

The Role of Middle Managers SBU's in Context of Change: Sense-Making Approach

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Abstract : This paper is designed to spotlight the research on corporate strategic planning, by emphasizing the role of middle manager of SBU's and related issues such as the context of vision change. Previous research on strategic vision has been focused principally at the SME, with relatively limited consideration given to the role of middle managers SBU's in the context of change. This project of research has been done by using a single case study. We formulated through our immersion for 2.5 years on the ground and by a qualitative method and abduction approach. This entity that we analyze is a subsidiary of multinational companies headquartered in Germany, specialized in manufacturing automotive equipment. The "Delta Company" is a French manufacturing plant that has undergone numerous changes over the past three years. The two major strategic changes that have a significant impact on the Delta plant are the strengths of its core business through « lead plant strategy » in 2011 and the implementation of a new strategic vision in 2014. These consecutive changes impact the purpose of the mission of the middle managers. The plant managers ask the following questions: How the middle managers make sense of the corporate strategic planning imposed by the parent company? How they appropriate the new vision and decline it into actions on the ground? We chose the individual interview technique through open-ended questions as the source of data collection. We first of all carried out an exploratory approach by interviewing 8 members of the Management committee's decision and 19 heads of services. The first findings and results show that exist a divergence of opinion and interpretations of the corporate strategic planning among organization members and there are difficulties to make sense and interpretations of the signals of the environment. The lead plant strategy enables new projects which insure the workload of Delta Company. Nevertheless, it creates a tension and stress among the middle managers because its provoke lack of resources to the detriment of their main jobs as manufacturer plant. The middle managers does not have a clear vision and they are wondering if the new strategic vision means more autonomy and less support from the group.

Keywords : change, middle managers, vision, sensemaking

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