

**CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIC PLANS IN
ACCESSKENYA GROUP LTD**

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DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been submitted for examination in any other university.

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This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the university supervisor.

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I thank my family for all the support they have rendered to me throughout this program. I also thank my classmates for discussions and encouragement offered during the course of my study. My God bless them.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my family. You have been my inspiration and a source of encouragement throughout the duration of my academic pursuits. Thank you for the moral support and understanding during the course of this program. To my dad, thank you for inspiring and supporting me to pursue my graduate studies. May God bless you all.

ABSTRACT

Strategic planning involves articulating the direction, objectives and clear actions required to realize the desired strategic vision of an organization (Balanced Scorecard Institute, 2013). A strategic plan is a document that sets the organization's vision, mission, strategic objectives, strategies and activities. It further defines structures, staffing levels and financial resources required to carry out the functions and mandate. Strategic plan serves as a roadmap and is used to prioritize initiatives, resources, goals, and department operations and projects. It enhances operational effectiveness of organizations through addressing human resource capacity and management, enhances financial management and also aligns the organizational structure with its strategies. Strategic planning is the cornerstone of every organization. Without strategic planning, the organization will never know where its going much less know if it ever got there. An important concept of strategic planning is an understanding that in order for the organization to flourish everyone needs to work to ensure the organization goals are met. The aim of this research project was to investigate on strategic planning processes in AccessKenya Group Ltd. The study was a case study and used primary data collected by using self administered interview guides. The unit of the study was the AccessKenya Group Ltd to find out the challenges of implementing the strategic plan. Case study was appropriate where an in-depth analysis and understanding of a single unit of study was desired. Case studies place more emphasis on a full contextual analysis of fewer events or conditions and their interrelations. Primary data was collected through an interview guide. An interview guide was a set of questions an interviewer asks and focuses on a list of topics or areas that the researcher desires to cover in an interview. The interview was semi-structured in that it was controlled by the interviewer and allowed the respondent to have flexibility in answering questions. The merit for using semi-structured interviews in this study was because it will allow the interview to accommodate new and useful information that may crop up during the interview process. The data collected through the interview guides was qualitative and was analyzed thematically using content analysis method. From the findings, the study concluded that strategic planning was formal and that the vision and mission statement, and strategic plans were formally documented. The study also concluded that the organization carried out an extensive situational analysis to analyze its stakeholders, and review its internal and external environment. The study also established that financial constraints, time constraints, and consensus building were the major challenges faced during strategic planning. This study focused on strategic planning practices at AccessKenya Group Ltd. This study had two objectives: to determine strategic planning practices adopted by the organization and to determine the challenges encountered in strategic planning by the organization. The study confirms the theory that ownership of strategic plans by stakeholders of an organization is key to successful implementation. The vision and mission statements and all strategic plans formulated are documented into the official policy document. This further confirms that the organization has adopted modern strategic planning practices through formalization of the strategic planning process. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends that further research should be done on how policy and practice aspects such as corporate governance, corporate culture and organizational structure affect strategic plans.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Strategic planning is important in any private organization. A strategic plan communicates the organization's goals and actions needed to achieve those goals (Balanced Scorecard Institute, 2013). A strategic plan is a document that maps out the strategic direction of an organization through stipulation of priorities and means of achieving those priorities. Hence it defines organizational structures and resources required to actualize the set goals. However, many organizations are faced with the challenge of insufficient resources and capacity to actualize their strategic plan.

A strategic plan is a document that sets the organization's vision, mission, strategic objectives, strategies and activities. It further defines structures, staffing levels and financial resources required to carry out the functions and mandate. According to Municipal Research and Services Center for Washington (2013) a strategic plan serves as a roadmap and is used to prioritize initiatives, resources, goals, and department operations and projects. It enhances operational effectiveness of organizations through addressing human resource capacity and management, enhances financial management and also aligns the organizational structure with its strategies (Osero, 2012). It also identifies performance goals and objectives and identify external factors that may affect the achievement of the set goals (Bwisa, 2013).

1.1.1 Concept of Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is the cornerstone of every organization. Without strategic planning, the organization will never know where its going much less know if it ever got there. An important concept of strategic planning is an understanding that in order for the organization to flourish everyone needs to work to ensure the organization goals are met. Strategic planning process involves formulation of mission statements, formulation of vision statement, performance of situational analysis and finally strategy formulation and choice (Pearce and Robinson, 2008). The most common influencing strategic planning practices include vision and mission statements, growth objective, top management commitment, financial resources and situation analysis. All these practices are crucial for an efficient operation in organization.

Vision outlines what the organization want to be, or how it wants the world in which it operates to be. It's a long view and concentrates on the future. It can be emotive and is a source of inspiration. Mission defines the fundamental purpose of an organization or an enterprise, succinctly describing why it exists and what it does to achieve its vision. A company's mission is it's reason for existence. The mission often is expressed in the form of a mission statement, which conveys a sense of purpose to employees and projects a company's image to customers. This is the agreed upon statement, which by the organization and explains the reason for its existence.

Objectives are the goals that the organization seeks to reach. Objectives should be challenging but achievable, measurable so that the company can monitor its progress.

They're the areas of emphasis need to be attained by discussion and review of the organization. Current activities as well as activities in which it would like to participate.

Situation analysis is an environmental scan performed to identify the available opportunities that the organization the organization can use to get new ways to reach it's objectives. The external environment has two aspects: the macro-environment analysis which includes political, economic, social, and technological factors and sometimes referred to as PEST analysis. Micro-environment is the industry in which the firm operates. Porter's 5 forces includes barriers to entry, customers, suppliers, substitute products, and rivalry among competing companies. The internal analysis considers the situation within the firm itself such as: company image, company culture, key staff and market share. It's useful to categorize the internal the internal factors of the firm as strengths and weaknesses and the external environmental factors as opportunities and threats. This analysis is referred to as a SWOT analysis.

Finance is so crucial to the economic development for any country. Cargo handling firms can use financial services to boost their ability to handle increased volumes of cargo improve customers satisfaction, strengthen their competitive position in the market and improve security and safety. It can also enable the firms acquire IT systems that can help strengthen operations and offer on-line solutions that are popular. Direct participation by highest level executives in a specific is critically an important aspect or program of an organization. In quality management it includes setting up and serving on a quality committee, formulating and establishing quality policies and objectives, providing resources and training, overseeing implementation at all levels of the organization, and

evaluating and revising the policy in light of results achieved.

1.1.2 Strategy Implementation

Strategy implementation is the communication, interpretation, adoption and enactment of strategic plans (Noble, 1999). Whereas strategy formulation entails heavy doses of vision, analysis and entrepreneurial judgment, successful strategy implementation depends on the skill of working through others, organizing, motivating, culture-building and creating strong fits and how the organization operates (Arthur, 1989). According to Noble (1999) strategy implementation involves generating commitment from various stakeholders, alignment of the organization's structure to strategy, linking work duties to strategic performance goals and assigning responsibilities and accountability to various strategy implementers.

Successful implementation depends on effective strategy implementation action plans should have specific functional tactics and actions with sufficient time frames and expected deliverables. Responsibility and accountability should be assigned to the stakeholders to ensure that actions plans are acted on. Pearce and Robinson (2003) argued that short-term objectives should be defined to help "operationalize" the long-term objectives. Action plans and short-term objectives should be integrated and coordinated to guarantee successful strategic plan implementation (Pearce and Robinson, 2003) realized through management of roles, commitment to strategic plans and good communication channels (Alexander, 1991). Strong strategy-supportive fits and sufficient resource allocation to critical activities and installation of administrative support systems such as

policies, procedures, Information Systems and controls are a necessity for successful implementation (Arthur, 1989). Employee capacity should be enhanced to ensure that an organization has the capacity to implement formulated plans.

Challenges to successful implementation include lack of good will and commitment by stakeholders. Other like, Lack of awareness or misunderstanding of strategic plans/strategies as a result of poor communication is a major factor in strategy implementation failure. The external environment is unpredictable and hence unforeseen changes pose major challenges in successful implementation of strategic plans. According to Hrebiniak (2008) management and resistance to change during implementation process is crucial and poses the greatest challenge to strategy implementers.

1.1.3 ICT industry in Kenya

From introduction of telecommunication services in Kenya up to 1977, the services were managed as part of regional network with neighboring Tanzania and Uganda. In 1977 the East Africa Community under which the regional telecommunications services operated, collapsed and as a result, Kenya established Kenya Posts and Telecommunications corporation to the services. A telecommunications policy statement was issued in 1997 that set out the government vision on telecommunications development to the year 2015. The challenge at that time was to transform the existing policy structure from one designed for a monopoly to a policy managing a liberalized telecommunication market. The government separated the functions and management of the sector. This clarified

roles for the policy, regulatory and operational responsibilities with the government and specifically the Ministry of Transport and Communications retaining policy guidance.

In 1998/99 the government launched the telecommunications sector reform and introduced competition in certain market segments, while at the same time disbanding KP&TC. The cornerstone of the sector reform was a new telecommunication policy and telecommunication laws. KP&TC was split into three legal entities namely Telkom Kenya Limited (TELKOM), Postal Corporation of Kenya (POSTA) and Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK). The National communications secretariat was also formed under the Kenya to serve as the policy advisory arm of the Government on all matters pertaining to the info-communications sector.

Since the launch of the telecommunication sector reform, Kenya has made great strides in the expansion of telecommunications services. Between 1999 to-date, the government has implemented policy reforms that have resulted in a number of structural changes. The main structural changes are – redefinition and clarification of roles for policymaking, market regulation, dispute resolution and operation and operation of services among multiple players. In the operation of services, multiple operators are competing in various market segments based on a policy of the private sector operating in a competitive environment that also safeguards consumer interest (epzakenya, 2005).

While the growth of the ICT sector in Kenya has been significantly influenced by global trends, it can be evaluated in terms of number of fixed and mobile telephone lines; the tele-density; the number of computers and services; Internet Service Providers, the number of internet users; broadcasting stations and market share of each one of them. Realizing that ICT is a primary instrument for realizing economic growth. Kenya offers attractive incentives and presents various investment opportunities for potential investors as it prepares to leverage ICT in its national priorities of growth and poverty reduction. As an entry point to the regional market and communications and financial hub for the region, Kenya also offers potential investors a wide market for their products and services in the utilisation of ICT (epzakenya, 2005).

1.1.3 AccessKenya Group Ltd

AccessKenya Group Ltd is one of the many privately owned ICT firm in Kenya. The organization's headquarters in located in Westlands, Nairobi with regional offices in Kisumu, Mombasa, and Nakuru. Started in 1995 as Communications Solutions Kenya (Commsol), the company re-branded to AccessKenya Ltd in 2000 to become the leading corporate ISP in Kenya and later the holding company AccessKenya Group in 2006. With a long history in providing unbeatable solutions, the focus of the company is to deliver business value to clients in all sectors of the economy by remaining true to the company's vision of providing new and innovative ICT products and services at affordable and competitive prices. In 2013 AccessKenya Group partnered with Internet Solutions Kenya Ltd to form an integrated services leading communication and IT infrastructure service provider in East Africa. A one stop shop offering world class cloud, communications

connectivity and carrier services geared towards meeting client's unique business and ICT needs. There core business of the organization is to provide cheap affordable internet services to the masses.

1.2 Research Problem

A strategic plan outlines both the medium and long-term strategic objectives of an organization. It outlines specific goals and objectives, a comprehensive implementation plan, provisions for monitoring and evaluation and clear reporting mechanisms and contains information on investments, projects, development initiatives, maps, statistics, and a resource mobilization framework (TISA, 2013). The need for formulation and implementation of strategic plans has been necessitated by the demand for tangible development and effective service delivery. For organizations to effectively implement their strategic plans, they must pool together necessary resources required to successfully implement their strategic plans. Many organizations in Kenya have formulated ambitious strategic plans but they are faced with the challenge of limited resources and limited capacity to implement their strategic plans.

AccessKenya Group Ltd is mandated with the task of providing public services, initiate development of infrastructure and come up with measures of creating a hospitable environment that encourages public participation in the development of targets as well as encouraging private sector participation in economic activities. To do all these, the organization requires adequate resources.. To address this deficit in funding, the organization is authorized to come up with measures of revenue mobilization.

It also has to come up with strategies to encourage more investment in the organization to exploit the available resources and in the process accruing more revenue. The ideal scenario is for the organization to be able to exploit its resources and be self-sustaining, and above all have the capacity to successfully implement its strategic plan.

Various studies on challenges faced in strategy implementation in the public sector have been done by scholars in Kenya. The previous studies identified major challenges to strategy implementation as poor leadership, organization structure, socio-economic instability, inadequate resources and lack of capacity to implement the strategies formulated. It is evident from the above studies that none of the studies done focused on challenges facing the implementation. There is need therefore, to conduct studies that will provide an understanding on the challenges faced in implementation of its strategic plan.

Different organizations face different challenges in implementation of their strategic plan. Therefore, this study aims to answer the following questions: What are the challenges faced by the AccessKenya Group Ltd in implementation of its strategic plan? What are the responses to the challenges of strategy implementation by the organization?

1.3 Research Objectives

This study addressed the following research objectives:

- i. To determine the challenges facing AccessKenya Group Ltd in implementation of its strategic plan.

- ii. To establish how AccessKenya Group Ltd is dealing with the challenges it is facing in the implementation of its strategic plan.

1.4 Value of the Study

The proposed study will form a foundation for future reference to scholars, students and researchers who may wish to carry out research on the same or related field. The study will contribute greatly to strategic planning of the organization. The study will provide planners with invaluable information relating to strategic planning in general and the importance of formulating better strategic plans. The study may also be helpful to scholars and researchers in identification of further areas of research on other related studies by highlighting related topics that require further research.

The study contributes substantially to strategic planning at organization. The study provides strategic planners with invaluable information relating to strategic planning in general and the importance of formulating better strategic plans. The findings from the study may also provide useful reference to policy makers during formulation of strategic plans by highlighting the best strategic planning practices.

The research findings contributes to a better understanding of the strategic planning practices to the management. Also, the study will help policy makers to identify important aspects of their organization that need to be considered during strategic planning hence ensuring that the strategic plans developed are comprehensive and that they factor in stakeholders views and aspirations.

The proposed study will be of value to the management since it will enable them assess the impact of their strategic plans and also help them understand the challenges impeding successful implementation of their strategic plan.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature pertinent to the subject under study. It covers the theoretical framework upon which the study is based, the concept of strategy implementation, success factors in strategy implementation and the challenges of strategy implementation.

2.2 Theoretical Foundation

Poor strategy implementation leads to strategic failures in an organization. According to Schaap (2006) strategy implementation or execution is the most complicated and time consuming part of strategic management. Although implementation is usually considered after strategy has been formulated, implementation is the key determinant of strategic success hence strategy formulation and implementation should thus be considered as two sides of the same coin (Wheelan, 2008). This study is anchored on resource dependency theory and structure follows strategy theory.

2.2.1 Structure Follows Strategy Theory

Structure follows strategy (Chandler, 1962). According to Wheelan (2008), structure, strategy and the environment need to be closely aligned for performance to be good. An organization's strategy affects the way it conducts its operations and the design of the organization. As Chandler (1962) points out, formulation and execution of long term strategy determines a firm's structure, scale and level of integration. According to Pearce

and Robinson (1997), matching structure to strategy is a fundamental task of an organization's strategists. They further argue that structural design ties together key activities and resources of the firm and as such there is need to align the structure with the strategy for it to be successfully implemented. Pearce and Robinson (2003) observe that if a firm alters its strategy, its structure must obviously change as well. Chandler (1962) argues that a firm's strategy indirectly determines an organization's tasks, technology and environment which in turn determine its structure. Strategy requires a framework for it to be successfully implemented. The organization's structure provides the framework within which the formulated strategy is implemented. There is need therefore, to structure an organization in a way that it supports the implementation of formulated strategy. Hitt, Ireland and Hoskisson (2011) argue that strategy has a more important influence on structure and once strategy is in place then the structure influences strategy implementation. Chandler (1962) argues that unless structure follows strategy, in efficiency rules. In the public sector, strategy is formulated with a bias on service delivery and hence once strategy is formulated, focus shifts towards aligning the organization structure with the strategy to attain efficiencies required in provision of better services.

2.2.2 Resource Dependency Theory

The resource dependency theory proposes that the key to an organization's survival is the ability to acquire and sustain resources (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). They further point out that organizations are resource insufficient hence they depend on resources found in their external environment. These resources may be in the hands of stakeholders in the environment hence the need for establishment of relationships and coalitions between the

organizations and management of demands of interest groups upon which the organization depends for resources and support (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). According to the resource dependency theory, the choices of an organization is limited by external pressures. Malatesta et al (2014) note that organizations require resources from their environment, which, when successfully obtained, produce power, influence, and long-term stability. According to Sheppard (1995), organizational success is influenced to a large extent by whether it can acquire the right mix of resources from its environment.

Public institutions strategies should be based on identifying stakeholder expectations and determining what resources the organization should build and enhance in order to create the highest possible value for the stakeholder (Bryson et al, 2007). Public organizations such as counties depend mainly on resources held by other stakeholders such as the national government and private entities to finance their strategic plans hence the need for management of the relationships that exist between them and their stakeholders.

Smith (2014) notes that the resource dependency theory provides managers with a perspective of comparing different strategies, emphasizing on short-term co-ordination costs, as well as the longterm prospects of organization survival and growth. He further asserts this view by stating that managerial strategy starts with an understanding of an organization's dependency on its environment.

Implementation of strategy is a series of interventions concerning organizational structures, key personnel actions, and control systems designed to control performance

with respect to desired ends (Hrebiniak and Joyce, 1984). It also requires an understanding of stakeholders expectations on strategy and management of external influences on strategic plan implementation. As Floyd and Woodridge (1994) note, successful implementation depends to a large extent on how an organization manages its relationship with its external constituencies to realize strategy.

2.3 Success factors in Strategy Implementation

Key success factors in strategy implementation refers to performance areas that are essential for an organization to achieve the objectives of the formulated strategy and the overall mission and vision (Pearce and Robison, 2003). Implementation of strategy depends on the implementation action plans and time frames provided for during formulation. The implemented strategy should be aligned with the needs of the organization for it to be beneficial in the long term. Linkages between short-term, medium and long-term objectives determine how successful formulated strategy is implemented. Success factors for strategy implementation in organizations differ as each organization is unique.

2.3.1 Commitment by Stakeholders

Building commitment to strategic plans is a key factor in implementation (Korsgaard et al, 1995). The importance of gaining commitment of the management and employees to strategic plan is underscored by the reality that strategy is implemented through the actions of individuals in an organization. Yang Li (2008) notes that commitment by all stakeholders in an organization to its strategic plan is a key factor in implementation.

Alexander (1985) argues that obtaining commitment from employees leads to successful implementation of formulated strategy.

Commitment by the top management to strategy is crucial (Hrebiniak, 2008). He further points out that execution of strategy demands commitment to and a passion for results regardless of level of management. Commitment to strategy calls for a sense of ownership to execution and change processes vital to execution for it to be successful (Hrebiniak, 2008).

2.3.2 Monitoring Progress and Evaluation of Deviations

Monitoring progress made to date with expected progress is a key concern to the management during strategy implementation (Pearce and Robinson, 2003). It is important to monitor the implementation process to ensure that the progress made is on course with the expected progress. According to Pearce and Robinson (2003), after the deviations and their causes are identified, the implications of the deviations for the ultimate success of the strategy must be considered. Understanding the causes for deviations during strategy implementation helps strategy implementers to come up with the appropriate responses to them. After deviations have been evaluated, slight adjustments may need to be made to keep implementation progress and expenditure in line with the strategy programmed needs (Pearce and Robinson, 2003). Monitoring strategy implementation reinforces the focus of the organization to strategic goals. Employee performance is also evaluated to identify their ability to implement the strategy of the firm as well as identify the type of training if necessary required to improve their knowledge for better execution of their

duties.

2.3.3 Availability of Resources

An organization should have enough resources to carry out its strategic plan (Thompson, 1989). This includes having capable human resources and enough finances to implement formulated strategy. According to Thompson and Strickland (1989), success or failure strategy implementation depends on how well the implementer ties the organization's budget directly with the needs of the overall strategy. Therefore, there is need for strategic plans to be matched with resources required to successfully implement them. Thus, resource allocation requires proper understanding of the strategic goals and priorities. Human resources are critical in the implementation process. The management should identify the critical positions that will have the most impact on the implementation process, and then make sure that the positions are filled with the right persons (Wootton, 2014). Availability of resources determine the ability of an organization to implement its strategic plans. Hitts (2011) notes that capabilities exists when resources have been purposely integrated to achieve a specific task or set of tasks. Hence without resources, a firm has no capacity to implement its own strategic plans.

2.3.4 Organization Leadership

Leadership has a great impact on performance in an organization (O'Reilly et al, 2010). Pearce and Robinson (2007) identify organizational leadership as a key driver to effective strategy execution. Hrebiniak (2005) notes that leadership is a key factor in successful implementation of strategy. Pearce and Robinson (2010) argue that senior management in

an organization play a big role in guiding employees towards realization of a vision and development of organization's culture. Hence an organization requires a dedicated leader with good understanding of formulated strategy to oversee the implementation process. The management plays a big role in identification and communication of key success activities in an organization's strategy hence an organization should prioritize on building capable leadership (O'Reilly et al 2010). Dekluyver and Pearce (2003) argue that implementation is a hands-on, action-oriented human behaviour that calls for executive leadership and managerial skills. Organization's leadership is responsible for leading strategy implementation at different levels within the organization and thus it should have the capacity and expertise to lead the implementation process.

2.3.5 Effective Communication

Effective communication is a key factor and requirement in strategy implementation (Peng, 2001). Rapert et al (2002) observe that communication plays a major role in successful implementation of strategy. Hrebiniak (2005) observes that communication of responsibilities and accountability to action plans to implementors of strategy plays a major role in successful implementation. Yang Li et al (2008) point out that communication is an integral part of strategy implementation as it relates in a complex way to organizing processes, organizational context and implementation objectives which, in turn, have an effect on the process of implementation. Kotter (1995) notes that communication of strategic vision to the employees by management is central to success of any strategy. Yang Li and Eppler (2008) argue that when communication between the management and other employees in an organization is timely and frequent, it leads to a

shared understanding of strategic priorities which in turn translate into better implementation. Schaap (2006), observes that frequent vertical communication in an organization enhances strategic consensus. Communication plays a key role in building commitment to a firm's strategy. Yang Li et al (2008) argue that communication between top-level management and functional-level management enhances understanding, identity and commitment to strategy.

2.4 Challenges of Strategy Implementation

Successful strategy implementation depends on how an organization deals with the challenges faced during implementation. Implementation challenges may bring about delays or even render formulated strategy useless. Successful implementation of strategy takes more time than formulation hence implementation on its own poses various challenges to the management (Hrebiniak, 2008). An organization may face unique challenges during implementation due to the unique nature of its operations and environment. However, organizations face common challenges during implementation although with variable effects.

2.4.1 Organization Culture Challenges

Every organization is unique and has a unique culture. Organization culture is developed through a history of how an organization has been managed, its own set ways of approaching problems and conducting activities and its own ways of how changes have been instituted (Thompson and Strickland, 1989).

Interactions between work groups and organizational systems over a period of time determine how employees react to change. Strategy implementation may call for a disruption in the traditional mode of operations in a firm. The role of the management in shaping the organization's values and culture in this scenario becomes even more important. According to Thompson and Strickland (1989), a strategy-implementer's task once strategy is chosen is to bring the corporate culture into alignment with the strategy.

As Wheelan (2008) points out, corporate culture can exert a powerful influence on the behavior of all employees and hence it can strongly affect a company's ability to shift its strategic direction. Organization culture exists to preserve stable relationships and patterns of behavior thus trying to change it may affect employee commitment to implementation of the new strategy. According to Wheelan and Hunger (2008), the management must be willing and able to make major organizational changes and accept probable delays in a scenario where the existing corporate culture cannot be modified and is not compatible with the strategy being implemented.

2.4.2 Change Management Challenges

Strategic change management resides at the heart of the strategy implementation process (Macmillan and Tampoe, 2000). Strategy implementation often involves change in an organization hence it is prudent to handle change well (Hrebiniak, 2008). Change affects people and the success of implementation critically depends on carrying the people in the organization along with the new strategy (Macmillan and Tampoe, 2000). They further argue that strategic change causes a significant upheaval to people as they struggle to find their feet in the new arrangement. According to Pearce and Robinson (2003), the main

challenge facing an organization's leadership during strategy implementation is the challenge of galvanizing commitment among people within the organization as well as those outside the organization to embrace change.

Resistance to change by employees arises when the changes that occur as a result of strategy implementation are drastic and are introduced hastily without proper communication and systems in advance. Where as new strategy implementation may call for a wholesale transformation in the organization, the key challenge to the management is managing the change as well as motivating employees during the transformation period. As Macmillan and Tampoe (2000) point out, managing change involves sustaining employee morale and motivation as the organization transformation takes shape in line with the needs of formulated strategy.

2.4.3 Organization Structure Challenges

An organization's structure and design is a key factor in the implementation process (Hrebiniak, 2005). The challenge facing managers during strategy implementation is how to match the new strategy with structure without affecting the current on-going business. According to Charlesmore (2009), strategy implementors are faced with the challenge of answering the following question: How should we best structure and organize to be able to deliver strategy? Finding an answer to the above question is hard. Finding the right structure and design to carry out new strategy is a result of a well thought and negotiated process between various stakeholders in the organization. Considerations should be made based on the long term vision of the firm.

An organization's structure determines the work to be done and how to do it given the organization's strategy (Hitt, Ireland and Hoskisson, 2011). They further argued that an organization's structure affects how strategic leaders perform their duties hence the importance of the organizational structure cannot be overlooked. Slater, Olson and Hult (2005) observed that for strategy to achieve superior performance, it must be complemented by appropriate organizational characteristics and employee behaviours. To overcome structural challenges during implementation, there is need to find a structural fit with the strategy. As Thompson and Strickland (1989) point out, making strong supportive "fits" prevents internal activities from being in conflict with the strategy and hence brings the organization's work effort into closer harmony with the strategic plan. Therefore, a firm that succeeds in implementation of its strategy is one that ensures that there is harmony between its structure and the strategic plan.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology to be used for the study. This chapter covers the research design, data collection and data analysis aspects of this study.

3.2 Research Design

The research design of this study was a case study. Case studies are used to make a detailed examination of a single unit, group or phenomena (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). The unit of the study was the AccessKenya Group Ltd to find out the challenges of implementing the strategic plan. Case study was appropriate where an in-depth analysis and understanding of a single unit of study was desired. Case studies place more emphasis on a full contextual analysis of fewer events or conditions and their interrelations (Cooper and Schindler, 2006).

This study used a case study to understand the phenomena of strategy implementation and challenges faced during strategy implementation. The merit of using a case study was that it involves an empirical investigation of a particular phenomena within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence (Robson, 2002).

3.3 Data Collection

This study used primary data. Primary data was collected through an interview guide. An interview guide was a set of questions an interviewer asks and focuses on a list of topics

or areas that the researcher desires to cover in an interview.

The interview guide was administered through personal interviews. The interview was semi-structured in that it was controlled by the interviewer and allowed the respondent to have flexibility in answering questions. The merit for using semi-structured interviews in this study was because it will allow the interview to accommodate new and useful information that may crop up during the interview process. The researcher will seek to utilize the respondents who are well versed with the formulation and implementation of the strategies.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data obtained from the interview guide was analyzed qualitatively. Qualitative analysis was suitable where the researcher was interested analyzing information in a systematic way in order to come to some useful conclusions and recommendations (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). Qualitative data analysis tries to establish relationships from obtained data. Content analysis will be employed during qualitative data analysis. Content analysis was the systematic qualitative description of composition of the objects or materials of the study (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003).

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS, AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data and findings of the study as set out in the research methodology. The chapter specifically covers the general information, strategic planning practices, strategic planning challenges and discussion of the findings. The purpose of this study was to determine the strategic planning practices adopted by AccessKenya Group Ltd. The study had two objectives namely: to determine strategic planning practices adopted by AccessKenya Group Ltd and determine the challenges encountered during strategic planning.

The study had targeted 8 respondents with the organization. The study however was unable to attain 100% response rate. The study managed to successfully interview 6 respondents hence attaining a response rate of 75%. According to Cooper and Schindler (2006), a response rate of 75% is sufficient enough for scientific and social studies to proceed.

4.2 General Information

The general information of this study comprised of the respondents position at the organization and the duration of time that they had been working their. This information was used to ascertain the respondents' appropriateness in responding to questions about strategic planning practices at AccessKenya Group Ltd.

4.3 Strategic Planning Practices

The first objective of the study was to find out the strategic planning practices adopted by the organization during the formulation of its strategic plans. The findings of the study noted that its actively involved in strategic plans. The study also established that strategic planning was formal and all strategic plans formulated are documented into an official document.

4.3.1 Planning Committee

The researcher sought to establish whether there was a strategic planning committee and the composition of the committee. The respondents reported that the organization had a 13 member strategic planning committee which is mandated to steer and guide through the strategic planning process.

The study established that the planning committee comprises of heads of departments, employee representatives, and business representatives.

4.3.2 Formulation of vision and mission statement

The researcher also sought to establish the process followed in formulation of the organization's vision and mission statements. The researcher established that the top management and the planning committee were involved in the formulation of the vision and mission statement.

Development of the vision and mission was a result of a rigorous environmental scanning process by the planning committee which was aimed at comparing the position in its

environment and determination of future aspirations of the organization. The researcher also established that the mission and vision statement was formally written into an official document and embedded into the strategic plans.

4.3.3 Stakeholders' Participation in Strategic Planning

The researcher also sought to find out whether stakeholders were involved in the strategic planning at AccessKenya Group Ltd. The respondents reported that strategic planning at the organization was an inclusive formal process. The researcher also established that stakeholder participation is an integral part of the strategic planning process.

The respondents reported that the representatives participate in strategic planning through public consultative meetings and forums organized by the planning committee. During these meetings, the planning committee receives views, ideas and proposal from the stakeholders which were then evaluated and incorporated into the strategic plans developed

4.3.4 Awareness and communication of strategic plans

The researcher also sought to establish whether the organization communicates its strategic plans to its stakeholders and the level of awareness of the strategic plans by employees. The 6 respondents interviewed by the researcher reported that the organization communicated its strategic plans through seminars organized to create awareness on the strategic plans to the employees.

The researcher also observed that all the respondents demonstrated a high level of awareness the strategic objectives. It was also established that strategic plans were communicated internally to the employees through the established internal communication channels. The internal channels used included emails, memos, and circulars to various departments.

4.3.5 Situational Analysis

The researcher also sought to establish whether situational analysis was carried out during strategic planning, what it involved and its importance in strategic planning process. He also established situational analysis was usually done during formulation of strategic plans at the organization. It was further established that situation analysis conducted by the planning committee involves; internal, external and stakeholders analysis.

The researcher also sought to establish the importance of situation analysis in strategic planning at AccessKenya Group Ltd. The researcher established that the importance of situational analysis in strategic planning was used to establish the strategic areas of interest in the environment.

The study found that the organization conducted an extensive environmental scanning process where SWOT analysis, PESTEL and stakeholder were conducted in order to determine the position in relation to its environment as well as identify strategic objective and priorities. The researcher established that internal weaknesses such as deficiency in skilled personnel, poor organizational structure and limited finances posed the greatest

threat to long term success of the organization.

The researcher also sought to establish the importance of stakeholder analysis during situational analysis. It was established that stakeholder analysis enabled the strategic planners at the organization understand who they're and where and how best to engage the stakeholders in strategic planning in terms of developing clear guidelines on the role to be played by the stakeholders in the planning process.

4.4 Strategic Planning Challenges

The second objective of the study was to establish the strategic planning challenges faced. To determine this, the respondents interviewed were in agreement that limited time was allocated to the strategic planning process. The time allocated for strategic planning events such as forums wasn't adequate to capture views.

The study established that financial constraints were a challenge during strategic planning. The study established that the organization had budgetary constraints hence limiting the amount needed for planning. This forced the planning committee to come up with specific planning time frames and prudent financial practices in order to utilize the allocated funds.

The study also established that building consensus during strategic planning was a challenge. The researcher established that differing views between the members of the planning committee, the stakeholders and the representatives was a challenge during

strategic planning. Building consensus amongst various parties involved in the planning process was done through consultative meetings and seminars meant to reach out on contentious issues.

There was consensus amongst respondents that stakeholder commitment was a challenge during strategic planning at the organization. The study established that initially, representatives participation in the consultation meetings held were meant to incorporate the views of the representatives into the strategic objectives and plans of the organization and also create a sense of ownership by the stakeholders to overall strategic plan.

4.5 Discussion of findings

Strategic planning process involved various activities which were aimed at formulation of an organization's long term mission and near term objectives, identification of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats through a thorough strategic analysis of its environment (Pearce and Robinson, 2011). This study established that AccessKenya Group Ltd scanned its environment during strategic planning with the key aim of understanding its effect on its operations. Legal issues including guidelines on budgeting and procurement as set out.

From the findings of the study, it's evident that strategic planning at AccessKenya Group Ltd was a calendar driven process in which the planning committee played a great role. This conforms to the views of McKinsey (1999), who opined that strategic planning was a time-bound process which requires a planning committee. Strategic planning required a

high level of discipline in terms of adherence to objectives set, time and resources allocated hence the importance of it being a formal process. The role of the planning committee during strategic planning did not confined only to the analysis of views from stakeholders but also to ensure that the planning process does not deviate from the expected targets.

Communication of the vision and the organization's strategic plan in general was important during the implementation phase. It was evident from the findings that AccessKenya Group Ltd communicated its vision and strategic plans to the employees as well as to the stakeholders. This is meant to ensure that employees are committed to the organization's vision and understand the strategic plans they implementing. This was in line with the views of Thompson and Strickland (2008) that an effectively communicated strategic plan is a valuable management tool for enlisting the commitment of the organization's personnel to strategic objectives of the organization.

The study revealed that strategic planning at AccessKenya Group Ltd is a participatory process involving external stakeholders, the top management and employees. This conforms to the views of Bryson (2004) that stakeholder participation in strategic planning process is important since it captures their views, creates a sense of ownership to strategic plans and most importantly adds a broad perspective to the planning process.

AccessKenya Group Ltd also sought to analyze and understand its stakeholders with an aim of understanding the organization's obligations to the stakeholders as well as

understanding on methodologies of how best to engage them in strategic planning and future engagements. According to Bryson (2004) analysis of stakeholders is important in managing relationships between an organization and the parties that are involved or affected by its operations. According to Bryson (2004), analysis and attention to stakeholders by institutions are important since their operational success and survival depends on satisfying their needs.

The study established that strategic plans and objectives at AccessKenya Group Ltd were built around its long term vision and mission. The findings are in agreement with Thompson et al (2008) views that building strategic objectives from an organization's vision helps in conversion of the strategic vision into performance goals. Linking the vision with the vision enables strategic planners and implementers convert the vision into measurable targets.

The study established that AccessKenya Group Ltd faced the challenges of financial and time constraints, stakeholder commitment issues, interference and the challenge of building consensus. The organization strategic committee acknowledged these challenges and established measures of mitigating their effect on strategic planning at the organization. Dealing with strategic issues during strategic planning was key to formulation and implementation of strategic plans formulated. The study established that the organization strategic planners put in necessary measures to address the strategic issues mentioned above. The findings are in agreement with the views of Bryson (1988) who noted that organizations should identify key strategic issues during planning and

devise ways of resolving them effectively.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study. More specifically it covers the summary of the findings, conclusions, recommendations for theory and managerial practice, limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.

5.2 Summary

This study focused on strategic planning practices at AccessKenya Group Ltd. This study had two objectives: to determine strategic planning practices adopted by AccessKenya Group and to determine the challenges encountered in strategic planning by AccessKenya Group Ltd.

5.2.1 Strategic Planning Practices

From the findings, the study established that AccessKenya Group Ltd was actively involved in strategic planning. This illustrates that strategic planning was key factor in the organization's operations. Additionally, the study also established that strategic planning was essential in streamlining the operations of the organization to achieve operational efficiencies and better service delivery. The organization has developed a five year strategic plan and an integrated development plan that stipulates its strategic objectives

and targets to be attained. From the findings, the study established that communication of AccessKenya Group Ltd's vision and strategic objectives is an integral part strategic planning. The study established that internal communication channels were used to communicate the strategic plan to the employees. The organization also communicated its strategic plans to the external stakeholders through forums.

The study established that strategic planning at the organization was formal. The vision and mission statements and all strategic plans formulated are documented into the official policy document. This further confirms that the organization has adopted modern strategic planning practices through formalization of the strategic planning process.

The study also established that strategic plans developed by the organization were proactive. This conforms to modern strategic planning practices in public institutions through formulation of flexible strategic plans that are not reactionary to unexpected events. The organization's strategic plans are prepared with clear strategic targets and action plans within stipulated time frames. The researcher established that preparation of the budget was guided by the strategic plans. The study also established that flexibility of the strategic plans is established through short-term strategic plans and through the budgetary process that stipulate the measures to be taken by the organization to address unforeseen events.

The study also established that AccessKenya Group Ltd applied the following strategic planning practices; resource allocation for the strategic planning process, establishment of

a strategic planning unit to guide through the strategic planning process, development of strategic objectives which contribute to the realization of the organization's vision, conducting a comprehensive situational analysis to understand the organization's position in relation to its environment and development of realistic strategies with well-defined operational goals and performance targets and indicators.

The study established that strategic planning process at the organization was an inclusive process involving the top management, other employees of the organization and external stakeholders. This was meant to develop a sense of ownership by all stakeholders to the strategic plans formulated. The strategic planning committee organized forums where the top management and stakeholders held consultative meetings to discuss and identify strategic objectives and gauge the strategic position in relation to its environment.

From the findings, the study established that situational analysis was an integral part of strategic planning at the organization. The respondents were in agreement that they'll used SWOT, PESTEL and stakeholder analysis techniques. The study established that situational analysis conducted during strategic planning was important in understanding the position in relation to the expectations of its stakeholders, identification of legal requirements and laws guiding operations and identification of areas of weakness to improve on.

5.2.2 Strategic Planning Challenges

The findings of the study established that financial constraint was a major challenge

during strategic planning. The findings revealed that budgetary allocations to strategic planning was limited hence forcing the strategic planning committee to adopt prudent financial measures such as cutting back on the number of consultation forums. Additionally, the findings revealed that organization had a low revenue base which in turn impacts on its ability to raise sufficient funds to finance its strategic plans.

The study also established that stakeholder commitment was a challenge during strategic planning. The consultative forums were meant to incorporate the general public views in strategic plans. Additionally, due to the low public participation in strategic planning, the study established that ownership and awareness of strategic plans developed was low.

The findings established that internal interference had a negative impact on strategic planning. The study established that forms of internal interference at the organization included vested interests in determination of key priority projects including determination the physical location of identified priority projects and attempts by players at the organization to influence on budgetary allocations to identified strategic objectives.

The study also established that building consensus was a challenge. Building consensus amongst the leaders with vested interests on strategic planning at the organization was found out to be the most challenging task for the planning committee by the study. The study also established that differing views between the planning committee, the general public and other stakeholders was a challenge during identification of strategic objectives and hence consensus building was a necessity during strategic planning at the

organization.

The study also found out that time allocated to strategic planning process was a challenge. Limited time was allocated to the strategic planning process at the organization. To meet the time allocated to strategic planning process, the planning committee had to develop time frames to strategic planning activities.

5.3 Conclusion

From the foregoing discussions, the following conclusions were deduced. The study concluded that AccessKenya Group Ltd was actively involved in strategic planning. The study also concluded that the strategic planning process at the organization was a formal process which resulted into formulation and documentation of the strategic vision and mission statement, and strategic plans.

The study concluded that, strategic planning process at AccessKenya Group Ltd was a participatory process that involved employees, the business community and stakeholders. The organization's strategic planning committee was also an inclusive unit comprising of key stakeholders at the organization. The participation of employees and other stakeholders in strategic planning was meant to empower them to have a say in formulation of strategic plans and on operations of the organization.

The study also concluded that the organization adopted the following strategic planning practices; establishment of a planning committee with clear a mandate, resource

allocation to the strategic planning process, formulation of the organization's vision and mission and building key organization strategies and objectives around the vision.

From the findings, the study concluded that AccessKenya Ltd situational analysis was done during strategic planning. The study concluded that SWOT, PESTEL and stakeholder analysis methods were used by the organization to analyze its environment as well as to identify the areas of strengths and weaknesses of the organization.

From the findings, it was possible to conclude that communication was a key factor in strategic planning at AccessKenya Group Ltd. The organization communicated its vision and strategic plans internally through the internal communication channels and externally through public forums. This was meant to build consensus during strategic planning and to create awareness by stakeholders.

From the ongoing discussion, the study concluded that socio-economic factors were a major challenge to strategic planning. The study concluded that socio-economic factors during strategic planning at AccessKenya Group Ltd arose vested unfavorable business environments that influenced key priority projects.

From the study, it was concluded that consensus building was used address differing internal views and interests amongst the managers within the organization. Additionally, the study concluded that consensus building between the planning committee and stakeholders in itself was a challenge during strategic planning.

The study also concluded that financial constraints, time constraints, and stakeholder commitment challenges were encountered during strategic planning at AccessKenya Group Ltd. Additionally, the study concluded that financial constraints during strategic planning at the organization arose from budgetary allocation.

5.4 Recommendations

The study recommended sufficient allocation of resources to strategic planning including skilled personnel, adequate budgetary allocations and sufficient time allocation to the strategic planning process at AccessKenya Group Ltd. This would ensure that strategic planning at the organization runs smoothly without any unnecessary delays, meets the desired goals and conforms to the best strategic planning practices.

The study recommends that, the management and planning committee should recognize and encourage involvement of the managerial leadership in strategic planning. This would ensure that the strategic plans formulated have adequate backing and goodwill hence reducing unnecessary interference on strategic planning.

Strategic implementation in any organization is influenced by its corporate culture, organization structure and corporate governance. The study recommended that AccessKenya Group Ltd should align their corporate culture, organization structures and resources to formulated strategic plans for them to be successful implemented.

The study also recommends that formulated strategic plans should be communicated adequately internally to the employees and externally to other stakeholders. This would ensure that there is better understanding by the employees to corporate strategies they are implemented and as well as aiding them to understand the expected deliverables.

5.5 Limitation of the Study

The study was a case study and hence the research was limited to AccessKenya Group Ltd only on strategic planning practices adopted by the organization. The findings of the study therefore, were specific to AccessKenya Group Ltd only and as such, cannot be generalized for other organizations. Each organization is unique and may adopt different strategic planning practices. It was also not possible to compare strategic planning practices adopted by the organizations with other organizations in Kenya.

The study used interview guides administered to target respondents to collect the data used in this study hence the accuracy of the data collected depended on the extent at which the respondents were truthful in responding to questions. Also the respondents targeted in this study were managers with busy schedules. This posed a challenge during data collection but the study was able to schedule favorable interview times with the respondents thus enabling the study to acquire data from the targeted respondents.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

The study focused on strategic planning practices adopted by AccessKenya Group Ltd. The study recommends that further research should be done on the challenges faced

during implementation of strategic plans. This will enable strategic planners at the organization to identify aspects to improve on during future strategic planning at AccessKenya Group Ltd. The study also recommends that further research should be done on how the strategic planning practices adopted have contributed to realization of the vision and strategic objectives, and their effect on the overall performance of the organization.

The study also recommended on the need to conduct further studies on stakeholder participation in strategic planning process at organizations in Kenya. This will give an insight on stakeholders' role in strategic planning as well as create awareness to strategic planners on the importance of stakeholder participation in the planning process.

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APPENDIX
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Section A: General Information

1. Interviewee's Position in the organization: _____
2. Education background: _____
3. Years in the current position: _____

Section B: Strategic Planning Practices

4. Is your organization actively involved in strategic planning process?
5. Is strategic planning at AccessKenya Group Ltd formal or informal?
6. Are the strategic plans formulated reactive or proactive?
7. Does the organization have a strategic planning committee?
8. Are all levels of the organization represented in the strategic planning committee?
9. Does AccessKenya Group have a formally documented vision and mission statement?
10. Who was involved in the formulation of the vision and mission statement?
11. Are the resources of the organization a major factor in strategic planning?
12. Are stakeholders involved in strategic planning?
13. Are employees involved in strategic planning?
14. Is situational analysis done during strategic planning?
15. Is SWOT analysis technique used in situation analysis process?
16. Does the organization use PESTEL during strategic planning?
17. Is stakeholder analysis used during situation analysis?

18. Does the organization communicate its strategic objectives to all stakeholders within?

Section C: Strategic Planning Challenges

19. Do you encounter the challenge of financial constraints during strategic planning?

20. Is building consensus a challenge during strategic planning?

21. Do you encounter the challenge of internal interference during strategic planning?

22. Is stakeholder commitment a challenge during strategic planning?

23. Is time constraint a challenge during strategic planning?