular companies in the world. In terms of ensuring sustainability for the better future, the current belief and value system of Unilever will contribute largely. By establishing a code of conduct and business policies reflecting the international and national laws and guidelines, by creating value of ensuring integrity, continuous improvement and performing responsibility to all relevant parties and building positive attitudes to all the stakeholders, Unilever has made millions of people committed to its products, contributed to the welfare of people in different regions of the world and increased probabilities of remaining a pioneer in upcoming days.

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